



Vocabulary and Reading in Secondary Schools (VaRiSS)

Dear Parent,

We are researchers at the Institute of Education, University of Reading and we would like to invite your child to participate in a study about oral vocabulary and reading development.

What is the study?

The study will follow the development of oral vocabulary and reading in secondary school pupils from Year 7 to Year 9. We know from our previous work with secondary schools that there is great concern about the language and literacy levels of some pupils in secondary school, a time when learning increasingly depends on independent study. However, there is currently very little research in this area that involves pupils at secondary level, so the findings from this study will contribute considerably to the research knowledgebase, as well as having implications for teaching practice.

Why has my child been chosen to take part?

Your child has been invited to take part in the project because they are currently in Year 7 at XXX school.

Does my child have to take part?

It is entirely up to you and your child whether or not he or she participates. You or your child may also withdraw consent at any time during the project, without any repercussions, by contacting Nicky Dawson or Dr Jessie Ricketts using the addresses or numbers given below.

What will happen if my child does take part?

We will visit your child in school over the course of three years to assess oral vocabulary and reading development. Pupils will be seen individually during each year for approximately two sessions, lasting about 45 minutes each. During these sessions pupils will complete reading and vocabulary activities.

What are the risks and benefits of taking part?

The information you and your child give will remain confidential and will only be seen by the research team. Neither you, your child, nor the school will be identifiable in any published report resulting from the study. Information about individuals will not be shared with the school and taking part (or not doing so) will not influence the grades your child receives at school. Participants in similar studies have found it interesting to take part. It is anticipated that the findings from this study will have implications for professionals working in the field of education by informing theories of reading and oral vocabulary development. In addition, it is hoped that insights that are gained will guide teaching and learning practices in school. If you agree to take part in the study, an electronic report summarising the findings can be sent to you at your request.

What will happen to the data?

Any data collected will be held in strict confidence and no real names will be used in this study or in any subsequent publications. The records of this study will be kept private. No identifiers linking you, your child, or the school to the study will be included in any sort of report that might be published. Participants will be assigned a number and will be referred to by that number in all records. Research records will be stored securely in a locked filing cabinet and on a password-protected computer and only the research team will have access to the records. The data will be destroyed securely once the findings of the study are written up, after five years. The results of the study may be presented at national and international conferences, and in written reports and articles.

What happens if I change my mind?

Should you wish to withdraw your consent for participation, you are free to do so at any point by contacting us using the details given at the end of this letter. Your child is also free to change his/her mind at any point during testing without repercussions. If you change your mind after data collection has ended, we will discard your child's data.

Who has reviewed the study?

This project has been reviewed following the procedures of the University Research Ethics Committee and has been given a favourable ethical opinion for conduct. The University has the appropriate insurances in place. Full details are available on request. Furthermore, all researchers with access to the pupils' data have enhanced Criminal Records Bureau clearance.

What happens if something goes wrong?

In the unlikely event of concern or complaint, you can contact Jessie Ricketts at the University of Reading by telephone on +44 (0)118 378 2796 or by email at j.ricketts@reading.ac.uk.

Where can I get more information?

If you would like further information, please do not hesitate to contact either Nicky Dawson or Dr Jessie Ricketts using the addresses given below.

What should I do next?

We hope that you and your child will agree to participate in the study. Please discuss the project with your child. If you and your child are happy to take part, you do not need to do anything. If, however, either you or your child does not want to take part, please complete the consent form on the next page and return it to the school office (reception) as soon as possible. Your child will also be given an information sheet to read.

Thank you for your time.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Jessie Ricketts and Nicky Dawson

Dr Jessie Ricketts

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Consent form

If you are happy for your child to take part you **DO NOT** need to complete this form.

If you do not wish your child to take part please fill in the details below and return to the school office by XX (Date).

I **DO NOT** give consent for my child to take part in the research.

Name of child: _____

Name of school: _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____



Vocabulary and Reading in Secondary Schools (VaRiSS)

Dear Participant,

We are researchers at the University of Reading and we would like to invite you to take part in a study about vocabulary and reading development.

What is the study?

We are carrying out a study designed to follow pupils from Year 7 to Year 9. We are particularly interested in what pupils know about the meanings of words and in their reading abilities. We would like you to help us with the project and we have already made sure that your Head Teacher and parents are happy for you to help us.

Why are you doing this study?

Every day, as a secondary school pupil, you are required to use your reading and vocabulary skills in order to learn. At the moment, we know lots about reading and vocabulary in primary school children, but very little about how these skills continue to develop as you move into secondary school. With your help, we want to find out more about the link between vocabulary and reading in secondary school pupils, and how new words are learned, so that we can understand the best ways that teachers can help you learn.

Why have I been chosen to take part?

You have been chosen to take part in the project because you are in Year 7.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you whether or not you decide to take part. You do not have to take part if you do not want to. You can also decide that you do not want to take part at any point during the project without any repercussions. Just let your teacher, your parents or us know.

What will happen if I do decide to take part?

We will visit you in school over the course of three years to do some vocabulary and reading activities. You will work individually with us each year in approximately two sessions, lasting about 45 minutes each.

What are the risks and benefits of taking part?

The information you give will remain confidential and will only be seen by the research team. Neither you nor your school will be identifiable in any published report resulting from the study. Taking part will in no way influence the grades you receive at school and information about you will not be shared with the school. Participants in similar studies have found it interesting to take part. We hope that our research will help teachers to better support reading and language development in secondary school pupils. If you agree to take part in the study an electronic report summarising the findings can be sent to you if you ask us for it.

What will happen to the data?

Any data collected will be held in strict confidence and no real names will be used in this study or in any subsequent publications. The records of this study will be kept private. No identifiers linking you or the school to the study will be included in any sort of report that might be published. Participants will be assigned a number and will be referred to by that number in all records. Research records will be stored securely in a locked filing cabinet and on a password-protected computer and only the research team will have access to the records. The data will be destroyed securely once the findings of the study are written up, after five years. The results of the study may be presented at national and international conferences, and in written reports and articles.

What happens if I change my mind?

Should you wish to withdraw your consent for participation, you are free to do so at any point by contacting us on the email addresses given at the end of this letter or by telling your parent or tutor. If you change your mind after data collection has ended, we will discard your data.

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Where can I get more information?

If you would like further information, please do not hesitate to contact either Nicky Dawson or the principal investigator Dr Jessie Ricketts using the addresses given below.

What should I do next?

We do hope that you will agree to participate in the study. If you are happy to take part you do not need to do anything. If, however, you **do not** wish to take part please let us know, or tell your parents or a teacher.

Thank you for your time.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Jessie Ricketts and Nicky Dawson

Dr Jessie Ricketts

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Nicky Dawson

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