

These national headlines changed our attitudes to the teaching of reading ..

THE SCOTSMAN
Wednesday, 26 October 1998

Dare we return to 'traditional' learning methods?

Education officials in Scotland are considering a return to traditional methods of teaching reading, after a year of experimental methods. The Scottish Education Secretary, David Stewart, has announced that the Government is considering a return to traditional methods of teaching reading, after a year of experimental methods. The Scottish Education Secretary, David Stewart, has announced that the Government is considering a return to traditional methods of teaching reading, after a year of experimental methods.

News 7
YES NOVEMBER 6 1998

Scots throw down literacy gauntlet

Is the latest Government-approved strategy for teaching reading really the most effective one available? **Robert Mendick** reports

A RADICAL WAY of teaching using synthetic phonics — schools in Clackmannanshire — children to read had really outperformed the Government's preferred literacy strategy. The technique, pioneered in Scotland, has produced results which are being compared with those of the Government's preferred literacy strategy.



THE SCOTSMAN
Wednesday, 28 October 1998

They are just weeks into school but can already write. What's their secret?

Seonag MacKinnon on a remarkable early learner who is writing words and sentences at the age of five.



On the orange: Pupils at Abernethy Primary School repeat the lesson.

The Daily Telegraph
No. 41,675
Britain's biggest-selling newspaper

Literacy Hour 'is behind the times'

By Liz Lightfoot, Education Correspondent

TOOLS in Scotland are being told not to teach reading the way the Government prescribed for the Literacy Hour in England. Scottish Office officials published research by which it said that the real benefits of the phonic method were achieved by the age of six months behind the Literacy Hour.

David Dewar, Secretary of State for Scotland, who had visited the pioneer schools. The gains made by children taught the new way for 20 minutes a day for 12 weeks were dramatic. The children's reading age while they were in the Literacy Hour was six months behind the phonic method.

THE TIMES EDUCATIONAL SUPPLEMENT
October 27 1998

SCOTLAND

Reading hurdle conquered

Researchers at St Andrews have made an exciting breakthrough on literacy teaching

By David Henderson

The reading hurdle that has long been a major barrier to literacy in Scotland has been conquered, according to researchers at St Andrews University. The breakthrough came after a year of experimental methods, and the results are being compared with those of the Government's preferred literacy strategy.

The research revealed that children who were taught using synthetic phonics were able to read at a level equivalent to children who had been taught using the traditional method for a year. The researchers also found that children who were taught using synthetic phonics were able to read at a level equivalent to children who had been taught using the traditional method for a year.

THE INDEPENDENT
Monday 7 December 1998

New reading plan 'staggeringly good'

By Judith Jones, Education Editor

NEW WAYS of teaching reading in Scotland are far more effective than those being promoted by the Government in England, a study to be published next week has revealed. The findings are likely to prompt research looking at the possibility of teaching reading in Scotland in a way that is more effective than the Government's preferred literacy strategy.

The Scottish study, which was funded by the Government, compared the results of children who were taught using synthetic phonics with those of children who were taught using the traditional method. The results showed that children who were taught using synthetic phonics were able to read at a level equivalent to children who had been taught using the traditional method for a year.

David Blunkett, the Secretary of State for Education, has said that the results of the study are "staggeringly good" and that they show that synthetic phonics is a more effective way of teaching reading than the traditional method.



Blunkett, Laid down 'less successful' methods

Behind them was one school.

A Jolly Phonics Case Study

What made their teaching so special?

Let Deerpark Primary School* tell you in their own words...

* in Clackmannanshire, Scotland



Annette teaches the "ie" sound with its action – the children are saying "Aye aye!" like sailors!

Making the change to *Jolly Phonics*

by Annette Steele, Primary 1 teacher

ABOUT three years ago the Deputy Headteacher brought a copy of *The Phonics Handbook* into our school. She asked me to have a look at it and I liked what I saw. The programme was well-structured, with eye-catching worksheets. After discussions with our Management Team, we decided to use some *Jolly Phonics* ideas with my Primary 1 class, but at a slightly slower

pace than that suggested in *The Phonics Handbook*. I didn't feel that my children would be able to cope with the introduction of six new sounds each week.

How wrong could I be? The children loved the programme with its multisensory approach to the teaching of phonics. At the end of the first year, all of the pupils had retained more sounds than in any previous year.

the results the pupils had achieved using only part of the *Jolly Phonics* programme and at a slowed-down pace, I was excited about the possibilities of this initiative. I still had reservations about the quick

pace of introducing the sounds, the early introduction of writing, and the whole-class approach. Would my children be able to cope with this from almost their first week in school?

All that worry for nothing! The children loved the routine of our daily phonic lessons. They would choose to read the *Finger Phonics* books on their own in the reading corner. They formed letters and words using building blocks, rods and chalk boards.

They were totally stimulated and always eager to learn more. The whole-class approach meant that there was more time for direct teaching and the less able children thrived, working with and learning from the more able. By the end of their first year in school, almost all the children in the class were reading above their chronological age and were able to write stories on their own. I was amazed by what they had achieved.

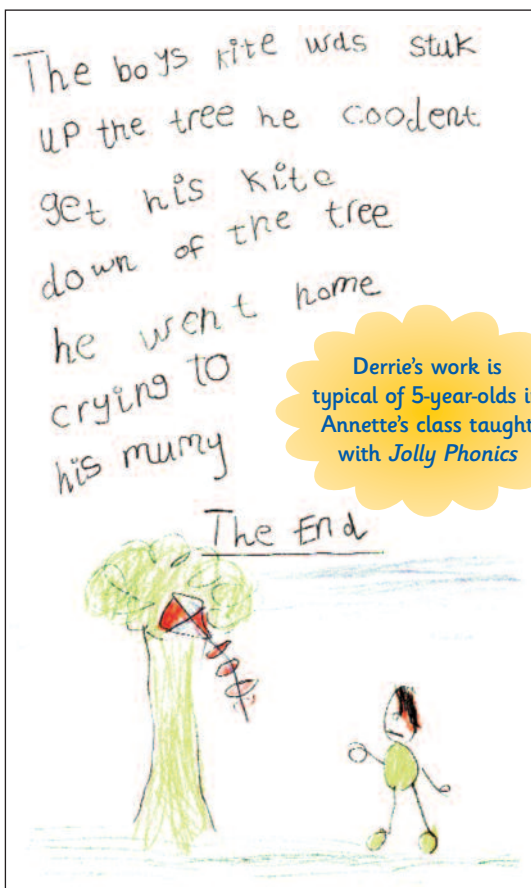
We are now through with the restrictions so vital for the

integrity of the research project. This year we have been able to involve parents more and earlier. We held a reading workshop for parents and for the first time ever we had a 100% turn out! Parents had the opportunity to look at the materials being used, see a lesson being taught and discuss ways in which they could help their child at home. Like all

children, my class love to see their parents involved in school, and to have a chance to show off what they can do.

The *Jolly Phonics* materials are very suited to Clackmannanshire Council's approach to the teaching of reading and writing in the early years. The *Finger Phonics* books, the *Jolly Phonics Wall Frieze* and the worksheets photocopied from *The Phonics Handbook* are beautifully illustrated and presented. Children

love using them. After seeing the results we have achieved in the last few years, I only wish I had discovered the programme years ago. Give it a go – you will be amazed by the success your pupils will experience!



Derrie's work is typical of 5-year-olds in Annette's class taught with *Jolly Phonics*

It was around this time that the school was approached by Clackmannanshire Council to take part in a research project conducted by the University of St Andrew's, which was an important part of Clackmannanshire's Early Learning Initiative. My new class and I were to use a synthetic phonics programme which made use of many of the *Jolly Phonics* ideas and materials. Having seen

"After one year, nearly all the children could write stories on their own!"

"Give it a go – you'll be amazed by your pupils' success!"

Year Group Names:

Average age, mid-year: 5 years
 Scotland Primary 1
 England/Wales Reception
 New Zealand Year 1
 NSW Kindergarten



Putting phonics teaching to the test

by Dr Rhona Johnstone and Joyce Watson (pictured left),
 Researchers at the School of Psychology, University of St Andrews

IN 1992, we embarked on a study of how phonics was taught in Scottish Primary Schools. Although most Scottish schools had continued to teach phonics even when whole language approaches were in vogue, the teaching had become much less intensive, often taking as long as three years for the programme to be completed. The phonics teaching had also become divorced from other aspects of teaching reading, probably due to a demise of phonics reading-scheme books. In one of the schools we studied, a teacher had an accelerated phonics programme, which included the use of explicit sounding and blending in order to read unfamiliar words. Her children had a much better level of reading skill, and this superiority was maintained over the three years of the study. At this time we became interested in the synthetic phonics taught in Germany and Austria, in which children are taught to read by learning letter-sounds and being shown how letters can be used to build up words. Most phonics in Britain is of the analytic kind, where whole words are shown and children are shown how to segment them into letter sounds.

We decided to examine whether synthetic phonics was more effective than the traditional analytic phonics. Children were taught a small number of letters, and as each letter was introduced they were shown it in the beginning,

middle and end position of words. Then they were shown a picture of a word, said the name of the picture, and selected the letters to make up the word. Having done this they were then taught to sound each letter and blend the sounds together to pronounce the word. As this was an experimental programme, materials from *Jolly Phonics* were used to assist in the teaching. We

used the *Finger Phonics* books, the alphabet song, and clips from the *Jolly Phonics Videos*. Our scheme

differed slightly from *Jolly Phonics* in that we did not do any phonological awareness training without print, we did not use letter-sound mnemonics except to aid pronunciation, and we taught explicit word-building using magnetic letters. In addition, children were taught to sound the letters without an 'uh' sound (e.g. 'nn' rather than 'nuh' for the letter 'n'), and smoothly to co-articulate the sounds in order to

pronounce the word. This is the method used in Austria.

After two terms in school, the children were tested, and the two methods of teaching compared. We found that a systematic programme of analytic phonics was effective, and that the children were

"We asked whether synthetic phonics (like Jolly Phonics) was more effective than analytic phonics"

"We found that programmes like Jolly Phonics gave the quickest and best results"

On average, the children were 11 months ahead of actual age in reading!

And 14 months ahead in spelling!

reading appropriately for their chronological age. However, the children taught with synthetic phonics were reading and spelling seven months ahead of their chronological age, and had very high levels of rhyme and phoneme awareness. At the end of the year, when all of the children had been in school for three terms, the synthetic phonics children were found to have continued to make gains in reading and spelling, being 11 and 14 months ahead of chronological age respectively. In the Table below, we present

the end of year results at Deerpark Primary School in Clackmannanshire. It can be seen that only one child had reading skills which were lagging behind chronological age, despite this school's being in an area of fairly severe economic deprivation. We conclude that any programme of teaching reading will be effective if it includes systematic phonics teaching. However, synthetic phonics programmes, such as *Jolly Phonics*, will give the quickest and best results and will lead to a significant reduction in underachievement.

"Programmes like Jolly Phonics significantly reduce underachievement"

"Only one child read below actual age"

Results of Standardised Reading and Spelling Tests

Annette's Primary 1 class, after one year of school

Pupil:	Boy/ Girl:	Actual Age:	Reading Age:	Spelling Age:	Reading Gain:	Spelling Gain:
BU	g	5:8	6:6	7:0	+0:10	+1:4
CM	g	5:11	6:11	7:1	+1:0	+1:2
EN	g	6:3	7:2	7:1	+0:11	+0:10
HE	g	5:5	5:5	6:2	0:0	+0:9
JS	g	6:3	7:0	7:8	+0:9	+1:5
KE	g	5:9	7:0	7:5	+1:3	+1:8
MN	g	5:11	6:5	6:4	+0:6	+0:5
NL	g	5:5	8:1	8:3	+2:8	+2:10
EN	g	5:9	6:3	6:7	+0:6	+0:10
UT	g	5:10	7:2	7:1	+1:4	+1:3
SF	g	5:7	7:1	7:5	+1:6	+1:10
SH	g	6:0	7:7	7:8	+1:7	+1:8
TL	g	5:10	6:0	6:8	+0:2	+0:10
YO	g	5:5	6:5	7:0	+1:0	+1:7
YK	g	5:7	6:6	6:7	+0:11	+1:0
CL	b	5:11	6:6	6:6	+0:7	+0:7
CK	b	5:9	6:5	6:6	+0:8	+0:9
DE	b	5:7	5:4	5:0	-0:3	-0:7
EK	b	6:3	7:4	7:8	+1:1	+1:5
EH	b	5:5	6:3	7:1	+0:10	+1:8
KM	b	5:11	6:0	6:2	+0:1	+0:3
EO	b	5:4	5:5	5:6	+0:1	+0:2
OY	b	6:1	8:1	8:6	+2:0	+2:5
RT	b	5:9	7:0	7:2	+1:3	+1:5
TE	b	5:7	7:1	7:2	+1:6	+1:7
Average (Girls):		5:9	6:9	7:1	+1:0	+1:4
Average (Boys):		5:9	6:7	6:9	+0:10	+1:0
Average (Class):		5:9	6:8	6:11	+0:11	+1:2
% above Actual Age:			92.3%	96%		

Reading Test: British Ability Scales Word Reading Test
 Spelling Test: Schonell Spelling Test

All ages shown in years and months.

Helping us make a difference

by Lorna Spence, Headteacher

LIKE all schools, we are always looking for ways to improve our teaching. When we first heard of a new approach to phonics teaching which was reportedly achieving startling improvements in reading attainment, we decided to find out more. While impressed by the *Jolly Phonics* results, we were initially sceptical about the pace. As canny Scots, we decided that for our first dip into the water of synthetic phonics, we would try only three sounds per week, rather than six as recommended in *The Phonics Handbook*. Even so, this was more than we would

"Pupils' success has surpassed our wildest expectations..."

have taught with our previous analytical approach, and despite this cautious pace, we were delighted with the gains pupils made over that first year. We were now convinced that the *Jolly Phonics* approach to the teaching of reading could deliver significant gains for our pupils.

We were enthusiastic participants when Clackmannanshire Council offered Deerpark Primary the opportunity to be a pilot school for their Early Learning Initiative for Literacy, since we were to use a synthetic phonics approach designed by

the University of St Andrews which incorporated the key elements of *Jolly Phonics*. This highly-structured programme was welcomed by teachers and the success of pupils has surpassed even our wildest expectations. At the end of Primary 1, 93% of pupils were reading at above their chronological age, and were showing, on average, gains of eleven months over their actual age! Another session has just finished and the results remain just as impressive.

And the really good news? Deerpark Primary is not a school in the leafy suburbs. The school serves an area of significant socio-economic disadvantage. Our heads are up – staff, pupils and parents. The feeling of

"...yet Deerpark is not a school in the leafy suburbs!"



professional satisfaction that comes from being part of an exciting and ongoing success story is the reason why each and every one of us came into teaching – to know that we can make a difference!



A flying start with *Jolly Phonics*

by Maureen Nelson, mother of two

WHEN my younger son William started school I was asked if he could be included with other children in a pilot scheme to teach them to read in a different way from that previously used in the school.

I knew William was bright for

his age. So was his older brother Andrew, but I was amazed at how much earlier William started reading than

Andrew had when he started

"William, 5, has started writing his own storybook"

school. William seems more interested in reading and writing, and has even started writing and illustrating a storybook himself.

I am very proud of both of my children but feel William has had a flying start at school with this new method of teaching phonics.

Supporting staff through the changes

by Lesley Robertson,

Early Intervention Development Officer for Clackmannanshire Council

RAISING levels of attainment is a top priority for education services in Clackmannanshire. Funding for early intervention enabled Clackmannanshire to forge ahead with plans to examine the most effective methods of teaching young

"Everyone thoroughly enjoys the whole-class teaching sessions"

children to read. The Council commissioned the University of St Andrews to conduct a research programme in Primary 1 classes in the authority.

Generally, teachers meet the announcement of any new education initiative with a degree of apprehension, and those involved at the beginning of the early intervention programme in Clackmannan-

shire were no exception. Many teachers did not believe that their pupils could cope with the pace or demands of the programme, and the return to

whole-class teaching methods met with some anxiety. Without staff development, and training in the techniques to be used, this initiative would have been less likely to succeed.

As the development officer for the authority's early learning initiative, it was my responsibility to oversee the staff development and implementation of the research pro-

grammes. The most successful element, within the teaching programmes devised by the University of St Andrews, used *Jolly Phonics* materials as a resource.

Eighteen months on, we are delighted that everyone's early apprehensions have been overcome. Staff and pupils thoroughly enjoy the whole-class teaching sessions, and the levels of attainment in Primary 1

"Every school in Clackmannanshire has received *Jolly Phonics* materials, so now each child can benefit"

classes surpassed all expectations. Unsurprisingly, reactions from all interested parties in the community have been very



positive. As a result, all schools in Clackmannanshire have received not only training to support the explicit teaching programme written by the researchers, but also a selection of *Jolly Phonics* materials to support its delivery!

Every child in Clackmannanshire can now benefit from the effective teaching of reading in the early years of primary school.