

# From training to teaching early language and literacy

The effectiveness of training to teach language and literacy in primary schools

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This survey set out to evaluate how well new Early Years and primary teachers are trained to teach language and literacy, including phonics, in primary schools. It sought to identify the common elements of effective training and induction as well as the most common factors that prevent new teachers from gaining the necessary knowledge, understanding and skills for teaching language and literacy well.

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## Executive summary

'We need to renew our national drive for higher standards of literacy... I am committed to Ofsted playing its part in that campaign to raise standards.'

Sir Michael Wilshaw, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, March 2012.

All teachers, including new teachers coming into the profession, need to be well trained. New teachers in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stages 1 and 2 must know how to teach early language skills, reading and writing effectively.

This survey set out to evaluate how well new teachers are trained to teach language and literacy, including phonics in primary schools. Inspectors followed 50 trainee teachers from their final training placement to the first and second terms of their first teaching posts. Forty-four of these trainees from 10 different initial teacher education providers took part from the start to the end of the survey.

Inspectors found variation in the quality of initial training and induction and considerable differences in the depth of knowledge and level of skills of the new teachers in teaching early language and literacy. Twenty-one of the 44 new teachers had good or better skills. Fourteen of these had received at least good training at every stage of their training and induction with sufficient focus and in-depth learning. However, the survey also found that not enough new teachers had consistent high-quality training during initial teacher education and induction to ensure that they developed good teaching skills, underpinned by a deep understanding of language development and the acquisition of literacy skills.

The following factors were found to be most important in ensuring that trainees and new teachers have the best possible chance of developing the necessary knowledge and expertise for teaching language and literacy well.

- Initial teacher education programmes need to ensure that every trainee has a good understanding of how children develop language and literacy skills and a good understanding of the prerequisite early developmental experiences children need to ensure later success.
- There must be ongoing rigorous evaluation of the knowledge and skills of trainees and new teachers, specifically with regard to the teaching of language and literacy; training opportunities must be adapted accordingly.
- Trainees and new teachers must receive clear, robust and objective feedback on their performance, specifically about the teaching of language and literacy.
- Trainees and new teachers must be provided with many early opportunities to work alongside skilled colleagues in assessing, planning and evaluating pupils' learning, in order to ensure that from the outset, planning and teaching meet the different needs of all pupils.

## Key findings

- Twenty-one of the 44 new teachers were teaching language and literacy well and ensuring that good progress was being made in this area by nearly all of the pupils in their class. Nearly all the 44 new teachers were teaching at a satisfactory or better level by the spring term 2012.<sup>1</sup>
- Fourteen of the 44 new teachers did not have sufficiently in-depth training in assessing pupils' skills and knowledge in language and literacy to be able to use their judgements effectively to plan lessons and decide how to give extra help.
- All but three initial teacher education providers gave trainees at least a reasonable start in understanding how to teach phonics effectively, but nearly half the trainees were not sufficiently aware of how learning in one age group related to pupils' previous and subsequent learning in language and literacy.
- In the best initial teacher education programmes, trainees developed a good understanding of how language skills underpin literacy, and how the development of phonic skills relates to reading and writing across the age groups from the Early Years Foundation Stage to Year 6 and beyond. The most successful training and induction occurred in schools where there was a whole-school focus on improving the teaching and learning of language and literacy.
- The survey found that it is possible for a trainee to become a successful new teacher even when aspects of their initial training have been weak, where the gaps in their knowledge and skills are picked up and addressed by the provider, subsequent school placements or the induction school. Similarly it is possible for a new teacher to be effective when induction is weak if they have had good strong training and experience in good or better placements.
- Too often training and induction in the teaching of language and literacy did not take sufficient account of trainees' and newly qualified teachers' different starting points. This survey found that, although not a guarantee of success, an initial degree in English, other language-based subjects or child development usually provided a stronger foundation of understanding for teaching language and literacy.
- On leaving training, newly qualified teachers were not always sufficiently skilled in adapting their teaching to meet the needs of pupils at an early stage of learning English as an additional language, the needs of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.
- Trainees rarely had sufficient training and guidance on how to work with other colleagues to ensure: that they received information about the pupils in their class who were taught in different ability groups by other staff; that they were

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'satisfactory' refers to the criteria used in the inspection framework for maintained schools and academies, January 2012;  
[www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/090019](http://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/090019).

able to monitor the quality of the input of, and provide feedback to, other staff working with pupils in their class in developing language and literacy skills.

## Recommendations

The Department for Education, including the Teaching Agency, should:

- ensure that initial training and induction develop trainees' understanding of how to teach language and literacy, including phonics, from the Early Years Foundation Stage to Year 6, regardless of the age range for which they are being trained; they should be taught what to teach, as well as how to avoid gaps in pupils' learning, knowledge and skills as they move through the school
- publicise the expected standards and training in these areas so that they are available for anyone considering training
- use the full range of evidence, including inspection evidence, about the quality and effectiveness of trainees' and newly qualified teachers' teaching *and* the outcomes for the pupils they teach, when evaluating the effectiveness of any initial training provider
- provide every trainee and newly qualified teacher with clear information about what their trainer and induction schools should provide in relation to the teaching of language and literacy and what they are expected to know and understand by the end of their course and induction; trainees should understand how they can challenge the quality of their training and induction if it is weak, and they should also be provided with access to excellent practitioners – for example, those schools identified as 'Leading Partners in Literacy' and current 'Teaching Schools'.<sup>2,3</sup>

Initial teacher education partnerships should:

- use information about the prior knowledge and experience of trainees to plan their programmes and ensure that trainees with less experience of, or knowledge about, language and literacy have additional input in these areas
- rigorously evaluate the quality of provision, progress and attainment in language and literacy for pupils in all the partner schools so that centre-based training and future placements can be adjusted to complement the trainees' experiences more effectively

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<sup>2</sup> 'Leading Partners in Literacy' was a programme offering funding to selected schools funded by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (now the Department for Education) and the then Training and Development Agency for Schools for three years (2009–11).

<sup>3</sup> A 'Teaching School' is an outstanding school that has a strong track record of collaborative working and has been designated by the National College to play a key role in the leadership of a Teaching School alliance receiving additional funding from the government.

- ensure that the development of language skills from the Early Years Foundation Stage to Year 6 and the relationship these have with literacy skills are fully understood by all new teachers for primary aged pupils
- ensure that trainees have opportunities to observe and learn about the teaching of literacy and language across the key stages so they become aware of how their work fits with pupils' literacy and language learning over time
- provide more opportunities for trainees to assess, plan and evaluate pupils' learning from an early stage so that their planning meets the different needs of the pupils more effectively
- ensure that trainees are given clear information about current age-related expectations of pupils' progress and attainment in language and literacy
- support trainees in evaluating their own performance in the teaching of language and literacy.

Schools that provide induction should:

- carry out an early assessment and ongoing evaluation of newly qualified teachers' knowledge and skills when teaching language and literacy and use this information to plan further training opportunities; assessments should include formal and informal observations, analysis of pupil tracking and looking at pupils' work across the curriculum.
- ensure that every newly qualified teacher is given support from the school's language and literacy coordinator and the induction tutor<sup>4</sup>
- have clearly defined lines of accountability and responsibility for all professionals working within an induction programme
- ensure that newly qualified teachers evaluate their language and literacy teaching so that they understand the impact that this has on pupils' progress
- help newly qualified teachers to identify what may be preventing some children from learning as quickly as others and where they should be providing more challenge.

Ofsted will:

- evaluate trainees' and newly qualified teachers' preparedness for teaching language and literacy, including phonics, and their ability to assess and support the progress of all pupils regardless of their attainment levels
- ensure that inspectors review the quality of induction, where relevant, when evaluating the effectiveness of performance management systems.

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<sup>4</sup> Induction tutors are often referred to as mentors by schools.



## **Characteristics of the best new teachers of language and literacy in this survey**

The best new teachers had been well supported and consequently they had:

- a deep understanding of children's language development and understanding of the links between language skills and literacy skills
- sufficient knowledge of language and literacy skills across the age groups, so that they were able to adapt their teaching for different age groups as well as pupils with a range of abilities and attainment
- good questioning skills which helped pupils develop their thinking skills through talking and listening
- a good knowledge and understanding of phonics and how this supports reading and spelling; they understood how to help pupils use their skills learnt throughout the curriculum
- a good understanding of how to help pupils use the skills they have learnt throughout the curriculum.

They also had an ability to:

- create interesting experiences and activities that promoted the use of language and children's listening skills
- assess learning in language and literacy accurately and understand what to teach next to enable pupils to progress quickly
- provide good models of spoken as well as written language
- use accurate and precise pronunciation
- blend and segment words when teaching phonics
- use a wide range of well-considered resources to help extend vocabulary and create an enthusiasm for writing
- assess pupils throughout lessons and target their questioning, providing sufficient challenge and support for different pupils
- understand how to support pupils with special educational needs and those who are at an early stage of acquiring English
- be proficient in teaching language and literacy skills across the curriculum
- be highly reflective practitioners.

## **Common features of the most effective initial training and induction**

- A well-defined initial teacher education curriculum that included: ways of teaching language skills through modelling and skilful questioning; tutoring about the links between language skills and literacy; ways of teaching reading and writing; the use of systematic synthetic phonics and the links with spelling strategies, grammar and higher-order comprehension skills.
- Precise audits and subsequent monitoring of trainees' skills; adjustments to tutoring in order to meet trainees' needs.
- Opportunities for trainees to develop a good understanding of effective assessment and how to use this to inform accurate planning.
- A good understanding of the quality of teaching of language and literacy and achievement of pupils in partner schools. This enabled the providers to plan good future placements and centre-based training for trainees.
- The induction of new teachers into effective staff teams; this facilitated good informal monitoring, joint planning and assessment.
- Well-trained school-based mentors with the necessary skills to assess the skills and knowledge of the trainee or newly qualified teacher, and offer well-targeted support and challenge.
- School literacy coordinators with a high profile within training and induction, with clear lines of support and accountability.
- Well-planned observations of literacy teaching during initial training and induction, including observations of phonics and skills tutoring sessions.
- Effective feedback about pupils' learning for trainees and new teachers from tutors, mentors and other school staff. This helped them to reflect on their teaching skills and evaluate how much pupils were learning in their lessons.
- An understanding of the correlation between the performance of newly qualified teachers and the progress made by all the pupils in their classes.
- Good opportunities within initial training and induction for observing practice in different key stages within a range of schools.

## **Common barriers facing trainees and new teachers**

- Too few opportunities to teach all aspects of language and literacy, and ways of teaching literacy skills across other subject areas.
- Too few opportunities to teach pupils of different ages and those with different needs.
- Observations of trainees and new teachers which do not focus sufficiently on specific areas of language and literacy, including phonics, and feedback which is not precise about how pupil's learning could be improved.
- Poorly defined, and often too many, areas for improvement in feedback which do not build upon existing skills.
- Schools which do not have an accurate enough view of the quality of their own provision or the skills of different staff. Often they struggle to identify what the newly qualified teacher needs to learn which leads to overly narrow, inward-looking induction.
- Insufficient expertise or capacity to support the newly qualified teacher in developing their teaching of language and literacy. New teachers in these situations are often isolated and lack experience of different approaches in order to reflect upon and evaluate their own practice.

## The key elements of initial training and induction

This section considers some of the constituent parts of initial teacher training and induction. It sets out important 'dos and don'ts' for providers and schools, and provides case studies to illustrate good practice and identify how weaker practice can be improved.

### A well-defined curriculum within initial teacher education

Do	Don't
ensure trainees understand the key skills needed by pupils at different ages	limit training to one key stage in primary education
ensure trainees understand how to teach all elements of language and literacy including developing effective communication and systematic synthetic phonics	become too focused on one approach to teaching language or literacy at any given time
ensure trainees understand the importance of reinforcing language and literacy skills consistently across all curriculum areas	
adapt training in response to robust evaluation, latest research and reviews	
involve excellent practitioners wherever possible	

After gaining a degree in English and History, one of the trainees followed the Postgraduate Certificate in Education route into teaching. His initial training gave him a good grounding in the knowledge and skills to teach language and literacy characterised by:

- an effective audit of his subject knowledge that included phonics, early reading and spelling strategies, which was used to shape the training he required
- explicit input on the simple view of reading, early writing and systematic synthetic phonics<sup>5</sup>
- taught elements for developing speaking and listening across the curriculum, and using speaking and listening as the first steps to successful writing
- taught elements including working from Early Years Foundation Stage through to Key Stage 2
- early introduction to assessment strategies so that he became familiar with using different systems

<sup>5</sup> The definition of the simple view of reading by the Rose Review can be found in the further information section of this report.

- observing best practice and following guidance about the features to look out for in the teaching of phonics, guided reading and literacy in a Leading Partner in Literacy school
- formal observations of his teaching of phonics and literacy lessons which was an explicit requirement of centre-based mentors or tutors as well as school-based mentors
- a requirement to complete an assessed English portfolio in the first term to show how well gaps identified in the initial subject knowledge audit had been addressed. This included completing tasks focusing on phonics, reading comprehension, spelling, grammar and genre.

The centre-based training was well supported by school-based experience, building the trainee's knowledge and understanding over time and complemented by assessed tasks. School experience moved quickly from him observing the teaching of phonics and early reading to increased responsibility for teaching them. Video-conferencing with good teachers and previously filmed teaching were used as means of increasing access to best practice.

For his final placement the trainee was placed in a good school which had developed a consistent and structured approach to teaching language and literacy from the Early Years Foundation Stage through to Year 6. There was a strong focus on teaching phonics to improve reading and writing, since weaknesses in pupils' phonic skills in Key Stage 2 had been identified as a barrier to raising standards further. There was also a strong focus on developing speaking and listening skills through, for example, drama and a highly structured reading programme.

This new teacher had benefited from a good foundation of subject knowledge from his first degree, supplemented by effective input from his initial teacher training and school placements. He was being well supported in his first job by colleagues who coached him and focused on his individual needs as a newly qualified teacher. He had made good progress throughout the process and taught English well so that the pupils in his class were making good progress.

## Precise audit of the trainees' skills

<b>A good audit of skills includes:</b>
a thorough initial assessment of the knowledge and understanding trainees have of teaching language, reading and writing, carried out by tutors from the providers
follow-up from the trainee's own evaluation of strengths and identified areas for improvement as practice progresses
regular reviews between trainees and tutors which include reflection on teaching experience and analysis of coursework
an ongoing contribution from school-based mentors, identifying strengths and future targets specific to this subject
centre-based input and placement experiences adjusted to ensure the trainee has access to sufficient opportunities to learn from good practice
summative reports at the end of placements making specific reference to the teaching of language, reading and writing, with targets and action plans for each placement

## Early and ongoing experience of effective assessment

<b>Do ensure</b>	<b>Don't</b>
trainees plan a series of lessons during early school placements	use a programme of single 'non-sequential' lesson planning as part of training
trainees are introduced to the principles of a range of assessment strategies	teach only one assessment strategy
trainees have a basic understanding of expected attainment for different ages	promote a single pace or style of learning for all pupils
trainees have an understanding of expected progress from different starting points	let trainees and newly qualified teachers plan for what pupils will be doing rather than what they will be learning
trainees use assessment strategies regularly in their practice	
trainees become clear about the differences between special educational needs, underachieving pupils and pupils who are at an early stage of learning English	
trainees and new teachers receive precise feedback about their use of assessment of language and literacy skills during lessons	
trainees and new teachers use assessment from observations of pupils, marking and summative assessment (using levels and common criteria) to plan lessons	

After working as a teaching assistant for 14 years, one trainee gained a degree in Early Childhood Development. She then secured a place on the Graduate Teacher Programme. Her main placement was in the good school where she had been working previously.

From the start this trainee was introduced to different strategies for assessing pupils' learning in lessons and over time. Her training focused on the teaching of speaking and listening skills, reading and writing, including systematic synthetic phonics. She was shown how to carry out formative and summative assessment from a range of evidence including pupils' work, assessed tasks and observations. In the first term of the programme the trainee observed best-practice teaching of language and literacy, with a focus on assessment strategies used by the teachers. The programme explicitly required her to meet with the literacy coordinator to gain an overview of how literacy was taught at the school, investigate assessment within the school and practise 'levelling' of pupils' work. The training programme also required the trainee to teach a sequence of lessons for literacy and phonics, building each time on what pupils had learnt in previous lessons.

School-based input closely complemented input from the training provider. The trainee became familiar with the school's systems for assessing pupils' progress in reading and spelling. She was involved in regular pupil progress meetings which were used to identify any pupils falling behind and to plan specific short-term support needed by each pupil.

Throughout her training and induction, the trainee's skills were built upon developmentally. As a new teacher she had attended training on 'Reading Recovery' and was aware of the need to teach pupils specific skills – for example, particular phonemes and graphemes – to ensure that they were secure in their learning. Her assessment was careful and accurate; she used a range of strategies including level checklists and National Curriculum level descriptors, of which she had a considerable understanding. Pupils' work was moderated with other teachers and the literacy coordinator moderated samples of work from target pupils every six weeks.

The new teacher used her assessment of pupils' knowledge and skills to group them flexibly for different aspects of literacy. Her planning was carefully matched to what pupils had learnt. She was reflective and accurately evaluated her practice in the light of pupils' learning.

## Providers know the quality of language and literacy provision in their partner schools

<b>Good information about quality in partner schools includes:</b>
analysis of current progress and attainment data in English <sup>6</sup>
clarity about the precise methods used for teaching phonics and any other programmes followed for teaching language and literacy
shared information about the quality of teaching of language and literacy in different phases and classes of any partner school

### Good-quality mentoring at every stage

Do ensure	Don't
mentors and induction tutors are well trained to identify the strengths and weaknesses for teaching language and literacy	spend too much time during training for mentors and induction tutors on the administration of the role
there are formal and informal observations of language and literacy lessons including the teaching of phonics during initial training, early on during induction and repeated during the induction period	focus on generic teaching skills at the expense of subject-specific skills
every observation regardless of the subject includes specific feedback on how language and literacy are promoted	focus feedback from observations on teaching skills without reference to <i>all</i> the children's learning
feedback is developmental, returned to and reviewed to ensure progress made by a new teacher is consolidated	allow timetabling issues to limit the range of observations that can take place
new teachers develop the necessary skills to reflect on the language and literacy learning of <i>all</i> children in their lessons	

One trainee had previously worked in private-sector nurseries for some years and then for a year as a teaching assistant in an infant school while studying for a degree in child development. She secured a placement on a graduate teacher programme in a good school and gained a temporary position for her induction year. She has since gained a permanent position at the school.

The headteacher of the main placement school had been involved in developing the graduate teacher programme over the past few years. The

<sup>6</sup> From 2012 this should include information about outcomes from the reading skills development check for six-year-olds.



provider within the partnership had a very good understanding of the strengths of the school through pupil achievement data and frequent lesson observations and liaison with the school. Using this and regular feedback from the headteacher and the trainee, the provider's knowledge of the school enabled it to supplement the training on offer effectively. This included supporting the trainee to visit other schools that catered for older pupils and observe different styles of good practice.

Both the school-based mentor for the training year and the induction tutor were outstanding practitioners. They had received good training as mentors and benefited from programmes to develop coaching and leadership skills. They were both knowledgeable about practice in other local schools, and the quality of their own practice and that of other teachers in their own school.

The school had its own induction package that was tailored to the new teacher's needs and the context of the school. The mentor from the training year provided a good level of information to aid transition from training to induction. The induction tutor was very experienced at assessing the knowledge and skills of the new teacher and made suitable adjustments to the induction programme to support her needs.

The school recruited two newly qualified teachers and decided to place them in the same year group with their mentor working for part of the week across the classes in a team teaching and coaching capacity. This start to the new teacher's induction meant that she was working as part of a team so that planning, assessment and organisation of groups and sets were carried out with colleagues while she retained full responsibility for the achievement of the pupils in her class. The induction tutor was highly skilled in offering initial support and very precise feedback, not only on generic teaching skills but aspects specific to language and literacy including phonics. As well as giving informal feedback while working alongside the new teacher the induction tutor carried out formal observations supplemented by observations from the headteacher and literacy coordinator. Following all the formal observations, the new teacher received detailed feedback with precise areas identified for improvement. The feedback concentrated on the learning of the pupils. This helped the new teacher become a reflective practitioner who evaluated the quality of lessons by assessing the learning of different pupils in the class.

## Well-managed involvement of the literacy coordinator

Do	Don't
plan for the literacy coordinator to be part of the support and monitoring programme for trainees and new teachers	limit the support for a new teacher to one person within the school
	ignore the need for subject-specific expertise during training and induction

A new teacher who was one of the most successful at teaching language and literacy within this survey received high levels of support from skilled literacy coordinators in his final placement school and during his induction year.

In both schools the involvement of the literacy coordinator was well defined in the support package. Each coordinated approach had:

- clear lines of accountability between the mentor, literacy coordinator and headteacher for monitoring and supporting the progress of the trainee or new teacher in developing their subject-specific and more generic teaching skills
- a clearly mapped programme of observations specifically identifying that both phonic sessions and language and literacy sessions would be observed
- explicit expectation that teaching language and literacy would also be observed across the curriculum
- planned, ongoing review of pupils' progress.

During the induction year the programme also provided:

- timetabled and regular pupil progress meetings with the literacy coordinator, leading to interventions being put in place and the effectiveness of these being reviewed after a set number of weeks
- regular review of planning to evaluate how well assessment was informing planning
- clear articulation of the formal monitoring that would take place during the induction year and how this would be supplemented by informal monitoring and support.

This gave the new teacher more than one person who could help them develop their skills; made sure those involved had the necessary expertise to provide support at different times; and ensured there were not too many points for development at any one time.

## Observations, monitoring and giving feedback

Do	Don't
monitor the performance of trainees and new teachers using pupils' assessment data, planning, lesson observations and work scrutiny	ignore the responsibility a teacher has to monitor the quality of work of other staff in the class
provide precise written feedback based on progress made by all children in the class	
prioritise subject-specific areas for development from observations of teaching language and literacy	
ensure subject-specific feedback is developmental and points for improvement are revisited	

Prior to training one new teacher had two years' experience working as a teaching assistant in an outstanding school.

In each of her training placements, her early language, reading or phonics teaching was observed jointly by her mentor and tutor. These lessons were the frequent focus for the twice-weekly observations by the mentor, due to the importance of language and literacy to help pupils access other learning.

The mentor's feedback always referred specifically to the teaching of language and literacy, including the trainee's pronunciation. It also covered more generic issues, for example how effectively children's understanding was checked during the lesson. Feedback was clearly written so that strengths were highlighted and areas for further improvement were outlined. These were cross-referenced with possible support for, or actions to be taken by, the trainee. Subsequent meetings referred back to the areas for improvement and this enabled the trainee to demonstrate her progress and/or seek additional support.

During the induction year, the written feedback given to the new teacher was again clear, well informed and well focused. The new teacher was made fully accountable for the progress of all pupils in her class. This was monitored well, as were her assessments, records and plans. There was detailed analysis of the achievement of different groups of learners and good attention was given to her communication with pupils.

Opportunities for discussion and review were frequent. Regular team meetings with other experienced colleagues complemented the teacher's own reflective habits. They gave her good-quality support in working out what pupils needed to learn next and helped her to identify what she needed to change and why.

## Promoting speaking and listening

Do	Don't
ensure trainees and new teachers know the importance of developing language skills to help thinking and problem-solving	assume all trainees and new teachers have a comprehensive understanding about language development
give precise feedback to trainees and new teachers to help them to understand how to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills	
give precise feedback to trainees and new teachers about their communication with pupils, including how well they ask questions and respond to answers	

## Opportunities for teaching all aspects of language and literacy

Do	Don't
develop a programme where schools enable trainees to teach a sequence of lessons for language and literacy	ignore the needs of trainees and new teachers to develop the skills and understanding needed to teach successfully in schools where language and literacy are taught through ability groups
develop a programme where schools enable trainees and new teachers to teach language and literacy to pupils of different abilities	

One proficient new teacher was teaching a top literacy group well. However, he knew that his practice when teaching other subjects to mixed-ability groups was less secure. The school had no processes for sharing any assessment of pupils' literacy skills between the teachers of the different ability groups. The newly qualified teacher identified that he had insufficient detailed knowledge of the language and literacy skills of all the pupils in his mixed-ability class and did not know how to rectify this. This prevented him from ensuring he could challenge all pupils appropriately and meet their needs. His mentor was not skilled enough to help with the planning of work for foundation subjects to promote language and literacy teaching at different ability levels. Consequently there was limited evidence in books to demonstrate how pupils were being taught to apply their literacy skills.

### How could this be improved?

- The school could set up a systematic way of sharing information about pupils' skills across the ability groups on a regular weekly basis.
- The literacy coordinator could review the new teacher's planning across a sample of subjects to ensure opportunities for all pupils to apply language and literacy skills are maximised.
- There could be clear feedback from lesson observations (by the literacy coordinator) to the new teacher about how he helps develop language and literacy skills for all pupils in his class across other subjects.

## Making provision for pupils who have special educational needs

Do	Don't
ensure trainees and new teachers have a good grasp of language development and acquisition of literacy skills	encourage new teachers to perceive the role of support staff as the main or only way of meeting the needs of pupils who have special educational needs
help trainees to understand how to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs when teaching language and literacy	
ensure new teachers can identify common difficulties faced by pupils in developing expressive and receptive language and in learning to read and write	
ensure new teachers recognise their responsibility for the learning of all pupils in their class even when they are taught by other staff for specific sessions	

One of the new teachers was acutely aware of the fact that her class had a wide range of attainment. During initial training there had been insufficient emphasis on ways of using assessment to inform planning and consequently the new teacher was concerned that she did not know enough about applying early language and phonic skills in the upper years of Key Stage 2, particularly for pupils working at lower levels of attainment. Similarly she had limited understanding of the purpose of phonics for older pupils beyond teaching spelling rules, or the purpose of handwriting beyond keeping work neat. The newly qualified teacher also struggled to recognise opportunities for developing speaking and listening skills.

However, her training and support during induction helped her to make appropriate adaptations and meet the needs of different pupils. The new teacher became better at analysing gaps in pupils' skills, including those with special educational needs. She still lacked awareness of the different strategies she could use to help improve their skills, other than doing 'more of the same' or working more slowly because she was over-reliant on support staff. The new teacher could see weaknesses in the school's provision for special educational needs in the over-reliance of pupils on additional support, but did not know how to improve matters. As a result, her planned activities and support for pupils with special educational needs and pupils with lower attainment were not well thought through or sufficiently linked to learning objectives. The pupils were not given activities that supported them well enough in applying language and literacy skills in other subjects, and they struggled to work independently.

### **How could this be improved?**

- Taught sessions during initial training about different types of intervention for pupils who have difficulties with language and literacy.
- Input during training and induction about how to plan the work for pupils with a range of different needs, including ways of making the best use of additional staff in creative ways.
- Feedback during training and induction about how to monitor the quality of interactions between her pupils and other staff.
- Input during induction on teaching language and literacy to pupils who have special educational needs, from expert practitioners.

## Making provision for pupils at an early stage of learning English as an additional language

Do	Don't
ensure all trainees and new teachers know about effective teaching for pupils who are at an early stage of learning English	leave this to trainees' and new teachers' intuition or chance
ensure trainees know how to plan a range of rich activities to promote the use of language and relate it to literacy teaching	let trainees or new teachers assume pupils who have special educational needs and those who are at an early stage of learning English need the same type of additional support or intervention
assess the experience of new teachers during induction and adjust input accordingly	
ensure all new teachers know where to find additional information about how to meet the needs of pupils who are at an early stage of learning English	

One new teacher was working in a school where 94% of the pupils were at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The input from her initial training focused on supporting these pupils by ensuring she used explicit, short instructions, visual cues and resources alongside modelling the activities. She was able to put these strategies into practice in her placement schools as all had high proportions of pupils at an early stage of learning English.

She was able to refine these approaches working with highly skilled practitioners in her current school. She was working in Year 3 as a new teacher and had developed talking partners to reinforce language development. She had used a 'buddy' system for new pupils, matching them with another pupil with the same first language. As a result, pupils had made very evident progress since October in terms of sentence length, order, expression and vocabulary.

Another new teacher had responded extremely well to support and feedback from the school during induction. She had transformed her planning for pupils at an early stage of learning English as an additional language from a low level to good during her first two terms of teaching. She had addressed the issue of guided support and integration for these learners. In the first term of her induction, the new teacher segregated the pupils at an early stage of learning English from the start of the lesson to work with an interpreter (who did not speak the same language as the pupils) while she worked with the rest of the class. Her planning did not consider the needs of this group from the outset and the activities given



to this group were not sufficiently rich experiences for developing language or literacy. When asking questions of the pupils, she often reverted to closed or rhetorical questions, or questions such as 'Did you understand that?', which rarely gave enough insight to their understanding.

In response to feedback the new teacher changed her practice considerably and by the second visit during her induction her practice was good. All pupils were included in all parts of the lesson including the introduction. She was using carefully planned talk partners so that the pupils at an early stage of learning English worked with other pupils during teacher-led sessions. Lesson-planning fully integrated planning for these pupils and lessons offered a rich variety of learning activities that promoted language development and literacy skills. For example, activities included reading text with picture cues, speaking and listening and labelling using picture cues, and then matching the label to the picture on the same theme ('fables') as the rest of the class. The role of support staff was explicit in planning and additional adults were fully engaged during the session, including during the whole-class session. The new teacher regularly checked the progress of the pupils at an early stage of learning English throughout the lesson if she was not working with them directly. In her weekly planning she established a good balance of input from herself as well as from support staff. She regularly took them for a guided group session while support staff worked with other groups.

Another new teacher had fewer children at an early stage of learning English as an additional language but was struggling with approaches and tended to group these pupils with pupils who had special educational needs. The limited focus in her initial training on stages of language development and the teaching of pupils at an early stage of learning English as an additional language had not prepared her well to identify pupils' needs. It was a similar case with the limited input for teaching disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. She was unaware that it was inappropriate to assume that the strategies to support these two groups of learners were likely to be the same. She was actively seeking guidance, but the school's expertise was limited and external professionals had not been involved. In these circumstances the teacher was relying on intuition rather than accepted good practice.

### **How could this be improved?**

- More input during initial training.
- Guidance on where to find information about effective practice when teaching language and literacy with pupils who are at an early stage of learning English.
- Working with another school with greater expertise in this area.

## Access to best practice

Do	Don't
ensure trainees and new teachers have opportunities to observe and analyse excellent practice in the teaching of language and literacy, including phonics	limit experience of teaching language and literacy to one style or system within a single school
involve newly qualified teachers in professional discussion about best practice in teaching language and literacy within and outside their own school	

Induction for one of the new teachers had been organised jointly between the school and a Teaching School. The Teaching School started the programme by providing training for the induction tutor. The induction tutor attended three whole-day and three half-day sessions during the year prior to working with the newly qualified teacher. This ensured that the mentor was in a good position to organise the induction programme jointly with the Teaching School to ensure it met the needs of the new teacher.

The induction programme was clearly defined, tailored and set out the new teacher's expected learning over the year. There were clear expectations outlined about the contributions from the Teaching School and the school within which she was working.

Every half term there was a full day of training at the Teaching School. The training days provided opportunities to work alongside other newly qualified teachers and experienced skilled practitioners who could draw upon their up-to-date knowledge and experience of successful teaching of language and literacy. Learning was active and practical, providing opportunities to draw upon everyone's ideas and experiences. Set tasks focused on developing practice in the new teacher's own school. All the documents and records of discussions were available online.

The induction programme was of a high standard and had very effectively helped to shape her professional development and increase her knowledge and skills for teaching language and literacy. The new teacher found it useful to discuss ideas at the Teaching School and then immediately reflect on and modify her own practice. She had joined her school with a sound knowledge of early language and literacy development, and had been well supported to adapt her skills and increase her knowledge to meet the needs of the children in her class who were working at lower levels than pupils she had previously taught.

## Further information

For further details about the survey findings please refer to *From training to teaching early language and literacy: further information about the survey (120031)*, Ofsted, 2012; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/120031](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/120031).

*Excellence in English (100229)*, Ofsted, 2011; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/100229](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/100229).

*Learning: creative approaches that raise standards (080266)*, Ofsted, 2010; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/080266](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/080266).

'Raising standards in literacy' (speech by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector), March 2012; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/raising-standards-literacy-speech](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/raising-standards-literacy-speech).

*Reading by six: how the best schools do it (100197)*, Ofsted, 2010; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/100197](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/100197).

*Removing barriers to literacy (090237)*, Ofsted, 2011; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/090237](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/090237).

*Responding to the Rose Review: schools' approaches to the systematic teaching of phonics (080038)*, Ofsted, 2008; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/080038](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/080038).

*Teacher trainees and phonics (070257)*, Ofsted, 2008; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/070257](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/070257).

*The impact of the Early Years Foundation Stage (100231)*, Ofsted, 2011; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/100231](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/100231).

## Annex A: Providers visited for this survey

### Initial teacher education providers visited

Bishop Grosseteste University College, Lincoln  
 Birmingham Advisory Schools Service  
 Bradford College  
 Liverpool John Moores University  
 School-centred Initial Teacher Training in East London Schools (SCITTELS)  
 Stoke-on-Trent Graduate Teacher Programme  
 Suffolk and Norfolk Primary School-centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT)  
 University of Bedfordshire  
 University of Reading  
 University of Southampton

### Schools visited

#### School

Abbotsmede Primary School  
 Al-Furqan Primary School  
 Allerton Primary School  
 Ashleigh Infant and Nursery School, Wymondham  
 Bare Trees Primary School  
 Belgrave St Bartholomew's Academy  
 Boston Carlton Road Primary School  
 Bottesford Junior School  
 Boxford Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School  
 Boyne Hill CofE Infant and Nursery School  
 Bracebridge Heath St John's Primary School\*  
 Brookvale Primary School  
 Broughton Junior School  
 Burchetts Green CofE Infant School  
 Bushfield School  
 Castle Hill Primary School  
 Cleveland Junior School  
 Coupals Community Primary School

#### Local authority

Peterborough  
 Birmingham  
 Bradford  
 Norfolk  
 Oldham  
 Stoke-on-Trent  
 Lincolnshire  
 North Lincolnshire  
 Suffolk  
 Windsor and Maidenhead  
 Lincolnshire  
 Halton  
 North Lincolnshire  
 Windsor and Maidenhead  
 Milton Keynes  
 Calderdale  
 Redbridge  
 Suffolk

Curwen Primary and Nursery School	Newham
Dell Primary School	Suffolk
Elmhurst Primary School	Newham
Essex Primary School	Newham
Everton Nursery School and Family Centre	Liverpool
Fairfield Infant School	Suffolk
Flitwick Lower School	Central Bedfordshire
Freemantle Church of England Community Academy	Southampton
Frodsham CofE Primary School	Cheshire West and Chester
Glebe Primary School	Stoke-on-Trent
Gordon Infants' School	Redbridge
Greenholm Primary School	Birmingham
Gusford Community Primary School	Suffolk
Hatch Ride Primary School	Wokingham
Heath Primary School, Kesgrave	Suffolk
Heaton Avenue First and Nursery School	Kirklees
Heckington St Andrew's Church of England School	Lincolnshire
Hempstalls Primary School	Staffordshire
Hibaldstow Primary School*	North Lincolnshire
Hinchliffe Mill Junior and Infant School	Kirklees
Holbrook Primary School	Hampshire
Holbrook Primary School	Suffolk
Jackfield Infant School	Stoke-on-Trent
Knightwood Primary School	Hampshire
Langland Community School	Milton Keynes
Lord Street Primary School	Bolton
Medlock Primary School	Manchester
Netley Abbey Junior School	Hampshire
New Ford Primary School	Stoke-on-Trent
Norton Primary School	Stoke-on-Trent
Our Lady's Catholic Primary School	Stoke-on-Trent
Park Hill Primary School	Birmingham
Penn Wood Primary and Nursery School	Slough
Priory School	Slough
Purlwell Infant and Nursery School	Kirklees

Robert Piggott CofE Infant School	Wokingham
Rosendale Primary School	Lambeth
Shirley Infant School	Southampton
Sidegate Primary School	Suffolk
South Failsworth Community Primary School	Oldham
South Lake Primary School	Wokingham
St Bartholomew's CofE Voluntary Controlled Primary School	Leeds
St Edmund Campion Catholic Primary School, Maidenhead	Windsor and Maidenhead
St Gerard's Roman Catholic Primary and Nursery School	Halton
St John's Church School	Peterborough
St John's CofE (Aided) Primary School	Reading
St Margaret's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Ipswich	Suffolk
St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School	Milton Keynes
St Monica Infant School	Hampshire
St Patrick's Catholic Primary School	Liverpool
St Sebastian's Catholic Primary School and Nursery	Liverpool
Stalyhill Infant School	Tameside
Starbank Primary School	Birmingham
The Gainsborough Parish Church Primary School	Lincolnshire
The Willows School and Early Years Centre	Milton Keynes
Thomas Johnson Lower School	Central Bedfordshire
Timberley Primary School*	Birmingham
Totley Primary School	Sheffield
Weston Park Infant School	Southampton
Witton Church Walk CofE Primary School	Cheshire West and Chester
Woodgrange Infant School	Newham
Worlingham Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School	Suffolk
Yarborough Primary School	North East Lincolnshire

### Telephone call interview

St Luke's School

Jersey Offshore  
Establishments

\* The provider has closed or converted to an academy since the time of the visit.