

The Aston Literacy Project (ALP)

Parent information sheet



Who is conducting the study?

This project is being conducted within the School of Life and Health sciences at Aston University. It is led by Dr Laura Shapiro (Principal Investigator) and Dr Anna Cunningham (Research Fellow). A group of 16 Research Assistants are employed to carry out the testing in 15 schools within the Birmingham area.

What is the purpose of the study?

Our aim is to investigate the relationship between auditory skills, phonology, and reading in children at the beginning and intermediate stages of literacy development. Importantly, we are attempting to understand whether children who go on to develop reading difficulties have poor levels of phonology, auditory skills, or both at the beginning of school. In order to establish this, it is necessary to follow the same group of children from Reception to Year 1 to see how they progress. Once children have developed fluent reading, the relationships between these skills may change, hence we are testing Year 2 children as well. Therefore, initially, we aim to test all the children in Reception and Year 2 at your child's school.

Does my child have to take part?

It is up to you and your child whether or not he or she takes part. It is entirely voluntary. If you would not like your child to take part, then please fill in the 'opt out' section at the bottom of the letter you received from your child's school. Children will be asked at the start of each session if they are happy to take part and be given the option to return to class if they choose. In our experience, children normally enjoy doing the activities and are excited by the novelty of participation.

What will happen to my child if he or she takes part?

Your child will be assessed by one of two researchers who will visit their school for a period of 2-6 weeks, depending on the size of the school. Children will be 'borrowed' one by one from the classroom and taken to a quiet area elsewhere in the school to complete the tasks. Each child will be seen for 5-6 sessions lasting approximately 20 minutes each. Most of the tasks will be administered on a laptop computer with headphones. This is to ensure that they are conducted fairly and in the same way for all the children involved. Great care has been taken to ensure that the tasks are age-appropriate and engaging for young children.

What will we get in return for taking part?

We do not pay participants, though we will give children small rewards (a sticker) for their participation. We also provide a report to each class teacher on the performance of the class as a whole on all standardised assessments (the reading and Maths tests). In a broader sense, this research will help to inform teachers and parents about which children are likely to develop reading difficulties and which children will not. This may not help your particular child but it should help similar children in the future.

Will my child's information be kept confidential?

Yes. We will not release information about individual children to anyone. The information about your child will be stored anonymously. Only a handful of researchers will have access to this information.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results of the study as a whole will be published in an academic journal. We will also send schools a newsletter at the end of the project summarising our findings. No names or identifying information will be contained in this summary.

Who is funding the research?

This research is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, an independent government-funded research body.

What if I have a query or concern?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, you should ask to speak with the researchers at your child's school who will do their best to answer your questions. Alternatively, contact Laura (L.R.Shapiro@aston.ac.uk, 0121 204 4052) or Anna (A.Cunningham@aston.ac.uk, 0121 204 4190) directly.

Further information

If you would like further information about this project please visit:
www.aston.ac.uk/alp