

News story: Thousands more children on track to become fluent readers

Figures out today show 155,000 more six-year-old children are on track to become fluent readers compared to 2012.

The Phonics Screening Check, is taken by all Year 1 pupils across the country in June. As part of the check, pupils are asked to read as many of 40 simple words as they can to their teacher.

By encouraging teachers to use phonics – where pupils are taught to read by breaking words down into their component sounds – the government is getting closer to a time when all pupils are reading fluently and accurately by the age of six.

Today's figures show that for 2017, 81 per cent of pupils met the expected standard at the end of Year 1 – up from 58 per cent in 2012.

Those who did not reach the standard in Year 1 took the Phonics Check again in Year 2, with 92% of seven-year-olds then reaching the standard.

Alongside the results of the Phonics Screening Check, the department has also published national data for Key Stage 1 (KS1), showing that the proportion of 7 year olds reaching the expected standard has increased across reading, writing and maths.

This year, 76 per cent of pupils reached the KS1 expected standard in reading, 68 per cent of pupils in writing and 75 per cent of pupils in maths as government reforms continue to bring higher standards to primary education.

School Standards Minister Nick Gibb said:

We want every child to reach their potential and this means ensuring all pupils can read fluently by the time they leave primary school.

Thanks to the hard work of teachers across the country, and this Government's continued focus on raising standards and increased emphasis on phonics, 6 year olds are reading better than ever before. Today's results show there are now an additional 155,000 six-year-olds on track to becoming fluent readers. This is a huge achievement, improving the lives and education of hundreds of thousands of children.

But there is more to do for the youngest children which is why, as we said in our manifesto, we will strengthen the teaching of literacy and numeracy in the early years. We are determined that all children, whatever their background, should have the rich vocabulary needed to fulfil their potential at school.

News story: Government extends suspension of minimum wage enforcement in the social care sector

The government today (28 September 2017) announced a further [one-month suspension of minimum wage enforcement](#) concerning sleep-in shifts in the social care sector to minimise disruption to the sector and seek to ensure workers receive the wages they are owed.

This follows July's decision to waive all historic penalties in the sector where employers incorrectly paid workers a flat-rate for sleep-in shifts instead of hourly rates. This was in response to concerns over the combined impact which financial penalties and arrears of wages could have on the stability and long-term viability of providers.

Today's announcement will allow the government to establish how providers' back pay bills will affect vulnerable people's care. The evidence base will also ensure any intervention is proportionate and necessary and could be required to satisfy EU State aid rules on government funding for private organisations.

During this temporary pause, the government will develop a new enforcement scheme for the sector to encourage and support social care providers to identify back pay owed to their staff. This will help to minimise the impact of future minimum wage enforcement in the sector while seeking to ensure workers receive the arrears they are owed.

Exceptional measures announced in July will remain in place until guidelines on this new approach are outlined next month.

It remains the government's expectations that all employers pay their workers according to the law, including for sleep-in shifts, as set out in guidance entitled ['Calculating the National Minimum Wage'](#).

News story: Burial of 19 unknown British WW1 Soldiers in Ypres, Belgium

19 unknown British comrades in arms who lost their lives on the battlefield during World War 1 (WW1) have finally been laid to rest in the New Irish Farm Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) Cemetery in Ypres, Belgium on Thursday 28 September.

Unusually for a single service the ceremony involved casualties from English, Irish, Scottish and Welsh Regiments. The service itself was organised by the MOD's Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre (JCCC), part of Defence Business Services and was conducted by The Reverend Iori Price CF, Chaplain to the 1st Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment.

Local piper, Pierre Dervaux, leads the procession into the cemetery – Crown Copyright, All Rights Reserved

Sue Raftree, JCCC said:

It is very unusual for there to be 19 First World War soldiers from English, Irish, Scottish and Welsh Regiments buried in one ceremony. It has been a privilege for the Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre to organise this service.

The soldiers were found following ground work at an industrial development at Briekestraat, Ypres in Belgium. The location, thought to be the original Irish Farm site, is an original war time cemetery created by the army under war conditions. It was believed that all those buried there had been transferred to the New Irish Farm Cemetery, some 300 meters away, but this discovery has proved that they hadn't.

Local children from the Peace Village lay wreaths for the 19 unknown soldiers – Crown Copyright, All Rights Reserved

Investigations undertaken by the JCCC established that of the 19 soldiers:

- 4 served with the Essex Regiment
- one with the Monmouthshire Regiment
- one with the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders
- one with the Northumberland Regiment
- one with the Royal Irish Regiment

As no regimental artefacts were found, the remaining 11 will be buried as 'Known Unto God'. During the burial service all the coffins were in the burial plots with the exception of 1, which was carried in as the focus of the ceremony by the Essex Regiment, now the Anglians.

A bearer party prepare coffin to be lowered into the ground – Crown

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Reverend Iori Price CF said:

We are always mindful of the costs of conflict and the need we have to pursue peace for all. At such a moment as this, when we have gathered to bury those fallen in conflicts, we reflect on the great price paid by our service personnel then and the motivation that encouraged them.

The headstones were provided by the CWGC and Liz Sweet, CWGC's Director of External Relations in Western Europe said:

We, at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, are delighted that the sacrifice of these 19 soldiers has been recognised by today's event and will now be cared for in perpetuity by the Commission.

News story: Infected blood scheme reform

The government announced reforms to payments supporting people who received infected blood during NHS treatment in the 1970s and 1980s.

The Department of Health published its response to the recent consultation on [infected blood support and the special category mechanism](#) on 28 September.

As part of this response, the government announced new payment 'uplifts' and a new special category mechanism (SCM) to improve financial support for those affected by the infected blood tragedy of the 1970s and 1980s.

At least 2,400 people died and thousands more were exposed to Hepatitis C and HIV, with life-changing consequences, as a result of receiving infected blood.

The following measures will now be introduced:

- a new SCM will be introduced so more people with hepatitis C stage 1 can claim financial support with no distinction between severities of illness suffered
- the SCM will consider any significant and sustained adverse impact of

Hepatitis C infection or its treatment on the ability of an individual to carry out routine day-to-day activities

- administration of the current 5 payments schemes will be given to a single body – the NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA). The NHSBSA will start on 1 November 2017
- ‘uplifts’ to annual payments from 2018 to 2019 and increasing the amount of discretionary funding available
- adding membranoproliferative glomerulonephritis (MPGN) to the list of stage 2 Hepatitis C conditions.

The discretionary payment scheme has been changed so that all groups can get the support they need quickly, both financial and otherwise

The department has increased annual spend on support payments to record levels since 2015, committing an additional £125 million in funding for support.

The changes concern people who were infected in England.

Press release: Further extreme right-wing groups banned in the UK

An [order](#) laid in Parliament today will proscribe Scottish Dawn and NS131 (National Socialist Anti-Capitalist Action) as aliases of National Action which was [proscribed](#) in December 2016.

As a result, from tomorrow (29 September 2017) when the order comes into effect, being a member – or inviting support for – the organisations will be a criminal offence, carrying a sentence of up to 10 years’ imprisonment.

The neo-Nazi group National Action was banned last year following an assessment that it was ‘concerned in terrorism.’ The order laid today means that it cannot operate as Scottish Dawn or NS131, which have been identified as alternate names the group has used.

Home Secretary, Amber Rudd, said:

National Action is a vile racist, homophobic and anti-semitic group which glorifies violence and stirs up hatred while promoting their

poisonous ideology and I will not allow them to masquerade under different names.

By extending the proscription of National Action, we are halting the spread of a poisonous ideology and stopping its membership from growing – protecting those who could be at risk of radicalisation.

Our priority as government will always be to maintain the safety and security of families and communities across the United Kingdom and we will continue to identify and ban any terrorist group which threatens this, whatever their ideology.

National Action's online propaganda material featured violent imagery and language, inferring that violent acts, including the attack on the Pulse Nightclub in Orlando and the murder of Jo Cox should be emulated.

Decisions about proscribing or extending the proscription of a particular organisation are taken after extensive consideration and in light of a full assessment of available information.