

Literacy Today No. 94

December 2020

News

1 **Controversy over Phonics Screen Check grows**

The Government's policy of testing Year 1 pupils with its Phonics Screening Check, originally meant as a light touch assessment but increasingly being seen as part of the high stakes testing regime that is integral to the Government's accountability model of schools, has run into further controversy.

2 **New campaign calls for new statutory "right to learn" throughout life**

Academics, politicians and campaigners have launched a "Right 2 Learn" Campaign to call for a new entitlement that would enable access to skills and learning courses for both younger and older adult learners.

More Than a Score research on Phonics

Reaction to the Government's compulsory Phonics Check for Year 2 pupils, *Government Tests In A Pandemic: Getting In The Way Of What Children Need Right Now*.

3 **Extra support for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and young people**

Children and young people from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities will receive extra educational support under proposals outlined by the Communities Minister, Lord Greenhalgh.

Adults to gain new skills on 400 free courses

The Government has announced that tens of thousands of adults will be able to benefit from almost 400 free courses in 2021, in the first development in the Lifetime Skills Guarantee.

4 **Free support for embedding maths and English in apprenticeships**

The Education and Training Foundation organised a series of embedding maths and English in apprenticeships interactive webinars.

5 **Public library guidance from Scotland on COVID-19**

Scotland published advice and guidance for public libraries to help them reopen as safely as possible in the face of the COVID coronavirus pandemic.

Research

6 **The administration of the Phonics Screening Check in autumn term 2020 to Year 2 children in primary schools in England**

Professor Margaret M. Clark OBE looks at the Phonics Screening Check, which was not administered in June 2020 as most children were not in school. However, the Government intends to reintroduce the check in June 2021 for Year 1 children. In an original research article for *Literacy Today*, Professor Clark questions some of the Government's assumptions that lie behind this.

8 **Early language learning linked to school maths performance**

Pre-schoolers who spend more time discussing letters and sounds with their parents are better at reading and mathematics when they start school, according to a Nuffield-funded report from the Liverpool Early Number Skills Project at Liverpool John Moores University.

9 **Local government early years peer review programme hailed in independent evaluation**

An independent external evaluation has found that the Early Years Local Government Programme has been instrumental in helping councils shape priorities and improve services and prospects for children and families.

Document review

10 **International Early Learning and Child Well-being Study**

The *International Early Learning and Child Well-being Study* (IELS), from the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER).

Parliament - Committees

11 **Left behind White pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds**

The Education Select Committee held an evidence session on left behind white working class pupils on Tuesday 3 November. Those giving evidence included the chief executive of the National Literacy Trust.

13 **Prison education**

The Education Committee announced a new inquiry, into prison education. Prisoners have notoriously low levels of literacy, which prison education struggles to address.

Parliament - Debates

14 **No debates**

There were no parliamentary debates on literacy or libraries since the last issue of *Literacy Today*.

Parliament - Questions

15 **Answers to written parliamentary questions**

Answers to written parliamentary questions on literacy from the Department for Education, the Department for Digital Culture Media and Sport, the Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government, the Ministry of Justice, H M Treasury and the House of Lords.

34 **Publisher details**

Publisher details and subscription information.