

Improving reading in UK schools

This week came the good news that English schools have done well in boosting reading standards in recent years.

The Coalition government spread the teaching of reading by synthetic phonics throughout England's schools. They introduced the Phonics Screening check at 6 to see how well pupils were doing. In 2012 just 58% of pupils aged 6 met the required standard. The most recent tests show 81% of 6 year olds meeting it, with a better figure again for 7 year olds. There are 154,000 more 6 year olds fluent at reading than in 2012.

As a result of this improvement England now ranks 8th out of 50 countries at reading, compared to being 19th out of 45 in 2006. The improvement in reading standards has been fastest for the lower performing pupils, which is also good news.

There are now 1.9m more children in good or outstanding schools as assessed by Ofsted than in 2010. Raising reading standards is an important part of raising educational standards, as so much learning rests on reading and understanding the written word. This is a good base for later educational achievement, as the UK seeks to ensure people achieve more at school so they can get access to better paid and more interesting jobs later.