

10 Years as an Evidence Centre: Lessons from EEF

Professor Becky Francis CBE, PhD
CEO

About the EEF: Context

In 2011...

- Large attainment gap for pupils from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds
- Sudden move to high autonomy education system
- New funding for schools to spend independently – “Pupil Premium”
- Lack of rigorous evidence (<5 RCTs)
- Low research use

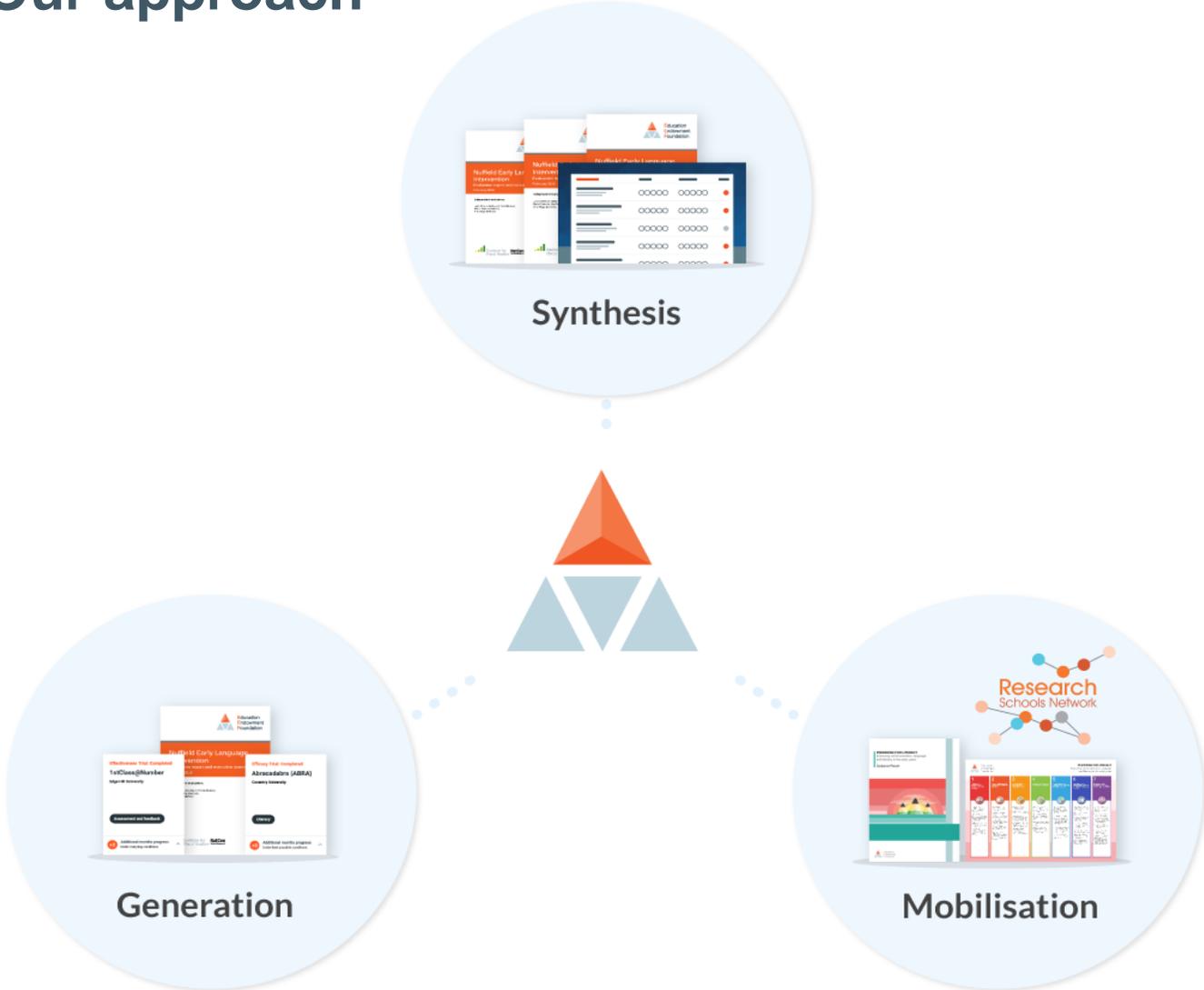


About the EEF: Formation

- £125m to found a new independent organisation committed to closing the attainment gap, with a commitment to spending £200m over 15 years.
- A founding member of the "What Works Network" - a group of independent organisations committed to the generation and use of high quality evidence
- Since 2022, re-endowment from government, additional funding to build evidence pipeline



About the EEF: Our approach



Our approach: Evidence generation

We fund ideas that:

- Focus on raising outcomes to narrow the socio-economic attainment gap
- Build on existing evidence or widespread practice
- Can be scaled up cost-effectively if shown to work.

We focus on robust evaluation:

- Randomised Controlled Trials (RCTs) or QEDs
- Independent evaluations
- Separation of developers and evaluators

All reports are published in plain language

Efficacy Trial: Completed

Nuffield Early Language Intervention

University College London and ICAN

Improving spoken language skills in young children around the time that they start school

+4 Additional months progress
Under best possible conditions

Cost 

Evidence 

Efficacy Trial: Completed

URLEY (Using Research Tools to Improve Language in the Early Years)

University of Oxford, UCL, and A+ Education

Professional development and mentoring for early years practitioners

-1 Additional months progress
Under best possible conditions

Cost 

Evidence 

Our approach: **Evidence synthesis**

Our flagship resource is the **Teaching and Learning Toolkit**.

- An accessible summary of over 2,600 studies, regularly updated with the latest evidence
- Used by 70% of school leaders in England

Mastery learning

High impact for very low cost based on limited evidence.



+5

Mentoring

Low impact for moderate cost based on moderate evidence.



+2

Metacognition and self-regulation

Very high impact for very low cost based on extensive evidence.



+7

Our approach: **Evidence mobilisation**

Evidence is only useful if it changes practice.

We work nationally and regionally to make sure that evidence is actively mobilised to teachers and school leaders.



Lessons from the first 10 years

Lesson 1: Multiple pathways to impact are required

“Simply disseminating research summaries and evidence-based resources to schools is not an effective way for research organisations to support schools to improve pupil outcomes.”

‘Literacy Octopus’ Dissemination Trial evaluation report (2019)

Effectiveness Trial: Completed

**The Literacy Octopus:
Communicating and
Engaging with
Research**

Efficacy Trial: Completed

**Research Learning
Communities**

Institute of Education

Efficacy Trial: Completed

**The RISE Project:
Evidence-informed
school improvement**

Huntington School

Pilot Study: Completed

Research Champions

Ashford Teaching Alliance

Impact development: a 4-fold approach to evidence mobilisation

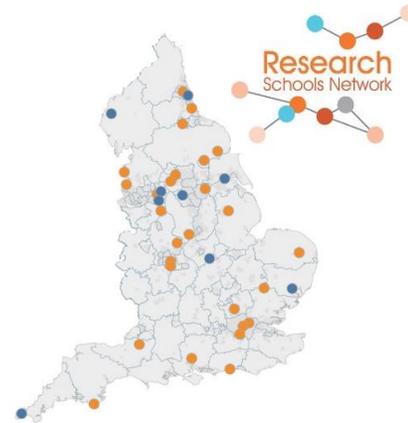
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**Accessible
resources**



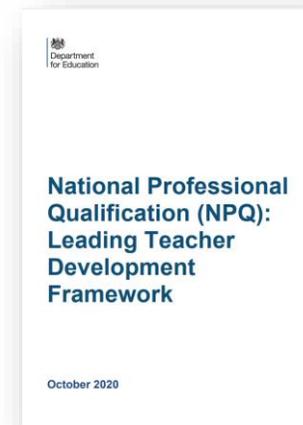
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**Communities
of practice**



3

**Evidence
'guardianship'**

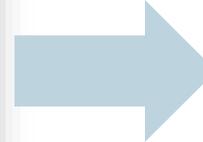
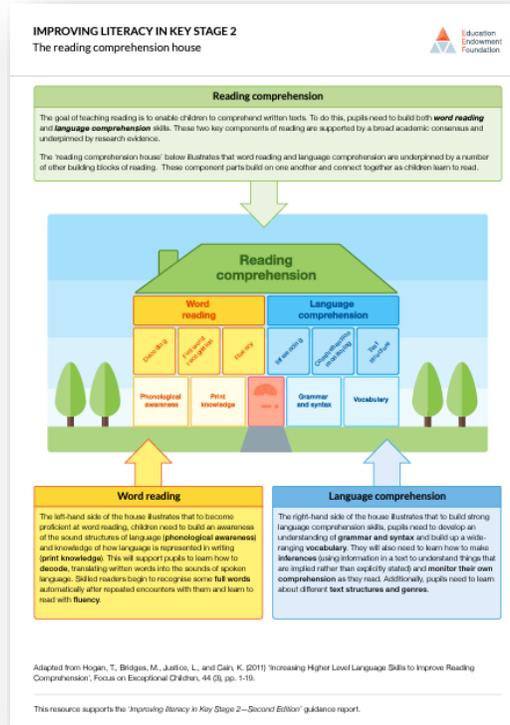
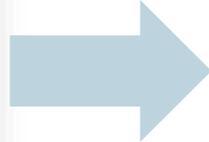
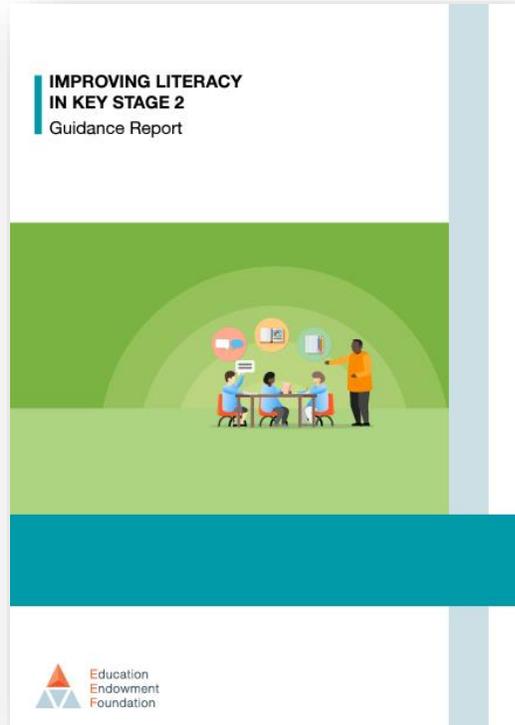


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**Scale up
activity**



Open access resources



IMPROVING LITERACY IN KEY STAGE 2
Reader's Theatre

The Wise Multi-Academy Trust uses Reader's Theatre to support pupils to develop their reading fluency. Reader's Theatre is a widely used teaching strategy that exemplifies how guided oral reading instruction and repeated reading of texts can be used to support pupils to develop reading fluency.¹ The Trust have developed their own guide to support the use of Reader's Theatre in the classroom.

The Wise Multi-Academy Trust is a family of schools in the North East of England.

Step 1: Adult as model	Step 2: Echo reading	Step 3: Text allocation
The adult reads the selected passage of the class text aloud as an expert model of fluency whilst pupils follow the text with their own copy. This may be repeated multiple times as necessary.	Children echo back the section read by the adult, emulating their intonation, tone, speed, volume, expression, movement, use of punctuation, etc.	Children work in pairs or triads. Each group may: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. all have the exact same short section of text, or 2. a longer section might be split into short parts, so that each group has a different part.
Step 4: Repeated choral reading	Step 5: Close reading	Step 6: Text marking
In their groups, children read their section aloud, echoing the initial reading by the adult.	In their pairs/triads children make a close reading of their section of text and think about meaning, audience, and purpose. This requires children to look closely at the writer's use of language and consider characterisations, etc.	Each child has a copy of the text to annotate in order to inform their performance. This is discussed and agreed as a group. Prompts are provided to direct their reading.
Step 7: Practise	Step 8: Perform	Step 9: Reflect
Time is provided for groups to rehearse their reading. They may decide to change or add to their performance slightly as a result of their rehearsal.	Each group performs their rehearsed piece. (Adult may record so that children can appraise their own performance).	Children evaluate their own and/or others' performance and give feedback. They may use a reading fluency rubric or the prompts as success criteria to support articulation of evaluations.

¹ Young, C. and Reesink, T. (2016) 'Reader's Theatre Effects on Word Recognition, Automaticity and Reading Fluency', Journal of Research in Reading, 41, pp. 475-485.

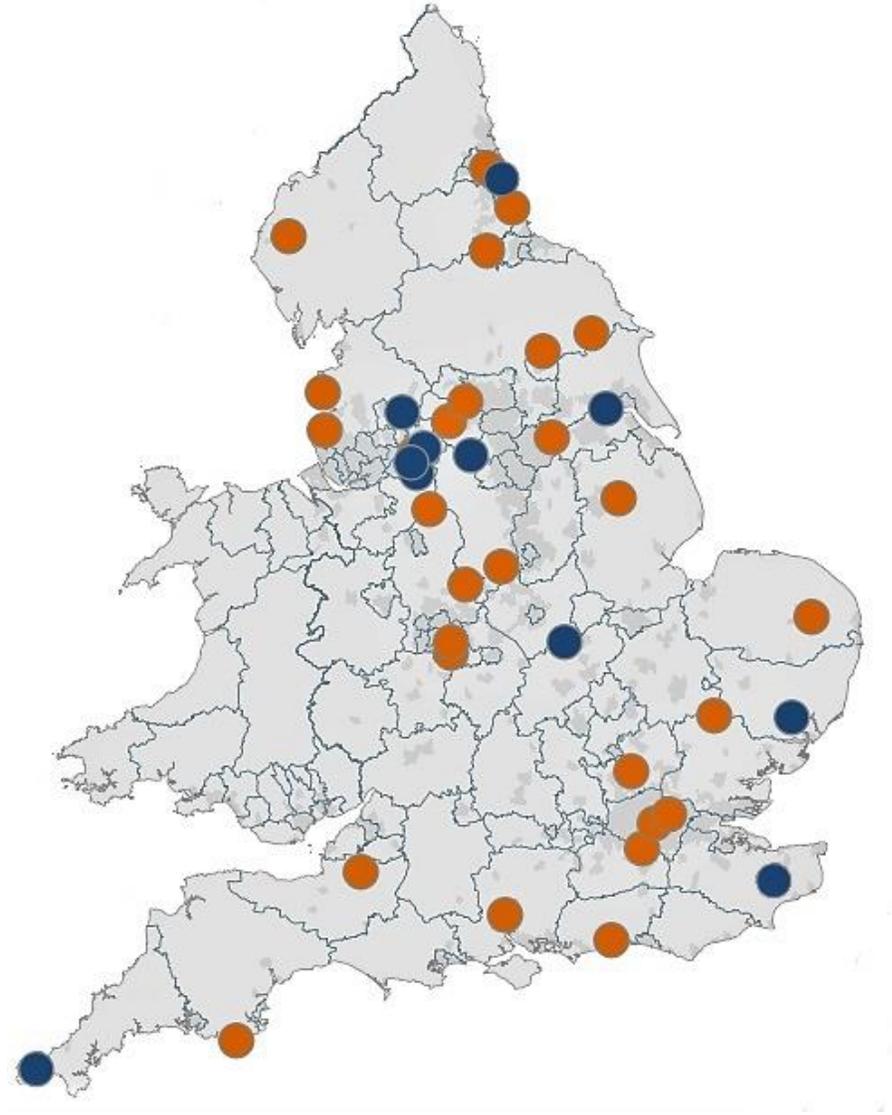
Saunders, T. D., and O'Shea, C. (2012) 'Reader's Theatre: "Hold on, let's read it again"', Teaching Exceptional Children, 43(7), pp. 6-13.

Young, C., Skuse, F. and Reesink, T. (2017) 'Readers Theatre Plus: Comprehension and Word Study', The Reader's Theatre, 1(2), pp. 201-205.

This resource supports the 'Improving Literacy in Key Stage 2—Second Edition' guidance report.

Communities of practice

The **Research Schools Network** serves as a bridge between evidence and practice.



Communities of practice

Our regional strategy:

- Focus on supporting schools serving high levels of socio-economic disadvantage.
- Work alongside intermediaries (e.g. Local Authorities, MATs).
- Co-develop partnerships based on local need.
- Provide evidence-based training and follow-on most often through our Research School Network.

Partnership example:

- Working with 90 Devon schools across three cohorts.
- Focusing on improving teaching of reading in years 3 and 4.
- Drawing on EEF KS2 Literacy Guidance report with ongoing implementation support from senior school leaders.
- Partners – Babcock / Devon Local Authority, Kingsbridge Research School, Exeter Diocese



Evidence to policy

Our policy work includes:

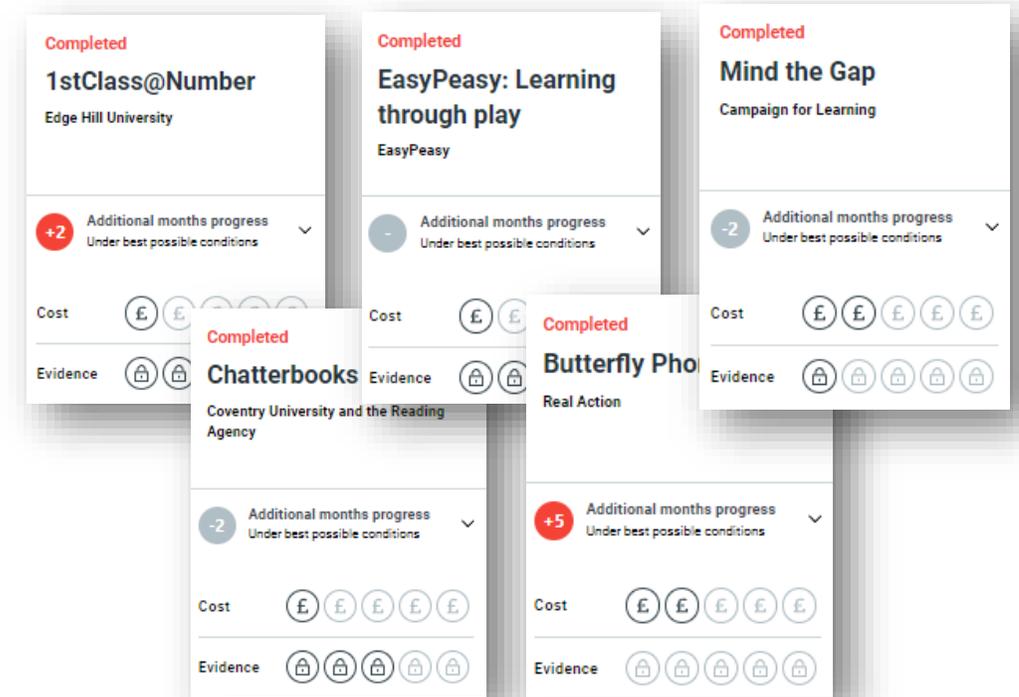
- Reviewing the evidence behind teacher development reforms (National Professional Qualifications, Early Career Framework)
- Working with the Department for Education on national policy
- Targeted efforts to scale effective programmes in response to covid-19

A system role as the **independent** "evidence guardian"

Subject and Curriculum (Standard 3 – Demonstrate good subject and curriculum knowledge)	
Learn that...	Learn how to...
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. A school's curriculum enables it to set out its vision for the knowledge, skills and values that its pupils will learn, encompassing the national curriculum within a coherent wider vision for successful learning.2. Secure subject knowledge helps teachers to motivate pupils and teach effectively.3. Ensuring pupils master foundational concepts and knowledge before moving on is likely to build pupils' confidence and help them succeed.4. Anticipating common misconceptions within particular subjects is also an important aspect of curricular knowledge; working closely with colleagues to develop an understanding of likely misconceptions is valuable.5. Explicitly teaching pupils the knowledge and skills they need to succeed within particular subject areas is beneficial.6. In order for pupils to think critically, they must have a secure understanding of knowledge	<p>Deliver a carefully sequenced and coherent curriculum, by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identifying essential concepts, knowledge, skills and principles of the subject and providing opportunity for all pupils to learn and master these critical components.• Ensuring pupils' thinking is focused on key ideas within the subject.• Working with experienced colleagues to accumulate and refine a collection of powerful analogies, illustrations, examples, explanations and demonstrations.• Using resources and materials aligned with the school curriculum (e.g. textbooks or shared resources designed by experienced colleagues that carefully sequence content).• Being aware of common misconceptions and discussing with experienced colleagues how to help pupils master important concepts. <p>Support pupils to build increasingly complex mental models, by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discussing curriculum design with experienced colleagues and balancing exposition, repetition, practice of critical skills and knowledge.• Revisiting the big ideas of the subject over time and teaching key concepts through a range of examples.• Drawing explicit links between new content and the core concepts and principles in the subject.

Lesson 2: Robust and independent evaluation of high-potential programmes is not only possible, but essential.

- Evidence is a crucial tool to inform senior leaders' decision-making.
- The promising interventions we have trialled have shown differing levels of impact on pupil attainment when evaluated.
- Schools cannot afford to waste precious time and money on approaches and programmes that do not have an impact on pupil outcomes.



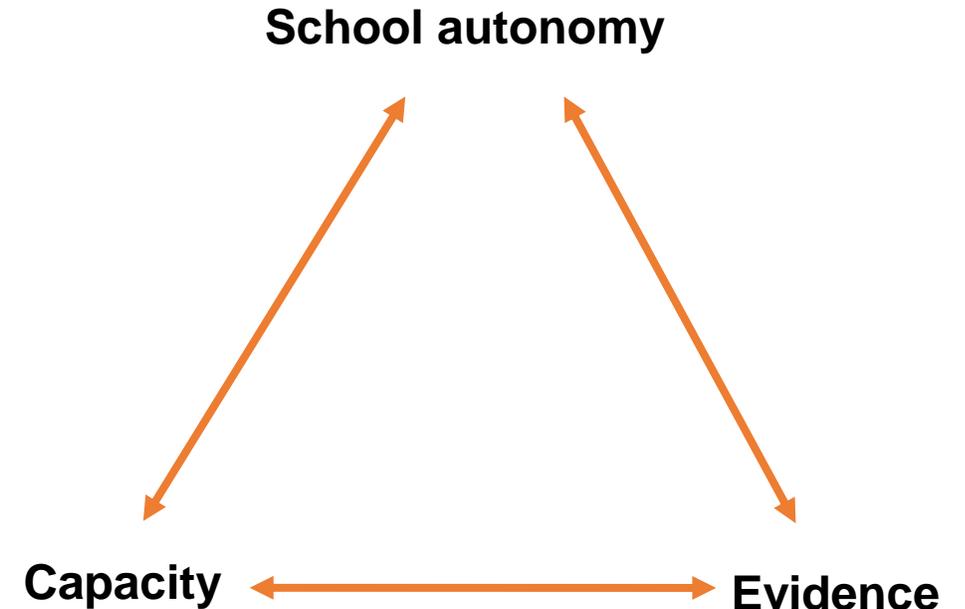
Lesson 3: Evidence can be successfully scaled

We work to scale interventions that are proven to have a positive impact on pupil progress.



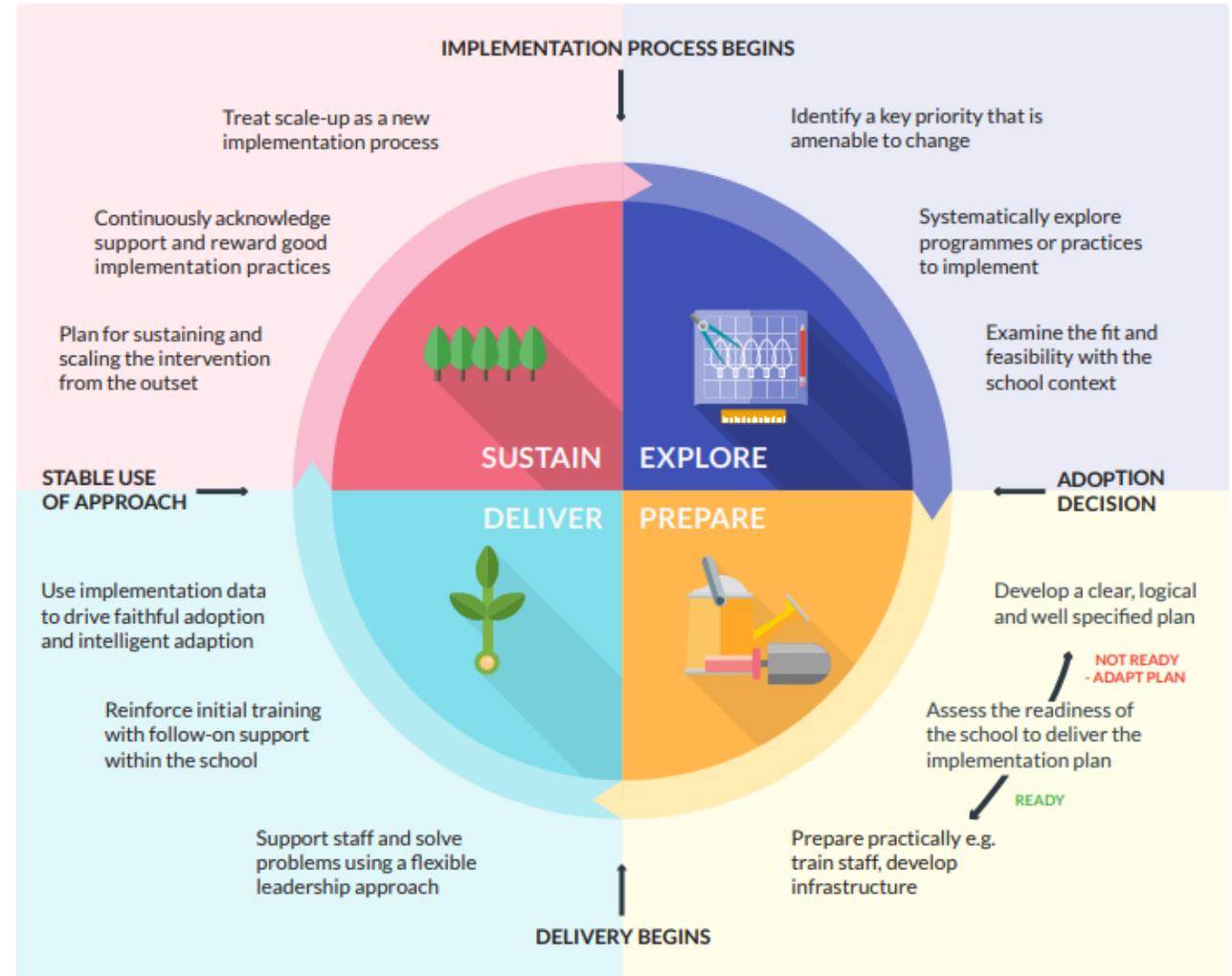
Lesson 4: Evidence and professional expertise are complimentary

- Evidence can enhance professional expertise
- Even the most well-evidenced approaches can be implemented poorly
- Appropriate targeting, buy-in and capacity all influence pupil outcomes
- Autonomy and expertise also require capacity within the system for evidence to reach its full potential



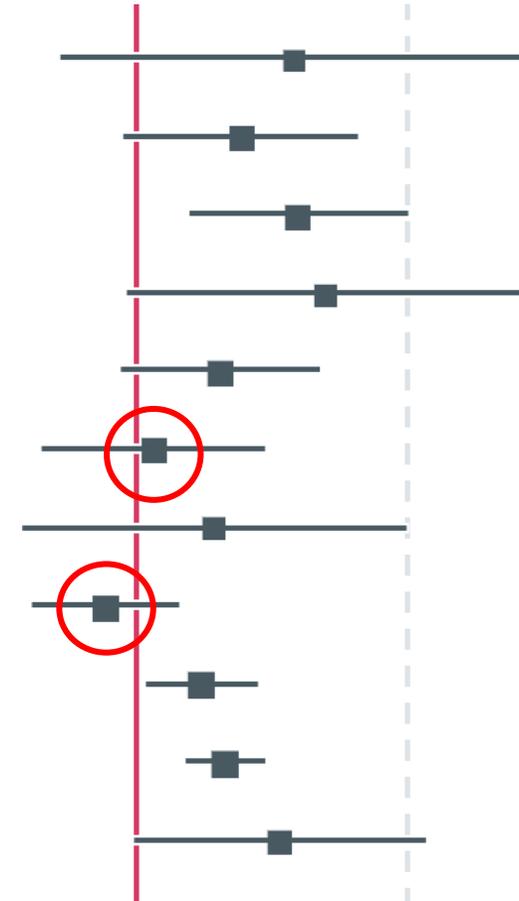
Implementation is a process

- Evidence based approaches often fail to achieve results due to poor implementation
- Viewing implementation as a process in which appropriate evidence is targeted at schools priorities can support high quality adoption



Lesson 5: Evidence-use requires trust in evidence quality

- The EEF has been able to have an impact due to being seen as an independent organisation that conducts high quality evidence
- Evidence has to mean more than the opinion of influential educators
- Commitment to open science methods that guarantee replicability and transparency
- **Not** cherry-picking evidence



Lesson 6: Not just “what works” - how, why, where?

- False dichotomy between quantitative and qualitative research
- Every EEF funded trial includes a process evaluation that examines fidelity and implementation through qualitative research
- Within synthesis work, moderator analysis explores the causes of variation behind the average

Behind the average



Feedback appears to have slightly greater effects for primary school age pupils (+7 months) than for secondary (+5 months).



Effects are high across all curriculum subjects, with slightly higher effects in mathematics and science



Low attaining pupils tend to benefit more from explicit feedback than high attainers.



Although some studies have successfully demonstrated the benefits of digital feedback, effects are typically slightly smaller (+ 4 months).

Lesson 7: Educators want to engage with and use evidence

1.8m children have been involved in EEF projects.

23,000+ schools, nurseries and colleges have taken part in an EEF trial.

70% of senior leaders use our Teaching and Learning Toolkit.

90% of all primary schools found EEF resources useful during the pandemic.



Thank You!

Info@eefoundation.org.uk

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