

The future content of courses on teaching early reading in initial teacher education in England: evidence-based or controlled by government?

By Professor Margaret M. Clark OBE

In this original research article written for Literacy Today, Professor Margaret Clark explores the issue of the future content of courses in teaching early reading and asks whether the future is to be policy determined by evidence or government ideology.

Since 2006 there has been a growing insistence by government in England that in the teaching of reading, primary schools must focus on systematic synthetic phonics, not just as one of a range of strategies, but as the method of teaching all children to read. In 2012 it was announced that Ofsted would start a series of unannounced inspections of providers of initial teacher education focusing solely on the training of phonics teaching. Over the following years, the government, backed by Ofsted, has increased its hold over policy and practice on early reading in state primary schools, in institutions providing initial teacher education and courses offering further professional development for teachers. Claimed to be an evidence-based policy, contrary evidence has been ignored. A Phonics Screening Check (PSC) was introduced in 2012 as a mandatory assessment for all children in state primary schools in England at the end of year 1 (for children about six-years-of-age). This assessment of children's ability to decode has become a high stakes test with a school's percentage pass a major criterion in Ofsted inspections. Ofsted requires that institutions involved in initial teacher education in their courses present systematic synthetic phonics as the way to teach all children to read.

The education policy analysed here refers to England, not Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland as education is a devolved power in The United Kingdom. However, similar moves have been apparent in both Australia and in the United States (See Allington, 2002 and Clark 2017 and 2018). In all three countries an increasing role in policy decisions on early literacy is being played by consultants, to the exclusion of professionals. Many of these consultants have commercial interests in producing materials to implement the policies.

The future content of courses on early reading in initial teacher education in England

In January 2020, Ofsted issued a consultation document on initial teacher education with the new framework and handbook to be published in June 2020 and implemented in September 2020 (Ofsted, 2020a). Responses to the consultation document were to be submitted by 3 April 2020. There are numerous statements in the draft document referring to the need for institutions to require systematic synthetic phonics as the only way to teach early reading (Clark 2020a and b). One such statement was: "An institution will be deemed Inadequate if: Primary training does not ensure that trainees only learn to teach reading using systematic synthetic phonics." (44) (Ofsted, 2020a)

In a recent article I reported research based on observations in classrooms on the effects of the government phonics policy on early years classrooms in primary schools in England (Clark, 2020a). I also drew attention to the reservations of many teachers and parents on the Phonics Screening Check based on our research (Clark and Glazzard, 2018). In a further article I summarised the findings of our independent research from a survey which received 38 responses together with interviews of ten of the respondents, showing the constraints already felt by those involved in initial teacher education (Clark, 2020b). In that

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article I included a number of quotations from the consultation document. I expressed concern that should these changes be implemented these would place even greater constraints on the content of literacy courses on institutions in England if institutions wished to retain the right to train teachers. I also pointed out that in the consultation document there were no such edicts for any other subjects in primary or secondary schools. Our research was published in April 2020 and can be read and downloaded from the Newman University website (Clark et al, 2020). The article summarising the research is also available on that site and an announcement about the research and the summary have been sent to Ofsted and members of The Education Select Committee. On 10 June 2020 written questions were asked in parliament referring to our research, whether it had implications for policy and whether there were lessons we could learn from other countries. In his replies Nick Gibb, the School Standards Minister, responded that: 'Providers in their training are therefore obliged to ensure their courses will ensure their trainees are able to demonstrate a clear understanding of systematic synthetic phonics'. In his lengthy responses he ignored the question as to whether trainees might profit from learning approaches to literacy which have been successful in other countries and other parts of UK (see *Education Journal* Issue 416: 67).

It would appear that, decoding, and in particular synthetic phonics, and preparation for the Phonics Screening Check may continue to dominate reading in reception classes and years 1 and 2 in England, and teachers will have had their initial teacher education courses, and their observations in schools, dominated by synthetic phonics.

Evidence on recent developments in initial teacher education in England

Evidence from professionals involved in initial teacher education and from newly qualified teachers reveals that many institutions involved in initial teacher education have already narrowed their literacy courses to comply with government policy and Ofsted requirements. Hendry in a recent article reported a study in which she observed teachers in training and interviewed them as they became newly qualified teachers (Hendry, 2020). Her study commenced in 2013 which she claims marked an important change in the delivery of ITE in England: "University-led postgraduate certificate in education (PGCE) routes were required to increase the number of days that student teachers spent in school from 90 to 120 in their 38 week courses.... This change reflected government scepticism about universities' contribution to teacher preparation...and an emphasis on school led professional training rather than education for future teachers... As a consequence, university based time to engage with theory and pedagogy for teaching early reading was limited and the role of the school-based mentor became increasingly significant." (Hendry, 2020: 58)

In her study she found that: "The participants' experiences highlighted the focus on phonics teaching as the main priority in the teaching of reading in the 20 schools involved in the study. As a consequence the student teachers received limited examples of wider pedagogy and a rich environment for teaching reading....With one or two exceptions reading experiences were focused on phonetically decodable texts and phonics schemes."

She concluded that: "In essence when assessment and curriculum guidance prioritise one method for teaching reading, universities must work with schools, students and NQTs to re-establish a broader understanding of what it means to be an effective teacher of early reading." (Hendry: 67)

Research evidence relevant to the government's synthetic phonics policy

Learning to be Literate: Insights from research for policy and practice, Part IV has evidence from research relevant to the questions posed below (Clark, 2016). Several of my recent articles critiquing government policy insisting synthetic phonics be mandated as the only way to teach early reading in primary schools in England were reprinted in a Special Issue of *Education Journal* (Clark, 2019). In two edited books (Clark, 2017 and 2018), there are contributors from the United Kingdom, the United States, the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. A further two articles (Clark, 2020a and b) summarise more recent research. Below are a number of questions where claims have been made by the government yet relevant research has gone unacknowledged.

1. Is there one best method of teaching reading to all children? There is a lack of such evidence. See chapter 14 in Clark, 2016 and chapter 6 in Clark 2017.
2. Did the Rose report in 2006 provide convincing evidence for the superiority of synthetic phonics? See chapter 13 in Clark 2016 and chapters 7 and 8 in Clark 2017, also Torgerson et al. 2019 for the latest review of the research evidence suggesting there is not convincing evidence for synthetic phonics as the best method.
3. Is there evidence that synthetic phonics should be the only method of teaching reading to all children? There is extensive evidence against that view (see Clark, 2016).

In the most recent of a series of reviews of the experimental research on phonics, Torgerson and her co-authors, repeat their assertion that Rose overstated the case for synthetic phonics and that: “there remains insufficient evidence to justify a ‘phonics only’ teaching policy’.... and that there is little evidence of the superiority of one phonics approach over any other.” Torgerson et al., 2019: 234.

In 2005-6 Greg Brooks was a member of Jim Rose’s committee and with Carole Torgerson a member of a team contracted to produce a systematic review of the research evidence on phonics (see Brooks, 2017).

4. Are academics anti phonics? This was not the case in 2006 when the government in England was still making this claim. See Appendices I and 2 in Clark 2017 where the response to that claim by the national literacy associations in the United Kingdom and Australia are reproduced.
5. Was phonics part of the teaching of reading in classrooms in England prior to 2012? A large national research project based on observation in classrooms showed that a significant amount of time in early years classrooms was devoted to a diverse range of phonics activities in England even by 1994. Such evidence was disregarded, according to Bridie Raban who directed the research, and for political reasons. See Raban, chapter 10 in Clark, 2018 where she compares developments in England and Australia.
6. Do the results of PIRLS 2016 prove the success of the government’s policy as these ten-year-old children were the first to have sat the Phonics Screening Check in 2012? These claims seem exaggerated as discussed in Part II of Clark, 2018.

There is little evidence of any improvement in attainment other than on the actual check that can clearly be attributed to this policy, though the government does cite the results of PIRLS 2016. The minister made no reference to cautions in the reports on PIRLS against drawing causal relationships from the data, nor possible alternative explanations for this rise in ranking from joint 10th to joint 8th (Clark, 2018, Part II).

7. Is either the research in Clackmannanshire in Scotland in 2005 or The National Reading Panel Report in the United States in 2000 a sufficient evidence-base to justify adoption of synthetic phonics as the only method of teaching all children to read? These are the two researches cited by Nick Gibb as the evidence-base for adopting synthetic phonics as the only way to teach children to read and Ofsted also cites the Clackmannanshire research. These researches have both been criticised by researchers, the Clackmannanshire study by Ellis and Moss 2014, and the evidence is summarised in Clark, 2016 and 2019. Allington, in his edited book has contributions from members of the panel expressing concern at the way the phonics aspect had been reported (Allington, 2002 and 2018, Clark, 2016 and 2019)

8. Do the results and effects of the Phonics Screening Check justify its continuation as a statutory assessment, and does it provide useful diagnostic information? The majority of the teachers and parents in our research project did not feel the PSC should continue as a statutory assessment, criticising many aspects of it. (2018). While consulting on other aspects of assessment policy, the Department for Education has not consulted either teachers or parents as to whether they regard the PSC as providing valuable information, or about whether the PSC should remain statutory (See Clark and Glazzard, 2018 and in particular Appendix 1 on lack of consultation).

9. Should all institutions training primary teachers be required to insist that their literacy courses promote synthetic phonics as the way to teach all children to read? (See Clark et al., 2020) and recommendations by the Education Endowment Foundation below.

A balanced policy for early reading

Like most academics I do not deny the importance of phonics in learning to read. However, there is evidence that this is better practised within context rather than in isolation. Time spent decoding words in isolation, or as in many schools in England, on practising pseudo words to enable schools to achieve a high percentage pass on the PSC, might be better spent studying the features of real written English.

In a recent valuable guidance publication for teachers, the Education Endowment Foundation lists key recommendations for the teaching of literacy at Key Stage 1 (EEF, 2017). 'EEF aims to support teachers and senior leaders by providing evidence-based resources designed to improve practice and boost learning' (see educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk). It is therefore perverse that the government ignores its evidence-based recommendations for effective teaching of reading. Three of the key recommendations are:

1. Develop pupils' speaking and listening skills and wider understanding of language.
2. Use a balanced and engaging approach to developing reading, which integrates both decoding and comprehension skills.
3. Effectively implement a systematic phonics programme.

Note the emphasis is on 'integration of decoding and comprehension' and that the reference is to a systematic phonics programme, not to synthetic phonics as the only approach as currently required in England.

Given the extensive research which points to the need for a balanced approach to early reading development, it is crucial that teacher education courses support trainees to critically interrogate government literacy policy and that trainees are introduced to approaches that have been successful in other countries.

The future content of courses on early reading in initial teacher education in England

After the completion of our research, in January 2020, Ofsted issued a consultation document on initial teacher education with the new policy to be announced in June 2020 and implemented in September 2020 (Ofsted, 2020a). Responses to the consultation document were to be submitted by 3 April 2020. There are numerous statements in the consultation document referring to the need for institutions to require systematic synthetic phonics as the only way to teach early reading. I quoted a number of these statements in Clark, 2020a and b. Most of these statements remain in the final document, with only minor changes in wording, though not in intent. One such statement repeated in virtually identical words in the final version is: "In primary phase programmes, training ensures that trainees learn to teach early reading using systematic synthetic phonics as outlined in the ITT core content framework and that trainees are not taught to teach competing approaches to early reading. (Ofsted, 2020b: 38). NB in the consultation document this was followed by 'that are not supported by the most up-to-date evidence...Ofsted, 2020b 39)."

The statement is now followed on the same page by 'Trainees are taught the importance of providing pupils with enough structured practice to secure fluency in both reading and numeracy work'. Note the emphasis is on 'fluency', rather than understanding.

An institution will be deemed Inadequate if: "EY and primary training does not ensure that trainees only learn to teach decoding using systematic synthetic phonics as part of early reading (Ofsted, 2020b: 44)."

In the consultation document, and in the final document there are no such edicts for any other subjects in primary or secondary schools. Indeed, No references are cited justifying this policy, removing as it does from professionals any freedom of choice in their presentation of literacy. Associated Ofsted/ DfE documents have long, and in some cases dated reference lists. None of the references refer specifically to evidence on synthetic phonics (DfE, 2019). It would appear that now and in the future, decoding, and in particular synthetic phonics, and preparation for the Phonics Screening Check may dominate reading in reception classes and years 1 and 2 in England, and recently trained teachers will have had their initial teacher education courses in the institutions, and their observations in schools, dominated by synthetic phonics.

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Ofsted states in the final document, as in the consultation document, that systematic synthetic phonics should be the only method advocated for teaching decoding in early reading (see pages 38, 44, 47, 49, 53, 55 for quotations) There were over 300 responses to the survey on the consultation document and it is claimed that these were in general favourable. Concern was expressed by some respondents on the focus on systematic synthetic phonics. However, the response is that: 'Teaching SSP is a requirement of the primary national curriculum' and that 'the clear expectation in the ITE inspection is that partnerships will train trainees to teach SSP in line with government expectations' (Ofsted, 2020c: 12).

There is however a conflict in the final document as it is also stated that an institution will be regarded as inadequate if: 'Trainees do not know about up-to-date or pertinent research and so are unable to apply this knowledge in their subject and phase' Ofsted, 2020b: 44).

Furthermore, there is a clear statement that: Ofsted does **not** advocate that any particular teaching approach should be used exclusively with trainees (Ofsted, 2020b: 22.)

I have here listed issues on which there is research evidence that challenges the stance taken by both the government and Ofsted and cited sources where students could evaluate these researches for themselves. This could form the basis for a research module in institutions training early years and primary school teachers. Trainees could then emerge from training as professionals equipped to critique new policies but also with the expertise and knowledge to evaluate current policy. They would also be made aware, and appreciate the very different literacy policies in other successful countries. Only then could they become true professionals with the knowledge and information to better critique the repeated claims by the current government and on occasion Ofsted that current policy is evidence based and that all criticism are merely ideology.

Conclusions

The proposed changes in initial teacher education in England in September 2020 will mean that:

- Tutors involved in early reading courses in initial teacher education will retain little control over the content of their literacy courses.
- Early years and primary teachers will not know about important aspects of early reading.
- Future primary teachers may have little awareness of the approach to literacy teaching in other countries, or even that the policies may be different (even in Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland).

One must question the role of Ofsted in England and whether it remains an independent non-ministerial government department reporting to parliament or as Scott suggested merely an enforcer of government policy (Scott, 2018).

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Written Questions in the House of Commons and House of Lords relevant to the government policy on the National Curriculum/Early Reading in England, 10 June to 16 July 2020

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Preet Kaur Gill MP asked three questions on Literacy: Teaching Methods [53560, 53561, 53562] on 10 June, all responses were by Nick Gibb, School Standards Minister. She asked about possible implications of the research by Newman University published in April 2020. She also asked if there were any merits in teacher trainees learning about approaches to literacy which have been successful in other countries other than systematic synthetic phonics.

The Government's policy on early reading dictates that teachers in England use systematic synthetic phonics as the only method of teaching all children to read. From September 2020 Ofsted will require institutions involved in initial teacher education in their literacy courses to adopt this same policy, otherwise they will be deemed inadequate. In the responses to all six questions listed below it is claimed, however, that the knowledge and expertise of teachers determines both what they teach and how they teach it. Why then does the government not respect the knowledge and expertise of reading specialists? The Newman University Research Report, Preet Kaur Gill's questions and related articles can be read and downloaded from: <https://www.newman.ac.uk/knowledge-base/independent-research-into-the-impact-of-the-systematic-synthetic-phonics-government-policy-on-literacy-courses-at-institutions-delivering-initial-teacher-education-in-england>.

Four MPs posed written questions in the House of Commons on the History Curriculum in relation to Black Studies, all these were answered by Nick Gibb. Two further questions were asked in the House of Lords and the responses were by Baroness Berridge.

The following were the four MPs who posed written questions on Black History in the House of Commons:

Afzal Khan [61785, 61786, 61788, 61789] on 29 June.

Darren Henry [66228] on 7 July.

Harriet Harman [70951] on 13 July.

Fleur Anderson [73120] on 16 July.

The two Lords who posed written questions in the House of Lords were Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick on 6 July and Lord Taylor of Warwick on 8 July.

The following is part of the reply to the written question by Darren Henry and similar wording is in all the other responses:The national curriculum is a framework setting out the content of what the Department expects schools to cover in each subject. The curriculum does not set out how curriculum subjects or topics within the subjects should be taught. The Department believes teachers should be able to use their own knowledge and expertise to determine how they teach their pupils, and to make choices about what they teach.....

For ease of reference, all these questions are reproduced in the next section, with the headlines in purple rather than red for ease of identification.

The following written questions on libraries and literacy were answered in Parliament, from the time of the last issue of *Literacy Today* to the present.
The period covered is April to July 2020.

House of Commons

Department for Education

Basic Skills: Standards

Emma Hardy: [33700] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make it his policy for the assessment of Functional Skills that where testing is not possible tutors are able to determine where a learner has achieved the requisite competency.

Gillian Keegan: On 9 April, the Department for Education and Ofqual published details in relation to the assessment approaches for vocational and technical qualifications. This sets out that learners due to take assessments for Functional Skills qualifications before the end of the summer will receive a calculated result. Further information is available at the following link:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/direction-issued-to-the-chief-regulatorof-ofqual>.

Tuesday 21 April 2020

Public Libraries: Coronavirus

Caroline Lucas: [41416] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the effect of the loss of access to public library computer terminals during the covid-19 outbreak on the (a) education and (b) mental wellbeing of autistic children and young dependent adults from households with no access to a computer or smartphones.

Vicky Ford: During the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, access to a digital device is important to enable children and young people to access education provision and support. We recognise that they can also be an important means of young people maintaining connections with others, accessing sources of support and for maintaining wellbeing.

Access to a digital device can often be particularly valuable for autistic children and young people and we appreciate the challenges for those who usually access a device in the community or at their education setting. The government has announced measures to provide laptops and tablets and connectivity support for disadvantaged children and young people who do not currently have access to them. This includes disadvantaged Year 10 pupils, care leavers, and children with a social worker.

People aged 16 to 19 without a suitable device for education will be eligible for support through the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund. Further detail on these measures can be found at the following link:
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/get-help-with-technology-for-remote-education-duringcoronavirus-covid-19>.

Monday 11 May 2020

Adult Education: Disadvantaged

Chi Onwurah: [42023] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to increase participation rates in adult education by people in lower socio-economic groups.

Gillian Keegan: The department recognises the importance of adult education in supporting the economy and tackling disadvantage. Participation in adult education will only become more important as people live longer lives and automation and technological change the profile of the jobs market. We are continuing to invest in adult education to support people from all backgrounds. Most recently, we announced an extra £3 billion, over the course of this Parliament, for a new National Skills Fund (NSF) to help people learn new skills and prepare for the economy of the future.

The NSF will transform the lives of people who are not in work or who wish to improve their qualifications as well as people who are keen to return to work from raising a family or who wish to change to a different career. It will not only make this country more prosperous but will also make it fairer. We are also continuing to invest in the Adult Education Budget (AEB) (we are investing £1.34 billion in 2019/20 and 2020/21).

The AEB fully funds or co-funds skills provision for eligible adults aged 19 and above from pre-entry to level 3 in order to support them to gain the skills that they need for work, an apprenticeship or further learning. Through the AEB, providers are able to fully fund learners who are employed and in receipt of a low wage and who cannot contribute towards the cost of co-funding fees. The AEB also funds colleges and providers to help adult learners to overcome barriers which prevent them from taking part in learning. This includes Learner Support, which supports learners with a specific financial hardship.

For the 2019/20 academic year, we are continuing to support those in work on low incomes to access the AEB through a trial, which allows providers to fully fund eligible learners on low wages. This directly supports social mobility by enabling those that have moved out of unemployment, and are low paid or low-skilled, to further progress.

Tuesday 12 May 2020

Literacy: Teaching Methods

Preet Kaur Gill: [53560] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the report published by Newman University in April 2020 entitled, Independent research into the impact of the systematic synthetic phonics government policy on literacy courses at institutions delivering initial teacher education in England; and if he will make a statement.

Nick Gibb: All trainee teachers must meet the Teachers' Standards (2011) in order to achieve Qualified Teacher Status, including for those training to teach early reading to demonstrate a clear understanding of systematic synthetic phonics. The Initial Teacher Training (ITT) Core Content Framework (2019) sets out a core minimum entitlement that every trainee must receive.

To ensure that all trainees receive this entitlement, the new ITT Core Content Framework is mandatory (through the ITT Criteria) so all providers will need to ensure their ITT programmes encompass the entitlement in full. The framework specifies that trainees must learn that systematic synthetic phonics is the most effective approach for teaching pupils to decode. The framework does not set out the full curriculum for trainee teachers, ITT providers may wish to integrate additional analysis and critique of theory, research and expert practice as they deem appropriate.

The Department contracted the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) to provide an independent review of all the peer-reviewed evidence on what constitutes good teaching. This includes the latest evidence and research on approaches to literacy. There is sound evidence that systematic synthetic phonics is a highly effective method for teaching early reading. The Department is clear that in future we will review the ITT Core Content Framework and the ECF together in light of the best evidence, as it emerges.

In 2016, England achieved its highest ever score in reading, moving from joint 10th place to joint 8th place in the International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) ranking. This follows a greater focus on reading in the primary curriculum and a particular focus on phonics. In 2019, 82% of pupils in Year 1 met the expected standard in the phonics screening check, compared to just 58% when the check was introduced in 2012. In 2018 the Department launched the English Hubs Programme, which supports nearly 3,000 schools across England to improve their teaching of reading through systematic synthetic phonics, early language development and reading for pleasure.

Preet Kaur Gill: [53561] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the report by Newman University entitled Independent research into the impact of the systematic synthetic phonics government policy on literacy courses at institutions delivering initial teacher education in England, published April 2020, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the conclusions from that report (a) that there needs to be a balanced approach to early reading development and (b) that any divergence from Government and Ofsted policies which focus on systematic synthetic phonics will become more difficult if the proposed draft initial teacher education (ITE) framework is ratified.

Preet Kaur Gill: [53562] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of teacher trainees learning approaches to literacy which have been successful in other countries and other parts of the UK other than systematic synthetic phonics.

Nick Gibb: The Initial Teacher Training (ITT) Core Content Framework (2019) sets out a core minimum entitlement that every trainee must receive. To ensure all trainees receive this entitlement, the new ITT Core Content Framework is mandatory (through the ITT Criteria) so all providers will need to ensure their ITT programmes encompass the entitlement in full.

The framework does not set out the full curriculum for trainee teachers and it leaves room for providers to integrate additional analysis and critique of theory, research and expert practice as they deem appropriate. In designing their curricula, providers should carefully craft the experiences and activities detailed in the ITT Core Content Framework into a coherent sequence that supports trainees to succeed in the classroom.

It is important to stress that the ITT Core Content Framework does not replace the Teachers' Standards (2011), which remain as the bar that all teachers need to meet in order to achieve Qualified Teacher Status. Providers are therefore obliged to ensure their courses will ensure their trainees are able to demonstrate a clear understanding of systematic synthetic phonics. The department contracted Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) to provide an independent review of all the peer reviewed evidence on what makes good teaching. This includes the latest evidence and research on approaches to literacy.

There is sound evidence that systematic phonics is a highly effective method for teaching early reading. In 2016, England achieved its highest ever score in reading, moving from joint 10th to joint 8th in the progress in International Reading Literacy Study ranking. This follows a greater focus on reading in the primary curriculum, and a particular focus on phonics. In 2019, 82% of pupils in Year 1 met the expected standard in the phonics screening check, compared to just 58% when the check was introduced in 2012. In 2018 we launched a £26.3m English Hubs Programme. The English Hubs programme is supporting nearly 3000 schools across England to improve their teaching of reading through systematic synthetic phonics, early language development, and reading for pleasure.

Wednesday 10 June 2020

Primary Education: Assessments

Caroline Lucas: [53381] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to his letter to the honorable Member for Brighton, Pavilion dated April 7 2020, reference 2020-0008728POGibb, if he will publish the basis on which he determined that the Information Commissioner's Office was content with the

proposals for the reception baseline assessment's use of data; what assessment he has made of the compatibility of the contents of that letter with the statement made by the Information Commissioner on 14 May 2020 that its review of the Reception Baseline Assessment's use of data was still ongoing and that it had not made a definitive decision or made a comment whether we are content or not with this"; and if he will make a statement.

Nick Gibb: The Department submitted an Article 36(4) consultation with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) in December 2019, where it was confirmed that the ICO would continue to monitor the reception baseline assessment (RBA) through its relationship with the officials working on the national pupil database (NPD). The Department is unaware of any statement made by the Information Commissioner on 14 May 2020 and we have confirmed with the ICO that no statement about the RBA was made on this date. No comment can therefore be made on this. Information on the RBA and the RBA privacy notices can be found here: <https://www.nfer.ac.uk/forschools/participate-in-research/information-about-the-201920-reception-baselineassessment-pilot/>.

Monday 15 June 2020

Primary Education: Assessments

Tim Loughton: [60644] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, for what reasons the results of Reception Baseline Assessments will not be shared with the school attended by the pupil until that child is about to leave primary school.

Nick Gibb: The Department has always been clear that the reception baseline assessment (RBA) is not a diagnostic assessment and should not be used to track or group individual children or hold early years settings to account. Data gathered from the assessment will only be used to create a baseline for school-level progress measures and will not be shared with schools, teachers, or parents. However, teachers will receive a series of short, narrative statements on how each child did at that time, which can be used to inform teaching.

Monday 22 June 2020

History: Education

Afzal Khan: [61785] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if his Departments will revise the national curriculum to consider Black British history and the history of racism and discrimination in the British empire.

Afzal Khan: [61786] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what books by non-white authors are currently required reading on the (a) primary and (b) secondary school curriculum.

Afzal Khan: [61788] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that textbooks used in the national curricula are (a) race conscious and (b) inclusive.

Afzal Khan: [61789] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the extent and value of teaching of Black and minority ethnic experience in the national curriculum.

Nick Gibb: Racism in all its forms is abhorrent and has no place in our society. Schools play a significant role in teaching children about the importance of having respect and tolerance for all cultures. The Department

is committed to an inclusive education system which recognises and embraces diversity and supports all students to tackle racism and have the knowledge and tools to do so.

The national curriculum is a framework setting out the content of what the Department expects schools to cover in each subject. The curriculum does not set out how curriculum subjects, or topics within the subjects, should be taught. The Department believes teachers should be able to use their own knowledge and expertise to determine how they teach their students, and to make choices about what they teach and the resources they use, this also includes textbooks.

The development and content of textbooks is a matter for individual publishers rather than the Department. The Department has not made an assessment of the impact of the National Curriculum on any specific group. As part of a broad and balanced curriculum, students should be taught about different societies, and how different groups have contributed to the development of Britain, and this can include the voices and experiences of Black and minority ethnic people.

The flexibility within the history curriculum means that there is the opportunity for teachers to teach about Black and minority ethnic history across the spectrum of themes and eras set out in the curriculum. There is scope to include Black and minority ethnic history and experience in other curriculums, such as in:

- Citizenship: At Key Stage 4, students should be taught about the diverse national, regional, religious and ethnic identities in the United Kingdom and the need for mutual respect and understanding.
- PSHE: Schools have flexibility to teach topics such as Black history as part of their Personal, Social, Health and Economic education (PSHE) programme and through the introduction of Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education students will be taught the importance of respectful relationships in particular how stereotypes, based on sex, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation or disability, can cause damage.

Monday 29 June 2020

Literacy: Teaching Methods

Olivia Blake: [63553] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, for what reasons Ofsted's draft Initial Teacher Education Inspection Framework and Handbook, published as part of his Department's consultation on that document, bans the use of competing approaches in early reading teaching; and for what reasons Ofsted changed its position in the Initial Teacher Training Core Content Framework which only mandated the use of systematic synthetic phonics to teach decoding in early reading.

Nick Gibb: There is sound evidence that systematic phonics is a highly effective method for teaching early reading. The evidence indicates that the teaching of phonics is most effective when combined with a language-rich curriculum to develop children's positive attitudes towards literacy. The Initial Teacher Training (ITT) Core Content Framework was published by the Department in November 2019 and is mandatory from September 2020. It makes clear that, in line with the Teachers' Standards (2011), it is essential for all teachers of early reading to have a clear understanding of systematic synthetic phonics. Ofsted are responsible for inspecting ITT provision and between 27 January and 4 April they held a public consultation on proposals related to their new Initial Teacher Education Inspection Handbook. The new handbook sets out how ITT provision will be inspected and was published on 24 June 2020 alongside Ofsted's consultation response. For primary and secondary phases, ITT providers must ensure that their curricula provide the minimum entitlement to training as outlined in the ITT Core Content Framework. England achieved its highest ever score in reading in 2016, moving from joint 10th to joint 8th in the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) rankings. This follows a greater focus on reading in the primary curriculum, and a particular focus on phonics. These are the first international assessment results from a cohort of pupils who have experienced changes in primary curriculum and assessment introduced since the 2010 election.

Monday 29 June 2020

Teachers: Racial Discrimination

Afzal Khan: [61783] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what training his Department requires of (a) prospective teachers and (b) teachers on anti-racism and racial literacy.

Afzal Khan: [61784] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what anti-racism training his Department provides as part of teacher's continued professional development.

Nick Gibb: The new Initial Teacher Training (ITT) Core Content Framework sets out a core minimum entitlement for all trainees of what should be covered during their teacher training. The Government does not prescribe the curriculum of ITT courses, it remains for individual providers to design courses that are appropriate to the needs of trainees and for the subject, phase and age range that the trainees will be teaching.

Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) will continue to be awarded at the end of ITT against the Teachers' Standards (2011). The Standards set out the key elements of effective teaching and the minimum expectations for the professional practice and conduct of teachers. In order to be awarded QTS, trainees must demonstrate that they satisfy all of the Teaching Standards at the appropriate level, including the requirement that they have a clear understanding of the needs of all pupils and set goals that stretch and challenge young people of all backgrounds and abilities. High-quality professional development is important for teachers at all stages of their careers to ensure they receive appropriate support and to enable them constantly to improve their practice.

Decisions relating to teachers' professional development rests with schools, headteachers, and teachers themselves, as they are in the best position to judge their own requirements. While teachers and headteachers are responsible for their own professional development, we recognise that it is of vital importance teachers are sensitive to issues of race and discrimination at all times. Teachers are required to always meet the Teachers' Standards and their training and development should support them to do this. Part two of the Standards refer to 'Personal and Professional Conduct' and includes the requirement to always show tolerance of and respect for the rights of others.

Monday 29 June 2020

Literacy: Ethnic Groups

Afzal Khan: [63497] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent estimate he has made of (a) child and (b) adult literacy levels by ethnic group.

Nick Gibb: The most relevant measure that we have for children is based on Key Stage 2 reading results. These are broken down by ethnicity and are available here: <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/education-skills-and-training/7-to11-years-old/reading-attainments-for-children-aged-7-to-11-key-stage-2/latest>.

For adults, there is a breakdown of literacy skills by ethnicity in Table 2.25 of our England national report of the Survey of Adult Skills 2012 Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) – full report available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/international-survey-of-adult-skills-2012>.

Wednesday 1 July 2020

History: Curriculum

Darren Henry: [66228] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department has taken to include Black British history in the national curriculum for primary and secondary school pupils.

Nick Gibb: The Department is committed to an inclusive education system which recognises and embraces diversity and supports all pupils and students to tackle racism and have the knowledge and tools to do so. The national curriculum is a framework setting out the content of what the Department expects schools to cover in each subject.

The curriculum does not set out how curriculum subjects, or topics within the subjects, should be taught. The Department believes teachers should be able to use their own knowledge and expertise to determine how they teach their pupils, and to make choices about what they teach. As part of a broad and balanced curriculum, pupils should be taught about different societies, and how different groups have contributed to the development of Britain, and this can include the voices and experience of Black people.

The flexibility within the history curriculum means that Black British history can already be included in the teaching of the curriculum. For example, at key stage 1, schools can teach about the lives of key Black historical figures such as Mary Seacole or others; at key stage 2, pupils can be taught about Black Romans, as part of teaching that era in history or Black history within the requirement for a study of an aspect or theme in British history that extends pupils' chronological knowledge beyond 1066; and at key stage 3, we give an example for a more in-depth study on the topic of the impact through time of the migration of people to, from and within the British Isles, and this key stage can include the development and end of the British Empire and Britain's transatlantic slave trade, its effects and its eventual abolition. Additionally, local history is an element across key stages. The teaching of Black history need not be limited to these examples.

Tuesday 7 July 2020

Black Curriculum

Harriet Harman: [70951] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will implement the recommendations of the Black Curriculum.

Nick Gibb: The Department has responded directly to The Black Curriculum's campaign. The reply sets out in detail how the history curriculum already enables the teaching of Black history, as do other curriculums across other subject areas. The substance of our reply to The Black Curriculum is based on the national curriculum's history programmes of study, available at the link below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-historyprogrammes-of-study>.

The national curriculum is a framework setting out the content of what the Department expects schools to cover in each subject. The curriculum does not set out how curriculum subjects, or topics within the subjects, should be taught. The Department believes teachers should be able to use their own knowledge and expertise to determine how they teach their pupils, and to make choices about what they teach. As part of a broad and balanced curriculum, pupils should be taught about different societies, and how different groups have contributed to the development of Britain, and this can include the voices and experience of Black people. The flexibility within the history curriculum means that Black British history can already be included.

Monday 13 July 2020

History: Education

Fleur Anderson: [73120] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with external organisations on the inclusion of Black British history in the national curriculum.

Nick Gibb: On behalf of the Department, my officials have discussed the flexible scope of the history curriculum with a range of organisations such as the Historical Association, Runnymede Trust and The Black Curriculum. The national curriculum is a framework setting out the content of what the Department expects schools to cover in each subject. The curriculum does not set out how curriculum subjects, or topics within the subjects, should be taught.

The Department believes teachers should be able to use their own knowledge and expertise to determine how they teach their pupils, and to make choices about what they teach. As part of a broad and balanced curriculum, pupils should be taught about different societies, and how different groups have contributed to the development of Britain, and this can include the voices and experience of Black people.

The flexibility within the history curriculum means that there is the opportunity for teachers to teach about Black history across the spectrum of themes and eras set out in the curriculum. We will continue to explore what more we can do to support the teaching of Black history and welcome the perspectives of committed individuals and groups, building on previous discussions.

Thursday 16 July 2020

English Language: Education

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [73103] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of implementing recommendation 68 of the House of Lords Select Committee on Citizenship and Civic Participation's 2018 report in relation to funding for ESOL teaching.

Gillian Keegan: This government remains committed to the 2019 manifesto commitment to boost English language teaching to empower existing migrants and help promote integration into society. In 2018/19, the Department for Education supported 120,500 adult learners to improve their levels of English through fully and part-funded English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses.

The Department for Education funds ESOL through the Adult Education Budget (AEB). Approximately half the AEB is devolved to 6 Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs) and delegated to the Mayor of London acting through the Greater London Authority (GLA). The authorities are responsible for the provision of adult education, including ESOL, and allocation of the AEB in their local areas. The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) is responsible for the remaining AEB in non-devolved areas.

In non-devolved areas colleges and adult learning providers have the freedom and flexibility to determine how they use their AEB allocation to meet the needs of their communities and this includes planning, with local partners, the ESOL courses that they will deliver locally.

Hilary Benn: [73708] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to support ESOL teaching that has been disrupted by the COVID-19 outbreak; and if he will make a statement.

Gillian Keegan: We want to get all further education learners, including ESOL students, back into education settings as soon as the scientific advice allows because it is the best place for them to learn, and because we know how important it is for their mental wellbeing to have social interactions with their peers and teachers. Many FE providers are already open for some learners, including those who are 16- 19 and adults, subject to the required safety measures being met. From Autumn 2020, all learners, including those who are 16-19 and adults will return to a full high-quality education programme delivered by their college or post 16 learning provider.

We are providing a one-off, ring-fenced grant of up to £96M for colleges, sixth forms and all 16-19

Speech and Language Therapy

Lord Ramsbotham: To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists about the use of aerosol generating procedures. [HL3211]

Lord Ramsbotham: To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to update the COVID-19 infection and control guidance, published on 6 April, to include all aerosol generating procedures carried out by speech and language therapists. [HL3212]

Lord Bethell: The evidence around aerosol generating procedures (AGPs) is being kept under review; the evidence review is led by Public Health Scotland. Public Health England has not held discussions with the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists about AGPs. This guidance has been written and reviewed by all four United Kingdom public health bodies and informed by National Health Service infection prevention control experts. It is based on Health Protection Scotland evidence reviews and the evidence and reviews have been endorsed by New and Emerging Respiratory Virus Threats Advisory Group (NERVTAG). A rapid evidence appraisal has been conducted by Health Protection Scotland to assess the risk of patient to healthcare worker infection transmission associated with a wide range of potentially aerosol generating medical procedures. An updated evidence review and the position on the presented evidence review from NERVTAG is awaited.

Monday 18 May 2020

History: Curriculum

Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick: To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the merits of including Black British history in the national curriculum in England. [HL6024]

Baroness Berridge: The department is committed to an inclusive education system which recognises and embraces diversity and supports all pupils and students to tackle racism and have the knowledge and tools to do so. The national curriculum is a framework setting out the content of what the department expects schools to cover in each subject. The curriculum does not set out how curriculum subjects, or topics within the subjects, should be taught.

The department believes teachers should be able to use their own knowledge and expertise to determine how they teach their pupils, and to make choices about what they teach. As part of a broad and balanced curriculum, pupils should be taught about different societies, and how different groups have contributed to the development of Britain, and this can include the voices and experience of Black people. The flexibility within the history curriculum means that Black British history can already be included in the teaching of the curriculum.

Monday 6 July 2020

History: Curriculum

Lord Taylor of Warwick: To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to diversify the curriculum in schools to include a broader range of culture heritage history. [HL6093]

Baroness Berridge: The department is committed to an inclusive education system which recognises and embraces diversity. The national curriculum is a framework setting out the content of what the department expects schools to cover in each subject. The curriculum does not set out how curriculum subjects, or

specific topics within the subjects, should be taught. The department believes teachers should be able to use their own knowledge and expertise to determine how they teach their pupils, and to make choices about what they teach.

We want to support all young people to be happy, healthy and safe. We also want to equip them for adult life and to make a positive contribution to society. Schools are required to actively promote fundamental British values, including democracy as well as the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance of those of different faith and beliefs. As part of a broad and balanced curriculum in history, pupils should be taught about different societies, and how different groups have contributed to the development of Britain.

Wednesday 8 July 2020

Basic Skills: Primary Education

Lord Watson of Invergowrie: To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the likely effect of the decision to end the Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up premium on pupils who do not achieve the expected standard in reading or maths at the end of Key Stage 2. [HL6699]

Baroness Berridge: Although the year 7 catch-up premium has been discontinued, we continue to provide funding which can be used to support pupils who did not reach the expected standard in reading or maths at the end of key stage 2. The national funding formula (NFF) contains a low prior attainment factor which is allocated on a similar basis to the year 7 catch-up premium, but provides funding for all five years that a pupil is in secondary school. NFF allocations do not directly determine schools' budgets, which are set through formula determined by local authorities in consultation with local schools. Local authorities are free to use a low prior attainment factor in their local formula, and for 2020-21, all are doing so.

In 2020-21, the amount allocated through the secondary low prior attainment factor in the school's NFF is increasing by £49 million from £924 million to £973 million. In addition, the £1 billion catch up package that the government announced on 19 June includes £650 million to help all pupils make up for the lost teaching time and £350 million for a new National Tutoring Programme for disadvantaged pupils.

Thursday 23 July 2020

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