

Extracts from Jim Rose's final report	Debbie Hepplewhite's comments
<p><i>The important point is that practitioners and teachers need to be willing, and have the wherewithal, to test the boundaries of children's readiness for systematic phonics work....</i></p> <p><i>Efforts to overcome persistent underperformance are hardly likely to benefit from depressing expectations for our five-year-olds when we know that, with appropriate teaching, they are capable of higher achievement than at present. The indications are that, when these children do not get a really good start, they are likely to need interventions to enable them to 'catch up' and 'recover' ground that they should not have lost in the first place.</i></p>	<p><b>16</b> Know that all children are capable of learning and the better we teach, the more they will learn! Intervention requires detailed assessment but follows the same teaching principles as for beginners. Ensure that the aspects of a) increasing knowledge of the correspondences, b) blending all-through-the-word for reading, c) segmenting all-through-the-spoken-word for spelling, and d) handwriting are daily activities.</p> <p>Know that some children as young as 3 or 4 are perfectly able to learn correspondences, blend and segment and if they fail to be taught these things, some may default to learning words as whole shapes and guessing which may cause problems at a later stage.</p>
<p><i>Important, too, is the boost to children's confidence, self-belief and attitudes to reading that is apparent when early phonic work is taught successfully within a language-rich curriculum.</i></p>	<p>The reverse of this is true. Children frequently 'withdraw' or misbehave when they have not been taught how to read and perceive themselves as failures. Consider how often you ask children to do things which they actually cannot do!</p>

**Most significantly:  
The searchlights model**

'... The searchlights model does not best reflect how a beginner reader progresses to become a skilled reader. This is because skilled readers do not rely upon strategies to read words, as they have already developed the skill of word recognition. They may use knowledge of context and grammar, which are conceived within the searchlights model, to assist their understanding of text but, crucially, they would still be able to decode the words if all contextual and grammatical prompts were removed...

'...if beginner readers, for example, are encouraged to infer from pictures the word they have to decode this may lead to their not realising that they need to focus on the printed word....It may also lead to diluting the focused phonics teaching that is necessary for securing accurate word reading.'

**Future developments?**

The demise of the searchlights model raises the issue of whether existing programmes which heavily promote a range of multi-cueing

reading strategies such as the Early Literacy Support programme and Reading Recovery should be withdrawn. It will also be necessary to retrain teachers in their understanding of miscue analysis of running reading records as it will no longer be considered 'desirable' for readers to guess words from whole word shape or picture, context and initial letter cues. This will affect the end of key stage 1 national reading assessments and so clearly infant teachers need to be thinking carefully about the full implications for the future of the Rose Report.

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*Debbie Hepplewhite is a primary teacher, synthetic phonics consultant and trainer, and columnist. She is the editor of the Reading Reform Foundation website through which awareness has been raised regarding the efficacy of applying evidence-based teaching techniques to reading.*

*Teachers would benefit from background information and collegial support. These can be found on the following websites: [www.rff.org.uk](http://www.rff.org.uk) (the Reading Reform Foundation has downloadable newsletters describing research and best practice); [www.syntheticphonics.com](http://www.syntheticphonics.com) (this site provides a helpful teaching model and detailed guidance for teaching synthetic phonics via links on the homepage plus free resources); and for the history of reading instruction see [www.dyslexics.org.uk](http://www.dyslexics.org.uk). The first two sites also include active message boards offering international support, advice and general discussion.*