

# FFT Tutoring with the Lightning Squad Evaluation

## School Information Sheet

**We are seeking schools to participate in a randomised control trial of the FFT Tutoring with the Lightning Squad programme.**

**All recruited settings will deliver the intervention to either Year 3 or Year 4.  
All evaluation activities will take place between September 2025 and July 2026.**

### 1. What is Tutoring with Lightning Squad?

FFT (Fischer Family Trust) is partnering with the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), who have commissioned the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) to evaluate FFT's Tutoring with the Lightning Squad programme.

This online reading catch-up programme aims to help pupils improve their reading skills. It is a structured, targeted intervention for pupils in years 1-6 that are below age related expectations in reading and are particularly weak with their decoding and fluency skills. Pupils work in pairs through a series of engaging activities and stories to build their confidence and enjoyment for reading alongside improving their reading skills. The trial will assess the impact on Year 3 and 4 pupils across England.

The Tutoring with the Lightning Squad programme has been evaluated in the US and FFT has analysed data from nearly 20,000 pupils who took part in the programme during the 2021/22 academic year. The analysis indicated that pupils make twice the rate of expected progress in reading development and three times the expected rate of improvement in reading fluency. You can download the report and read more on the analysis by following this link: <https://fft.org.uk/tutoring/data-impact-report/>

This is an exciting opportunity for your school to access a structured intervention with potential to boost reading outcomes. Participating will support evidence-based practice in education and provide valuable professional development for staff.

### 2. Who is involved in running the project?

FFT, a non-profit charitable trust that provides data and literacy tools to support schools in improving pupil outcomes, will support schools to deliver this programme. NFER is an independent evaluation organisation that will be assessing the impact of the programme.

### 3. What does the programme involve?

The programme involves pupils working in pairs through engaging activities and stories to build reading confidence and enhance their reading skills. Schools will identify 16 pupils (8 each from Years 3 and 4) to participate. One year group will receive the intervention while the other continues their usual practice in school.

Schools must designate a teacher as the 'school coordinator' to oversee the programme's successful implementation in their school. This coordinator will attend a short briefing providing an overview of the project and guidance on identifying suitable pupils. Selected pupils will complete FFT's online Reading Assessment to confirm their eligibility.

The school coordinator and two additional teachers/TAs will undergo a full day of online training in autumn 2025. Following this, schools can commence programme delivery.

Staff will deliver 4-5 weekly 30-minute sessions of Tutoring with the Lightning Squad for at least 16 weeks. Pupils work in groups of 4 (two pairs) during these sessions. Schools receive training, resources to support delivery and ongoing support to implement the programme. An online follow-up meeting with FFT advisers will assist schools with implementation.

Schools must allocate staff time for training and the online support meeting. They need to plan session locations and timetabling. The programme will be independently evaluated by NFER, with both the programme and evaluation funded by the EEF.

### 4. Who can take part in the trial?

Schools will be eligible to apply if they are:

- A primary school with at least **two** Year 3 **and two** Year 4 class
- **Not** currently using or have previously used FFT Tutoring with the Lightning Squad
- **Not** delivering Accelerated Reader, Reciprocal Reading, Dyslexia Gold, Lexia, ReadingPlus or Fresh Start (RWI) during 2025/26 to pupils in year 3 and 4.
- **Not** participating in the following EEF trials in 2025/26 with pupils in year 3 and 4: Pathways Literacy, Power of Reading or Writing Roots.
- Willing to have either year group randomly assigned to intervention or control group.



## 5. How does the trial work?

This is a Randomised Controlled Trial (RCT) where all recruited schools will deliver the intervention. Schools will be randomly assigned to one of two arms:

- In arm 1, pupils in year 3 will receive Tutoring with the Lightning Squad. Pupils in year 4 will not receive the intervention.
- In arm 2, pupils in year 4 will receive Tutoring with the Lightning Squad. Pupils in year 3 will not receive the intervention. The year groups that do not receive the intervention will form the control group, continuing their usual practice.

The Woodcock Reading Mastery Test 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (WRMT-III) will be used to evaluate the main impact of the programme. All year 3 and year 4 pupils selected to take part in the trial will complete selected WRMT-III sub-tests in Summer 2026. All selected pupils in Year 4 will also complete Section R8 of the PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study) questionnaire in Autumn 2025 and Summer 2026. NFER will contact schools about the assessments and other evaluation activities.

Schools commit to:

- Identifying eligible pupils and completing assessments
- Attending training and delivering the programme as specified
- Providing data on pupil attendance and progress
- Facilitating evaluation activities by NFER

Schools will be asked to complete a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to agree to the evaluation arrangements before being accepted onto the project.

## 6. What are the benefits for my school in taking part in this project?

By participating in Tutoring with the Lightning Squad programme, all schools will not only help understand its impact but also contribute to the evidence base in what works for pupil phonics and reading fluency development as well as the use of educational technology in schools. An evaluation report will be published on the EEF website upon project completion.

### Schools will receive:

- Access to FFT's reading catch-up which has the potential to improve reading outcomes and enjoyment for reading.
- High quality CPD for 3 staff members
- 60 copies of FFT's Further Reader texts
- Certificates and stickers to celebrate pupil success
- Resources to support the delivery of Tutoring with the Lightning Squad sessions
- Access to Tutoring with the Lightning Squad for two additional years after the evaluation

At the end of the research period, schools will receive £800 to recognise their work for the evaluation. The control year group will be able to access Tutoring with the Lightning Squad in the summer term after their endline assessments

## 7. Are there any costs involved?

Schools pay £250 for training and resources (usually costing £1,400). The remainder is subsidised by the EEF. Schools should consider staff time for training and programme delivery, including cover for absences. At the end of the research period, schools will receive £800 to recognise their work for the evaluation.

## 8. How will data be used?

As part of this project, FFT will be collecting data on the schools involved, including URN numbers and contact details of staff involved. During the project, we will be collecting data on pupils' reading skills, starting points and pupils' attendance at Tutoring with the Lightning Squad sessions, as we believe the number of sessions completed is a factor in the progress they make. FFT will securely share this data only with the NFER team evaluating the programme. Parents can withdraw their child and corresponding data from the trial at any time. Details are provided in the Parent Information Sheet. We are committed to upholding the highest standards of data protection and privacy.

FFT's data protection policy can be accessed here: [Data protection and information security - FFT](#) and Privacy Policy can be seen [here](#)

FFT's data protection officer is Helen Robinson. She can be contacted at FFT Education Ltd, The Pavilion, 60 Eastgate Cowbridge, CF71 7AB; Email: [dpo@fft.org.uk](mailto:dpo@fft.org.uk); Telephone: 01446 776262

NFER's Evaluation Team will also be collecting data on pupils' reading skills, progress, end point attainment and overall achievement. Their privacy policy can be accessed [here](#).

FFT will share a contact name and email address for a named individual in your school with the EEF. For information on the purpose, processing, and retention of this data, please see their [privacy notice](#).

## 9. How to find out more or sign up for the project

The window for applying to take part in this research runs from January 2025 to April 2025. The deadline for sign up is **30th April 2025**. As spaces are limited, schools are encouraged to sign up as early as possible in the spring term to secure your spot in the project.

**To find out more and to sign up for a free webinar please go to**

**To sign up, please contact** [twltrial@fft.org.uk](mailto:twltrial@fft.org.uk)

To find out more about the evaluation, please contact [TWLtrial@nfer.ac.uk](mailto:TWLtrial@nfer.ac.uk)

## 10. Evaluation Project Timeline: Key Dates

Date	Activities
<b>All schools</b>	
January – April 2025	Headteacher commits to participating in the trial by signing the MoU.
April 2025	Online introductory briefings for school coordinators.
May – July 2025	Schools will identify 50% of cohort year 3 & 4 pupils (academic year 2025/26) that will most benefit from the programme and submit these pupils to FFT.
September 2025	Short online training session for School Coordinators and/or staff that will be delivering the assessment on how to use FFT's Reading Assessment Programme Online survey to be completed by school coordinators.
September 2025	Schools complete FFT's Reading Assessment Programme with all pupils identified in previous summer term. Schools complete the PIRLS survey with the 8 year 4 pupils.
October 2025	Online Training for Tutoring with the Lightning Squad. Schools notified of year group allocation to intervention or control group.
October - May 2026	Schools begin delivering Tutoring with the Lightning Squad sessions with intervention year group. Aim is for 4-5 sessions a week for at least 16 weeks. Complete attendance of sessions and submit to FFT. Schools to facilitate case study visits (if invited) with NFER researchers to conduct teacher interviews and pupil focus groups. Case study schools receive £150 voucher or book token from NFER.
January – February 2026	Online support meeting.
June -July 2026	Schools facilitate final assessments by NFER.
September 2026	FFT will pay the trial incentive of £800 to all schools who complete baseline and endpoint trial activities.
Spring 2027	Publication of evaluation report.

**Thank you for your interest in this Tutoring with the Lightning Squad project!**