

Last reviewed: January 2019

Intervention website: <https://www.doodleden.ie/>

GUIDEBOOK INTERVENTION INFORMATION SHEET

Doodle Den

Please note that in the ‘Intervention summary’ table below, ‘child age’, ‘level of need’, and ‘race and ethnicities’ information is **as evaluated in studies**. Information in other fields describes the intervention as **offered/supported by the intervention provider**.

Intervention summary	
Description	Doodle Den is an after-school support intervention for children aged between 5 and 7 years. It is delivered by one teacher and one qualified youth worker/ childcare professional to groups of 15 children over the course of the school year.
Evidence rating	3
Cost rating	2
Child outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhancing school achievement and employment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved speech, language and communication. Preventing crime, violence and antisocial behaviour <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved behaviour.
Child age (population characteristic)	5 to 6 years old
Level of need (population characteristic)	Targeted Indicated
Race and ethnicities (population characteristic)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Black African Irish Travellers White.

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Intervention summary	
Type (model characteristic)	Group
Setting (model characteristic)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Primary school• Community centre.
Workforce (model characteristic)	Primary school teacher alongside either a youth worker, social care worker, or child worker
UK available?	No
UK tested?	No

Model description

Doodle Den is a literacy support after-school intervention targeted at children between the ages of 5 and 6 who would benefit from additional literacy support. The intervention is delivered in primary schools, community centres, or libraries and aims to help children fully participate in education, address developmental delays, and improve educational outcomes. Each Doodle Den group accommodates 15 children, with referrals made by class teachers, support workers, or parents through a standard referral form.

Doodle Den adopts a family-inclusive approach, working closely with schools to promote inclusion and engagement. The intervention follows a balanced literacy framework, incorporating a variety of instructional modalities such as phonics ‘mini-lessons’, sight vocabulary, shared and independent reading, shared and independent writing, and comprehension. These core elements are reinforced through small-group activities and games.

The child component of Doodle Den consists of 96 sessions, each lasting 1.5 hours, delivered by a qualified teacher and a youth worker or childcare professional over the course of a school year. Additionally, the intervention includes a parent/carer component with six 1.5-hour sessions, as well as a joint parent/carer and child component, which comprises three hour-long sessions over the school year.

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Target population

Age of child	5 to 6 years old
Target population	Children identified as struggling beginner readers who would benefit from additional literacy support.

Please note that the information in this section on target population is as **offered/supported by the intervention provider**.



Theory of change

Why		Who	How	What		
Science-based assumption	Science-based assumption	Science-based assumption	Intervention	Short-term outcomes	Medium-term outcomes	Long-term outcomes
Children's improved literacy skills are a gateway to general academic achievement and broader social outcomes, including improved concentration, reduced problem behaviours in school, more regular school attendance, and ultimately reduced risk of lifelong poverty.	Some children struggle with reading and require additional literacy support.	Children identified as struggling beginner readers who would benefit from additional literacy support.	Doodle Den focuses on improving children's literacy through a wide range of methods in a literacy-rich afterschool setting which promotes parental engagement and enables children to develop their literacy, oral language, and social skills through fun activities.	In the short term, children will have improvements in overall literacy ability including writing, text comprehension, phonics, sight vocabulary, independent reading, and fluency.	Children have higher academic achievements and do better in school.	Ultimately, these outcomes reduce the likelihood of lifelong poverty and increase the chances of fulfilling and productive lives.



Implementation requirements

Who is eligible?	Primary school children identified as struggling readers who could benefit from additional literacy support or group work.
How is it delivered?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The child component of Doodle Den is delivered in 96 sessions of 1.5 hours' duration each (over the course of the school year) by one qualified teacher and one qualified youth worker/childcare professional to groups of 15 children. • The parent/carers component is delivered in six sessions of 1.5 hours' duration each (over the course of the school year) to groups of parents. • The parent/carers and child component is delivered in three hour-long sessions (over the course of the school year) to groups of parents and children.
What happens during the intervention?	<p>Each session begins with a snack and sign-in routine, followed by various aspects of literacy teaching and activities, and concludes with a 'fun' element (such as art, physical education, drama, or music). A sample outline of each element of the intervention is given below:</p> <p>Snack and sign-in (10 minutes): The evidence-based Doodle Den manual outlines links between nutrition, behaviour, and learning. Therefore, the children sit together to eat a snack. During this time, they are also exposed to environmental print, defined as 'print of the everyday world of the child' which 'allows children to gain an initial level of comfort within the group'.</p> <p>Shared reading (Big Book reading; 20 to 30 minutes): This element includes subsections on 'before reading activities', 'during reading activities', 'after reading activities', and 'reflection'. A Big Book is used over several weeks, taking a different focus or revisiting previous learning outcomes.</p> <p>Shared writing (10 to 30 minutes): The time allocated to the shared writing element gradually increases throughout the year. This element includes specified focus vocabulary, a list of comprehension skills and guidelines on the 'introduction', 'writing' and 'reflection' subsections of the mini-lesson, such as sequencing events and sentence structure.</p> <p>Phonics mini-lesson (10 minutes): The phonics section progresses from the individual sounds letters make to blending two-, three-, and four-phoneme words and segmenting two-, three-, and four-phoneme words into word families. Each mini-lesson has a 'focus sound' with details on the activities to be used. Jolly Phonics flashcards are used, as well as mini whiteboards, magnetic letters, sound pictures, oral segmentation boxes, and word family flashcards.</p> <p>Sight vocabulary (10 minutes): This mini-lesson focuses on whole words and, for example, involves placing them in sentences or on an alphabetical 'word wall' or playing word games/rhymes. Each mini-lesson has a 'focus word' and the words become more difficult as the intervention progresses.</p>



	<p>Reading independently (10 minutes): Facilitators are directed to listen to two or three children reading independently from an appropriate book within a 'levelled text scheme'. Children also select a new book to take home.</p> <p>Centres (10 to 20 minutes): These are small-group work activities/games involving combinations of reading, writing, sight vocabulary, and phonics work, using a variety of fun, educational, and interactive resources.</p> <p>Fun elements (art/music/drama/physical education, 20 to 30 minutes): Each of these activities is carried out at least once a week and involves a variety of games/activities. Art and drama are Big Book-related; music reinforces sounds and rhymes covered; PE promotes physical activity and incorporates games using letters, sounds, and words.</p> <p>The parent sessions are entitled: Introduction to Doodle Den; Reading is Fun; Making Story Sacks; Picking Books; Using the Library Service; and Writing and Supporting your child after Doodle Den. These sessions are designed to inform parents about what their children are doing in Doodle Den, and to provide information about using the local library and tips for supporting their children's reading and writing at home.</p> <p>Parent and child sessions: As well as encouraging parents to read and engage with the books sent home with their children, the Doodle Den intervention also has a parent/family element aimed at promoting enhanced confidence among parents and children, celebration of achievements, and enhanced relationships. This element is made up of six parent sessions and one family day (for example, involving a visit to the local library, attending plays, or story-telling sessions).</p>
Who can deliver it?	The practitioners who deliver this intervention include a primary school teacher, and a youth worker (or social care or child worker).
What are the training requirements?	Practitioners have seven hours of intervention training. Booster training of practitioners is recommended.
How are practitioners supervised?	Practitioner supervision is not required.
What are the systems for maintaining fidelity?	<p>Intervention fidelity is maintained through the following processes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training manual • Other printed material • Other online material • Face-to-face training • Fidelity monitoring • Site visit observations, monitoring and progress reports, printed and online implementation guide, dedicated Doodle Den portal and website, and communities of practice meetings.



Implementation requirements (Cont.)

Is there a licensing requirement?	Yes
*Contact details	<p>Contact person: Tara Scott</p> <p>Organisation: Childhood Development Initiative</p> <p>Email address: tara@twcdi.ie</p> <p>Website: https://www.doodleden.ie/</p> <p>*Please note that this information may not be up to date. In this case, please visit the listed intervention website for up to date contact details.</p>

Evidence summary

Doodle Den's most rigorous evidence comes from a singular RCT which was conducted in Ireland.

This study identified statistically significant improvements in reading ability, general literacy ability, and improved concentration and behaviour in class. The intervention can be described as evidence-based: it has evidence from at least one rigorously conducted RCT or QED demonstrating a statistically significant positive impact on at least one child outcome.



Child outcomes			
Outcome	Improvement index	Interpretation	Study
Improved reading ability	+7	0.04-point improvement on the Drumcondra Reading Test Immediately after the intervention	1
Improved general literacy ability	+11	0.29-point improvement on the Adapted version of the National Assessment of English ERC 2004 and National Literacy Trust Immediately after the intervention	1
Improved concentration and behaviour in class	+7	0.14-point improvement on the ADHD rating scale Immediately after the intervention	1

Search and review

	Number of studies
Identified in search	1
Studies reviewed	1
Meeting the L2 threshold	0
Meeting the L3 threshold	1
Contributing to the L4 threshold	0
Ineligible	0



Individual study summary: Study 1

Study 1	
Study design	RCT
Country	Ireland
Sample characteristics	623 children aged 5 to 6 years old, attending primary schools in socioeconomically disadvantaged areas of Dublin, who were identified by teachers as ‘struggling beginning readers’.
Race, ethnicities, and nationalities	16% from a minority ethnic background – most commonly African (in particular, Nigerian), Irish Travellers, and Eastern European migrants.
Population risk factors	Participants attended primary schools in socioeconomically disadvantaged areas of Dublin and were identified by teachers as struggling beginner readers.
Timing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baseline • Post-intervention.
Child outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved child literacy ability (Child report) • Improved general literacy ability (Teacher report) • Improved concentration and behaviour in class (Teacher report).
Other outcomes	None
Study Rating	3
Citations	<p>Study 1a: Biggart, A., Kerr, K., O’Hare, L. & Connolly, P. (2012) <i>Evaluation of the effectiveness of the Childhood Development Initiative’s ‘Doodle Den’ literacy programme</i>. Childhood Development Initiative, Dublin.</p> <p>Study 1b: Biggart, A., Kerr, K., O’Hare, L. & Connolly, P. (2013) A randomised control trial evaluation of a literacy after-school programme for struggling beginning readers. <i>International Journal of Educational Research</i>. 62, 129–140.</p>



Brief summary

Population characteristics

This study involved 623 children aged 5 to 6 years old from primary schools in an area of socioeconomic disadvantage in Dublin. 53.7% of the sample were boys. 17% of the sample identified as members of minority ethnic communities. A small percentage of children had special educational needs.

Study design

This study is an RCT. Using a raffle procedure, 311 children were randomly assigned to receive the Doodle Den intervention, and 310 to a wait-list control group.

Measurement

Measurement took place at baseline and post-intervention.

- **Child report** measures included the Drumcondra Primary Reading Test.
- **Teacher report** measures included the National Assessment of English (ERC 2004, Adapted) and the Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder Rating Scale.

Regular school attendance record was also collected at post-test to measure ‘dosage’ (number of Doodle Den sessions attended by each intervention child).

Parental measures were also collected to measure parental perceptions and family literacy activity. However, despite ongoing attempts, parental response rate remained below an acceptable level (32% completing both pre- and post-test), so the results are not reported in detail.

Study retention

Post-intervention, 74% of the sample was retained (76.2% of the intervention group and 73.2% of the control group).

Results

Data-analytic strategy

Multiple linear regression models were used to assess the effects of the intervention, with pre-test scores controlled for to account for baseline differences.

Findings

The study found that the intervention led to significant improvements in child-rated overall literacy ability (including word recognition, sentence structure, and word choice) and teacher-rated literacy abilities. There were also improvements in concentration and child behaviour.



Study 1: Outcomes table

Outcome	Measure	Effect size	Statistical significance	Number of participants	Measurement time point
Child outcomes					
Child's overall literacy ability	Drumcondra Primary Reading Test (Child report)	d=0.17	Yes	237	Post-intervention
Child's literacy ability: word recognition subscale	Drumcondra Primary Reading Test (Child report)	d=0.17	Yes	237	Post-intervention
Child's literacy ability: sentence structure subscale	Drumcondra Primary Reading Test (Child report)	d=0.3	Yes	237	Post-intervention
Child's literacy ability: word choice subscale	Drumcondra Primary Reading Test (Child report)	d=0.26	Yes	237	Post-intervention
General literacy ability	National Assessment of English ERC 2004 (adapted; teacher report)	d=0.28	Yes	245	Post-intervention



Outcome	Measure	Effect size	Statistical significance	Number of participants	Measurement time point
Concentration and behaviour	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder Rating Scale (teacher report)	d=0.18	Yes	245	Post-intervention
School attendance	Attendance school records (administrative data)	d=0.03	No	N/A	Post-intervention

Other studies

No other studies were identified for this intervention.

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Note on provider involvement: This provider has agreed to Foundations' terms of reference (or the Early Intervention Foundation's terms of reference), and the assessment has been conducted and published with the full cooperation of the intervention provider.