

News story: Department for Education launches Commonwealth education pack

School Standards Minister Nick Gibb met with his counterparts from across the world today to launch a new resource for teachers, aimed at helping them to inform and explain the importance of the Commonwealth to their pupils.

The new classroom tools are for teachers working with 11 to 14 year olds and contain information on the Commonwealth and its values, accompanied by a range of classroom activities relating to topics including citizenship, geography, general studies and history.

It has been created ahead of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in April, where leaders, business, civil society and young people from around the world will gather in London to focus on a common future and helping ensure every young person can access a world-class education.

School Standards Minister Nick Gibb said:

Standards are rising in our schools thanks to our reforms and the hard work of teachers. There are 1.9 million more children in good or outstanding schools than in 2010 and our recent rise up the international rankings for reading and literacy puts our achievements on a global scale.

We are already sharing best practice internationally. Last year, I visited Australia to discuss with policy makers the evidence behind the success of phonics in teaching children to read. This included the introduction of the Phonics Screening Check to ensure all 6-year-olds are on track to becoming fluent readers. As a result of that check, our focus on phonics and the hard work of teachers, there are 154,000 more 6-year-olds on track to becoming fluent readers than in 2012.

By working collaboratively with other countries we can create ever more opportunities for young people and help build a Britain that is fit for the future.

Mark Herbert, Head of Schools Programmes at the British Council said:

As the home to one third of the world's population, 60% of them under the age of 30, young people have always been at the heart of the Commonwealth. This pack, designed specifically for primary and secondary schools in the UK, will help pupils understand the Commonwealth and why it matters to us all in an ever-more connected world.

The materials in this pack can support teaching of a range of subjects and topics across the curriculum including history, geography, economics, citizenship, art, design and personal and social education. The resources link to the Commonwealth Summit's overall theme of 'Towards a Common Future' and, at a local level, encourage pupils to contribute to a fairer, more prosperous, secure, inclusive and sustainable future for all.

The activities in the new teacher resource have been designed to be delivered collectively to form a complete lesson or individually to complement other classroom activities.

The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting will bring leaders from up to 52 countries spanning six continents together to ensure that the Commonwealth is able to tackle current and future challenges effectively and will focus on ensuring the Commonwealth is meeting the ambitions of young people as the organisation works towards a common future.