

PRESS RELEASE, 12 SEPT 2005, FROM THRASS UK (TUK)

BRITISH PRIMARY SCHOOLS TO TRIAL UNIQUE PHONICS COURSE FOR PARENTS

One of the phonics programmes to be investigated by the British Government in the Rose Review, recently instigated by Ruth Kelly, Minister of Education, is to trial a unique phonics course for parents. The course, for parents of primary-aged children in England, Scotland and Wales, uses animations, downloadable software and streamed video on a new groundbreaking website, along with hands-on training in schools, to give parents a better understanding of how they can help with reading and spelling at home.

From Monday, 12 September, schools using the THRASS (Teaching Handwriting Reading And Spelling Skills) programme will be directing their parents to www.phonics4parents.co.uk This new website has: cutting edge 3D animations (stunning computer graphics, music and sound effects); FLASH animation software (including speaking human lips that are believed to herald a revolution in the teaching of many languages worldwide); streamed Windows Media Video (including features, interviews, demonstration lessons and a video diary, following teachers and parents, this school year, as they implement THRASS in a brand new school in Milton Keynes) and information about the four-hour school-based hands-on training – all of which help parents gain a better understanding of the 44 sounds of English and their main spelling choices.

British educational psychologist Alan Davies, Director of THRASS UK and pioneer of THRASS, said, "Ruth Kelly has the wrong focus. THRASS UK has been training teachers and assistants for over a decade and there are thousands of evaluations on our website, from hundreds of courses. After eight years of the National Literacy Strategy, Ruth Kelly should now be turning attention towards helping parents, not experimenting with yet another 'patch-up' resource with the teachers, such as the new 'Playing with Sounds' initiative. This, anyway, has been written mindful of the guide TEACHING THRASS, as is clearly stated in the Government produced CD-ROM."

The new website focuses on the Tony Blair's definition of English Phonics, given at the OFSTED Literacy Conference in December 1998, as "The skilled process of teaching children how the 44 sounds in the English Language are represented by a letter or group of letters". The website content is likely to be of considerable interest to Conservative Party Leader candidates Kenneth Clarke and David Cameron. In 1992, Kenneth Clarke, then Minister of Education, was sent a copy of THRASS by Chester MP Gyles Brandreth and David Cameron is a strong supporter of synthetic phonics. THRASS is British pioneered and is now the preferred phonics programme in thousands of schools worldwide, because it is "The natural approach to synthetic phonics".

For example, in South African schools and universities, the THRASS courses and resources are already highly regarded. In October, Alan Davies has a meeting with the Minister of Education for South Africa, in Pretoria, to discuss the impact of the THRASS programme in South African educational institutions. It is believed that there is to be some discussion about using the downloadable THRASS PHONEME MACHINE software (see 'speaking human lips' above) to improve the literacy rates for the various national languages in South Africa.

Adverts for the new website will be appearing in most British national daily newspapers, as of Monday, 12 Sept.
Contact: Mike Meade, Media Director, TUK 01829 741413 Mob: 07970 151 738 mikemeade@thrass.co.uk
Contact: Chris Griffiths, International Development, TUK +30 266 203 1207 chrisgriffiths@thrass.co.uk

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