

HFL Education's Making Fluent and Flexible Calculators Programme.

School Information Sheet

Summary:

- HFL Education is partnering with the Education Endowment Foundation and The Policy Institute at King's College London, to invite state schools in England with low prior attaining Year 7 students in 2025 to take part in an evaluation of HFL Education's Making Fluent and Flexible Calculators Programme (MFFC).
- MFFC focuses on developing students' foundational knowledge and understanding of a range of mental calculation strategies, which weren't secured at the end of KS2, aiming to increase confidence and reduce cognitive load when solving more complex calculations.
- In schools that have successfully implemented the programme with HFL Education, data analysis conducted by HFL Education indicated that the average lower prior attaining KS3 students made significant progress in their mental maths skills.
- The evaluation will explore whether this targeted whole-class intervention improves maths attainment among low prior attaining Year 7 students.
- This is an exciting opportunity to enable your maths department to recognise which mental calculation strategies the students already have, receive comprehensive training (following high-leverage approaches), and gain access to a complete set of resources to run a personalised programme that explicitly teaches and rehearses a variety of mental calculation strategies alongside delivering the KS3 maths curriculum.
- The programme can be delivered by maths specialist teachers, non-maths specialist teachers and non-qualified teachers / higher level teaching assistants alongside the school's intended KS3 curriculum.
- The evaluation requires involvement of 120 schools:

Register your interest today!

If you would like to register your interest to take part in this evaluation, please complete [THIS FORM](#) 

There is no obligation to commit at this stage. By registering an interest, you will be invited to attend a free information webinar ahead of making a commitment to take part in the trial.

Discover more!

If you have any questions, please contact us at: fluentandflexible.eef@hfleducation.org 

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What is HFL Education's Making Fluent and Flexible Calculators programme

Some students leave primary school without securing key foundational knowledge to access the KS3 maths curriculum. Hodgen et al (2023), indicates that low attaining students in secondary schools overuse their fingers, lack strategies other than formal procedures and don't know how to derive facts from those that they do know.


HFL Education's **MFFC** is a structured fully resourced whole-class intervention for Year 7 students designed to run alongside the KS3 maths curriculum. It focuses on securing foundational learning and explicitly teaching additive calculation strategies and the connectedness between calculations.


MFFC supports staff to explicitly teach using the CPA approach (concrete, pictorial and abstract) to overcome these barriers. Staff will use manipulatives, pictorial representation, oracy and over learning, to help students develop deeper understanding of foundational knowledge, see connections between calculations, improve fluency and reasoning. This will reduce the need for using fingers to solve calculations, releasing cognitive load that can then be focused on new learning or more complex operations.

This is an exciting opportunity for your school to access a fully resourced, structured programme which can be tailored to meet the needs of your low attaining Year 7 students who failed to secure gateway learning by the end of KS2. Participating will support evidence-based practice in education and provide valuable professional development for staff.

Hodgen, Jeremy; Foster, Colin; Brown, Margaret; Martin, David (2023). Low attaining secondary school mathematics students' perspectives on recommended teaching strategies. Loughborough University. Journal contribution. <https://hdl.handle.net/2134/24190245.v1>

Who is running the programme

 **HFL Education** is the largest not-for-profit school improvement company in the UK and we believe that every young person, through access to a great education, should be able to realise their potential, regardless of where they live, their background or circumstances.

 **The Policy Institute** at King's College London is part of the Faculty of Social Science and Public Policy, their research draws on many disciplines and methods, making use of the skills, expertise and resources of not only the institute, but the university and its wider network too.

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What does the programme involve

If allocated to the intervention group for this trial, MFFC will be delivered to groups of low prior attaining students in Year 7.

Schools must designate at least two members of staff to attend two online training sessions in October / November 2025. One member of staff must have regular teaching responsibilities for a group of low prior attaining Year 7 students, who are taught together regularly as a class.

SESSION 1: 2 HOURS. ONLINE

Staff are trained to deliver short diagnostic assessments with a small number of students to gain insights into their students' current mental calculation strategies.

SESSION 2: 3 HOURS. ONLINE

Supporting staff to analyse their data and create a bespoke intervention programme for their cohort of students.

A COMPREHENSIVE SUITE OF RESOURCES is provided via an online learning platform that includes:

- Downloadable resources to support teaching, including ready to use teaching PowerPoints
- A range of whole class and independent practice resources
- Additional training resources to support teaching
- Modelling videos that can be used within the teaching

Following the training, staff will use these resources to deliver a series of 8 to 10 short teaching sessions. Staff will also provide regular over-learning practice opportunities, at least 3 times a week, lasting 5 to 10 minutes each. This approach helps to reinforce learning and build confidence among students. As a result, the Year 7 maths curriculum can continue to be delivered as intended by the participating school.

All schools will participate in various evaluation activities throughout the 2025/26 academic year.

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Who can take part in the trial

Schools will be eligible to apply if they are:

- A state-funded school in England;
- Have a Y7 cohort in autumn 2025;
- Within this cohort, schools must have a class(es) of students who are low prior attaining* who are taught regularly as a group**.
- Have not taken part in MFFC programme delivered by HFL Education within the last 3 years.
- Not be taking part in any of the EEF trials listed below:

CoachBright Charitable Trust: Peer-to-peer coaching.

NCETM: Specialist Knowledge for Teaching Mathematics.

Action tutoring: tutoring programme.

**Low prior attaining refers to students who have been identified by the schools as being lower attaining compared to their peers; schools can identify these groups using usual systems.*

***Class groups are a group of pupils who have maths lessons together regularly after the October half term 2025. This may be a group of pupils allocated to a lower set if pupils are grouped by prior attainment, or could be a group of identified pupils within a wider/mixed ability class, but who have at least three sessions separate from the wider class as an intervention group.*

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How does the trial work

This is a randomised controlled trial (RCT) which will be led by The Policy Institute, King's College London. Participating schools will be randomly allocated to either the 'treatment' group (schools who will receive the training and deliver the intervention), or the 'control' group (schools who will not receive the training and will not deliver the intervention) but will assist in data collection and be paid £500 as a thank you for completing the evaluation activities.

This random assignment makes sure that the 'treatment group' and the 'control group' are, on average, as similar as possible before the intervention. The only systematic difference after the intervention will be that schools in the 'treatment group' have delivered the **MFFC programme**. By comparing the results between the two groups, we can estimate the impact of the intervention.

Participating schools will be informed of their allocation to either 'treatment' or 'control' group in either **July 2025 or September 2025, depending on date of sign up.**

The evaluation of MFFC will focus on the impact the programme has on maths attainment among Year 7 students with low prior attainment. In addition to this, the trial will also research the effect of the programme on students' attitudes to maths and calculation fluency.

All school involved in the trial will need to:

- Communicate with the evaluation team (King's College London) and the delivery team (HFL Education)
- Share class lists of low prior attaining pupils in November / December 2025 and May / June 2026
- Complete the evaluation assessments in the summer term 2026
- Complete staff surveys
- Take part in staff interviews (only in a small selection of schools)

All schools taking part in the trial ('treatment' and 'control' group schools) will receive the scores achieved by the participating students from the assessment activities undertaken as part of the trial. These will consist of an assessment administered by independent assessors in the summer term 2026 (the results of which would be shared at the end of the project in July 2026).

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What are the benefits for my school in participating in this trial, including costs

All schools participating in this study will be playing a key role in strengthening the evidence base on how to support students with low prior maths attainment. This will help colleagues across the country to improve teaching and learning, particularly for closing gaps in low prior attaining students in Year 7. Your contribution will be invaluable.

Treatment School Benefits

Schools allocated to the 'treatment group' will:

- Receive HFL Education's MFFC programme at a significantly reduced cost of **£150** (standard price £450), including:
- Access to approximately 12 hours of high-quality CPD (a mixture of live and online learning) for two members of staff, delivered by experienced project advisers from HFL Education Maths team;
- Guidance and ongoing support from HFL Education project advisers to deliver MFFC programme in low attaining Year 7 classes, including remote drop-ins to support best practice.
- Be provided with a specific diagnostic assessment and a complete suite of teaching resources that can be delivered **by maths specialist teachers, non-maths specialists teachers and non-qualified teachers / higher level teaching assistants.**

Control School Benefits

Schools allocated to the 'control group' will:

- Receive £500 incentive payment to help cover administrative expenses related to participation (conditional on continued engagement throughout the trial and paid after all evaluation activities have been completed in July 2026);
- Be guaranteed a place on a future round of HFL Education's MFFC programme across academic year 2026-7 at a discounted price of £300 (standard price £450).

How will the data be used?

Schools implementing the MFFC will complete two assessments provided by HFL Education as part of the programme: one at the start and one after 12 weeks. HFL Education will collect the data from these assessments and complete an internal analysis of the outcomes of schools in the trial, and schools who have run the programme outside the trial. HFL Education data will not be published until after the evaluation report is published.

More information about how King's College London will collect, store and share data will be provided to schools that express interest in participating in the evaluation.

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How to find out more or sign up for this project?


The window for applying to participate in this exciting research runs from **February 2025 to September 2025. Don't miss out – the deadline for sign-up is 15th September 2025.** With limited spaces available, we encourage schools to register early to secure their spot in this project.

Register your interest today!

Complete **THIS FORM**  to express your interest.

There is no obligation to commit at this stage.

Discover more!

Feel free to get in touch with us at fluentandflexible.eef@hfleducation.org 
Detailed information about the evaluation will be provided to schools that express interest.

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What is the timeline for this trial?

Activity	Dates/timeframe:	Led by:	Which schools
Schools express an interest in the programme	February 2025 – September 2025	HFL Education	All schools
Schools receive and sign paperwork	February 2025 – September 2025	HFL Education / King's College London	All schools
Notify schools of randomised allocation (treatment or control)	July 2025 or Sept 2025	King's College London	All schools
School staff complete pre-intervention evaluation survey	W/C 29 September 2025	King's College London	All schools
Make payment of £150 to receive the programme	September / October 2025	HFL Education	Treatment schools
Attend launch webinar – how to complete diagnostic assessments (2 hours)	October 2025	HFL Education	Treatment schools –two staff from the school
Provide class lists of low prior attaining Year 7 students	W/C 20th October 2025	King's College London	All schools
Complete entry diagnostic assessments (one-to-one assessments with 4-6 students – 20 mins per student)	November 2025	Staff with teaching responsibility of low attaining Year 7 groups	Treatment schools only
Attend programme delivery training (3 hours)	3rd – 14th November 2025	HFL Education	Treatment schools –two staff members from the school
Deliver the programme	November 2025 to March 2026	Staff with teaching responsibility of low attaining Year 7 groups	Treatment schools
Complete exit diagnostic assessments (one-to-one assessments with 4-6 students – 20 mins per student)	W/C 9th March	Staff with teaching responsibility of low attaining Year 7 groups	Treatment schools
Remote interviews with teaching staff and middle/senior leaders	March 2026	King's College London	30 schools from the treatment schools
Complete evaluation assessments	Summer term 2026	King's College London (or company for KCL)	All schools
Follow-up remote staff interviews	June 2026	King's College London	10 schools from the treatment schools
Receive thank you payment of £500	June 2026	HFL Education	Control schools
Provide updated class lists of low prior attaining Year 7 students	June 2026	King's College London	All schools
Final report publication	Summer 2027	Education Endowment Foundation	

THANK YOU FOR YOUR INTEREST IN MAKING FLUENT AND FLEXIBLE CALCULATORS WITH THE HFL EDUCATION TEAM!