
IMPROVING LITERACY IN KEY STAGE 1

Acting on the evidence: Discussion Questions

This list of discussion questions accompanies the Education Endowment Foundation's report, *Improving Literacy In Key Stage 1*, which sets out eight evidence-based recommendations on the effective teaching of literacy.

Many of the questions do not have simple or 'correct' answers, but they can be used to guide discussion about how the recommendations compare to current practice and to help explore the nuance in the report.

1. Develop pupils' speaking and listening skills and wider understanding of language

- How do you use speaking activities to support pupils' writing?
- How do you use structured peer work to develop pupils' language skills?
- How do you *explicitly* teach pupils to understand and use new vocabulary?
- How do you teach pupils to use different language structures in different contexts, i.e. formal and informal language structures?

2. Use a balanced and engaging approach to developing reading, which integrates both decoding and comprehension skills

- Do you have the same balance between decoding and comprehension for all pupils?
- How does the balance change as pupils' reading develops?
- What do you consider when selecting texts for pupils to use?

3. Effectively implement a systematic phonics programme

- How do you train and support teachers and teaching assistants to use your phonics programme?
- How does your phonics teaching respond to individual pupils' progress?
- How do you motivate and engage pupils during phonics lessons?
- If you use a commercial programme:
 - What evidence suggests it is effective?
 - Are you using it as the developer recommends?
- If you developed your own programme:
 - What evidence suggests it is effective?
 - What things did you consider when you designed the programme?

4. Teach pupils to use strategies for developing and monitoring reading comprehension

- How do you develop pupils' reading comprehension?
- What do you consider when selecting texts for pupils to use?
- Do you *explicitly* teach reading comprehension strategies (e.g. inference, questioning, predicting, clarifying and summarising)?
 - How do you scaffold pupils' use of the strategies?
 - How do you support pupils to monitor their use of strategies?
 - How do you support pupils to use the strategies with increasing independence?

5. Teach pupils to use strategies for planning and monitoring their writing composition

- How do you develop pupils' writing composition?
- Do you *explicitly* teach writing composition strategies (e.g. pre-writing, sentence combination, revising and summarising)?
 - How do you scaffold pupils' use of the strategies?
 - How do you support pupils to monitor their use of strategies?
 - How do you support pupils to use the strategies with increasing independence?

6. Promote fluent written transcription skills by encouraging extensive and effective practice, and explicitly teaching spelling.

- Do children get extensive opportunities to practise their handwriting?
- When giving feedback about transcription does it have the following characteristics:
 - Specific, accurate and clear;
 - Compares what a learner is doing right now with what they have done previously;
 - Uses praise sparingly so that it remains meaningful; and
 - Encourages and supports further effort
- Do you explicitly teach spelling, or do you mainly test it?
- What strategies do you use to develop pupils' spelling?

7. Use high-quality information about pupils' current capabilities to select the best next steps for teaching.

- When a child is struggling with their literacy, what is the first thing that teachers in your school are encouraged to do?
- How do you use diagnostic tools (e.g. Simple View of Reading) to select next steps for teaching?
- What do you consider before choosing an appropriate assessment?
- How do you collect well-timed information so that you can respond appropriately?
- How do you use high-quality information to change your teaching approach (e.g. scaffolding or a more engaging approach)?

8. Use high-quality structured interventions to help pupils who are struggling with their literacy

- What evidence supports the effectiveness of your chosen interventions?
- Are you using any published interventions as recommended by the developer?
- Does the person delivering the intervention have time to plan and is there time for teaching staff to consider how interventions complement classwork?
- How effective are TAs and teachers at reviewing work taking place in intervention sessions?
- How do you support pupils to make links between interventions and classwork?
- How do you match pupils to interventions?
- How do you evaluate the impact of your interventions?