



2021-0045643POSoS

**Rt Hon Nadhim Zahawi MP**  
Secretary of State

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Ms Kim Johnson MP  
Chair, Liverpool City Region APPG  
By email: [kim.johnson.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:kim.johnson.mp@parliament.uk)

30<sup>th</sup> November 2021

Dear Kim,

Thank you for your email of 13 October, regarding the final report of the Liverpool City Region APPG Build Back Better Inquiry. I would be grateful if you could pass on my reply to your co-signatories.

My department wants every child to achieve their potential in maths regardless of their background or what part of the country they are from. We are continuing to invest to support and enhance maths teaching through our national network of 40 school-led Maths Hubs, which are harnessing local expertise to help schools improve the quality of their maths teaching, based on best practice. This includes the North West Three Hub, which is offering support to state-funded schools in Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, St Helens and Wigan, and benefitted from an expansion of the Hub's network capacity in the North of England in 2019.

An example of the support available from Maths Hubs is our £100 million Teaching for Mastery programme. The scheme is expanding teaching approaches based on those used in the top performing countries in the world for maths attainment, and which crucially encourage all pupils with the belief that by working hard at maths they can succeed. Alongside this, our Mastery Readiness programme, first piloted in the North of England, provides bespoke support and professional development to primary schools that are currently not ready to engage with the mainstream Teaching for Mastery programme, preparing them for participation.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Maths Hubs have continued to offer support and training to schools across the country by bringing much of their offer online. My department has also funded the development of free expert resources to support maths teaching, including a range of materials now available from the National Centre for Excellence in the Teaching of Maths, as well publishing new guidance to support curriculum planning and prioritisation covering Key Stages 1 to 3.

On 9 July we announced a £10 million investment in core skills, which includes funding to help pupils starting primary and secondary school to secure the key knowledge and understanding they need to progress in maths, and which may have been missed due to COVID-19. The scheme will be delivered by the National Centre for Excellence in the Teaching of Mathematics, in partnership with local Maths Hubs. Schools with high proportions of children from disadvantaged backgrounds will be prioritised to support those most impacted by the disruption to education.

In 2018, we launched a £26.3 million English Hubs Programme dedicated to improving the teaching of reading, with a focus on supporting children making the slowest progress in reading, many of whom come from disadvantaged backgrounds. The 34 English Hubs in the programme are primary schools which are outstanding at teaching early reading. We have since invested a further £17 million in this school-to-school improvement programme, which focuses on systematic synthetic phonics, early language, and reading for pleasure. Since its launch, the English Hubs Programme has provided appropriate and targeted support to thousands of schools across England. In the academic year 2020-21 the programme is providing intensive support to over 875 partner schools.

The focus in the first two years of the programme has been on phonics teaching, with early language and reading for pleasure as secondary aims. In this third delivery year, English Hubs continue to focus on systematic synthetic phonics, but some have started to deliver medium level support in all three priority areas: improving the teaching of systematic synthetic phonics; encouraging early language development; and developing a love of reading.

Over 5,000 schools have been supported through the Medium Level Support offer. Medium Level Support includes targeted support, continuous professional development and workshops focused on phonics and the teaching of early reading. A core set of support sessions and tools are being developed to increase the quality and reach of the Medium Level Support Offer in reading for pleasure and early language. Demand for support from schools is increasing and take up of Medium Level Support is high.

English Hubs have also brought much of their offer online. This has involved opening up virtual training and professional development events to a wider pool of schools and distributing materials targeted specifically at remote education and recovery. English Hubs have adapted well to providing intensive support remotely and have delivered more than 1,400 days of specialist phonics training to over 875 partner schools so far this academic year. Furthermore, we have worked closely with our English Hubs Programme to support them in guiding their networks of schools through the challenges of school disruption, particularly in promoting the importance of reading among school leaders.

The English Hubs Council forms part of the national English Hubs Network Programme. It provides strategic direction for the 34 English Hubs and their literacy specialists to improve early language and literacy. Membership of the English Hubs Council comprises a chair and two reading experts, one associate reading expert, six hub school representatives, one representative from the Training Centre, and a representative from my department.

Until March 2021, the English Hubs Training Centre was also represented on the Hubs Council. All non-department members have expertise in reading and all are committed to systematic synthetic phonics, with some having additional wider specialisms, including in early language and reading for pleasure.

Following an open competition, Ruth Miskin Training (RMT) was appointed to run the Training Centre in a consortium with other experts in phonics teaching, for the period of June 2019 to March 2021. Training videos and online resources are still available on the portal for English Hubs schools to use. The purpose of a Training Centre is to train and advise teachers appointed by English Hub schools to become literacy specialists, and to ensure that the support they offer is high quality and consistent. The training gives literacy specialists the skills to support struggling schools to improve outcomes for their children in early language and reading.

Due to the impact of COVID-19, the Training Centre began delivering remote training to literacy specialists and has developed 39 training videos and a range of other training resources to support Hubs and literacy specialists to embed good reading practice in schools. The Training Centre also supported hubs to adapt to remote delivery. The most popular training videos are Reading Aloud Matters and Decodable Books. There have been over 8,000 views since the start of the academic year, demonstrating how valued this resource is.

With regard to the adult education budget (AEB), currently, approximately 60% of the AEB is devolved to 9 Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs) and the Mayor of London, acting where appropriate through the Greater London Authority (GLA).

These authorities are now responsible for the provision of AEB-funded adult education for their residents and allocation of the AEB to providers. The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) is responsible for the remaining AEB in non-devolved areas.

MCAs and the GLA with a devolved AEB must follow the same learner residency eligibility as the ESFA and support the statutory entitlements to full funding for adult learners. Beyond this, the devolved MCAs and the GLA decide how to make best use of the AEB to meet the needs of their areas and decide which providers to contract with to deliver AEB-funded learning.

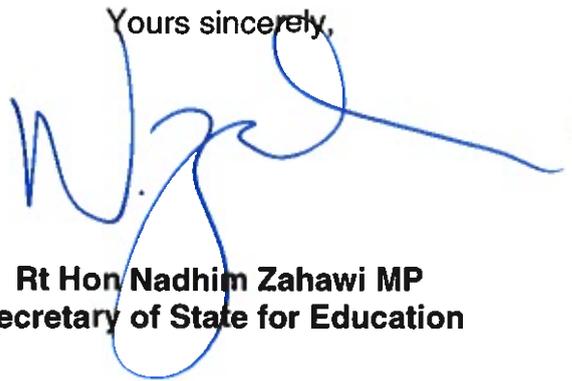
Statutory entitlements supported by the AEB are: English and maths, up to and including level 2, for individuals aged 19 and over, who have not previously attained a GCSE grade A\* to C or grade 4, or higher; and/or first full qualification at level 2 for individuals aged 19 to 23, and/or; first full qualification at level 3 for individuals aged 19 to 23, and/or essential digital skills qualifications, up to and including level 1, for individuals aged 19 and over, who have digital skills assessed at below level 1.

We have published a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and agreed we will continue to work in close partnership with the authorities to support their undertaking of the functions post devolution. We are committed to open dialogue with MCAs, the GLA and other sector stakeholders on how best skills provision and reforms can be shaped to fit the needs of local areas.

We will consider this further should there be further devolution to new areas.

Thank you for writing on these important matters.

Yours sincerely,



**Rt Hon Nadhim Zahawi MP**  
**Secretary of State for Education**