

Cyflwynwyd yr ymateb hwn i ymchwiliad y [Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg i weithredu diwygiadau addysg](#)

This response was submitted to the [Children, Young People and Education Committee inquiry into Implementation of education reforms](#)

IER 67

Ymateb gan: Unigolyn

Response from: Individual

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**Nodwch eich barn mewn perthynas â chylch gorchwyl yr ymchwiliad. | Record your views against the inquiry's terms of reference.**

My name is XXX XXXXXX, and I live in XXXXXX XXXX XXXXX with my family.

I'm writing to you XX XXXXXXXX X XXXXX XXXX XX XXXXXXXX X XXXXXXXX regarding the teaching of phonics in Wales, and the alarming literacy rates in Welsh children compared to the rest of the UK and internationally.

My eldest child is 3 years old and has recently started at the local primary school. He's enjoying his time there so far and will soon be starting to learn phonics as he progresses into nursery, reception, and beyond. A recent article on literacy in Wales (ITV News) and the teaching of phonics in Welsh schools has alarmed me, and with our son new to the education system, I'm concerned about what this means for him long term.

Reading skills, comprehension, and reading fluency are the basis of a child's entire educational career and form the building blocks of being able to learn, understand, and enjoy *every* subject as they progress through to higher education and into the workforce. I was shocked to learn that, as a country, the Welsh Government does not stipulate that an SSP **must** be used to teach phonics in every single primary school; it is merely *encouraged*. The DfE in England has a validated list of SSP programs for teaching reading in their schools. These programs provide a structured and sequential approach to phonics where children learn to decode words by blending different sounds. The DfE has published core criteria that SSP programs **must** meet, including a systematic approach to teaching phonics, progression in grapheme-phoneme correspondences, and support for developing fluency and comprehension.

As a result of the DfE's standpoint above, reading rates in England are substantially higher than those in Wales, leaving countless children in our own country behind in terms of their early foundation for later life.

I work for XXX XXXXXXXXXXX XXX, based in XXXXXXXXXXX, and we have worked with schools, Local Authorities, and Trusts across England and Wales for over 15 years to support teachers in analysing and gaining clarity on their assessment and performance data, to quickly and effectively exert real change in their schools to help improve outcomes of students. We have recently launched our own phonics scheme (which is an SSP), and it is proving extremely popular and effective. This email is not an attempt to sell you our phonics program, merely to highlight to you my concerns based on my knowledge of the subject because of my role within the

company. Our research arm, Education DataLab, has posted countless blog posts about this topic, reading rates generally, disadvantaged gaps, etc., and the results are shocking. Our founder is currently managing the [Apex Project](#), where he's hoping to halve the number of pupils in England who are behind in reading by tackling avoidable early literacy failure in schools. This includes implementing things like SSPs, as well as [mandatory eye tests for primary school pupils](#). The fact that this is not being rolled out in schools across Wales is again shocking. Some children are unable to read simply because they cannot see the words to read them.

If children are not able to read by the time they leave year 6, their future attainment and progress rates will have a ceiling. In year 7, pupils take on countless more topics and subject areas, and with teaching staff under enough pressure as it is to implement the existing curriculum in secondary schools, there is barely any time to dedicate to students who are still not able to read. If children cannot read as they progress through secondary school, their performance will be poor, their outcomes will be lower, their job prospects will shrink, their capacity to earn a higher salary will diminish, their love of learning will decrease, and their behaviour will likely become an issue, all because they cannot read. Teaching and learning will be inaccessible to a lot of pupils, and fostering a love of learning and achieving in school is what it should be about. If the first door they need to get past to succeed in school, learning to read, is closed, no further doors will open to them.

My partner and I have made it our main goal to help our children learn to read and foster a love of reading, so that as they progress through their education, they will be able to absorb and enjoy the information given to them. Without overcoming this first hurdle, they will find life a lot harder. Some children, unfortunately, are not in a position where their parents are able to help and encourage them at home. Some children are given game consoles on their birthdays instead of books, and some parents themselves are still unable to read. So we are lucky, our children are lucky. But for those that aren't so lucky, the education system in Wales needs to be there to catch and support them where their families cannot.

I hope that reading this will encourage conversation within the Senedd, as the children of this country are the future of this country, and the Welsh Government is failing them.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.