



18 August, 2006

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*Dear Secretary of State*

#### **EARLY READING**

Following my letter of 4 May to Ruth Kelly, I am writing with our advice on changes to the curriculum at key stage 1 and in the foundation stage to meet the recommendations of Jim Rose's review of the teaching of early reading.

The proposed changes to the key stage 1 English reading programme of study and the foundation stage early learning goal on linking sounds and letters, on which we consulted, were agreed with your officials in May. The proposals are set out in Annex 1, and are designed to clarify what is required for phonic work with beginner readers, while maintaining a curriculum that is broad and rich with appropriate emphasis on speaking and listening skills.

We have now completed the national consultation on the proposed changes. The full report of the exercise is at Annex 2. The consultation shows strong support for the proposals across all categories of respondent, which included foundation stage settings covering children aged three to five, schools with children aged five to seven, schools/settings with children aged three to seven, local authorities, professional associations and other national bodies.

Despite publicising the consultation through Primary National Strategy events during May to July and through the network of local authorities' directors of children's services, the consultation received a relatively small response of 568 overall. In part, this is likely to be due to the broader consultations taking place concurrently on the new early years foundation stage and the revised Primary National Strategy framework for teaching literacy. These provided a broader context, which may have affected stakeholders' views of this consultation. Nevertheless, we are confident that the views of the profession generally are supportive of the proposed changes.



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### *Key stage 1*

Seventy-seven percent of all respondents agreed with the proposed change to the key stage 1 English reading programme of study. This high level of agreement was similar across all categories of respondent. Schools/settings with children aged three to seven gave the most positive support, with 89 percent supporting the proposal. Of schools/settings, foundation stage settings with children aged three to five were the least supportive of the change, with 58 percent agreeing with the proposal. However, overall only 15 percent of respondents disagreed with the proposed change.

The consultation elicited a range of feedback from respondents. The most common concern at key stage 1 was that as well as teaching synthetic phonics, teachers should use a range of strategies as children learn to read. Feedback from professional and subject associations emphasised the importance of teachers' professional judgement in effectively meeting the learning needs of children, and they saw the *understanding text* section as an essential part of the programme of study. They reinforced the way that the *understanding text* section requires that a range of strategies be taught as children develop their understanding of what they read. On balance, we are confident that the proposed changes to the key stage 1 English reading programme of study are sufficiently clear.

### *Foundation stage*

Seventy-two percent of all respondents agreed with the proposed change to the early learning goal on linking sounds and letters. This level of agreement was similar across all categories of respondent. Again, schools/settings with children aged three to seven gave the most positive support, with 78 percent supporting the proposal. Of schools and settings, foundation stage settings with children aged three to five were the least supportive of the change, with 58 percent agreeing with the proposal. However, overall only 15 percent of respondents disagreed with the proposed change.

On the proposed change to the early learning goal, the most common comment was that the learning and saying sounds in words in the order in which they appear is beneficial to beginner readers. As at key stage 1, a common concern was that practitioners should use a range of strategies as children learn to read. Some representatives from the early years community raised concerns separately from the web consultation that changing the early learning goal could lead to fewer children achieving the goal. They took the view that there would be a significant training implication for practitioners to be able to understand the new goal. There could therefore be some vocal criticism from a minority opposed to the changes.

### *Recommendations and next steps*

Following the consultation we recommend that the both the key stage 1 and foundation stage changes should be implemented from the 2006/07 school year. The changes are

relatively small and do not warrant revision and reprinting of *The national curriculum handbook for primary teachers in England*, nor the *curriculum guidance for the foundation stage*. We recommend that the changes should be communicated formally to all key stage 1 schools, foundation stage settings and local authorities in England through a letter from QCA in September.

Other opportunities for informal communication can also be exploited, such as channels used by the National Strategies and any appropriate web based QCA communications.

At key stage 1 there are no implications for assessment resulting from the change to the English reading programme of study. In the foundation stage, we are carrying out work requested by Sheila Scales on modifications to the foundation stage profile scale points 5 and 6 in *Communication, language and literacy: linking sounds and letters*. We are trialling these modifications in settings and schools and this work will be reported at the end of September. We will then provide our advice on implementing modifications to the scale points.

Yours sincerely  
Heather Barker

## Proposed changes

1. To amend the current *Reading Strategies* section of En2 Reading in the English key stage 1 programme of study to read:

### *Knowledge, skills and understanding*

1. *Pupils should be taught to read with fluency, accuracy, understanding and enjoyment.*

### *Word recognition and graphic knowledge*

*They should be taught phonemic awareness and phonic knowledge to decode and encode words, including to:*

- a hear, identify, segment and blend phonemes in words*
- b sound and name the letters of the alphabet*
- c identify syllables in words*
- d recognise that the same sounds may have different spellings and that the same spellings may relate to different sounds*
- e read on sight high-frequency words and other familiar words*
- f recognise words with common spelling patterns*
- g recognise specific parts of words, including prefixes, suffixes, inflectional endings, plurals*
- h link sound and letter patterns, exploring rhyme, alliteration and other sound patterns*

### *Understanding text*

*They should be taught to use grammatical understanding and their knowledge of the content and context of texts to:*

- i understand how word order affects meaning*
- j decipher new words, and confirm or check meaning*
- k work out the sense of a sentence by rereading or reading ahead*
- l focus on meaning derived from the text as a whole*
- m use their knowledge of book conventions, structure, sequence and presentational devices*
- n draw on their background knowledge and understanding of the content.*

2. To amend the early learning goal 'Hear and say initial and final sounds in words, and short sounds within words' to read:

*Hear and say sounds in words in the order in which they occur*

# **Consultation on Proposed Changes to the Key Stage 1 English Programme for Reading and a Foundation Stage Early Learning Goal**

**Research Study Conducted for  
The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority**



**August 2006**



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# Contents

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<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
Background and objectives	1
The national consultation	1
Analysis	1
Respondent profile	2
Interpretation of the data	2
Acknowledgements	3
<b>Proposed Changes to Key Stage 1 Programme of Study for Reading</b>	<b>4</b>
Level of agreement with proposals	4
Key comments and concerns	5
<b>Proposed Changes to Foundation Stage Early Learning Goal</b>	<b>7</b>
Level of agreement with proposals	7
Key comments and concerns	8
<b>Appendices</b>	
Consultation leaflet	
Consultation questionnaire	





# Introduction

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This report presents the findings from a consultation held by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority on proposed changes to the Key Stage 1 Programme of Study for Reading and a Foundation Stage Early Learning Goal Relating to the Teaching and Learning of Early Reading.

## Background and objectives

The final report of the review of the teaching of early reading published on 20 March 2006 recommended that high quality phonics should be the prime approach used in teaching all children to read. The Secretary of State asked QCA to advise on how this approach can be made clear in the National Curriculum at Key Stage 1 and in the Early Learning Goals of the curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage.

QCA proposed minimal amendments to the Key Stage 1 English Programme of Study for Reading and to one of the Early Learning Goals in the Foundation Stage. QCA ran a national consultation on the proposed amendments.

## The national consultation

The national consultation on the proposed changes ran for 12 weeks from 8 May to 31 July 2006.

QCA targeted Key Stage 1 schools, Foundation Stage settings and other key partners and stakeholders, including local authorities, teacher/professional associations, subject associations, and other national bodies such as Ofsted, the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) and the National College for School Leadership (NCSL).

Consultees had available a consultation leaflet, which set out the background and the proposed changes and invited them to visit the QCA website to record their responses via a link to the leaflet text and questionnaire. Copies of the consultation leaflet were used at scheduled events to draw stakeholders' attention to the consultation, for example, Primary National Strategy and Early Years Foundation Stage conferences in May and June. QCA also wrote to all local authority directors of children's services in England about the consultation. The consultation leaflet and questionnaire can be found in the appendices.

## Analysis

QCA commissioned Ipsos MORI Social Research Institute to analyse the consultation results. This report provides overall quantitative analysis of responses to the 'closed' questions and analysis of responses in the open-ended comments boxes. For the open-ended questions Ipsos MORI developed a code frame in consultation with QCA in order to be able to quantitatively analyse these responses.

## Respondent profile

568 respondents from key stakeholder groups took part in the consultation designed and administered by QCA. 567 consultees responded online, while one consultee sent a written 'white mail' response, which is included in this analysis. The table below outlines the profile of respondents to the first question regarding proposed changes to the Key Stage 1 Programme of Study for Reading and the profile of respondents to the second question regarding proposed changes to the Early Learning Goal. Any significant differences in responses between these groups have been highlighted throughout the report (please see note below relating to interpreting data from small sub-groups).

Respondent type	Responses to Q1		Responses to Q2	
	Number	%	Number	%
Foundation Stage setting, including children age 3-5	33	9	33	9
School, including children age 5-7	103	28	98	27
School/setting, including children age 3-7	116	31	114	31
Local authority	64	17	62	17
Teacher/professional association	13	3	12	3
Subject association	2	*	2	*
Other national body	3	1	3	1
Other	38	10	38	10

*Source: Ipsos MORI*

## Interpretation of the data

When interpreting the findings, it is important to remember that the results are based on a sample of, rather than the entire total population of stakeholders. Consequently, results are subject to sampling tolerances and not all differences between sub-groups are statistically significant. At the same time, it should be noted that statistically significant data need to be interpreted to see whether they make reasonable sense. Data are unweighted.

Please note that data based on subgroups of less than 25 respondents are shown as numbers rather than percentages.

**Important note:** Differences between sub-groups containing fewer than 100 respondents are unlikely to be statistically significant and should be treated with caution. Most of the "respondent type" subgroups outlined in the table above contain fewer than 100 respondents. However, there do appear to be some indicative differences between subgroups, and these are highlighted in this report.

## Acknowledgements

We wish to record our gratitude to all consultees that took part in the consultation. Ipsos MORI would also like to thank Ian Shaw at QCA for all his assistance with this project.

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*Checked & Approved:*

*Kate Smith*

*Sarah Knibbs*

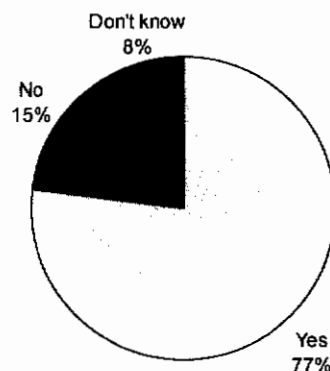
*Amy Lee*

# Proposed Changes to Key Stage 1 Programme of Study for Reading

## Level of agreement with proposals

The level of agreement with the proposed changes to the Key Stage 1 English Programme of Study for Reading is very high (77%). Only 15% of respondents disagree with the proposed changes.

### Agreement with the Proposed Changes to the Key Stage 1 Programme of Study for Reading

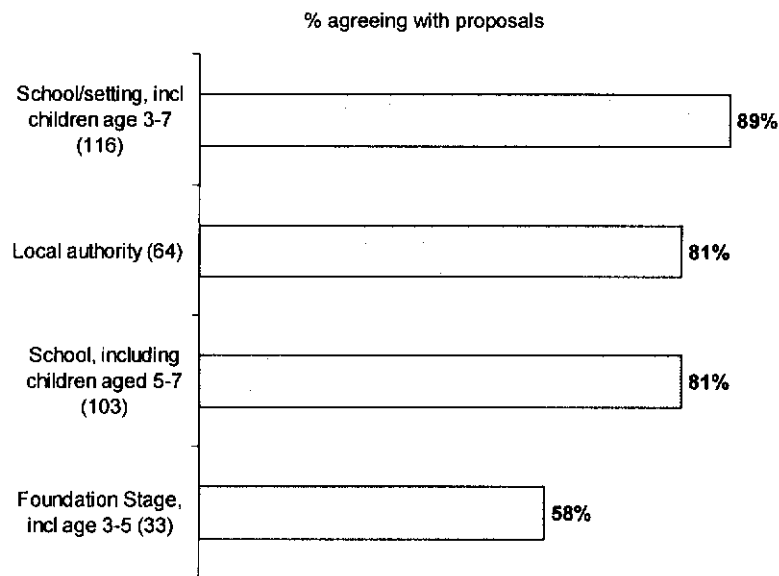


Base: All who answered Q1 (372)

This strong level of agreement is common across all categories of respondent. However, schools/settings that include children aged 3-7 are the most positive of all groups with 89% agreeing with the proposals. Respondents from Foundation Stage settings including children aged 3-5 (58% agree) appear to be less likely to agree with the proposed changes than other groups, and are more likely to say that they are unsure about their level of agreement (18% don't know, compared with 8% on average). However, it should be noted that this finding is indicative but not statistically significant due to the relatively small number of Foundation Stage respondents.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Please note that the 'Teacher/professional association', 'Other national body' and 'Subject association' categories are not included in the chart because there are too few respondents in each category to enable statistically reliable analysis (13, three and two respondents respectively).

### Agreement with the Proposed Changes to the Key Stage 1 Programme of Study for Reading – Sub-group Analysis by Respondent Type



Base: All respondents answering Q1 (bases are shown in brackets). Please note: sub-groups of less than 100 respondents are indicative only, and should be interpreted with caution.

## Key comments and concerns

On the whole, respondents are most likely to comment neutrally about the proposed changes to the Key Stage 1 Programme of Study for Reading (62%).

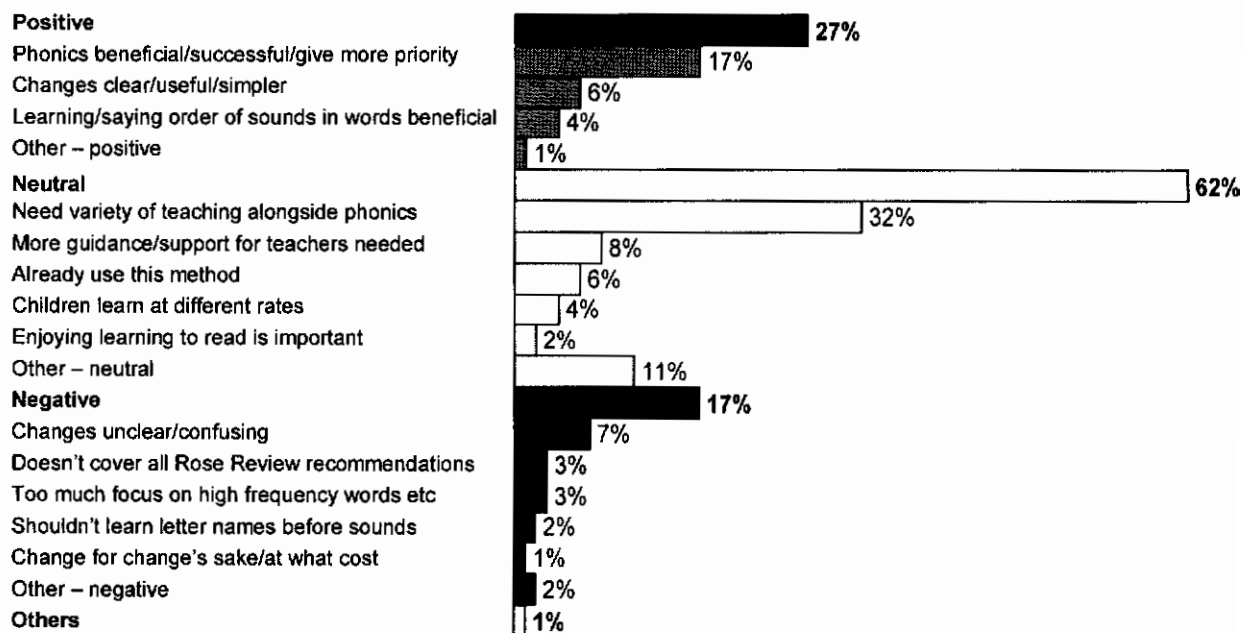
The most common comment, cited by a third (32%) of respondents, is that a variety of teaching/learning methods needs to be used alongside phonics, including contextual understanding. Although the proposed changes do reflect the need for a variety of teaching and learning methods to be used in the teaching of early reading in relation to understanding text, it may be useful to make this clearer in any amendments to the proposed changes.

However, some key themes do emerge, and respondents cite a variety of both positive (27%) and negative (17%) opinions on the proposed changes.

Among the positive comments, 17% of respondents say that the use of phonics is beneficial, successful and should be given more priority. Six percent of respondents feel the changes clarify and simplify the Key Stage 1 English Programme of Study for Reading and four percent of respondents believe that learning and saying the order of sounds in words is beneficial.

Reflecting the high level of agreement with the proposed changes overall relatively few respondents make negative comments about the proposals, suggesting that there is little doubt that changes to the Key Stage 1 Programme of Study for Reading will be beneficial to beginner readers. Among these negative comments seven percent of respondents find the proposed changes confusing; three percent feel the proposals do not fully incorporate the Rose Review recommendations, and the same proportion are concerned that the proposals place too much emphasis on high frequency words, rhyme and alliteration. A further two percent of respondents think that beginner readers should not learn letter names before sounds, and one percent of respondents think the proposals are making changes for change's sake.

### Comments on the Proposed Changes to the Key Stage 1 Programme of Study for Reading



Base: All respondents who commented at Q1 (161)

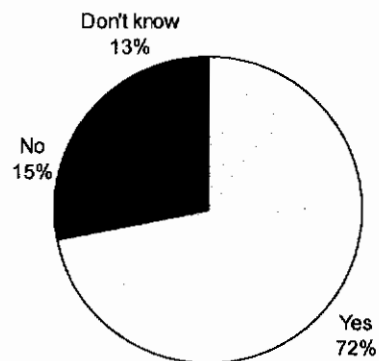
# Proposed Changes to Foundation Stage Early Learning Goal

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## Level of agreement with proposals

The aim of the amendment is to clarify the priority given to phonic work with beginner readers. Almost three quarters of respondents agree with the proposed changes to the Early Learning Goal (72%). As with the proposed changes to the Key Stage 1 Programme of Study for Reading, only 15% of respondents disagree with the proposed changes to the Early Learning Goal.

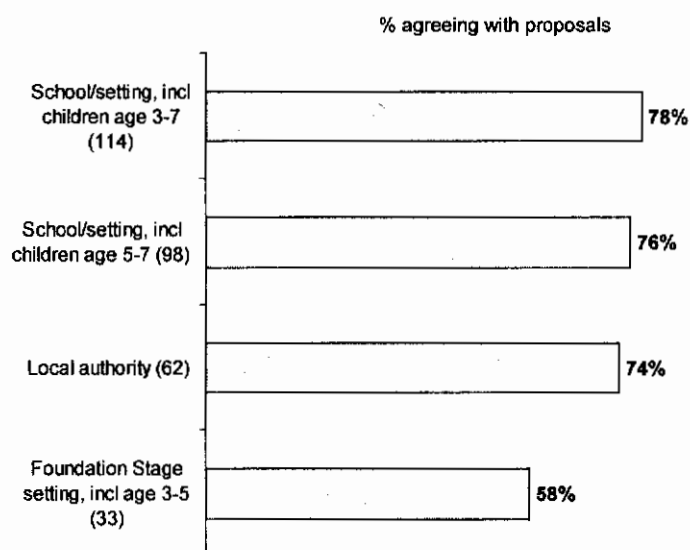
### Agreement with the Proposed Changes to the Early Learning Goal



Base: All who answered Q2 (362)

This high level of agreement is common across all categories of respondent. Once again, respondents from Foundation Stage settings including children aged 3-5 appear to be least likely to agree with the proposed changes (58% agree). This finding is indicative only, due to the relatively small number of Foundation Stage respondents.

### Agreement with the Proposed Changes to the Early Learning Goal – Sub-group Analysis by Respondent Type



Base: All respondents answering Q2 (bases are shown in brackets). Please note: sub-groups of less than 100 respondents are indicative only, and should be interpreted with caution.

## Key comments and concerns

Although the majority of respondents agree with the amendment, a wide range of comments and concerns are expressed, and predominantly equal proportions express positive (37%), neutral (33%) and negative (35%) viewpoints. Those most likely to offer a positive comment on the proposed changes are respondents from school / settings including children aged 3-7 (51%).

Positively, one of the most popular remarks in the additional comments box surrounds the fact that learning/saying the order of sounds in words is beneficial to beginner readers – a point cited by 13% of respondents. In addition, nine percent of respondents say that the use of phonics is beneficial, successful and should be given more priority.

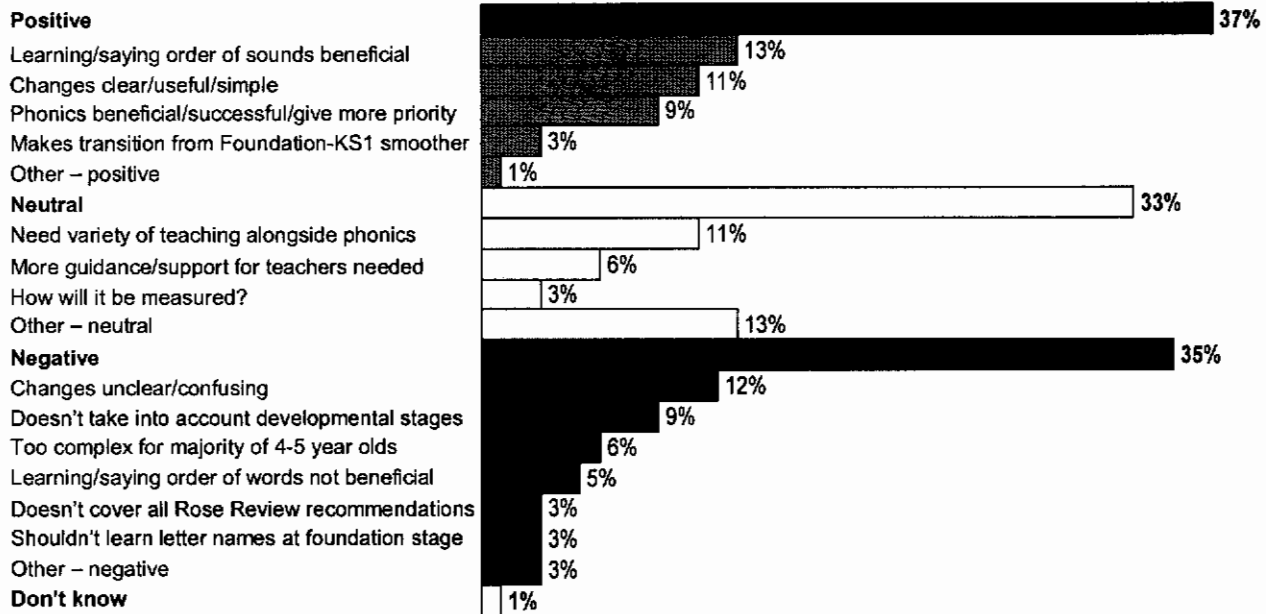
However, there are differing views about the clarity of the amendments to the Early Learning Goal. While 11% of respondents claim to find the aims of the proposed change clear, useful and simple, a slightly higher number have the opposite opinion, with 12% of respondents commenting that changes are unclear, confusing and too prescriptive.

As with the views on proposed changes to the Key Stage 1 Programme of Study for reading, more than one in ten respondents (11%) express the need for a



variety of teaching/learning methods to be used alongside phonics, including contextual understanding. As such, it may be useful to emphasise this point when communicating the proposed changes.

### Comments on the Proposed Changes to the Early Learning Goal



Base: All respondents who commented at Q2 (149)

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# Appendices

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# Consultation leaflet

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## CONSULTATION

Proposed changes to the key stage 1 English programme of study for reading and a foundation stage early learning goal

### Have your say

QCA is consulting on proposed changes to the key stage 1 English programme of study for reading and a foundation stage early learning goal. The consultation on the proposed changes runs from 8 May to 31 July 2006. We would like to hear your views. To contribute to the consultation please visit the QCA website at [www.qca.org.uk/consultations/](http://www.qca.org.uk/consultations/) and complete the online questionnaire before 31 July.

### Background to the consultation: review of early reading

In June 2005 Jim Rose led an independent review of best practice in teaching early reading. The final review was published in March 2006. It recommends that:

- *High quality, systematic phonic work as defined by the review should be taught discretely. The knowledge, skills and understanding that constitute high quality phonic work should be taught as the prime approach in learning to decode (to read) and encode (to write/spell) print.*
- *For most children, high quality, systematic phonic work should start by the age of five, taking full account of professional judgements of children's developing abilities and the need to embed this work within a broad and rich curriculum.*

### Implications of the review

The Secretary of State has decided that the findings of the review should be secured both through the new framework for teaching literacy, which is being developed by the Primary National Strategy, and through changes to:

- the key stage 1 English programme of study for reading
- an early learning goal.

**Ipsos MORI**

The proposed changes to the programme of study and the early learning goal (see overleaf) are designed to clarify what is required for phonic work with beginner readers, while maintaining a curriculum that is broad and rich, and an appropriate emphasis on speaking and listening skills.

The Primary National Strategy (PNS) is taking responsibility for implementing the Rose review's aims of 'quality first teaching' and ensuring that 'expectations about continuity and progression in phonic work are expressed explicitly' in the new framework. The Department for Education and Skills is ensuring that the review's recommendations are addressed within the early years foundation stage.

### **When will the changes happen?**

QCA will advise the Secretary of State on the results of the consultation in summer 2006. Agreed changes will then be communicated to key stage 1 schools and foundation stage settings in autumn 2006. (This consultation is separate from the broader consultation on the new early years foundation stage that will be implemented from 2008.)

## **Proposed changes**

1. To amend the current *Reading Strategies* section of En2 Reading in the English key stage 1 programme of study to read:

### *Knowledge, skills and understanding*

1. *Pupils should be taught to read with fluency, accuracy, understanding and enjoyment.*

### *Word recognition and graphic knowledge*

*They should be taught phonemic awareness and phonic knowledge to decode and encode words, including to:*

- a hear, identify, segment and blend phonemes in words*
- b sound and name the letters of the alphabet*
- c identify syllables in words*
- d recognise that the same sounds may have different spellings and that the same spellings may relate to different sounds*
- e read on sight high-frequency words and other familiar words*
- f recognise words with common spelling patterns*
- g recognise specific parts of words, including prefixes, suffixes, inflectional endings, plurals*
- h link sound and letter patterns, exploring rhyme, alliteration and other sound patterns*

### *Understanding text*

*They should be taught to use grammatical understanding and their knowledge of the content and context of texts to:*

- i understand how word order affects meaning*
- j decipher new words, and confirm or check meaning*
- k work out the sense of a sentence by rereading or reading ahead*
- l focus on meaning derived from the text as a whole*
- m use their knowledge of book conventions, structure, sequence and presentational devices*
- n draw on their background knowledge and understanding of the content.*

The current key stage 1 programme of study for reading can be found at [www.qca.org.uk/nc/](http://www.qca.org.uk/nc/).

2. To amend the early learning goal 'Hear and say initial and final sounds in words, and short sounds within words' to read:

*Hear and say sounds in words in the order in which they occur*

The aim of the changes is to clarify the priority given to phonic work with beginner readers. We do not envisage any other changes to either the foundation stage or key stage 1 curriculum programmes of study.

# Consultation questionnaire

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Qualifications and  
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## Consultation on proposed changes

### About this questionnaire

Proposed changes to the key stage 1 English programme of study for reading and a foundation stage early learning goal.

### Completing the questionnaire

It should take no more than 10 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

### Submitting the questionnaire

Please submit your questionnaire by 31 July 2006.

When you reach the end of the last section you will find a button labelled 'Submit'. Clicking on this button will automatically send us your completed questionnaire. At any point before clicking 'Submit' you can revise your answers. Your response will make a difference.

### Data protection

The data you provide in this survey is collected and stored by SurveyMonkey on behalf of QCA. SurveyMonkey is a US entity and its servers are based in the US. All data collected is kept confidential and secure, and is not shared with any third parties. SurveyMonkey is on the Safe Harbor list. You can view SurveyMonkey's Privacy Statement [here](#) (link).

Next

## Consultation on proposed changes

### Information about respondents

\* Please tick one of the following boxes to show which best describes the context/organisation in which you work.

- Foundation Stage setting, including children age 3-5
- School, including children age 5-7
- School/setting, including children age 3-7
- Local authority
- Teacher/professional association
- Subject association
- Other national body
- Other (please specify)

Name of school/setting/organisation

Prev

Next

## Consultation on proposed changes

### Consultation questions

The proposed changes to the key stage 1 English programme of study for reading and the early learning goal are designed to clarify the priority given to phonic work with beginner readers.

Q1. Do you agree with the proposed changes to the key stage 1 programme of study for reading?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Comments

Q2. Do you agree with the proposed change to the early learning goal?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Comments

Prev

Next



## Consultation on proposed changes

Thank you

Thank you for completing this consultation questionnaire.

Prev

Submit