

Society-wide mission to boost early literacy and communication

New national campaign launched with ideas to support children's learning at home, or as part of everyday activities like catching the bus or doing the shopping.



Families will get ideas on how to use everyday opportunities, like going to the shops and playing make-believe games, as part of a relentless society-wide effort to improve the early literacy and language skills in the years before children start school.

Today (2 July 2019) the Education Secretary Damian Hinds will:

- launch a new three year 'Hungry Little Minds' campaign to give parents access to video tips, advice and suggested games to help with early learning;
- announce up to 1,800 new school-based nursery places, to be created in disadvantaged areas so more children can access high-quality early education, backed by a £22 million investment; and
- set out the criteria for high quality educational apps that parents can use with their children, including promoting interactive learning and play.

While the percentage of children reaching a good level of development by the end of Reception has increased from 51.7% to 71.5% since 2013, more than one in four children still leaves Reception without the key communication skills they need to thrive. Although this occurs in all income groups, these children are disproportionately from the lowest-income families.

The Hungry Little Minds campaign will tackle the barriers some parents face in supporting their child's learning at home, including time, confidence and ideas of things to do.

It builds on [work](#) by the Department for Education and the National Literacy

Trust to bring together a coalition of businesses and organisations, including the LEGO Group, Penguin Random House, Arriva and the Greggs Foundation, who are supporting parents to play a bigger role in their child's early education.

Education Secretary Damian Hinds said:

Every parent wants to give their child the best start in life but not everyone has family support at hand and there is no manual telling us how to do everything right.

Part of making sure our children have the opportunity to take advantage of all the joys of childhood and growing up is supporting them to develop the language and communication skills they need to express themselves. Sadly, too many children are starting school without these – and all too often, if there's a gap at the very start of school, it tends to persist, and grow.

The only way we are going to solve this is through a relentless focus on improving early communication. So today, we're launching a society-wide drive with new nursery places, support from business and steps to make learning easier in the home – to improve early learning across the country.

Visiting Dunraven School in Streatham to launch the campaign, the Education Secretary met families already benefitting from new early learning content created by the LEGO Group and EasyPeasy. He joined them for a Stay and Play session, where parents and children can take part in learning activities together, getting advice and tips throughout.

The increased efforts from businesses, charities, and early years groups, backed by government investment, builds on the work to provide expert support and targeted intervention to disadvantaged families all over the country. Other projects supported through the government's coalition of businesses and organisations include:

The LEGO Group and EasyPeasy

Co-creating new learning games that will be hosted and shared on the EasyPeasy app. All the games can be played with things commonly found in the home, as well as with DUPLO bricks. The LEGO Group will also support EasyPeasy's development so that families using the app can benefit from additional new ways to learn through play. The partnership will be piloted with 500 families in areas of low social mobility, with plans to further roll-out the games to 10,000 families before the end of the year.

Arriva in Partnership with Penguin Random House

Running a series of book giveaways across its stations, as well as working with schools through visits and staff volunteering. It will also begin

training frontline staff with early education tips to help engage with children using their trains all over the country.

HarperCollins

Working with 12 bookshops across the UK through to offer individual grants of up to £2,000 that will support events for parents and children under five, with activities ranging from storytelling sessions with a theatre company, story sacks, and an eight-week course to boost parents' confidence.

WH Smith

Employees will volunteer at 'Small Talk' events in Swindon, run by the National Literacy Trust. These will be held in venues regularly visited by families such as their local shopping centre or coffee shop. Trained staff volunteers will show parents short, simple and fun activities they can do at home with their children to help their early language development.

Pearson

Free early years vocabulary intervention kits to 500 nurseries in areas of high deprivation, developed with speech therapy experts using LEGO Education Storytales resources and designed to close the speech and language gap among children aged three and four. They are currently working with a group of nurseries in Birmingham to test the kit ahead of its wider launch later in the year.

Greggs Foundation

Training materials to all of its 1,350 breakfast club volunteers to help them support children and parents that attend in developing language and communication skills, across 550 active breakfast clubs across the UK. Over 33,000 children and their families take part in a Greggs Foundation Breakfast Club and each club offers a unique experience for the families with activities ranging from rugby to reading groups.

Founder and CEO of EasyPeasy Jen Lexmond said:

85% of a child's brain is developed by age five, which shows just how important the early years are. We welcome that the Department for Education's campaign is highlighting how regular everyday moments can be opportunities for learning, long before children start their first day at school. Our community of parents use EasyPeasy to discover, play, create and share learning games with their children to develop the skills they need to succeed at school and beyond.

Our mission is to help parents give their children the best start in life, regardless of background. We're delighted that LEGO shares these goals and wants to support us to reach more families. So far the partnership has produced new learning games, which our families

have loved. We're excited that LEGO will also explore ways of supporting our future development so that families can play and learn more with EasyPeasy.

The government is investing more than ever before in early education and childcare, including £3.5 billion in the free offers this year alone, and 95% of early years providers are rated Good or Outstanding by Ofsted.

Thousands of families have better access to high-quality childcare, with near universal take-up of the free 15 hour offer for three-and four-year-olds, rising numbers of benefitting from the 30 hours offer, and more than 850,000 of the country's most disadvantaged two-year-olds are also benefitting from support.

In addition, the Department is funding seven early learning projects, [announced](#) in November last year, to make sure children from the most challenging backgrounds are not left behind by empowering parents to contribute to their child's early education. This includes the first ever Scouts programme for children under six years old, getting parents involved in building children's confidence, problem solving and communication skills through a range of physical activities.

As part of the School Nurseries Capital fund, further nursery places will open in schools across every region, as 66 projects have been given the green light to increase early years provision in areas with high numbers of families who get free school meals. The fund fulfils a manifesto commitment to support primary schools to develop nurseries where they do not currently have the facilities to do so, and new places will be created through a combination of new build projects, or by expanding existing schools already rated Good or Outstanding by Ofsted.

Tracy Lynch, Greggs Foundation Manager, said:

The Greggs Breakfast Club Programme, which celebrates its 20th birthday this year, provides nutritious breakfasts to 33,000 schoolchildren in disadvantaged areas across the UK every school day. Breakfast is proven to make a huge difference to pupils' attendance levels, behaviour and learning, and we are delighted to be helping to feed 'Hungry Little Minds', as well as tummies, through the provision of training materials for this campaign to all of our volunteers.

The Department for Education is also calling on other national organisations to get involved in the coalition where they have an interest in raising awareness among parents of the need to engage in activities that support their child's early learning, helping set them up for school and beyond.

Businesses and organisations can get in touch via hle.coalition@education.gov.uk.