



**PUBLIC PETITION NO.**

**PE01668**

**Name of petitioner**

Anne Glennie

**Petition title**

Improving literacy standards in schools through research-informed reading instruction

**Petition summary**

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to i) provide national guidance, support, and professional learning for teachers in research-informed reading instruction, specifically systematic synthetic phonics; ii) ensure teacher training institutions train new teachers in research-informed reading instruction, specifically systematic synthetic phonics.

**Action taken to resolve issues of concern before submitting the petition**

I have been campaigning since January 2015 to try and have my views heard, by writing to the Scottish Government, Education Scotland, Times Education Supplement Scotland and the General Teaching Council for Scotland. I blog regularly and I am a committee member of the IFERI (International Foundation for Effective Reading Instruction) and the RRF (Reading Reform Foundation).

**Petition background information**

Literacy standards have been falling in Scotland since 2006. This downturn is evidenced by previous Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) rounds, but is also confirmed in our own Scottish Survey of Literacy and Numeracy data, as well as the recent teacher judgement data. Scotland's OECD rank went from 6th in 2000 to 23rd in 2015 in reading, and we are now behind both England and Northern Ireland.

When it comes to literacy, and in particular beginning reading instruction, other countries are getting better faster than we are. We are 'doing what we've always done', instead of ensuring our classroom practice and pedagogy is informed by the latest international research. Teachers in the main are unaware of this research because:

- current advice given by Education Scotland through the benchmarks, the experiences and outcomes and the Primary One Literacy Assessment and Action Resource (POLAAR) do not draw on current international research on reading and reinforce the status quo
- reading practice in primary schools is led by resources; any research used is a relic of the past (Multi-cueing, miscue analysis, running records, reading recovery, sight words and guessing, whole-language, old look and say reading books etc.)
- new teachers are not trained in current, evidence-based reading pedagogy.

There is in fact a 'teaching gap'. Teachers, through no fault of their own, lack the required pedagogical subject knowledge about the most effective way to teach reading, writing and spelling.

I believe there is an obvious and logical solution to Scotland's literacy woes. To improve reading and writing we must improve teaching and learning in the classroom. There is now ample, secure and compelling evidence available, which shows if children are taught to read, write and spell using a systematic synthetic phonics approach (as opposed to the current 'mixed methods' approach in Scottish schools) that the attainment gap and the gender gap can be closed.

Three major international inquiries into the teaching of reading concluded that systematic phonics is the most effective way to teach children to read. (The National Reading Panel, 2000, USA; National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy, 2005, Australia; Independent review of the teaching of early reading, Final Report, Jim Rose, 2006, England.)

By providing national guidance, support, training and resources, teachers will be able to adapt their classroom practice accordingly to bring it line with research findings. I believe that adopting a systematic synthetic phonics approach for beginning readers would:

- close the gap in the earliest stages of school, even / especially for those children who are considered disadvantaged or who have English as a second language
- ensure all teachers have the professional subject knowledge to teach a child to read (write and spell) including children who may be experiencing difficulties at any school stage
- enable us to aim for 100% of our children reading in Scotland. (It is only in 2-3% of cases where children will have profound difficulties that will mean this is not possible)
- reduce the number of children being identified as dyslexic and those struggling with literacy
- provide equity and a level playing field where every child can access learning, books and the curriculum.

If there are research-informed methods for the teaching of reading and basic literacy skills that can improve Scotland's results and, more importantly, children's lives, I believe we are morally and ethically obliged to explore them.

### Unique web address

<http://www.parliament.scot/GettingInvolved/Petitions/readinginstruction>

### Related information for petition

**Independent review of the teaching of early reading, Final Report, Jim Rose (2006)**  
<http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/5551/2/report.pdf>

Read Scotland's own internationally renowned research on phonics here (the Clackmannanshire research):

**The effects of synthetic phonics teaching on reading and spelling attainment: A seven year longitudinal study.** Rhona Johnston and Joyce Watson (2005)

<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/Doc/933/0044071.pdf>

<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/Doc/36496/0023582.pdf>

**Follow-up Study from Reception to Year 1 (2010-2012) and Summary Report of an earlier Longitudinal Study (1997-2004) The Effects of a Systematic, Synthetic Phonics Programme on Reading and Spelling** Dr Marlynn Grant (2012)

<http://rrf.org.uk/pdf/Grant%20Follow-Up%20Study%202010-2012.pdf>

Further background research and information is provided by IFERI and RRF.

**Do you wish your petition to be hosted on the Parliament's website to collect signatures online?**

YES

**How many signatures have you collected so far?**

0

**Closing date for collecting signatures online**

09 / 08 / 2017

**Comments to stimulate online discussion**

The decline of literacy standards in Scotland's schools is unacceptable. Teachers should be supported urgently with national guidance and professional learning in research-informed reading instruction, specifically systematic synthetic phonics (SSP).

Longitudinal research has shown that SSP is effective for the reading, spelling and writing skills of all children, including those thought to be vulnerable and disadvantaged because of factors such as gender, socio-economic group, first language not English, age, struggling learners, children with attention difficulties and those with significant social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. SSP is successful even with children starting school with the lowest level of language and with low social skills on school entry.

- Should Scotland follow the current international research and change the way we teach beginning reading instruction in our primary schools?
- Should our reading instruction in schools be led by research or by resources?
- In your opinion, what do you feel has led to a decline in literacy standards in Scotland and what could be done to address this?
- If you are a teacher, or a student teacher, have you been given sufficient training, professional development or support in this area?
- If you are a parent, are you happy with the reading instruction that your child / children have received?
- Should Scotland consider introducing a Phonics Screening Check (light touch, simple assessment), as has been done in England and is currently being trialled in Australia?