

UKLA

The United Kingdom Literacy Association

United Kingdom Literacy Association,
University of Leicester,
Leicester LE1 7RH

Tel: 0116-223-1664

<http://www.ukla.org>

admin@ukla.org

PRESS RELEASE!

Michael Gove has announced an English grammar, spelling and punctuation test for eleven-year-olds. He claims this will raise standards in writing, saying: “I believe that we can only overcome the corrosive culture of low expectations which still persists in too many of our schools by setting a higher bar, with harder exams for all students.”

UKLA argues that the test is more likely to drive standards down, than raise them. Being asked to underline subordinate clauses, turn sentences from active to passive and correct artificially contrived errors in such bizarre invented sentences as “**The children are going to a shopping centre tomorrow and they had bought some new toys**” will not show whether children avoid error in their own writing, much less whether they write effectively.

The tests may be “hard”, as some have claimed, but the real problem is that they are likely to be counter-productive. **In the attached statement**, UKLA demonstrates its concern for the effective use of spelling, punctuation and grammar. But UKLA also argues that the proposed test both fails to assess children’s use of these in their own writing and also neglects such crucial aspects of learning to write as:

- addressing different audiences,
- writing for different purposes,
- creative uses of writing,
- using writing to aid memory and thinking,
- engaging productively with the many forms of digital writing, including multimodal texts.

For these reasons UKLA urges that that the imposition of this test be reconsidered.

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Contacts:

United Kingdom Literacy Association, University of Leicester, Leicester LE1 7RH
UKLA: <http://www.ukla.org> admin@ukla.org Tel: 0116-223-1664

UKLA Primary Task Group Convenor, Henrietta Dombey:
h.dombey@brighton.ac.uk
Tel: 01273-607035, Mobile: 07879-846122

UKLA President, Alayne Öztürk:
alayneozturk@gmail.com
0208 2877385, Mobile: 07837077310

UKLA Immediate Past President, David Reedy:
d.reedy@ntlworld.com Mobile: 07506739639

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