

LITERACY

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More volunteers needed to help children become confident readers

On World Book Day, Coram Beanstalk appealed for more volunteers across England to join its network of reading helpers who helped children to become more confident readers. Ginny Lunn, Managing Director of Coram Beanstalk, explained that Coram Beanstalk volunteers helped to bring the magic back in to reading for children who may be reluctant or have become disengaged with reading and were at risk of falling behind.

She pointed out that volunteers received training to ensure that they were equipped to help motivate and support children to feel more positive about reading and have fun with books in a way that would enrich and enhance a child's learning.

Ms Lunn stressed that to help to reach more children and help give them equal opportunities to succeed in life, more volunteers were needed to help deliver the one-to-one support in schools and early settings across England.

In 2017-2018 approximately 3,700 Coram Beanstalk reading helpers had supported approximately 13,400 children with their reading. In the next academic year, the aim will be to have reached 15,000 children through the help of reading helpers.

Making skills count during Literacy Works week

Unionlearn will be holding another of its Making Skills Count events for the Trade Union English, maths and digital skills network. Unionlearn Policy Officer, Kirsi Kekki, said that the Open University had developed new free English and maths courses online to help people with their basic skills and prepare them to further learning, and UNISON had developed an interesting initiative on digital champions.

Subjects on the agenda will include: English and maths courses; Developing digital champions; and Dyslexia & Dyscalculia. The meeting is being held in the UNISON Centre on Euston Road in central London.

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Minister's mission to improve early literacy and language

The Children and Families Minister has appointed a new expert panel as new businesses join the discussion to support early learning skills. The minister said that parents who lacked the confidence to support their young children's early learning at home, would benefit from projects being pledged by businesses around the country, which would range from bookswaps in supermarkets and author ambassadors, to special training for staff in shoe shops.

Oxford University Press and HarperCollins were among businesses joining a meeting chaired by Children and Families Minister, Nadhim Zahawi. The minister pointed out that while there were hundreds of educational apps on the market for parents to choose from when supporting their children's learning using mobile phones or tablets, there was little advice about their quality. He explained that to help tackle the issue, the Department for Education will bring together a new advisory panel to assess existing apps, produce tips and guidance for parents on how to use them to aid their child's learning, and to help them make informed decisions about which had the most educational value.

Pledges from businesses already signed up include:

- Clarks – where its 6,500 staff will be trained in children's speech, language and communication development and how to engage with families in stores.
- HarperCollins – is driving a love of reading through author ambassadors, book donations and grants for independent bookshops to support events targeted at children under five and their parents.
- Addo Foods – supports its employees with children aged 0 to five to use its language lab facilities at its Nottingham headquarters to encourage improved communication skills.
- WHSmiths – supports literacy programmes in Swindon, where there are high levels of illiteracy, including bringing parents into nurseries to help advise on how to support their child's literacy and language development.
- British Land and Penguin Random House – are working together to provide high-quality children's books for bookswap schemes in three British Land retail sites.

The new advisory panel will consist of:

- Professor Jackie Marsh, Chairman: Professor of Education at the University of Sheffield and a leading figure in children's digital literacy.
- Olivia Dickinson, Deputy Chairman: Digital consultant specialising in children's and educational digital media, with experience working for Nickelodeon, BBC, Discovery Education, Sky Kids and Amazon.
- Peter Robinson: Global Head of Research and Company Director of Dubit Limited, specialising in digital entertainment and education for children.
- Antonio Gould: Executive Director of Teach Monster Games, a not-for-profit education technology company responsible for the "Teach Your Monster To Read" app, boasting a monthly reach of more than one million children.
- Dr Rosie Flewitt: Co-Head of Research, Department of Learning and Leadership at UCL Institute of Education and Co-Director of the Helen Hamlyn Centre for Pedagogy, with 20 years' experience in early communication, literacy and language research.
- Sandra Mathers: a former primary teacher and now Senior Researcher at the University of Oxford, with expertise in child learning and development, including the ways in which this can be supported through technology.
- Jonathan Douglas: Director of the National Literacy Trust, responsible for the Trust's "Literacy Apps" resource for parents and teachers, and a key advocate of the Government's work to improve the Home Learning Environment.
- Jane Lewis: Head of Programme Development and Quality at Save the Children UK. She is responsible for programme development and innovation, focused on the home learning environment and supporting parents' engagement in their children's early education.

Award for Nuffield Early Language intervention

The Nuffield Early Language Intervention has been awarded a 3+ evidence rating in an updated version of the Early Intervention Foundation guidebook, which provides information about early intervention programmes that have at least preliminary evidence of achieving positive outcomes for children. It provides information based on EIF's assessment of the strength of evidence for a programme's effectiveness, and details about programmes shared by those who designed, ran and delivered them.

The Nuffield Early Language Intervention is an evidence-based oral language intervention for children in nursery and reception who show weakness in their oral language skills and who are therefore at risk of experiencing difficulty with reading. The 30-week programme is targeted at children between the ages of 3 and 6 who are in nursery and the first year of primary school. The 20-week programme is targeted at children between the ages of 4 and 6 who are in the first year of primary school. NELI is delivered by teaching assistants in groups of 3-4 children.

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Secondary teaching resource based on Obama book

The National Literacy Trust has teamed up with Penguin to produce a teaching resource aimed at secondary school pupils based on Michelle Obama's best-selling memoir, *Becoming*. Using *Becoming's* central themes of empowerment through education and the important role of self-belief in achieving potential, the resource features a range of activities designed to give students in Key Stages 3-5 new opportunities to use and develop their reading, writing, speaking and listening skills.

The resource also includes a wealth of motivational materials for students, including excerpts from *Becoming*, a video link to Michelle Obama's Penguin Talks event with students at Elizabeth Garrett Anderson School in London, and a clip of her final speech as First Lady of the United States.



Home learning summit and the importance of early years language skills

The Education Secretary, Damian Hinds, hosted a summit of experts to look at the home learning environment and early years language acquisition. The meeting coincided with the Government launching projects to improve children's early language and literacy, and boost parents' confidence with home learning.

James Bowen, director of NAHT Edge, who attended the summit today, said that in a recent NAHT survey of school leaders 86 per cent believed that school readiness had become worse over the past five years, and speech, language and communication issues had been identified as the greatest concern, as 97 per cent had identified the problem and almost half (47 per cent) had said it had been the most significant issue. Mr Bowen said that the Education Secretary had therefore been “absolutely right” to be looking at early intervention to help parents support children in the crucial area of development.

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Unionlearn welcomes plans for ESOL strategy

Unionlearn has welcomed the Government's plans to develop a national strategy for English for speakers of other languages in 2019. As well as an ESOL strategy the Government's Integrated Communities Action Plan promises to fund community-based English language provision and set up a fund to coordinate local authorities' language offer and support.

The action plan follows a consultation to a Green Paper carried out in 2018 and a recent government response to it, which acknowledged the need for an overall strategy, better joined-up provision and funding as well as progression pathways for ESOL learners.

Unionlearn Policy Officer Kirsi Kekki, said that Unionlearn had repeatedly been calling for an ESOL strategy for England. She said that learner surveys and union project evaluations had shown that ESOL learning delivered significant benefits for learners and many unions were doing valuable work in supporting learning and everyday English language learning. But Ms Kekki added that unions also needed to keep engaging employers to do more to ensure that people got help with their language skills.

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Disadvantage gap widens in English and maths

Following the recent publication of the secondary school performance tables 2018, which provided key performance data for KS4 assessments for all secondary schools in England for the last academic year, having had time to crunch the numbers, the Education Policy Institute has pointed out that the disadvantage gap (measured using the DfE's disadvantage gap index which is based on attainment in English and maths GCSEs) had widened by 0.6 per cent in 2018.

The finding was consistent with the EPI's *Annual Report* which had found that progress on the gap was stalling and that, based on current trends, it would take well over 100 years for the disadvantage gap in English and maths to close. The data had also showed that considerable gaps remained between progress made by other groups of pupils.

The researchers warned that scores for the pupil group with English as an additional language should be interpreted with caution because, while average EAL progress scored were high, they obscured large disparities in pupil performance within the group. The findings meant that average attainment scores of EAL pupils could be "deeply misleading".

In almost half (47 per cent) of state-funded mainstream schools, disadvantaged pupils were at least half a grade behind other pupils in each Progress 8 subject. The EPI researchers pointed out that two years on from the announcement of the twelve DfE Opportunity Areas, pupils in the targeted areas continued to attain below the national average at GCSE.

While the DfE has said that, by 2022, 75 per cent of pupils should be entering the English Baccalaureate, 69 per cent of grammar schools were currently meeting the target, compared with only 7 per cent of non-selective schools. The average EBacc entry rate in state-funded schools is 38.4 per cent.

The researchers concluded that the widening of the disadvantage gap, even by a small amount, was cause for concern given that it continued the trend of slowing progress towards equity. They added that the impact of the Opportunity Areas scheme remained to be seen, and the achievement of the EBacc entry target appeared to be a long way off for many schools.

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Baseline assessment pilot for 4-year-olds

Following the announcement by Nick Gibb that the Department for Education would be looking for schools to take part in a pilot scheme for the proposed baseline assessment tests, Kevin Courtney, Joint General Secretary of the National Education Union, said that the minister's claim that making all four-year-olds take a baseline test as soon as they entered school would provide a fair and accurate measure of their attainment, was "completely misleading".

He argued that Mr Gibb had been told by an expert panel of the British Educational Research Association that testing four-year-olds would not produce reliable results, and that the case for baseline testing had not been made. Mr Courtney insisted that baseline testing was a waste of teachers' time and public money. He urged the Government to listen to what teachers, school leaders and education experts were saying, which was that it was time to stop thinking that the answer to problems of assessment and accountability was to introduce new tests.

Disadvantaged families to benefit from free early learning apps

Thousands of families are to receive free access to educational apps to boost early literacy and language skills. Interactive learning tools and text message tips will help parents to support children's early language and literacy at home to make sure that children start school ready to learn. The Education Secretary, Damian Hinds, announced that families from disadvantaged backgrounds would be given free access to children's educational apps for smart phones and tablets to encourage parents to think about how to use children's screen time constructively.

The Department for Education will buy subscriptions to early learning apps and provide access to some of them free of charge to disadvantaged families with children aged two to four, in up to 12 pilot areas across the country. Damian Hinds also confirmed that nearly 6,000 families in the north of England would be taking part in four new programmes that would provide practical tools and advice, such as parenting group sessions, educational toys and books or text message tips sent directly to their mobile phones.

Up to 375 schools and nurseries will be recruited for the projects, run by the Education Endowment Foundation and Leeds-based education charity SHINE. The trials will include:

- **Making-it-REAL.** 960 families in 120 schools in Greater Manchester and Yorkshire will trial a National Children's Bureau programme that trains early years professionals to visit families at home to get parents more involved in drawing, singing songs and counting with their children, as well as encouraging them to use everyday activities to boost learning.
- **Group Triple P (Positive Parenting Program).** Trained experts will show parents how to improve their children's language, and social and emotional development through role play, homework exercises and video clips of positive parenting techniques. 1,800 families in the north west will benefit across 150 schools and nurseries.
- **Parent Child Home Programme.** Trained experts will visit families in Doncaster, Rotherham, Sheffield and Barnsley at home twice a week for 15 months, to demonstrate different reading, conversation and play activities, and provide books and educational toys. The programme will be run by Family Lives and 320 families with two-year-olds will benefit.
- **Tips by Text.** Parents of four and five-year-olds will be sent three texts each week to encourage activities that help develop literacy, numeracy and socio-emotional skills, such as counting the number of plates on the table. More than 2,700 families from 105 schools in the north east will trial an eight-month study run by the Behavioural Insights Team, who have run other successful text message trials.

The Education Secretary said that the plans had followed a Government announcement in January on the appointment of a new advisory panel to assess existing apps and produce tips and guidance for all parents to help them make informed decisions about which apps to choose for their children. The expert panel, chaired by Professor Jackie Marsh of the University of Sheffield, would draw up a set of criteria for assessing an app's quality, which would also help to decide which apps the Department would provide to families free of charge.

Local areas will be chosen based on factors including the proportion of children achieving below the expected level of development in communication, language and literacy at age five, as well as a focus on some of the most deprived communities.

Get involved in Tuesday News Day

The National Literacy Trust has announced its first *Tuesday News Day*, a new campaign from the News Literacy Network, which it chaired, to encourage primary and secondary teachers across the UK to discuss news and current affairs with their pupils for at least 10 minutes every week. Every Tuesday during term time, teachers of all subjects will be encouraged to set aside 10 minutes of class time to discuss a news story that matters to their pupils, who can either come to class with a news story they would like to discuss or a news story could be chosen by the teacher or class from one of a number of child-friendly news sources.

Teachers can then use the *Tuesday News Day* question card resource to guide conversations and get pupils thinking critically about the news story they have chosen to discuss.

Tuesday News Day aims to give pupils more opportunities to discuss and question the news with a trusted adult after research from the parliamentary Commission on Fake News and the Teaching of Critical Literacy Skills in Schools had found that:

- Only 2% of children and young people in the UK had the critical literacy skills they needed to tell if a news story was real or fake.
- A third of teachers feared that the critical literacy skills taught in schools were not transferable to the real world.
- Pupils wanted more opportunities to talk about news and current affairs in school, as only 6.4% of pupils currently talked to their teachers about fake news.

NLT Director, Jonathan Douglas, said that teachers and parents were increasingly concerned about the negative impact news was having on children, and many were concerned that they did not have the skills or confidence to have necessary conversations about it. He pointed out that by looking at the news through a critical lens, children could learn to decipher the messages in it, identify the author's agenda or bias, and interrogate the points of view represented. Mr Douglas stressed that it had never been more important to ensure that children and young people had the critical literacy skills they needed to navigate, participate in and survive the digital age.

Download your free *Tuesday News Day* resources and follow #TuesdayNewsDay on social media.

Link between children's reading skills and their ability to manage money

In Global Money Week, the National Literacy Trust published a report on how children's reading skills, their ability to manage money and their attitudes towards school are linked. The *Reading and Financial Capability* report uncovered a crucial link between children's reading skills and their ability to manage money, which could potentially help efforts to stem the UK's debt epidemic.

The research found that children and young people who had good reading skills had been four times more likely to have good financial skills than their peers who had poor reading skills (35.6% vs 8.8%). The same was true at the other end of the scale, as children who had poor reading skills had been four times as likely to also have poor financial skills (56.3% vs 12.3%).

The survey of 2,943 primary and secondary school students found that children and young people generally behaved positively when it came to reading and financial matters as 93.6% had agreed that it was important to learn how to manage money, while 77.3% said that they read outside class every week.

The survey also found that the degree to which children did not give up was a direct predictor of skills in reading and financial capability. The report argued that the finding was particularly significant in light of new ambitions set out by the Department for Education to help every child to access activities that would help them to build character and resilience, and an Ofsted framework that was under consultation to help education better prepare children and young people for adulthood.

A knowledge-base from which to debate central government's domination of literacy policy and practice in England. A plea for a research literate profession

By Margaret M Clark OBE

School Standards Minister Nick Gibb made a plea that young teachers enter “a research-informed and research-enthusiastic profession” and he claimed to endorse an evidence and “research-based policy”! Yet in England teachers are not only told what to teach but how to teach it, and those training teachers have the content of their courses dictated by government and Ofsted.

In contrast, the EU High Level Group of Experts in 2012 recommended that professionals acquire the competence to make critical evaluation of literacy research. Would current government policies stand up to such a scrutiny? In *Education Journal* in 2017 (310: 18-19) and elsewhere I have analysed government policy on literacy learning in England, claims, costs and commercialism, issues not confined to England. I scrutinized claims made over recent years by the government for one best method of teaching reading, for the Phonics Screening Check as a measure of an “expected phonics standard” and as the explanation for any rise in reading attainment, some of the so far unchallenged expenditure on this policy. I have raised the issue as to how people with knowledge that should count make themselves heard. The claims made repeatedly by politicians, and as recently as in November 2018 in the House of Commons by the School Standards Minister Nick Gibb, have so far remained unchallenged.

It is disturbing that there has been so little challenge to the many dogmatic statements by government and Ofsted both as to the research basis for current policy and its effects on standards. The aim of this article is to respond to the repeated claims made for this policy by the Government as evidence-based. Publications referenced here should enable professionals and parents to engage in informed dialogue with politicians, such as the School Standards Minister and Ofsted inspectors.

Background

The Government reports and scrutinizes pupil characteristics and local authority results on the check. The School Standards Minister, Nick Gibb, the strongest advocate over many years for the current government literacy policy dominated by synthetic phonics, continues to claim it is evidence-based and has resulted in improvement in the standard of reading in England. During November 2018 he repeated such claims twice, once in a debate and a second time in answer to a written parliamentary question. All contrary evidence is ignored or dismissed as ideology. At no time have teachers been consulted and large sums of money are earmarked for the policy by DfE. Schools are recommended to spend money on commercial programmes provided they advocate synthetic phonics. Indeed, to access DfE courses schools may even be required to purchase from their own funds a specific commercial programme. Synthetic phonics is mandated as the only method of teaching reading to all children. The Phonics Screening Check, the percentage pass on which in Year 1 has become high stakes data in the eyes of DfE and Ofsted, is claimed to be responsible for improved standards of reading, claims made on the basis of an increase in the percentage pass on the statutory Phonics Screening Check. Such an improvement is hardly surprising as preparation for the check now dominates many early years classrooms. Why are these claims still unchallenged?

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The views of teachers and parents

The final report of an independent survey of the views of teachers and parents undertaken in May 2018 can be read and downloaded from <https://www.newman.ac.uk/knowledge-base/the-phonics-screening-check-2012-2017>. There is a two page summary; Appendix I shows evidence that teachers have not been consulted by DfE on the policy; Appendix II lists expenditure by DfE on this policy; chapter 2 summarises research by others showing the effect of the high stakes nature of the check on early years classrooms. The survey report revealed the concern of many teachers and parents at the effect of the policy and their wish that the Phonics Screening Check no longer be a statutory assessment. On the same link are several articles summarising the evidence so far ignored by the Government, together with references to many other relevant publications.

Progressively the teaching profession in England has come to have both the content and method of teaching dictated by central government. A high percentage of teachers in England, possibly some of the more dedicated, leave the profession after only a few years. Shortage of funds and too low salary may be one cause, but another may be lack of autonomy and the need to meet accountability measures with which they do not agree and about which they have not been consulted. The emphasis on synthetic phonics required by DfE and Ofsted in initial teacher education training in England, and in many courses of professional development, may mean that recently qualified teachers are less well equipped with knowledge of alternative approaches in other countries, some of which rank statistically higher in attainment than England, with very different approaches. Consultation and dialogue with professionals in policy development and implementation of their literacy policies, not evident in England, appears to be a feature in other countries such as the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. Both these countries, with very different policies, ranked statistically higher than England in PIRLS 2016 (see Clark, (ed) 2018 Part II and my article on PIRLS online). Surely, we should learn from other countries such as these. Neither of these countries has problems of recruitment and retention of teachers. In both countries professionals play an important role in the development and implementation of policy.

The domination of government literacy policy in England by synthetic phonics

Learning to be Literate: Insights from research for policy and practice (Clark, 2016) Part IV summarises my publications on this up to 2015. Two articles of mine in *Education Journal*, numbers 351 and 352 in 2018, assess the justification for the domination of this policy, its effects, the expenditure and critique the claimed research basis justifying its imposition. These articles and two more recent articles in *Education Journal Review* 25(2) set out the evidence still ignored by government challenging the claims for this policy. These can be accessed on the same link as the report of the recent independent survey of the views of teachers and parents and will not be repeated here <https://www.newman.ac.uk/knowledge-base/the-phonics-screening-check-2012-2017>.

How robust is the research evidence?

I have already published articles challenging the research base for this policy, but draw readers' attention to two further publications, one edited by Allington as early as 2002 with contributions from members of the National Reading Panel in the USA, the other research apart from the Clackmannanshire research cited recently by Nick Gibb as his research evidence-base (see *Research Ed* September 2018, *Evidence-informed Education*; 4). In *Ethics, education policy and research: the phonics question reconsidered*, Ellis and Moss (2014) critically evaluate the Clackmannanshire research quoted by Nick Gibb, the School Standards Minister, as his research evidence and trace his commitment to this policy from 2004 onwards. At that time, he was not yet in government, but as a member of the Education Select Committee he heard the presentations of those witnesses claiming synthetic phonics as the way to teach reading. His commitment since then has been unwavering as can be seen from the transcripts of his speeches given on 11 September 2017, 5 December 2017, 23 January 2017 and 22 February 2018 at a Conference for Commonwealth Ministers. In none of his speeches or publications has he admitted that there is any contrary evidence or acknowledged that most of his claims are based on a rising percentage pass on the Phonics Screening Check.

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Ellis and Moss on page 249 referring to the Clackmannanshire research claim: “The weakness of the research design, including the way the statistical data were analysed and reported, suggest it would be unwise to draw any clear conclusions for pedagogy or policy from this single study.”

On page 252 they further comment: “Politics and research evidence remain awkward bedfellows. This is particularly so when research does not support the direction in which politicians and policy-makers want to move. It is not entirely clear why Nick Gibb committed so strongly to synthetic phonics as a teaching method for early reading when he did, except that it offered an easily understood message and played to his political advantage at a particular moment in the policy cycle.” Ellis and Moss comment that in 2012 Nick Gibb cited the Clackmannanshire study in a written paper to the discussion website mumsnet (page 246).

Recent claims for current policy

In parliament in November 2018 Nick Gibb again made extravagant claims for the success of the phonics policy, castigating those who do not accept his “evidence”. In an Opposition Day Debate on 13 November in the House of Commons he commented on the lack of reference to the importance of learning to read in contributions from Labour MPs claiming that: “Following the focus on phonics and the introduction of the phonics screening check, more children had learned to read more effectively and sooner.” The minister added that England had moved from joint 10th to joint 8th in 2017 in PIRLS (*Education Journal* 357: 29). (NB it was 2016 and elsewhere he erroneously claimed it was from 19th).

Where is his evidence young children now read more effectively and sooner?

In answer to a question from Sharon Hodgson as to what assessment had been made of regional differences in the results of the check and what steps were being made to reduce such disparities, Nick Gibb provided a table of improvements since 2012 in the percentage pass and by regions. It should be noted that in 2018 the range was merely from 80 per cent to 85 per cent pass in Year 1. Yet he claimed that “the Department recognises that more work needs to be done to tackle regional variations in phonics screening check results”.

To this end, a new national network of 32 English hubs has been announced with £26.3 million invested to improve educational outcomes. He continued that: “Due to the success of previous phonics roadshows which help schools use systematic synthetic phonics to support reading development, the Department has invested in a further 24 phonics roadshows in 2018-19. These will take place in local authorities where phonics screening check scores in 2018 were below the national average.” Here again the basis for intervention is the narrow one of percentage pass on the check, not reading attainment and the intervention is confined to a focus on one method of intervention (*Education Journal* 358: 33-35).

A summary of references critiquing Government policy with synthetic phonics at its core

Below references are given to a wide range of evidence published between 2006 and 2018, so far ignored by Government. These challenge claims that: “the current policy is based on firm research evidence that supports synthetic phonics as the only way to teach all children to read and that the Phonics Screening Check has been responsible for a marked increase in the reading attainment of young children in England since 2012 (not only an increase in percentage pass on the check).”

1. The views of teachers and parents based on an independent survey in May 2018.

Many of those who responded to the independent survey, teachers and parents, expressed the view that the phonics check should be discontinued. Singled out for particular criticism was the effect of the pseudo words in the check (20 of the 40 words). To achieve a pass (32 out of 40 words read correctly) much time is devoted to practising pseudo words. Many respondents did not think that children who failed the check in Year 1 should be required to re sit the check in Year 2. There is also evidence from other research on the effects of the high stakes accorded to the percentage pass on the check by DfE and Ofsted on the literacy experiences of young children in the early years summarised in chapter 2.

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Clark, M.M. and Glazzard, J. (eds.) (2018) *The Phonics Screening Check 2012-2017: An independent enquiry into the views of Head Teachers, teachers and parents*. Final Report September 2018. Available to read and download from Newman University. <https://www.newman.ac.uk/knowledge-base/the-phonics-screening-check-2012-2017/>. See Appendices I, II also chapter 2 for a summary of other researches. (*These articles are also on this link)

*Clark, M.M. (2018) *How justified is it to dominate government policy on early literacy with synthetic phonics and the Phonics Screening Check? Evidence, effects and expenditure. Part I Recent evidence on effects and expenditure. Education Journal*. 351: 18-21.

* ____ *How justified is it to dominate government policy on early literacy with synthetic phonics and the Phonics Screening Check? Part II A critique of the evidence. Education Journal*. 352: 15-19.

* ____ *What determines literacy policies: evidence or ideology? The power of politicians over policy and practice. Education Journal Review* 25(2): 2-30.

2. Published evidence on synthetic phonics and the Phonics Screening Check

There is evidence of the unreliability of the check also the high percentage failure among the youngest children. This check was originally claimed to be a light touch diagnostic assessment. Now it is high stakes data, the main criterion used by government and Ofsted when judging the literacy attainment of young children in schools and comparing attainment between regions (see statement by the School Standards Minister in response to a question by Sharon Hodgson on 19 November reported in *Education Journal* 358: 33-35).

Evidence up to 2015 is summarised in Clark 2016. The first edition won the UKLA Academic Book Award in 2015. Routledge published the revised edition which updated the information on government policy.

Clark, M.M. (2016) *Learning to be Literate: Insights from research for policy and practice*. Revised edition. Abingdon: Routledge. Part IV chapters 13-18 'Synthetic Phonics and Literacy Learning: government policy in England 2006 to 2015'.

3. References to research challenging the claims by the government in England that current policy is evidence-based.

(Chapters from the following two books are cited in articles on the same link as the final survey report).

Clark, M.M. (ed.) (2017) *Reading the Evidence: Synthetic phonics and literacy learning*. (editor and contributor) Birmingham: Glendale Education. Ebook downloadable from Amazon.co.uk and paperback. (This has six additional contributors from UK and Australia).

Clark, M.M. (ed.) (2018) *The Teaching of Initial Literacy: Policies, evidence and ideology* (editor and contributor). Birmingham: Glendale Education. Ebook and paperback from Amazon.co.uk. (This has twelve additional contributors from USA, Australia, the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland and UK).

Critiques of the two researches cited by government in England as the evidence-base for current policy mandating synthetic phonics as the only way to teach all children to read: the Clackmannanshire research and recently also the National Reading Panel Report from USA. The Clackmannanshire research was until recently the only research cited by the School Standards Minister in a series of speeches to support the claim that the one best method of teaching reading to all children is synthetic phonics. In a recent publication in September 2018, the National Reading Panel from USA was added by the School Standards Minister (*Research Ed* September 2018). Allington's edited book published as early as 2002 has contributions from members of that panel raising issues about claims made for the report. Part I is entitled:

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'Unreliable Evidence...' and Part II 'Politics, Policies and Profits: The Political Context of the National Reports'. In addition to references in my edited books Clark, 2017 and 2018 a further source for a comprehensive critique of the Clackmannanshire research is Ellis and Moss, 2014.

Allington, R.L. (ed.) (2002) *Big Brother and the National Reading Curriculum: How ideology trumped evidence*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Ellis, S. and Moss, G. (2014) 'Ethics, education policy and research: the phonics question reconsidered'. *British Educational Research Journal*. Vol. 40 No. 2: 241-260.

4. The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study PIRLS 2016.

The results of this are claimed by the government as proof of the success of current policy and the Phonics Screening Check. The pupils aged ten years of age who took part in the international study of 50 countries in 2016 were the first to have sat the Phonics Screening Check in 2012. England moved from joint 10th to joint 8th in the five years since the previous PIRLS. This was claimed by the School Standards Minister to be as a consequence of the government's policy and the Phonics Screening Check. NB Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland with very different policies ranked statistically higher than England.

See Part II in *Teaching Initial Literacy: Policies, evidence and ideology* (Clark, 2018). Four chapters are devoted to PIRLS including chapters outlining the policies in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, countries ranking statistically higher than England Their policies are very different from those in England, and teachers were involved in their development and implementation in contrast in England teachers have not been consulted (see Appendix I in the final survey report).

See also *Clark, M.M. (2018) *The progress in international literacy study PIRLS 2016: a cautionary tale*, in *Education Journal Review* 25 (2):76-83.

Reading with pre-school children

Parents and carers who regularly read with small children are giving them a language advantage of eight months, according to research from the University of Newcastle, funded by the Nuffield Foundation. A team of experts, led by James Law, Professor of Speech and Language Sciences, found that receptive language skills – the ability to understand information – were positively affected when pre-school children read with someone who cared for them.

The researchers carried out a systematic review of reading intervention studies from the past 40 years, using either a book or electronic readers and where reading had been carried out with a parent or carer. They looked for effects on receptive language (understanding), expressive language (where a child had put their thoughts into words such as vocabulary and grammar) and pre-reading skills (such as how words were structured). The results had been positive for each category but the biggest difference had been with receptive language skills. The review showed that socially disadvantaged children had experienced slightly more benefit than others.

Professor Law said that while the researchers had been aware that reading with young children was beneficial to their development and later academic performance, the eight-month advantage the review had identified had been striking, as it represented a big difference in language skills where children under five were concerned.

He stressed that the fact that the researchers had seen an effect with receptive language skills had been very important, because the ability to understand information was predictive of later social and educational difficulties, and research suggested that such language skills were hardest to change. The average age of the children involved in the 16 studies included in the review, had been 39 months and the review had looked at studies from five countries: the USA, South Africa, Canada, Israel and China. The researchers are calling for public health authorities to promote book reading to parents.

Early-intervention literacy programme to increase attainment at GCSE

Two independent research reports commissioned by the KPMG Foundation into the long-term benefits of Reading Recovery, a school-based literacy programme for the lowest achieving children aged five and six, have concluded that the intervention helps close the GCSE attainment gap between the children and their peers.

The research suggested that Reading Recovery had the potential to deliver up to £1.2 billion to the economy in the form of increased lifetime earnings and reduced costs for special educational needs and disabilities services. Independent research by Professor Jane Hurry and Dr Lisa Fridkin of the UCL Institute of Education highlighted the sustained effects of Reading Recovery ten years after intervention, when children receiving the programme had taken their GCSEs.

The research report, the impact of Reading Recovery ten years after intervention, found that, when compared to the lowest attaining children who had not participated in the programme, children who had benefited from Reading Recovery had been:

- More than twice as likely to achieve five or more good GCSEs including English and mathematics: 49% vs 23% in the comparison group.
- Less likely to leave school with no qualifications: 2% vs 7% in the comparison group.
- Performing only 5% below the national average at age 16 in GCSEs, despite having been in the bottom 10% of readers at age six.
- Requiring no intensive special-needs support (a Statement of Special Educational Needs, or Education, Health and Care Plan), while 10% of the comparison group had a Statement or EHCP at age 14, and 9% at age 16

Building on the findings, the study by charity Pro Bono Economics, Assessing the impact of the Reading Recovery programme - an economic evaluation, calculated that across the 101,000 children in England who had taken part in Reading Recovery between 2005/06 and 2016/17, for every £1 invested (£290 million in total) the programme had the potential to deliver a return to UK society of up to £4.30 (£1.2 billion in total) by improving long-term outcomes for each child over the course of their lifetimes.

The potential benefit of Reading Recovery support had been calculated as being up to £12,100 for each child, compared to around £2,800 in costs, which was a net benefit up to £9,300 per child.

- Up to £9,100 had been attributed to a child's higher lifetime earnings as a result of increased employment and higher wages.
- £2,900 per child represented savings to local authorities, since children were less likely to require a Statement of Special Educational Needs or an Education, Health and Care plan.

Reading Recovery provided literacy support for the lowest-attaining five- and six-year olds through daily one-to-one reading sessions with trained specialist teachers. Melanie Richards, chairman of The KPMG Foundation, said that it was heartening to see from the research that, by investing in targeted early intervention programmes, the long-term negative impacts of poor literacy skills could be prevented. But she stressed that there was still a way to go to level the playing field and remove the inequality that characterised the education and careers landscape in the UK.

Amanda Spielman at the Wonder Years curriculum conference

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, Amanda Spielman, discussed curriculum and Ofsted's proposed education inspection framework at the Wonder Years Knowledge Curriculum Conference. She said that the new education inspection framework really was about making sure that children's time in education were their wonder years, as it was the time when they got to grips with the power and flexibility of the English language and the fundamental mathematical concepts, when they learned about the scientific principles that shaped the world around them and the universe, and the events that had forged history.

The Chief Inspector pointed out that it should also be the time that children discovered the possibilities of foreign languages and developed an appreciation of music and the arts, as well as the rudiments of some principles and practice of design and technology. She argued that a high-quality education, built around a rich curriculum, was a matter of social justice and time in nursery and primary school was the best opportunity to tip the playing field back towards the level. Ms Spielman said that that was why Ofsted had stressed, in the draft schools handbook, the importance of reading to young children frequently, and of introducing new vocabulary in contexts that would stimulate their understanding and thinking. She said that from its curriculum research, Ofsted knew that it was disadvantaged pupils who were disproportionately affected by the narrowing of key stage 2 and the shortening of key stage 3, or who in various ways became less likely to take more academic subjects in key stage 4. Ms Spielman added that therefore, to reduce economic and social inequality, the place to start was what was taught in the classroom.

She cited research by Professor Cristina Iannelli, which had found that most of the advantage associated with attending a selective school could be accounted for by the curriculum that was studied, and in particular the greater likelihood of taking the core academic subjects. The Chief Inspector added that serious attention to curriculum was just as important for children with special needs and disabilities, even though a child with severe or complex needs may well take longer to acquire and build that knowledge than other children.

Turning to the importance of developing cultural capital, she pointed out that inspectors would consider how schools were equipping pupils with the essential knowledge they needed to be educated citizens, how they were introduced to the best that had been thought and said, and how they were being helped to a real appreciation of human creativity and achievement.

Ms Spielman said that while schools should be held to account for how well their pupils achieved, the framework would make sure that outcomes were considered in their proper context, to understand whether they had been achieved in a way that had set young people up to succeed in further study and life beyond, rather than just to pass a particular set of exams. She argued that the way to kill a real love of knowledge and learning was to give children 12 years of jumping through mark scheme hoops, with some nods towards developing some desirable but ill-defined skills thrown in alongside. The Chief Inspector added that the way to develop all children's intellects and curiosity, involved connected knowledge about Shakespeare, about the Battle of Trafalgar, and about the structure of the cell, which would pique their interests and passions. She pointed out that the concept of breadth would mean different things at different stages of young people's education and Ofsted had shown in its handbook that, for instance, the priority for key stage 1 was for children to master early reading and mathematics, otherwise so much of what came later would be inaccessible. Ms Spielman said that for that reason, and building on what Ofsted had learned through its reading champion programme of inspections over the past year, inspectors would be looking at the extent to which pupils in key stage 1 learned to decode text through systematic synthetic phonics and whether they developed into fluent confident readers.

(Continued on page 15.)

(Continued from page 14.)

The Chief Inspector stressed that while no school would be criticised by inspectors for focusing its key stage 1 curriculum on literacy and mathematics, equally no school would be criticised for providing greater breadth. She added that as children moved through primary school, inspectors would expect to see that focus on the fundamentals maintained, but that should be alongside broader learning across all the foundation subjects.

When it came to secondary school, for almost all children, there was no reason to start narrowing down their learning before the age of 14, as it pained her to think about how many potential historians, artists, linguists, musicians and designers had been lost because they had been made to drop subjects almost before they had begun, so they may never have discovered their talents in them.

The Chief Inspector said that as the Government had decided that its ambition was for the EBacc subjects to be studied by the vast majority of young people up to the age of 16, the draft new inspection framework proposed that inspectors would be looking at the extent to which schools were increasing EBacc uptake. But she stressed that what that did not mean was that Ofsted would expect every school to be at the same stage, or even to be heading towards the same end point in terms of EBacc entries. Ms Spielman pointed out that schools in disadvantaged areas would be starting from a lower base, and many would have struggled with recruitment, especially when it came to modern foreign languages. In the same vein, they would be likely to look unfavourably on a leafy grammar that was not already securing high levels of uptake.

PEOPLE

Baroness Morris of Yardley to co-chair Labour's lifelong learning commission

Following the launch of the Labour Party's new lifelong learning commission, the party explained that the commission would help to inform proposals for its National Education Service. Labour leader, Jeremy Corbyn, pledged that if it came to power, the party would ensure "genuine parity" between vocational and academic education.

The commission, which will include 14 experts from across education, will be co-chaired by former Labour education secretary, Baroness Morris of Yardley, and the general secretary of the Communication Workers' Union, Dave Ward. Panel members include, the University and College Union's Matt Waddup, Amatey Doku, from the National Union of Students, Vicky Duckworth, professor in education at Edge Hill University and Graeme Atherton, director of the National Education Opportunities Network.

New Chief Executive for Cambridge Assessment English

Cambridge Assessment today has announced the appointment of Francesca Woodward as the new Chief Executive of Cambridge Assessment English. She had first joined the organisation two years ago as Director of Cambridge English's Global Network, to lead an international team and work with Cambridge University Press.

Ms Woodward, who is currently in charge of a strategic review of existing and future technology at parent organisation Cambridge Assessment, will move into her new role on March 1, taking over from Christine Nuttall, Cambridge English's Interim Chief Executive. Before joining Cambridge English, she had had a 16-year career at Pearson, where she had worked in a variety of commercial leadership roles across the company's products and regions. Ms Woodward has a BA in Business from Staffordshire University and a Post Graduate Diploma from Manchester Metropolitan University.

Policies for early learning

Helping our Youngest to Learn and Grow: Policies for Early Learning. Key Topics for the International Summit on the Teaching Profession, by Andreas Schleicher, Director of the Education and Skills Directorate of the OECD, prepared for the ISTP 2019 conference, Helsinki, 14-15 March 2019. ISBN 978-92-64-31386-6.

Research has shown that attendance at early childhood education and care programmes can have a significant impact on children’s cognitive, social and emotional development, and on their performance in school – and in life – later on. There is evidence from both randomised controlled trials and observational studies that early childhood education and care has the potential to improve the life chances of children from disadvantaged families; yet results from PISA show that advantaged children are more likely to attend, and to attend for longer periods of time. Failing to tackle this situation could mean that early childhood education and care continue to exacerbate rather than mitigate inequities in education and in society.

Some evidence suggests that peers in early childhood education and care influence children’s language and socioemotional development. It is thus urgent for policy makers to identify the extent to which disadvantaged children are clustered together in early childhood education and care programmes, and whether and where centres with substantial numbers of disadvantaged children are of lower quality than those attended by more affluent children. In most countries, socio-economically disadvantaged children are the least likely to attend high-quality programmes.

A growing body of research suggests that the magnitude of the benefits of early childhood education and care depends on the quality of the services provided. Quality in this context depends on both the infrastructure, i.e. the available physical, human and material resources, and what is known as “process quality”, i.e. the social, emotional and instructional aspects of children’s interactions with staff members and other children. In order to attract the most suitable candidates to the early learning workforce, countries need not only to offer adequate pay, but also provide an environment where leaders and other staff are given the autonomy, and have the time and space to work as professionals.

Although research emphasises the importance of initial education and continuous professional development opportunities for early learning staff, there is no simple relationship between the staff’s level of education and process quality or children’s learning, development and well-being. One way to improve the pedagogical practices used in these programmes is to enhance the staff’s competence to communicate and interact with children in a shared and sustainable manner. Research finds that it is not necessary for all staff to have attained high levels of education. Highly qualified staff can have a positive influence on colleagues who work with them but who do not have the same level of qualifications.

Research shows that academic, staff-initiated practices and approaches are more likely to improve children’s academic outcomes, including IQ scores, literacy and numeracy skills, and specific subject knowledge, while child-centred practices are more likely to improve a child’s socio-emotional and soft skills, such as motivation to learn, creativity, independence, self-confidence, general knowledge and initiative. Research also cautions that strong, didactic, staff-directed practices may hinder the development of children’s socio-emotional skills, such as motivation, interest and self-regulation, in the long run.

The curricula for early childhood education and care often contrast with those used in primary schooling, partly because the latter tend to focus on the content to be taught, while the former typically rely on psychological and educational theories that inform pedagogical practice, i.e. how to teach, rather than what to teach.

Education systems need to re-evaluate their curricula, and teachers need to reassess their teaching styles, to ensure that ICT is used effectively. Education policies that foster the development of children’s digital skills are those that provide adequate training for teachers, and support the integration of technologies into school curricula. Linking the way children interact with ICT inside of school to the way they already use it outside of school can be a key to unlocking technology’s potential for learning.

Library closures

Baroness Pinnock (LDP) asked the Government what assessment it had made of the impact of the closure of local libraries in England since 2015. (House of Lords, oral question debate, 19 February 2019.) The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, Lord Ashton of Hyde (Con) said that while the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport did not record details of public library closures for councils in England, it monitored changes to library service provision throughout England.

He added that if DCMS received representations that changes agreed by a council might mean that the council was failing to meet its statutory duty to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service, it would consider the evidence before deciding whether a local inquiry would be needed.

Baroness Pinnock pointed out that in the last year alone £30 million less had been spent on local libraries and a further 127 had been closed. Lord Ashton argued that it was “not helpful just to look at straight numbers of openings and closings”, as it was sometimes the right thing to close a library and to produce a better, more centralised library in partnership with other local community areas.

Baroness Lister of Burtersett (Lab) pointed out that she had spoken to a librarian who spent much of her time helping with universal credit claims. She argued that libraries often provided services that had not been provided by Jobcentres. Lord Ashton said that the role of libraries had changed because the nature of society had changed with the internet. He acknowledged that in some cases libraries fulfilled roles that other public services used to do.

Lord Griffiths of Burry Port (Lab) argued that while closing libraries offered an easy way of saving money, simply to say that the Government had outsourced responsibilities to local authorities was not good enough to address the question. He added that there was “a horrendous picture of dissatisfaction” from those working in libraries at the service they were obliged to offer the public with fewer and fewer resources. Lord Ashton said it was very easy to blame the Government when devolved decisions were not to the liking of people living elsewhere. He argued that through Arts Council England, the Government provided the Libraries Opportunities for Everyone Innovation Fund, the private finance initiative and the Libraries Taskforce, which were all examples of the DCMS centrally supporting the library service.

The effect of libraries on social mobility

Matt Western (Lab, Warwick and Leamington) asked the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport what recent assessment it had made of the effect of access to public libraries on social mobility. (House of Commons, oral questions to the DCMS, 11 April 2019.) The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, Michael Ellis (Con, Northampton North) said that everyone used public libraries, and everyone was involved in the social mobility aspects of those libraries.

Matt Western pointed out that since 2010, 605 libraries had closed in England, Wales in Scotland, and 15 of the 34 in Warwickshire had closed. Michael Ellis said that local government had a responsibility under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 to maintain libraries and provide a comprehensive and efficient library service.

The chairman of the Education Select Committee, Robert Halfon (Con, Harlow) said that Essex County Council was threatening to close libraries across his constituency despite having nearly £250 million in reserves. Michael Ellis said that DCMS was monitoring Essex County Council’s compliance with its duty. Dennis Skinner (Lab, Bolsover) said that Derbyshire County Council had said almost every public librarian would lose many hours per week and libraries in Derbyshire were due to close completely. Michael Ellis repeated that local authorities had a statutory duty under the 1964 Act.

The following written questions were answered in Parliament, from the time of the last issue of *Literacy Today* to the present.

House of Commons

Department for Education

Reading: Curriculum

John Hayes: [205190] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of allocating time within the National Curriculum for reading in book form.

Nick Gibb: Reading is an essential foundation to a child's education and the acquisition of knowledge. The National Curriculum aims to ensure that all pupils can read easily, fluently and with good comprehension, and requires pupils to study a range of books, poems and plays to develop a life-long love of literature. The National Curriculum does not prescribe teaching hours for any subject. It is for schools to decide how much time pupils spend reading.

Monday 14 January 2019

Schools: Literacy

Geraint Davies: [209286] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of English Hub schools having at least one member of staff who has received specialist speech, language and communication training.

Nick Gibb: Each of our 32 English Hubs will deploy 5 practising teachers as literacy specialists, to deliver early language and reading teaching support to local schools. These teachers will not be required to hold specific qualifications in special educational needs and disability (SEND), but they will be trained to support all children to learn to read.

Literacy specialists will also have access to the wide range of support available to all teachers. Since 2010, the Department has invested heavily in the development of resources and training to ensure that teachers are equipped to support pupils with specific types of SEND, including speech, language and communication needs. To be awarded qualified teacher status, trainees must satisfy the teachers' standards which include a requirement that they have a clear understanding of the needs of all pupils, including those with SEND, and are able to use and evaluate distinctive teaching approaches to engage and support them. In addition, the Whole School SEND consortium, funded by the Department, has appointed new SEND regional leads who are bringing together practitioners and networks to build a community of practice, to help identify school improvement priorities and facilitate the exchange of knowledge and expertise.

Tuesday 22 January 2019

Children: Communication

Rebecca Pow: [210671] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans his Department has to (a) identify and (b) tackle children's communication difficulties under its Children in Need policy.

Nadhim Zahawi: The government is committed to ensuring that children and young people with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) get the support they need to lead safe, fulfilling lives and to reach their potential. The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Code of Practice makes clear that local authorities, clinical commissioning groups and relevant others are responsible for commissioning specialist support locally using their high needs funding budgets. This includes support for SLCN.

We have given an additional £250 million to high needs funding across 2018-19 and 2019-20 to help them fulfil these duties, on top of the £6 billion already provided for the high needs budget. Local authorities are required to develop and publish their local SEND offer based on an analysis of local need and we expect details of services for SLCN, including how they can be accessed, to be included. My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education has set out his ambition to halve the 28% of children who finish their reception year without the early communication and reading skills they need to thrive by 2028. The Department for Education is working with the Department of Health and Social Care and Public Health England to support health visitors and early years practitioners to identify and support children's early SLCN. We are investing £26 million to set up a network of English hubs, £20 million to provide professional development for early years practitioners, and £7.5 million to understand what works in partnership with the Education Endowment Foundation. We are investing £6.5 million in voluntary and charity sector grants supporting the home learning environment. Where children are at risk of harm, it is particularly important that they are supported to communicate their needs. The statutory guidance 'Working together to safeguard children' (2018) is clear that special provision should be put in place to support dialogue with children who have communication difficulties. This child-centred approach is supported by the Children Act (1989) and emphasised further in the interim findings of the children in need review.

Tuesday 29 January 2019

Children: English Language

David Simpson: [212344] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to support children who are learning English as a second language.

Nadhim Zahawi: Every child, regardless of their background or family circumstances, deserves the opportunity to progress and succeed in school and beyond. Schools are responsible for ensuring that each of their pupils is engaged, challenged and has opportunity to achieve their full academic potential. The government's ongoing education reforms have given headteachers considerable flexibility over their use of the funding allocated to their schools, as they are best placed to support and address the specific needs of their pupils – including those who are classed as having English as an additional language (EAL). We recognise that having a large intake of EAL pupils can present challenges for a school. Through the national funding formula (NFF) for schools, introduced in April 2018, state-funded schools attract funding for pupils with EAL who have been in the school system in England for up to 3 years. This funding equates to an additional £515 per primary school pupil and an additional £1,385 per secondary school pupil by the time the formula is fully implemented. Schools in which more than 10% of pupils joined mid-way through the school year also attract funding through the mobility factor in the NFF if their local authority uses this factor in their local formula. Furthermore, schools are also able to use their pupil premium funding to support pupils with EAL who are classed as disadvantaged, through having been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last 6 years, or through being looked after or previously in local authority care.

Friday 1 February 2019

GCSE: English Language and Mathematics

Gordon Marsden: [213952] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the decrease in the pass rate for GCSE English and maths resits between 2017 and 2018.

Anne Milton: We want every student to secure the English and mathematics knowledge that will enable them to thrive in their studies, work and life. As a result of the changes made and thanks to the efforts of students, teachers, schools and college and across the country a record number of 19-year-olds now hold a Level 2 qualification in both Maths and English.

The Department is also investing an additional £50 million over the next 5 years to help improve the quality of post-16 mathematics teaching and spread best practice. It is important that young people have an opportunity to reach their potential and they should be given every opportunity to do this. The Department will publish data on post-16 students achievement in GCSE English and mathematics for the full 2018/19 academic year and compare it to previous academic years after the 2018/19 academic year concludes. Any assessments undertaken prior to the end of the academic year will not reflect the results of those post-16 students studying GCSE English and mathematics who sit their exams in summer 2019.

Monday 4 February 2019

Literacy: Teaching Methods

Will Quince: [908974] What recent assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of teaching early literacy through phonics.

Nick Gibb: There is a significant body of evidence that demonstrates that systematic phonics is a highly effective method for teaching early reading. According to the Education Endowment Foundation, phonics approaches have been consistently found to be effective in supporting younger readers to master the basics of reading, with an average impact of an additional 4 months' progress. Research suggests that phonics is particularly beneficial for younger pupils (4 to 7-year-olds) as they begin to read. Teaching phonics is more effective on average than other approaches to early reading (such as whole language or alphabetic approaches). The Department is investing £26 million in a national network of English hubs to support local schools in developing their teaching practice, with a focus on systematic phonics. We are also funding 6 Phonics Partnerships and a series of Phonics Roadshows, to spread good practice and improve phonics teaching.

Monday 4 February 2019

English Language and History: Curriculum

Julian Knight: [215212] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that (a) English and (b) History on the national curriculum is (i) relevant, (ii) modern and (iii) interesting for students.

Nick Gibb: The new national curriculum, first taught in maintained schools from September 2014, was developed in consultation with subject experts, teachers and with regard to international best practice comparisons. These new programmes of study are more rigorous in preparing pupils for the high expectations of working life.

The history curriculum sets out core knowledge within a clear chronological framework, ensuring pupils are taught history in a way that helps them understand the development of the modern world in reference to key historical events. The English national curriculum and GCSE syllabuses aims to teach pupils

to develop a love of reading. Pupils study our rich literary heritage, from Shakespeare through to modern authors, and also read a range of works from the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries.

Wednesday 6 February 2019

Literacy: Teaching Methods

Andrew Rosindell: [224308] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment his Department made of the effectiveness of teaching early literacy through Phonics.

Nick Gibb: There is a significant body of evidence that demonstrates that systematic phonics is a highly effective method for teaching early reading. According to the Education Endowment Foundation, phonics approaches are consistently effective in supporting younger readers to master the basics of reading, with an average impact of an additional four months' progress. The Department is investing £26 million in a national network of English hubs to support local schools in developing their teaching practice, with a focus on systematic phonics.

Friday 1 March 2019

Schools: Literacy

Caroline Lucas: [224320] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many and what proportion of schools have run the Every Child a Reader (ECaR) programme in each year since that programme was introduced; what discussions he has had with head teachers about whether they have the resources they require to run the ECaR programme in (a) Brighton and Hove and (b) nationally; and if he will make a statement.

Nick Gibb: The Every Child a Reader programme was launched in 2005. The Department does not collect data on which programmes schools use to teach their pupils to read. Schools are expected to use evidence-based programmes that meet their pupils' needs and ensure that they learn to read as early as possible. The Department is investing £26 million in a national network of English hubs to support schools to teach early reading, with a focus on synthetic phonics. Schools in Brighton and Hove will receive an increase in funding of 2.4% per pupil by 2019/20, or £2.9 million in total, compared to 2017/18.

Nationally, there is more money going into the schools system than ever before, but the Department recognises the budgeting challenges schools face and that they are being asked to do more. That is why the Government is supporting schools to make the most of every pound. Schools decide how to spend their budgets in a way that best supports their pupils, and discussions are regularly held with headteachers about their funding.

Friday 1 March 2019

Literacy: Children

Jo Stevens: [230802] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment his Department has made of trends in the number of children daily reading unaided in England.

Nick Gibb: The Department does not hold data on the number of children daily reading unaided in England.

The Department does, however, hold figures on pupils' performance in reading assessments. This is an indicator of pupils' ability to read unaided. A new, more rigorous national curriculum has been taught in primary schools since September 2014 and new tests and assessments based on this curriculum were first taken by pupils in summer 2016. Since 2016, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the reading test at the end of key stage 2 has risen from 66% to 75% in 2018. Regarding pupils in the earlier stages of reading, in 2018 there were 163,000 more 6-year-olds in England on track to become fluent readers compared to in 2012. This represented 82% of pupils meeting the expected standard in the year 1 phonics screening check, compared to just 58% when the check was introduced in 2012.

Regarding pupils who met the expected standard in phonics in year 1 in 2013, 88% went on to meet the expected standard in the key stage 2 reading test in 2018. England achieved its highest ever score in reading in 2016, moving from joint 10th place to joint 8th place in the most recent Progress in International Reading Literacy Study rankings. This follows a greater focus on reading in the primary curriculum and a particular focus on phonics. A national network of 32 primary schools across England has been appointed to become English Hubs, backed by £26.3 million funding. In addition to improving the teaching of phonics and early language development, these schools will champion reading for pleasure in the schools that they support.

Thursday 14 March 2019

English Language: Immigration

Dan Carden: [232096] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the White Paper entitled The UK's future skills-based immigration system, published in December 2018, what additional funding his Department plans to make available to support their English language strategy beyond the current English Language Co-ordination Fund; and on what basis those funds will be allocated.

Anne Milton: As part of the government's response to the Integrated Communities Strategy green paper, the government has committed to developing a new strategy for English for speakers of other languages in 2019. We are currently in the process of developing the strategy. Funding for all programmes beyond 2019/20, including any potential funding for this strategy, if needed, will be set during the upcoming Spending Review, which we expect to take place later this year.

Monday 18 March 2019

Early Language, Literacy and Communication Apps Expert Panel

Angela Rayner: [233010] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what meetings are scheduled of his Department's advisory panel on early years, language, literacy and communication apps.

Nadhim Zahawi: The independently appointed advisory panel met for the first time on 27 February. The panel is due to meet again on 16 April when they intend to finalise the assessment criteria they will use to award quality marks; subsequent meetings have not yet been confirmed.

Friday 22 March 2019

Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport

Public Libraries

Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [203977] To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent assessment he has made of the effect on levels of social mobility of access to public libraries.

Michael Ellis: Libraries play an important role in giving everyone opportunities to improve their life chances and achieve their full potential. In doing so they serve a diverse range of people from all backgrounds, including those in lower socio-economic groups. In addition, DCMS's Taking Part Survey indicates that unlike other cultural sectors, public library use in 2017/18 by people in black or minority ethnic groups is significantly higher (40.9% having visited a public library in the previous 12 months) than for people in the white ethnic group (31.7%). In recognition of this, the Government funds the Libraries Taskforce to encourage good practice and innovation to public library services in achieving the strategic outcomes set out in its 2016 strategy Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016-2021. DCMS also invested £3.9 million in the Libraries: Opportunities for Everyone fund to support innovative library service activity in 2017/18 to benefit disadvantaged people and places in England, including projects to help people develop their skills and achieve their potential.

Monday 7 January 2019

World Book Day

Ben Bradley: [220326] To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans his Department has to contribute to events celebrating World Book Day in 2019.

Michael Ellis: DCMS has no Departmental plans to celebrate World Book Day in 2019 directly. However, around 90% of local authority public library services in England are participating in World Book Day activities. World Book Day has also put a message in the backs of most of the twelve £1 books taking part in the World Book day campaign to encourage children to join their local library.

Wednesday 20 February 2019

Public Libraries: Learning Disability

Kevin Brennan: [222767] To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to ensure that people with learning disabilities are able to access resources in unstaffed libraries.

Kevin Brennan: [222768] To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent steps he has taken to ensure that public libraries are autism and dementia friendly spaces.

Michael Ellis: Local authorities in England have a statutory duty under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service. It is for each local authority to decide how best to provide their library service ensuring that it meets local needs, including for those library users with a learning disability, or with autism or dementia. Many library services in England train staff to meet these needs and provide library spaces, resources and support designed for people with these and other disabilities or conditions. For example, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council received around £100,000 from DCMS through the Libraries: Opportunities for Everyone fund, to develop innovative new spaces in its central libraries, including in Thornaby Library. This Imagination Station opened in May 2018 and provides

sensory and immersive experiences designed for people with a variety of health needs, including those living with dementia, autism, or learning disabilities.

Thursday 21 February 2019

Public Libraries

Paul Farrelly: [237630] To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, with reference to the Carnegie UK Trust's report of March 2019, Engaging Libraries: Learning from Phase 1, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the findings of that report.

Michael Ellis: The Government welcomed the recent Engaging Libraries programme, supported by Carnegie UK Trust and the Wellcome Trust, which enabled public library services to pilot creative public engagement projects on health and wellbeing. We also welcome the announcement that a second phase of the programme will be launched later in 2019. In line with the learning in this report, the Government recognises the important roles that libraries can play in promoting health and wellbeing.

In December 2016, the Libraries Taskforce (which was jointly established by DCMS and the Local Government Association) published its Libraries Deliver: Ambition document. This set out seven strategic Outcomes to which libraries contribute and that local and central government is seeking to support and encourage; one of these was helping people to have healthier and happier lives. The Taskforce includes representatives of Public Health England and NHS England, and has been active in promoting and sharing good practice about a number of the Engaging Libraries projects through its blog on GOV.UK. In addition, the Taskforce has published an advocacy brochure to specifically showcase to library services, local councils, and partner organisations how libraries can support health and wellbeing for people and communities.

Monday 1 April 2019

Department for Health and Social Care

Speech and Language Disorders: Children

Rebecca Pow: [210673] To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the implications are for his policies of the conclusion in the paper entitled, Mental Health of Children and Young People in England, 2017, published by NHS Digital in November 2018 that children with a mental disorder were five times more likely to have speech or language problems.

Jackie Doyle-Price: On 20 December 2018, we announced the first wave of 25 trailblazer sites that will test the plans set out in 'Transforming children and young people's mental health provision: a green paper', published in December 2017. This set out the Government's intention to improve provision of support through its three key proposals: creating new Mental Health Support Teams working in and near schools and colleges to support children and young people with mild to moderate mental health conditions; piloting a four-week waiting time for access to specialist National Health Service children's mental health services; and training Designated Senior Leads in mental health in schools and colleges.

Mental Health Support Teams will build on support already in place and work in an integrated way with other professionals such as speech and language therapists, including in support of delivering schools responsibilities for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities. Our aim is to improve earlier identification of mental health needs, including through knowledge of the links between mental health and others such as speech, language and communication needs, to increase access to services and to provide

more comprehensive support for the full range of needs of children and young people.

Tuesday 29 January 2019

Children: Communication Skills

Geraint Davies: [211070] To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has for Public Health England to promote the importance of children's speech, language and communication skills to educational providers.

Caroline Dinanage: Public Health England (PHE) is working in partnership with the Department for Education as part of the Social Mobility Action Plan for Education, 'Unlocking Talent, Fulfilling Potential' to improve early language acquisition and reduce the word gap. As part of this programme PHE will deliver training for health visitors on speech, language and communication needs.

In addition, an early language assessment tool to support clinical decision making and improve early identification of children with speech and language delay at the two-year universal health review is in development and will be available in spring 2020. A model speech language and communication pathway for services for children aged zero to five built on the best evidence and experience of implementation in practice will be available by June 2019. This will encourage joint commissioning and service provision.

Wednesday 30 January 2019

Home Office

Educational Testing Service: Contracts

Stephen Timms: [209280] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, on what date his Department awarded ETS a contract to undertake English language tests for overseas students.

Stephen Timms: [209281] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what arrangements his Department has put in place to monitor performance on the contract awarded to ETS to undertake English language tests for overseas students.

Stephen Timms: [209282] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many bidders were considered by his Department in the procurement exercise which led to a contract being awarded to ETS to undertake English language tests for overseas students.

Stephen Timms: [209283] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the value was of the contract awarded to ETS to undertake English language tests for overseas students.

Caroline Nokes: The Home Affairs Committee inquiry into the Home Office's use of English-language testing in relation to the issuing of visas, with particular reference to its handling of recent allegations involving English-language test centres, can be found in the following links. Question 60, contains information requested in PQ 209280:

<http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/home-affairs-committee/english-language-testing/written/36541.pdf> Annex C contains information requested in PQ 209281: <http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/home-affairs-committee/english-language-testing/written/36543.pdf> Question 25 in the following link contains

information requested in PQ 209282:

<http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/home-affairs-committee/english-language-testing/written/33662.pdf>

Monday 21 January 2019

Educational Testing Service: Contracts

Stephen Timms: [209727] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment his Department made of ETS's proposal to provide English language tests for overseas students before awarding a contract; and if he will make a statement.

Caroline Nokes: A document of requirements was published, and we considered the application against those requirements. The detail of the requirements can be found in the linked document below at Annex C: <http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/home-affairs-committee/english-language-testing/written/36543.pdf>

Stephen Timms: [209729] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many bidders other than ETS were awarded contracts to provide English language tests for overseas students on behalf of his Department.

Caroline Nokes: Question 60 in the linked document below, contains information requested in PQ 209729: <http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/home-affairs-committee/english-language-testing/written/36541.pdf>

Wednesday 23 January 2019

Educational Testing Service: Assessments

Stephen Timms: [211620] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether anyone has been prosecuted for taking a Toeic English language test as a proxy in place of the actual candidate.

Caroline Nokes: Three individuals have been prosecuted and convicted for criminal offences in connection with taking a TOEIC English Language test as a proxy in place of the actual candidate. These convictions occurred in two separate criminal investigations undertaken by the Home Office.

Stephen Timms: [211621] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what was the commencement date for the licence awarded to ETS to provide English language tests for overseas students.

Stephen Timms: [211622] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether his Department made any payment to ETS while it held its licence for English language tests for overseas students.

Stephen Timms: [211624] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, on how many occasions officials from his Department visited centres delivering the Toeic test while ETS held its licence for English language tests for overseas students.

Stephen Timms: [211625] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps his Department took to verify that ETS implemented the security requirements specified in its licence.

Caroline Nokes: The Home Affairs Committee inquiry into the Home Office's use of English-language testing in relation to the issuing of visas, with particular reference to its handling of recent allegations involving English-language test centres, can be found in the following links. Question 60, contains information requested in PQ 211621:

<http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/home-affairs-committee/english-language-testing/written/36541.pdf>

Question 49 in the following link contains information requested in PQ211624:

<http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/home-affairs-committee/english-language-testing/written/33662.pdf>

Question 100 in the following links contains information requested in PQ211625:

<http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/home-affairs-committee/english-language-testing/written/36543.pdf>

Stephen Timms: [211623] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what information his Department holds on the amount of money paid to proxies who took Toeic English language tests in place of the actual candidates.

Caroline Nokes: Criminal investigations conducted by the Home Office concerning TOEIC abuse have revealed evidence that proxy test takers were receiving money for taking the TOEIC tests on behalf of actual candidates. The amounts varied; but, evidence indicates that they were being paid in the region of £30-£50 per test.

Monday 28 January 2019

Deportation: English Language

Stephen Timms: [213885] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people have (a) been removed and (b) have left the UK as a result of English language tests administered by ETS in each of the last 12 months.

Caroline Nokes: UKVI transparency data provides details of refusal, curtailments and removal decisions in response to the abuse of secure English language testing. A link to the most recent available data is provided here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/temporary-and-permanent-migrationdata-february-2017>

The table in SELT_02 is the closest match to the information requested. The data was last published in February 2017 and only contains data to the last quarter (December 2016). ETS data is no longer published after this date.

Monday 4 February 2019

Deportation: English Language

Stephen Timms: [216918] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 4 February 2019 to Question 213885, Deportation: English Language, how many (a) refusal, (b) curtailment and (c) removal decisions have been made in respect of ETSlinked cases to date.

Caroline Nokes: UKVI transparency data provides details of refusal, curtailments and removal decisions in response to the abuse of secure English language testing. A link to the most recent available data is provided here; [https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/temporary-and-permanent-migrationdata-february-](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/temporary-and-permanent-migrationdata-february-2017)

2017 The table in SELT_02 is the closest match to the information requested. The data was last published in February 2017 and only contains data to the last quarter (December 2016). ETS data is no longer published after this date.

Stephen Timms: [216919] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 4 February 2019 to Question 213885, Deportation: English Language, how many (a) removals and (b) departures there have been in respect of ETS-linked cases to date.

Caroline Nokes: UKVI transparency data provides details of refusal, curtailments and removal decisions in response to the abuse of secure English language testing A link to the most recent available data is provided here; <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/temporary-and-permanent-migrationdata-february-2017>

The table in SELT_02 is the closest match to the information requested. The data was last published in February 2017 and only contains data to the last quarter (December 2016). ETS data is no longer published after this date.

Friday 8 February 2019

Immigration: English Language

Keith Vaz: [220069] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many English language test centres in the UK accept certified copies of passports for non-UK citizens who want to apply for leave to remain.

Caroline Nokes: There are currently no Home Office English language test centres within the UK that accept copies of passports as standard, whether certified or not. Details of what documents can be accepted as proof of identity to take the approved Secure English Language Test are published on the www.gov.uk website, which sets out the Home Office position on copies:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/544663/2016-08-08_-_SELT_candidate_identification_requirements_v1.1.pdf

The only exceptional circumstance which might apply is where the Home Office is holding the original document in which case separate arrangements are made with test centres to verify identity in liaison with Home Office officials.

Tuesday 19 February 2019

English Language: Assessments

Stephen Timms: [224291] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when he plans to complete his review of the treatment of people accused by ETS of cheating in English language tests.

Caroline Nokes: I refer to my previous answer to question 163106. In relation to reviewing live ongoing litigation we continue to work closely with applicants and the Courts to progress each individual case. Where people have made a Human Rights claim this will be considered and even if refused will generate an in country right of appeal (unless the claim is clearly unfounded).

Tuesday 26 February 2019

Overseas Students: English Language

Stephen Timms: [241985] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his oral contribution of 1 April, Official Report, Column 799, when he plans to announce his final decisions in relation to the overseas students falsely accused of cheating in TOEIC English language tests.

Caroline Nokes: Further to the answer of 1 April, my Rt Hon Friend the Home Secretary has recently met with officials to discuss the important issue of TOEIC fraud. In that meeting he asked for some further advice on particular points that had been raised by the Rt Hon Member for East Ham. Once my Rt Hon Friend has considered that further advice he will write to him and other members who have raised this issue.

Thursday 11 April 2019

House of Lords

English Language: Education

Lord Hodgson of Astley Abbotts: To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of different methods of teaching English and their effectiveness. [HL12927]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: The department does not make assessments of the methods employed by schools to teach English. Schools are free to decide on the most appropriate teaching methods and practices, depending on their pupils' needs. We strongly encourage them to use teaching methods based on sound evidence. For example, the Education Endowment Foundation publishes robust evidence on effective pedagogic practice, for example its Teaching and Learning Toolkit, which is used by around 6 out of 10 teachers in senior leadership positions when deciding which approaches to adopt to improve teaching. When it comes to the teaching of reading, the national curriculum requires the systematic teaching of phonics. There is a significant body of evidence that demonstrates that systematic phonics is a highly effective method for teaching early reading. The department has invested £26 million in a national network of English hubs to support local schools in developing their teaching practice, with a focus on systematic phonics. We are also funding 6 Phonics Partnerships and a series of Phonics Roadshows, to spread good practice and improve phonics teaching.

Monday 28 January 2019

English Language: Education

Lord Hodgson of Astley Abbotts: To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Integrated Communities Strategy green paper, published in March 2018, when they expect to announce the results of the consultation on methods of improving English language skills. [HL13509]

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: On 9 February we published the Government Response to the Integrated Communities Green Paper and an accompanying Action Plan. The new Integrated Communities Action Plan will drive forward work across government to create socially and economically stronger, more confident and integrated communities. In the Action Plan we commit to a new Cross-Government National English Language Strategy for Autumn 2019. We will engage widely with the sector to help shape its content.

Monday 18 February 2019

Libraries Taskforce

Lord Bird: To ask Her Majesty's Government what support they intend to provide to the Libraries Taskforce, now that Arts Council England has assumed responsibility for its work, and given that its current funding arrangements will end in March 2020. [HL13842]

Lord Ashton of Hyde: Government funding for the Libraries Taskforce is currently confirmed until March 2020. Arts Council England receives funding for the work streams that it is leading on behalf of the Taskforce. Decisions about the Taskforce's future are yet to be made, and as with all government spending, funding beyond this period will be considered as part of the next Spending Review.

Monday 4 March 2019

School Libraries

Lord Bird: To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that every primary and secondary school is equipped with an adequate school library. [HL13839]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: It is for individual schools to decide whether to provide and maintain a library service for their pupils. It is clear, however, that many head teachers recognise the important role school libraries play in improving literacy and encouraging pupils to read for pleasure and ensure that suitable library facilities are provided. The 2016 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study indicated that 92% of year 5 pupils in England were attending a school where there was a library. This was above the international average of 87%.

Tuesday 5 March 2019

Public Libraries: Closures

Lord Hain: To ask Her Majesty's Government how many libraries have closed in England since 2010. [HL14384]

Lord Ashton of Hyde: The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport monitors proposed changes to library service provision throughout England, but does not hold complete figures on the number of public libraries closed since 2010.

Tuesday 19 March 2019

Prisons: Arts and Literacy

Lord Bird: To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they provide (1) funding, and (2) other support to prisons to run arts and literacy programmes; if so, what; and how they assess the impact of such programmes. [HL14771]

Lord Keen of Elie: The National Criminal Justice Arts Alliance is part-funded through the Ministry of Justice grant to CLINKS. Whilst there is no separate budget to fund arts and literacy programmes, such activity has for many years been funded at local level through prison education budgets. Both the new education

commissioning routes available to governors from 1 April make explicit provision for arts, literacy and other cultural activity as a means of engaging prisoners in learning. The activity also enables progression to higher levels, develops human and social capital, and improves life skills, employability and wellbeing, thereby helping to prevent re-offending. In 2016, 'Arts, culture and innovation in criminal justice settings: a guide for commissioners', published by the National Criminal Justice Arts Alliance, set out and summarised a growing body of evidence that demonstrates the positive impact of the arts in criminal justice settings in engaging, motivating and providing opportunities for people to develop new skills, as well as discover new ways of behaving and relating to others. On Friday 22 March 2019, the Ministry of Justice published a tool which arts organisations can use to measure the intermediate outcomes from activity they deliver within the criminal justice system. This will support them in demonstrating their effectiveness to commissioners.

Tuesday 2 April 2019

Pupils: Reading

Lord Bird: To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to encourage the use of school libraries and reading for pleasure in primary and secondary schools. [HL14935]

Lord Agnew of Oulton: It is for individual schools to decide whether to provide and maintain a library service for their pupils. Many head teachers recognise the important role school libraries play in improving literacy and encouraging pupils to read for pleasure and ensure that suitable library facilities are provided. The current national curriculum, introduced from 2014, places greater emphasis on pupils developing the habit of reading widely and often, for both pleasure and information, as they move through key stage 1 into key stage 2, having first mastered the essentials of phonic decoding. Pupils should read for themselves a wide range of stories, poems, plays and information books. From 2016 the end of key stage 2 reading assessment was changed to reflect this more rigorous curriculum.

Wednesday 10 April 2019

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