



How do we mobilise knowledge in education? The EEF Research Use in Schools projects

Dr Jonathan Sharples



Who we are

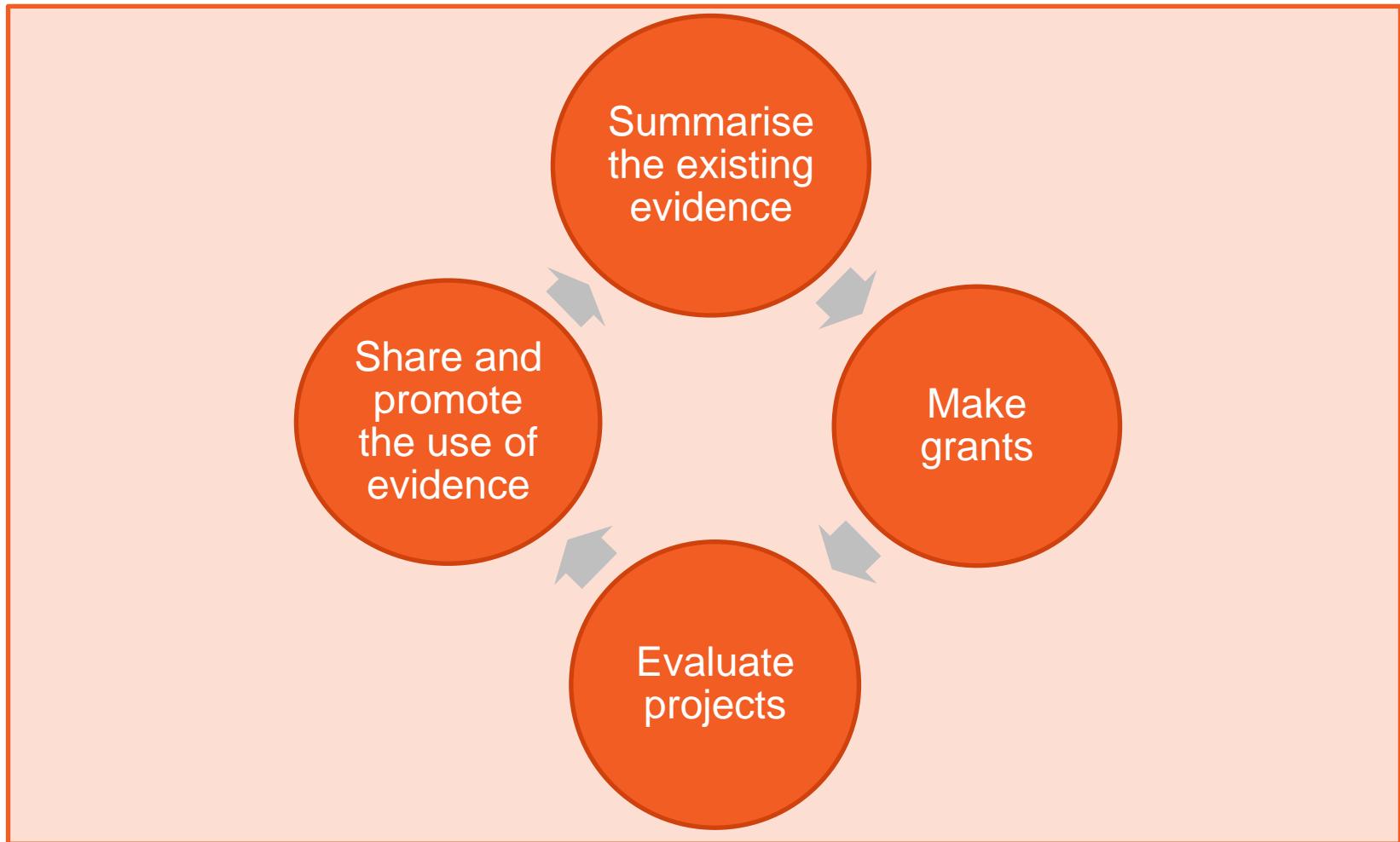
- The Education Endowment Foundation is an independent grant-making charity dedicated to breaking the link between family income and educational achievement.
- The EEF was founded in 2011 by lead charity The Sutton Trust, in partnership with Impetus Trust (now part of Impetus-The Private Equity Foundation) with a £125m grant from the Department for Education.
- Together, the EEF and Sutton Trust are the government-designated 'What Works' centre for improving education outcomes for school-aged children.



Department for
Education

What
Works
Network

The EEF Approach



The EEF by numbers

4,500
schools
participating
in EEF trials

34
topics in
the Toolkit

630,000
pupils involved
in EEF trials

£220_m
estimated spend
over lifetime of
the EEF

6,000
heads
presented to
since launch

16
members
of EEF
team

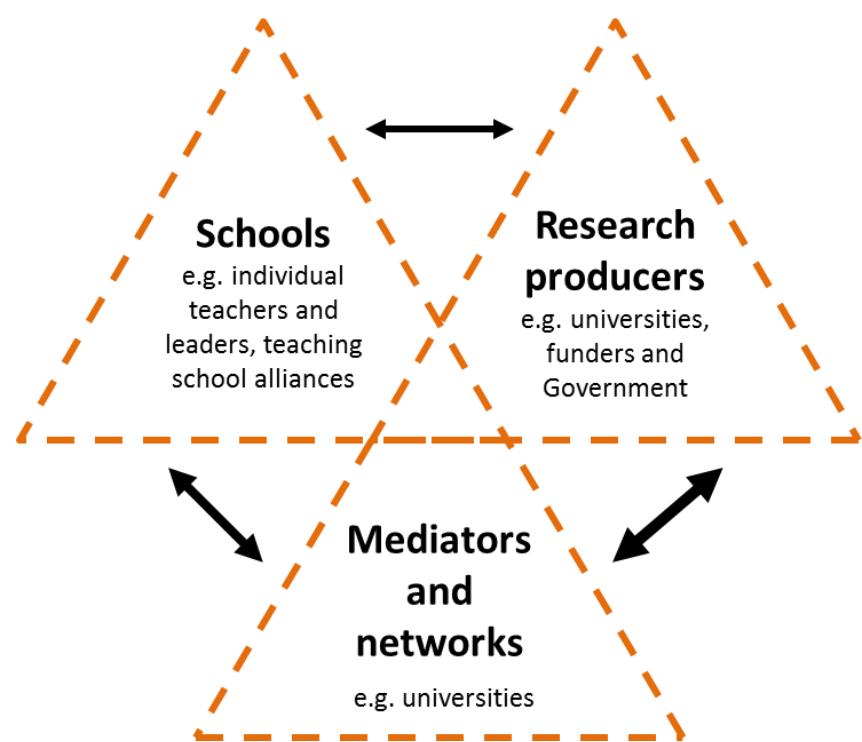
17
reports
published

16
independent
evaluation
teams

93
project
evaluations
funded to
date

The research use challenge

- Millions of pounds are spent each year on educational research, but important results can take decades to make an impact in the classroom.
- £2m funding round - 130 applications in 6 weeks
- Key questions:
 1. *How can **research organisations** and others effectively communicate their findings and engage with schools? ('Push')*
 2. *How can **schools** overcome the barriers to using research well? ('Pull')*
 3. *How can **brokers and mediators** help schools find and use evidence-based approaches? ('Linkage')*

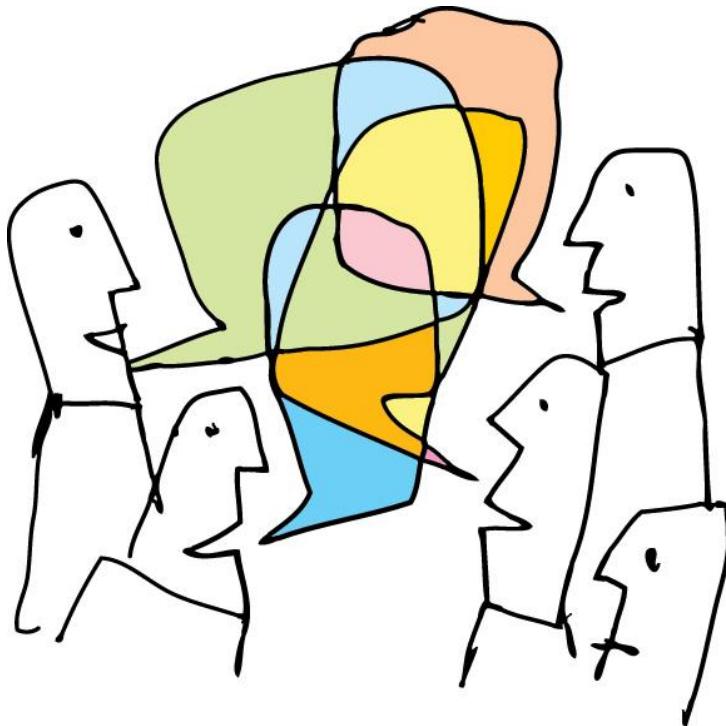


Different types of ‘knowledge mobilisation’ activity

- ***Dissemination***: simple circulation or presentation of research findings to potential users
- ***Interaction***: developing stronger links and collaborations between the research and policy or practice communities;
- ***Social influence***: relying on influential others, such as experts and peers, to inform individuals about research and to persuade them of its value;
- ***Facilitation***: enabling the use of research, through technical, financial, organisational and emotional support;
- ***Reinforcement***: using rewards and other forms of control to reinforce appropriate behaviour.

Social nature of research use

Uptake of research is based on trust and personality as much as practical usefulness - informal networks, direct contacts and brokerage are important

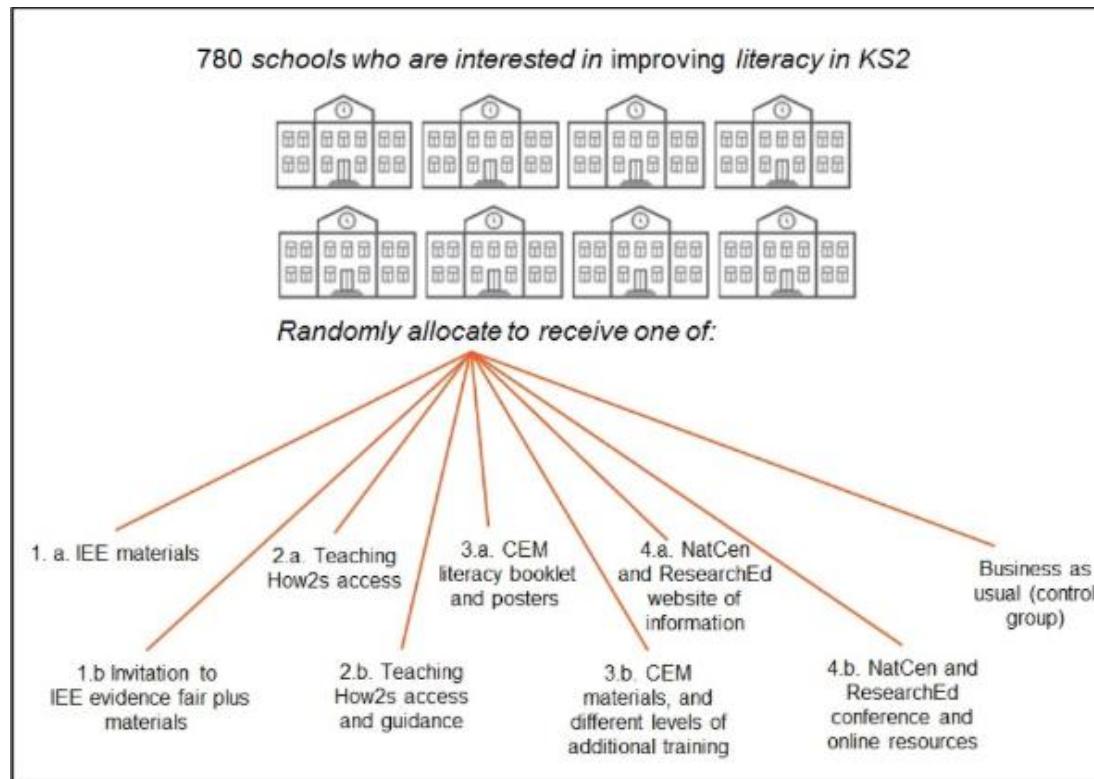


‘Passive’ dissemination vs
‘active’ engagement

Grantee	Summary	Scale and evaluation design	Budget
Ashford Teaching Alliance	A school-based research broker, working across 6 primary and secondary schools to increase the awareness, understanding and use of research in the classroom through symposia and targeted support.	Pilot study in 6 schools	£55,000
Rochdale Inspirational Primary Learning Community Network	An external CPD provider, working across a network of 11 primary schools to increase the engagement with evidence-based approaches, with a particular focus on supporting implementation	Pilot study in 11 schools	£50,000
Huntington School/ University of Durham	Research leads in schools working through a structured school improvement process, drawing on research, with support from a school/university partnership.	Designed as RCT across c.40 secondary schools	£270,000
Institute of Education	Testing whether opinion leaders and senior leaders, coming together in research learning communities, can promote and embed evidence in practice.	RCT across c100 schools	£240,000
Literacy Octopus projects – Communication and engagement approaches. Trials across 780 schools (active trial) and 12,000 schools (passive trial)			
Institute for Effective Education, York University	All schools receive research-based materials on literacy (eg magazines, database of interventions). 60 schools attend evidence fairs where they meet academic experts, programme developers and schools using of evidence-based interventions		£140,000
Campaign for Learning/ Teaching How2s	All schools are given access to a website of "Teaching How2s" – prescriptive, specific, visual guides to guide use of evidence-based techniques in the classroom. 60 are also given practical guidance and support to use the resource		£260,000
Centre for Evaluation and Monitoring, Durham	All Schools are given a booklet with guidance about best-practice literacy strategies for Key Stage 2 pupils. 60 schools receive additional direct training and support in using the guidance.		£180,000
NatCen and Research Ed	All schools are Invited to a teacher-led conference where practitioners and teachers deliver presentations on research and its applicability to the classroom. 60 schools receive additional information and support before and after the conference.		£50,000

The ‘Literacy Octopus’ trial

Two multi-armed Randomised Controlled Trials (RCTs) investigating different approaches to communicating and engaging schools with research on KS2 literacy



Two dimensions –

1. Mode of communication – magazines, conferences, social media, face-to-face
2. The focus of the unit of change – programme, practice, precise instruction

Measures

- ***Attainment measures*** – national tests (eg KS2, GCSE)
 - no additional external testing.
- ***Process evaluation*** – dispositions, culture, integration with professional expertise and school improvement – observations, interviews, artefacts
- ***'Research use' measures*** – the degree and way in which schools are engaging with research and using it to inform school improvement (using quantifiable survey).

Evaluation approach

1. Access and Awareness

Are teachers able to access appropriate research? Are they aware of it?

2. Understanding and Persuasion

Can people understand the implications for classroom practice?
Are they persuaded by it?

3. Translation and Action

Can that understanding be translated to a specific school context? Is it informing changes in practice?

4. Attainment

Does the action that results from improved research use improve pupil outcomes?

Research Use survey

- Objectify/quantify ‘research use’, and complement attainment outcomes and process evaluation.
- Focus on the explicit engagement with external academic research rather than ‘evidence-informed practice’
- Anchor around a specific activity in the school and tease out how research is being used.
- Challenges – priming, coding (e.g. training), defining research use, getting beyond perceptions
- Currently piloting in 300 schools. Use factor analysis to create scoring system

Questions

- Is it feasible!?
- What challenges will emerge?
- Is there equivalent work that might be relevant?
- What would you expect we will find?