

Teacher trainees and phonics

An evaluation of the response of providers of initial teacher training to the recommendations of the Rose Review

This report details the findings of a small-scale survey that evaluated the response of 20 providers of initial teacher training to the recommendations of the Rose Review. These providers represented a range of traditional and non-traditional routes into teaching. The survey aimed to ascertain the extent to which the providers had modified their courses so that trainees received appropriate direction on the teaching of early reading, including systematic phonics. It also evaluated the trainees' practical application of the principles underpinning the Rose Review in their teaching.

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Contents

Executive summary	4
Key findings	6
Recommendations	6
The response of providers to the Rose Review	7
Quality of training	7
Tutors, mentors and their teaching	11
Managing the changes	12
The impact of the changes	14
Trainees' knowledge and understanding	14
Trainees' practical skills in teaching early reading	16
Notes	18
Further information	20
Publications	20
Annex 1	20
Training providers and schools visited for this survey	20
Training providers surveyed by telephone	21
Annex 2	21
The 'searchlights' model and the 'simple view of reading'	21
Annex 3	22
Glossary	22

Executive summary

The purpose of this small-scale survey was to evaluate how well providers of initial teacher training had responded to the recommendations of Sir Jim Rose's *Independent review of the teaching of early reading*, published in March 2006.¹ The survey was requested by Ruth Kelly MP, the then Secretary of State for Education and Skills.

The survey was conducted by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) during the autumn term 2007 and the spring term 2008. It encompassed 20 providers of initial teacher training, which included higher education institutions (HEIs), providers of school-centred initial teacher training (SCITTs) and employment-based graduate teacher programme routes. HMIs visited 13 of these providers; the remaining seven took part in a telephone survey. The HEIs and SCITTs in this survey had been awarded grade 1 or grade 2 at the time of their previous short or full inspection by Ofsted. Providers of training for employment-based routes were not subject to regular inspection at the time of this survey. Weaker providers were not available for this survey and so the key findings are based on stronger providers only.

Overall, those providers surveyed had responded well to the Rose Review, and they were preparing trainees well to teach early reading. All the providers had altered the centrally taught elements of their courses to some extent since September 2007. The vast majority of courses are now judiciously planned so that they include an appropriately strengthened emphasis on the teaching of systematic phonics. The 'simple view of reading' described in the report of the Rose Review was, virtually universally, given appropriate prominence within the taught element of the courses as the key theoretical model underpinning the teaching of reading.² Almost without exception, providers ensured that they gave trainees sufficient information about early reading before their first significant school placement.

All but two of the English courses surveyed were coordinated and taught by knowledgeable specialists. Their input was a key factor in ensuring that timely and considered changes were made to courses. However, two of the providers of centre-based training for employment-based routes were slow off the mark in giving the review's recommendations the time and emphasis they required within their taught courses. At the most basic level, course documentation had not been updated. This led to a lack of clarity in terms of the expectations of all partners in the training process.

Generally, trainees showed good knowledge and understanding of the recommendations of the review, and they applied these effectively when teaching early reading, including systematic phonics. Despite this, some training courses failed

¹ J Rose, *Independent review of the teaching of early reading: Final report*, DfES, 2006.

² This is described briefly in Annex 2.

to highlight the links between early reading and writing effectively. The result was that around half the trainees visited had a weaker understanding of the use of phonics for spelling than for reading. Furthermore, few of the trainees seen assessed individual pupils' phonic knowledge with the necessary rigour or had a sufficiently clear understanding of the place of systematic phonics in supporting weaker readers at Key Stage 2.

Most providers expected that all trainees would be observed teaching early reading, including systematic phonics, by a tutor or school-based mentor. However, procedures to ensure that this observation took place were not rigorous enough. The providers were also at an early stage in evaluating, systematically, the quality of feedback trainees received. The result was that much of it, particularly from school-based mentors, concentrated on generic teaching skills rather than on ensuring that trainees received clear advice on how to refine their teaching of early reading, including systematic phonics.

Although the subject knowledge of school mentors was satisfactory overall, the providers recognised that, nevertheless, some variability existed between schools. One provider overcame this by ensuring that the taught element of the courses included regular opportunities for trainees to discuss their practice and evaluate the practice they had observed. Others ensured that all trainees saw at least one good early reading lesson, either during their placement or in a training classroom. These practices, although spreading across the providers, were by no means universal.

All the providers surveyed used subject knowledge audits to test trainees' knowledge and understanding about phonics. Some audits were outstanding. Providers used these very successfully to set individual targets to improve trainees' subject knowledge and to gauge levels of support needed for weaker trainees. The audits of a minority of the providers had not been updated and contained very little on the teaching of early reading and phonics, and on the associated technical language.

Overall, providers in the survey had made a secure and effective start in ensuring that their trainees were well equipped to teach early reading, including systematic phonics. The proof was seen in the trainees' teaching, much of which was good. All the lessons seen on early reading showed features of high-quality phonic work. Trainees enunciated pure phonemes accurately, made effective use of *Letters and sounds* or commercial synthetic phonics programmes to support their planning of phonics teaching and, in a few cases, focused effectively on assessing pupils' specific phonic knowledge.³ Trainees' enthusiasm, and that of many of their mentors, for systematic phonics as a central feature in developing early reading was marked. Crucially, the pupils of such trainees made good progress during the lessons seen.

This report makes a number of recommendations to strengthen training provision. In particular, it recommends that trainees receive better preparation to assess individual

³ *Letters and sounds: principles and practice of high quality phonics* (00281-2007FLR-EN), DfES, 2007.

pupils' phonic knowledge and skills. Providers should ensure that all trainees are observed teaching early reading and that they receive pertinent subject-specific feedback in this area. The report recommends that all trainees have opportunities to observe good teaching and assessment of early reading. Providers should clarify for trainees the links between pupils' use and application of phonic knowledge and skills in writing and reading, and the place of systematic phonics in supporting weaker readers in Key Stage 2.

Key findings

- Providers of initial teacher training in this survey of stronger providers had generally responded well to the Rose Review. They had adjusted the taught element of their courses to take account of the review's recommendations and to equip trainees to implement these.
- Most of the courses surveyed were well planned and the emphasis on systematic phonics had increased considerably since September 2007.
- The quality of the providers' training was generally good. The centrally based training by HEIs and SCITTs was generally better than that by the small number of providers of employment-based routes in the survey.
- Most of the trainees observed were well prepared to teach early reading. They had good knowledge and understanding of early reading and they applied this well in their teaching. They were not as effectively prepared to assess individual pupils' phonic knowledge or to teach pupils how to spell.
- Most of the providers had yet to establish robust procedures to ensure that all trainees were observed teaching early reading, including systematic phonics, and that the feedback they received was sufficiently specific about the quality of their teaching of phonics.
- Not all the providers arranged suitable opportunities for trainees to observe high-quality phonics teaching.
- Few of the trainees seen teaching during the survey had a clear understanding of the place of systematic phonics in supporting weaker readers at Key Stage 2.

Recommendations

The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) should:

- refine and add to existing assessment materials so that providers can help trainees to be clear about the precise assessment of individual pupils' phonic knowledge and skills.

The Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) should:

- clarify, particularly for providers of training for employment-based routes, the proportion of time within taught courses that should be devoted to teaching trainees about the recommendations of the Rose review.

Providers of initial teacher training should:

- prepare trainees so that they are able to assess rigorously individual pupils' phonic knowledge and skills
- ensure that all primary trainees are observed teaching early reading, and that the feedback they receive from tutors and school mentors is quality assured so that it is sufficiently subject specific.
- clarify for trainees the links between phonic skills for early reading (blending) and for writing (segmenting to spell)
- provide opportunities for all trainees to observe good teaching and assessment of early reading, including systematic phonics
- ensure that all trainees have a clear understanding of the place of systematic phonics in supporting weaker readers in Key Stage 2.

The response of providers to the Rose Review

Quality of training

1. The providers in the survey had responded well to the Rose Review and all but two had made appropriate changes to the content, structure and balance of their courses. The effectiveness of these changes was evident from trainees' generally good knowledge and understanding of the main messages of the review and the implications for teaching early reading.
2. The content and structure of training in this area were good in 14 of the 20 providers and satisfactory in a further four. Content and structure were good or better in 10 of the 13 HEIs and in all four of the SCITTs but they were no better than satisfactory in the three employment-based training routes.
3. The revised courses included coverage of the Rose Review, the features of high-quality phonic work and synthetic phonics. Almost without exception, the 'simple view of reading' described in the report of the Rose Review had replaced the previously recommended 'searchlights' of the National Literacy Strategy as the prime theoretical model underpinning the teaching of reading. Changes had also been made to the timing of taught elements of courses and trainees' related school experience.
4. In most cases, changes had been put in place from September 2007. A few providers were ahead of the game. They had developed their coverage of phonics in recent years and had responded promptly to the publication of Sir Jim Rose's interim report in December 2005.
5. Many of the providers in the survey had put on additional training sessions during 2006/07 to ensure that trainees leaving at the end of that academic year

were informed about the Rose Review and about *Letters and sounds*, the materials produced by the National Strategies to support systematic phonics teaching.

6. Many of the providers had been careful to underline all factors in the development of good readers, including a rich curriculum for language development. Several of the providers had increased their emphasis on speaking and listening as the foundations for reading and writing. Most providers had increased the time devoted specifically to phonics, placing the emphasis on systematic phonics as the central approach in the teaching of early reading. For example, a provider of central training for trainees on employment-based routes had added a day on phonics to the taught programme. This was taught by a partner HEI.
7. Trainees usually had planned opportunities to learn about *Letters and sounds* and, in several courses, the associated DVD was used in taught sessions. However, one SCITT provider did not make clear the difference between the Rose Review and *Letters and sounds*. Few of the providers offered opportunities for trainees to evaluate commercially produced synthetic phonics programmes.
8. Around half the courses surveyed paid good attention to the importance of teaching the skills of blending and segmenting, and effective links were made between pupils' reading and writing. However, in other courses, the planning for taught sessions indicated that the relationship between phonic work and spelling was not made sufficiently explicit.
9. A good proportion of the providers ensured that trainees who intended to specialise in teaching at Key Stage 2 learnt about the place of systematic phonics in the teaching of early reading. However, for these trainees, less attention was given to the place of phonics in teaching reading to weaker readers in Key Stage 2.
10. The assignments and assessed tasks that trainees undertook varied considerably in the extent to which they covered the teaching of systematic phonics and the assessment of pupils' phonic knowledge. The courses included the assessment of pupils' reading. Many providers required trainees to complete assignments that involved running records or miscue analysis of pupils' reading.⁴ Nevertheless, for several providers, there was no assurance that trainees would have opportunities to apply what they had learned in this respect. In general, opportunities for trainees to assess individual pupils' phonic skills in depth and plan the next steps for them were relatively rare. In several

⁴ The running record and miscue analysis are two detailed assessment procedures based on analysing individual pupils' errors as they read. They enable teachers to identify how pupils use cueing systems and other strategies for reading, such as correcting their errors themselves.

of the non-traditional routes, taught courses gave too little attention to how to assess pupils' phonic knowledge and skills.

11. Particularly good features were noted in the content and structure of small numbers of the courses. For a few providers, changes as a result of responding to the Rose Review were set in the context of continuous evaluation and review of provision for English. The more effective providers used discussions with trainees and audits of their subject knowledge very successfully to influence the content of taught sessions directly and promptly. One of the HEIs had produced self-study materials of very high quality to support trainees to develop their knowledge of phonology, morphology and lexis, following the audit.⁵
12. Many providers used staff from schools to contribute to the centre-based courses.

An HEI made very good use of a school mentor's experience and skill in teaching synthetic phonics.

The mentor, a teacher of a Reception class, led a session on synthetic phonics. She introduced a commercial programme used by many schools. She explained how she used the programme with her class, introducing four phonemes a week over 11 weeks, and how she built on this work, extending the children's reading and writing skills throughout the next term. There were lots of ideas about ways to introduce phonemes which would be fun for young children. Examples of children's independent writing were used to show how they applied their phonic knowledge and skills to spelling. The session included suggestions about how to involve parents and carers in helping children to learn phonemes and blend them to read simple but unfamiliar phonically regular words. Attention was also given to how synthetic phonics should fit into an overall language programme in the Foundation Stage and how phonics linked with the school's reading scheme and with developing handwriting skills.

This session helped trainees to build a bridge between theory and practice. Their evaluations were extremely positive, saying the sessions had increased their confidence by helping them understand how the theory in their taught sessions might be applied in the classroom.

13. Inevitably, the schools where the trainees were placed for their school experience were at different stages in responding to the Rose Review; mentors' and class teachers' subject knowledge varied. The most effective providers had compensated for this by building time into the taught sessions for trainees to discuss their experiences in school, thus enabling all to learn from the most

⁵ See Annex 3 for definitions of these terms.

positive and useful. Such provision, however, was far from universal in the survey.

14. Two central providers of training for employment-based routes had not done enough to review and update their courses in the light of the Rose Review. As a result, its recommendations and the implications for teaching early reading were not given sufficient prominence, coverage of early reading and phonics was superficial, and some out-of-date content remained. For the trainees on these routes, therefore, too much was left to chance – and dependent on the expertise of the school-based tutors. In another similar provider, the lack of effective communication between the provider and schools led to unnecessary repetition.
15. Staff from the National Strategies had supported the providers to restructure their courses in response to the Rose Review. The vast majority of providers had attended meetings or training sessions or both offered by the National Strategies. They had valued this support. A small number of providers had taken the initiative and invited assistance from the National Strategies early on. In the case of HEIs, several staff commented on the usefulness of Sir Jim Rose's contribution to a seminar, arranged by the Universities Council for the Education of Teachers.
16. For undergraduates, the timing of sessions on reading within the course and within each year was well considered. The teaching of reading was often covered each year in progressively more depth. A block of time was usually devoted specifically to early reading and systematic phonics, and the assignments for trainees to undertake in school followed the relevant taught sessions. However, in one case, because the training in the second year of the course was based on self-study modules, it was possible for trainees who did not select an early reading option to go for five terms without building on the four hours' introduction to early reading which had been provided early in the first year.
17. Postgraduate courses were also generally planned well so trainees covered theory and then had opportunities to apply it in schools. For example, in one institution the theoretical underpinning of the revised primary framework was covered before trainees' first school placements.⁶
18. All the providers in the survey devoted sufficient taught time to early reading and phonics with the exception of two of the providers of central training for employment-based routes.

⁶ *Primary framework for literacy and mathematics* (www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary), DfES, 2006.

Tutors, mentors and their teaching

19. Taken as a whole, the subject knowledge of all partners in training, together with their use of audits to assess and build on trainees' subject knowledge, was satisfactory or better across all the providers visited by inspectors, and good in 12 of these. The input received by two graduate trainees on employment-based routes just reached a satisfactory level because of the good teaching provided by their schools. Here, the quality of the centre-based teaching was limited by an inadequate emphasis on the teaching of early reading, including systematic phonics.
20. The subject knowledge of specialist tutors of English was fundamental to the successful implementation of the review's recommendations. In general, the subject knowledge of these staff was strongest in HEIs and SCITTs. Within these providers, several specialist tutors had undertaken research and published papers on early reading, including systematic phonics, and were contributing to training at a national level.
21. Most of the providers had ensured that non-specialist tutors received sufficient updates on the recommendations of the Rose Review. Four providers had taken advantage of specialist training or updates for these staff, provided by the National Strategies and funded by the TDA.
22. Auditing of trainees' knowledge about early reading and phonics was a relative weakness. Although all the providers tested the subject knowledge of trainees just before or soon after they began their courses, in several cases these subject audits had not been strengthened in the light of the review. Such audits did not test trainees' understanding of phonics or the related technical language in sufficient depth. In the worst case, an audit contained virtually no reference to phonics. A minority of the providers did not return regularly enough to the audits to check trainees' developing subject knowledge as the course progressed.
23. At the other end of the scale, two providers had acted extremely swiftly to ensure that their audits thoroughly tested trainees' developing knowledge and understanding.

A provider had developed an online audit which tested trainees' understanding of phonics and the language associated with it. This audit was web-based and trainees were able to return to it over the first six months of their postgraduate course. The course leader was therefore able to track trainees' progress closely and he intervened quickly to provide extra support where necessary.

An HEI developed an excellent subject knowledge audit which was highly effective in pinpointing areas for individual trainees' further development. For example, trainees were required to note where syllables began and ended in words such as 'haddock' and 'recognisable'. They also had to

count the phonemes in words such as 'continent' and 'folk', and note the graphemes which represented the phonemes.

24. The better providers used the results of their audits to agree targets with trainees for their individual training or development plans. Trainees produced evidence to demonstrate the progress they were making towards these targets. Tutors tracked this progress effectively and provided graduated support for trainees of differing ability levels.
25. Audits were not well used by two of the providers of central training on employment-based routes. These providers had not ensured that school mentors were fully aware of the gaps in trainees' subject knowledge. Consequently, the school staff were not well placed to develop the trainees' subject knowledge as effectively as they might otherwise have done.
26. The subject knowledge of school-based mentors was variable, but satisfactory overall. Many showed a good understanding of the principles underpinning the review, but some failed to apply this knowledge effectively when they evaluated trainees' lessons. Thus they fell back on evaluating the trainees' generic teaching skills rather than how well they taught early reading, including phonics.
27. Additionally, some of the schools themselves were at an early stage of introducing the systematic teaching of phonics. In these cases, mentors and class teachers were not always well placed to contribute to the trainees' developing knowledge and understanding of this aspect of teaching early reading. For example, one trainee was working in a class where the teacher was not familiar with the *Letters and sounds* materials, whilst another trainee from the same provider was placed in a school which had followed a synthetic phonics programme for several years. These differing settings exemplified the variable quality of school-based training provided for some trainees.
28. A few mentors were too blasé about the implementation of the recommendations of the Rose Review, asserting that, 'This is nothing new; we've always done phonics'.
29. In contrast, one mentor candidly admitted that the pace of her phonics teaching had been too slow in the past. She said with enthusiasm that she had been 'amazed at the children's ability to blend phonemes and read so quickly', since she had implemented the recommendations.

Managing the changes

30. Eleven of the providers had implemented action plans in this area in a timely and effective manner. This enabled them to adjust the content, structure and balance of their courses to take good account of the review. For all the providers except two, the management of the changes and quality assurance

procedures to ensure their efficacy were at least satisfactory. Nevertheless, almost all of them could do more to ensure consistent quality of training in this area and all acknowledged this.

31. Two providers of central training within employment-based routes had been slow to implement their action plans. The result was a number of inadequacies in the quality assurance of training provision for all their graduate trainees.
32. A key strength for seven providers was the emphasis on training for mentors. These providers ensured that school mentors had access to specific training on the recommendations of the review. A further four providers had convincing plans to provide such training in the near future.
33. Course leaders in 14 providers had also given a high priority to informing non-specialist tutors about the recommendations of the Rose Review. To supplement this information, around a quarter of the providers had developed useful checklists for non-specialist tutors and mentors to use when they were evaluating trainees' teaching of phonics.
34. It is essential that well-informed mentors and tutors give good, subject-specific feedback to trainees on their developing skills as teachers of early reading, including systematic phonics. The procedures to ensure this was done effectively were generally weak. Over a third of the providers surveyed expected tutors or mentors to undertake at least one formal observation of each trainee teaching early reading, including systematic phonics. This essential requirement was noted within course documentation in only a very few cases.
35. The best providers had recognised that the quality of subject-specific feedback to trainees was of prime importance and had sought to assure this.

Following quality assurance of tutors' and school mentors' written feedback to trainees on their teaching of early reading, one HEI arranged cluster meetings for link tutors and mentors with the intention of sharpening subject-specific feedback. All partners valued these meetings which led to improved written guidance. The guidance had been used successfully to ensure a proper focus on the skills of teaching early reading within tutors' and mentors' evaluations of trainees.

36. However, such initiatives were the exception. Too many of the providers did not rigorously assure the quality of feedback on the teaching of early reading, including systematic phonics, from non-specialist tutors or mentors. The result was that the quality of feedback, particularly from school mentors, was often too generic. As a result, the trainees received insufficient good, subject-specific feedback on their developing skills as teachers of early reading.
37. Around half of the course handbooks evaluated during the survey were of good quality. They provided the trainees and schools with a sufficiently detailed picture of centre-based training and outlined clear expectations of all partners.

In a minority of cases, providers supplemented their handbooks with high-quality information on their websites which enabled trainees, school mentors and non-specialist tutors to access detailed lecture notes.

One SCITT's web-based 'visual learning experience' provided mentors with a very comprehensive overview of the content of each centre-based training session. At the most basic level, the visual learning experience's 'week to view', which was also sent to tutors as a hard copy, created a very close synergy across all the schools in terms of provision and support for trainees. Across the SCITT, this was a significant contributory factor to the great clarity of expectation between trainees, schools and the centre-based trainers.

38. A small number of course handbooks were inadequate either because they had not been updated or they contained insufficient detail to enable school mentors to know what trainees had covered in this area and to build upon this. A few handbooks noted the requirement for trainees to hold a structured discussion regarding the teaching of early reading, including systematic phonics, with the English subject leader in their placement schools. This written requirement was the exception rather than the rule.
39. Not all the trainees were guaranteed the opportunity to observe a high-quality phonics session. A few providers had assured this entitlement and several others had commissioned videos of good reading sessions so that trainees could identify, discuss and emulate good practice.
40. Just over a third of the providers in the survey, sensibly, had begun to audit the programmes used by placement schools to teach early reading, including systematic phonics. The purpose of this was to ensure that trainees experienced a balance of commercial and nationally recommended programmes as they moved through their course.
41. The expertise of school mentors and external advisers was used judiciously by around a quarter of the providers to enhance central training sessions. Trainees particularly enjoyed these sessions, citing during the survey, for example, the opportunity to discuss high-quality classroom practice with a teacher.

The impact of the changes

Trainees' knowledge and understanding

42. The impact of providers' responses to the Rose Review has been good. Most trainees were well prepared to teach early reading, including systematic phonics. All the trainees were aware of the review. Nearly all had good knowledge and understanding of its recommendations in relation to the best practice that should be expected in the teaching of early reading and systematic phonics. This good knowledge and understanding on the part of

trainees, across training providers, reflects the high profile given in their courses to the implications of the Rose Review.

43. The trainees understood the central place of systematic phonics within early reading programmes. They knew the features of high-quality phonic work, as identified in the review. They were very aware of the importance of introducing phonemes and graphemes at a good pace and of doing this in well-structured, discrete teaching sessions which follow a clearly defined incremental sequence. Most trainees knew the difference between synthetic and analytic phonics and that the use of synthetic phonics was the model recommended by the review.
44. In discussions with HMI, school mentors often remarked on the trainees' readiness to teach early reading and their good knowledge and understanding about systematic phonics. For example, one said, 'Trainees are better equipped to teach early reading [than previous cohorts] ... They arrive in school expecting to see systematic phonics and to teach it themselves'.
45. The trainees generally understood that teaching phonics supports pupils' development as writers as well as readers by helping them to learn the relationship between graphemes and phonemes. They saw the links between blending phonemes together to decode unknown words and segmenting words into their separate phonemes to spell them (encoding). The better trainees recognised the importance of teaching phonemes and graphemes together, so pupils learnt the correspondence between them. The trainees understood that the purpose of teaching phonics systematically is to hasten the development of pupils' independent reading and writing.
46. All the trainees were familiar with *Letters and sounds*. They recognised that these materials could support them in planning a systematic phonics programme for a class of pupils. Occasionally, although the trainees had a very good knowledge of *Letters and sounds*, they were not clear about the distinction between these materials and the recommendations of the Rose Review.
47. Nearly all the trainees observed during the survey were well versed in the 'simple view of reading' and knew that it had superseded the previously recommended 'searchlights' model of the National Literacy Strategy. They understood the 'simple view of reading' as a conceptual framework which distinguishes between the two components of reading: word recognition and comprehension. The more knowledgeable trainees were able to assess pupils' reading skills accurately in relation to these, as set out in the report of the Rose Review. For the most part, however, trainees lacked confidence in assessing individual pupils' phonic skills and determining the next steps for their learning on the basis of assessment. This, though, was not always the case.

A graduate trainee taught a good lesson, which had some outstanding features, to a Reception class. Her assessment of individual children's

phonic knowledge was of a very high standard. Following 15 minutes of well-paced and engaging whole-class teaching of phonics, she worked with a group of children to ensure that they could hear the various phonemes in each word, could enunciate the phonemes correctly and could then find the corresponding graphemes. During this session she quickly completed an assessment sheet designed to pinpoint gaps in individual children's knowledge and understanding of phonemes, graphemes and phoneme/grapheme correspondences.

The impact of such assessment was demonstrated clearly in another part of the classroom where children worked on individual whiteboards, practising writing graphemes and saying the corresponding phoneme. The trainee had personalised these tasks for individual children, taking account of the excellent assessments that told her exactly which grapheme/phoneme correspondences each child needed to practise. A teaching assistant worked with this group of children, assessing improvements in each child's knowledge.

The close attention paid in this school to individual assessment of early reading skills, including systematic phonics, had been very effective in preparing the trainee to intervene early to prevent underachievement. Children in this class made good progress in this lesson. Class records demonstrated that they had made similar good progress over time.

48. The trainees were generally aware that programmes existed to give additional support to pupils in Key Stage 2 who have significant literacy difficulties but few showed any depth of knowledge or understanding of these.

Trainees' practical skills in teaching early reading

49. Inspectors observed 16 trainees teaching reading, all in the Foundation Stage or Key Stage 1. The lessons observed covered the full age range from Nursery to Year 2. Half the lessons were observed in Reception classes. In all the lessons seen, the teaching was at least satisfactory. It was good or better in 11 lessons and in two of these it was outstanding.
50. Trainees on all the training routes in this survey were observed teaching. No significant differences were evident in the quality of teaching of trainees from different routes.
51. The majority of the trainees seen had good generic teaching skills and they applied their good knowledge and understanding about the teaching of early reading and systematic phonics well in their teaching. Nevertheless, for several, the practical skills of teaching early reading were understandably not as well developed as their grasp of the theory.

52. The trainees showed good professional values. They had a strong commitment to improving their teaching of early reading. The best analysed the effectiveness of their teaching critically. Discussions with trainees and mentors showed that the trainees welcomed feedback and suggestions for development.
53. Many of the trainees had good skills for managing pupils and organising lessons. They had good relationships with the pupils and they established an orderly learning atmosphere through their authoritative professional demeanour and appropriate classroom routines. They used praise judiciously to encourage good behaviour and attention. In the most effective lessons, trainees planned a good variety of appealing activities for the pupils. As a result, their pupils were alert and enthusiastic, the lessons moved along at a good pace and the pupils made rapid progress.

A trainee, working with a lively Reception class that contained a high proportion of boys, matched her teaching of phonics very well to their age and interests. From the start of the session, she captured the children's attention with a range of compelling resources, including a treasure chest, all based on a theme of pirates. The children were enthralled and all were eager to read the phonically regular words and non-words shown by the trainee so that they could have a turn at putting 'real' words into the treasure chest.⁷ The trainee emphasised correct enunciation of pure phonemes. She modelled this accurately and urged the children to copy her model. The demands of the work built up steadily as the lesson progressed and the children showed what they could do. For instance, the trainee moved them on to segmenting words for spelling. In the group work that followed the whole-class teaching, the trainee developed children's comprehension skills effectively by asking them to decide if the sentences they created made sense.

Another trainee used the interactive whiteboard very effectively to captivate and enthuse Reception children. She started with a blank whiteboard and revealed individual graphemes in left to right sequence. She asked the children to sound out the corresponding phonemes and blend the sounds together to read the words. All the children were keen to blend the phonemes. They made progress in developing this skill and gained confidence in themselves as readers.

54. In a few lessons, the pace was laboured at times. Occasionally, too much time was spent in practising previously learned phonemes. One lesson with a group of Reception children included a game to test each pupil's knowledge of phonemes. Unfortunately, time was wasted as children undertook this assessment activity one by one, the others simply waiting for their turn.

⁷ Non-words are, for example, 'drap', 'pend' or 'kime'. They are useful for assessing pupils' knowledge and skills in recognising letters and blending together the corresponding sounds to read words.

55. Most of the trainees had suitably high expectations of what pupils could achieve; they pitched the work so that the majority of their pupils were challenged, but could taste success. Many trainees matched work to meet the needs of pupils of different abilities but several did not push the more able pupils on far enough. Some trainees adapted sessions skilfully, moving on to phonic work intended for older pupils when they saw that pupils found the planned work easy. However, the trainees occasionally underestimated pupils and some of the work covered was too easy for several of them. This was noticed particularly when a trainee followed a pre-planned progressive programme too slowly and did not provide enough opportunities for pupils to demonstrate their capabilities.
56. All the lessons seen showed features of high-quality phonic work. However, there was some variation in the trainees' skills, for example in enunciating pure phonemes, in the extent to which they capitalised on opportunities to assess pupils' phonic skills and reinforce learning, and in the extent to which they catered for the different ways in which pupils learnt. The trainees used the *Letters and sounds* materials or commercial synthetic phonics programmes to support well-structured discrete sessions of phonic teaching. However, these sessions sometimes went on for too long and the pupils' attention waned. Inspectors noted examples of trainees focusing unobtrusively yet effectively on assessing specific pupils' phonic knowledge during the class teaching session. Occasionally, however, learning objectives for phonics sessions were not tight enough for trainees to assess pupils' progress against them.

Notes

In March 2006, Sir Jim Rose published the findings of his *Independent review of the teaching of early reading*. The review concluded:

'The case for systematic phonic work is overwhelming and much strengthened by a synthetic approach, the key features of which are to teach beginner readers:

- grapheme/phoneme (letter/sound) correspondences (the alphabetic principle) in a clearly defined, incremental sequence
- to apply the highly important skill of blending (synthesising) phonemes in order, all through a word to read it
- to apply the skills of segmenting words into their constituent phonemes to spell
- that blending and segmenting are reversible processes.⁸

⁸ J Rose, *Independent review of the teaching of early reading: Final report*, DfES, 2006, p. 20.

In late 2006, partially as a response to the review, the National Strategies published a refreshed primary framework. A key change within the refreshed framework is the prime role of systematic phonics in a programme of early reading. In September 2007, the teaching of systematic phonics was made mandatory through changes to the statutory National Curriculum programmes of study.

To support teachers in teaching a systematic phonic programme, the National Strategies introduced *Letters and sounds* in July 2007, which was sent to every school and teacher training provider in England. This is a six-phase teaching programme for teaching high-quality phonic work. It stands alongside commercial schemes, such as *Read Write Inc.* and *Jolly phonics*, which the Rose Review found were used effectively in schools to support the teaching of early reading, including systematic phonics.

The TDA introduced a revised framework of professional standards for teachers in September 2007. Although the teaching of reading, including systematic phonics, is not mentioned specifically within the framework, standard Q15 states that those recommended for the award of qualified teacher status should:

‘... know and understand the relevant statutory and non-statutory curricula and frameworks, including those provided through the National Strategies, for their subjects/curriculum areas, and other relevant initiatives applicable to the age and ability range for which they are trained.’⁹

In the light of these developments, and at the request of Ruth Kelly MP, the then Secretary of State for Education, this small-scale survey was designed to evaluate the response of initial teacher training providers to the recommendations of the Rose Review. The survey set out to answer two key questions:

- How have providers of initial teacher training responded to the recommendations of the Rose Review?
- Have the trainees’ knowledge, skills and understanding of the teaching of early reading, including high-quality phonic work, improved as a result of their training?

HMI visited 13 providers and surveyed another seven by telephone during the autumn term 2007 and the spring term 2008. The HEIs and SCITTs surveyed had been awarded grade 1 or grade 2 at the time of their previous short or full inspection by Ofsted. Providers of training for employment-based routes were not subject to regular inspection by Ofsted at the time of this survey. The survey therefore covered a range of training routes, but was not nationally representative as it concentrated on stronger providers. Weaker providers were not available.

⁹ *Professional standards for teachers (TAO313)*, TDA, 2007, p. 9.

The sample comprised 13 HEIs, four SCITTs and three providers of employment-based routes from across England. If trainees were on school placements when survey visits took place, HMIs observed at least one trainee from each institution. In total, 16 trainees were observed from 10 providers. HMI held discussions with course leaders, tutors, school mentors and trainees during each of the 13 visits to providers. Telephone surveys were conducted with the course leaders of these seven providers.

Further information

Publications

J Rose, *Independent review of the teaching of early reading: final report*, DfES, 2006.

Letters and sounds: principles and practice of high quality phonics (00282-2007), DfES, 2007.

Annex 1

Training providers and schools visited for this survey

Bradford College
Bournemouth and East Dorset SCITT
Cumbria Primary Teacher Training
Dorset Teacher Training Partnership
London Metropolitan University
Langdale SCITT
Manchester Metropolitan University
Merseyside and Cheshire GTP Consortium
University of London, Institute of Education
Northumbria University
University of Reading
Urban Learning Foundation
West London Partnership

All Saints CE Primary School, Stockport
Battle Hill Primary School, Wallsend
Bousfield Primary School, Kensington and Chelsea
Cophorne Primary School, Bradford
St Aidan's CE First School, Huddersfield
St Stephen's RC Primary School, Newcastle upon Tyne
St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School, Stockport
St Boniface Catholic Primary School, Balham
St Francis de Sales Catholic Junior School, Liverpool
Woodchurch Road Primary School, Wirral
Bransgore CE Primary School, Hampshire

Holy Trinity CE Primary, Tulse Hill
Ravenstone Primary School, Tooting
Redlands Primary School, Reading
Walter Infant School and Nursery, Wokingham

Training providers surveyed by telephone

Bath Spa University
Canterbury Christ Church University
Leeds Trinity & All Saints
University of Bedfordshire
University of Hertfordshire
University of Leeds
York St John University

Annex 2

The 'searchlights' model and the 'simple view of reading'

The report of the Rose Review described the 'searchlights' model and the 'simple view of reading' thus:^{10,11}

The 'searchlights' model characterises the reading process as involving four strategies – called 'searchlights'. The suggestion is that, when tackling a text, readers use four sources of knowledge to 'illuminate' their processing. These four sources are: phonic knowledge; grammatical knowledge; word recognition and graphic knowledge; and knowledge of context. The original implication was that these four knowledge strands were of equal usefulness to the reader and that in some way, higher levels of facility in one area of knowledge might compensate for lower levels in another...

... The 'simple view of reading' identifies two components of reading. These are 'decoding' and comprehension'. 'Decoding' is the ability to recognise words presented singly out of context, with the ability to apply phonic rules a crucial contributory factor to the development of this context-free word recognition ability. 'Comprehension' is defined as the process by which, given lexical (i.e. word) information, sentences and discourse are interpreted.

¹⁰ *The National Literacy Strategy: Framework for teaching* (PP3/31981/298/124), DFEE, 1998.

¹¹ P B Gough & W E Tunmer, 'Decoding, reading and reading disability', *Remedial and special education*, 7, 1986, pp. 6–10.

Annex 3

Glossary

lexis	the total vocabulary of a language or, sometimes, the vocabulary used in a particular text
morphology	the study of the internal structure of words
phonology	the study of the sound system of a language