

IMPROVING LITERACY IN KEY STAGE 2

Guidance Report



Education
Endowment
Foundation

First edition

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With thanks to researchers, practitioners and colleagues who provided support and feedback on drafts of this guidance, in particular Professors Roger Beard, Professor Greg Brooks, Professor Charles Hulme, Professor Christine Merrell, Professor Kathy Silva, Professor Robert Slavin and Professor Maggie Snowling.

Second edition

Guidance report authors: Caroline Bilton and Aoife Duff.

With thanks to researchers, practitioners and colleagues who provided support and feedback on drafts of this guidance, in particular Professor Kate Cain, Professor David Waugh, Professor Steve Higgins, Dr Helen Breadmore, Stella Jones, Nicola O'Donnell, Sarah Stock, Hydeh Fayaz, David Windle, Dr Rupal Patel, Alex Quigley, and Sarah Tillotson.

About the Education Endowment Foundation

The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) is an independent charity supporting teachers and school leaders to use evidence of what works—and what doesn't—to improve educational outcomes, especially for disadvantaged children and young people.

CONTENTS

Foreword		4
Introduction		5
Summary of recommendations		10
Recommendation 1	Develop pupils' language capabilities	12
Recommendation 2	Support pupils to develop fluent reading capabilities	18
Recommendation 3	Teach reading comprehension strategies through modelling and supported practice	22
Recommendation 4	Teach writing composition strategies through modelling and supported practice	28
Recommendation 5	Develop pupils' transcription and sentence construction skills through extensive practice	32
Recommendation 6	Target teaching and support by accurately assessing pupil needs	38
Recommendation 7	Use high quality structured interventions to help pupils who are struggling with their literacy	44
References		48
Glossary		56

FOREWORD



Giving every child the skills they need to read and write well is a central ambition of our education system. The importance of literacy extends beyond its crucial role in enabling learning across the curriculum. Literacy matters in countless aspects of daily life—throughout the life course—and it significantly influences the opportunities that children and adults have available to them.

Yet despite our best efforts, too many children, particularly those from disadvantaged homes, fall behind in literacy. Disadvantaged pupils are

20% less likely than their peers to reach the expected standards in reading, writing and maths by the end of primary school, and the gap in literacy attainment

grows substantially during Key Stage 2, with pupils making less progress than their peers in both reading and writing.¹ Supporting socially disadvantaged pupils to excel in literacy at this stage of life is critical to closing the attainment gap between this group of pupils and their peers.

Key Stage 2 is a key period for literacy development for all pupils. Pupils learn many of the foundations of literacy in the early years and Key Stage 1 but must build on these foundations

in Key Stage 2 to become skilled readers and writers, equipped to take on the challenges of secondary school learning. The message from the evidence

summarised in this report is clear: to excel in literacy, pupils need high quality teaching and extensive opportunities to practice reading and writing.

The first edition of this guidance report was published in 2017. This second edition has been updated to take into account the latest research and to provide further exemplification for school staff. The seven key recommendations remain the same but this new edition provides additional information, tools, and examples to support teachers and school leaders to understand the recommendations and put them into practice.

Following the COVID pandemic, we know that primary literacy is a key education recovery priority for schools. Our hope is that this updated guidance will support teachers and school leaders to provide their pupils with evidence-informed literacy provision that improves outcomes for all.



Professor Becky Francis

Chief Executive

Education Endowment Foundation

Disadvantaged pupils are 20% less likely than their peers to reach the expected standards in reading, writing and maths by the end of primary school.

What does this guidance cover?

This report is one of a series of four guidance reports that the EEF has produced on the theme of language and literacy. It focuses on the teaching of literacy to pupils between the ages of seven and eleven in Key Stage 2. However, it may also be applicable to teachers working with children beyond this phase. For example, teachers may find it useful for older pupils who have fallen behind their peers, or younger pupils who are making rapid progress. This report is part of a series of EEF guidance reports on literacy, including:

- [Preparing for Literacy](#) (focusing on pupils aged three to five);
- [Improving Literacy in Key Stage 1](#) (focusing on pupils aged five to eleven); and,
- [Improving Literacy in Secondary Schools](#) (focusing on pupils aged eleven to sixteen).

We recommend that schools consider these guidance reports together when planning their literacy provision.

This second edition presents the same recommendations as the first but also offers additional examples, explanations, and resources to support educators to put the recommendations into practice. The recommendations represent ‘lever points’ where there is useful evidence about language and literacy teaching that schools can use to make a significant difference to teaching and pupils’ learning.

The report focuses on pedagogy and approaches that are supported by good evidence; it does not cover all the potential components of successful literacy provision. Some will be missing because they are related to school leadership or organisation; other areas are not covered because there is insufficient evidence to create an actionable recommendation in which we have confidence. Other important areas to consider include—but are not limited to—leadership, staff deployment and development, parental engagement, and resources.

The update now includes a vignette at the beginning of each section to support training and professional

conversations about effective practice. We have also included tools and case studies to support understanding of the recommendations and how they might be put into action in schools. The guidance draws on studies that feed into the [Teaching and Learning Toolkit](#) produced by the EEF in collaboration with the Sutton Trust and Durham University.² The Toolkit was updated in September 2021 to include a greater number of studies. More information about how this guidance was created is available on [page 6](#).

The recommendations represent ‘lever points’ where there is useful evidence about language and literacy teaching that schools can use to make a significant difference to teaching and pupils’ learning.

Who is this guidance for?

This guidance is aimed primarily at English leads, Key Stage 2 class teachers, headteachers, and other staff with leadership responsibility in primary schools. Senior leaders have responsibility for managing change across a school so attempts to implement these recommendations are more likely to be successful if they are involved. Key Stage 1 and secondary teachers will also find this guidance useful as a resource to aid their day-to-day literacy and language teaching.

It may also be used by:

- governors and parents to support and challenge school staff;
- programme developers to create more effective interventions and professional development; and
- educational researchers to conduct further testing of the recommendations in this guidance, and fill in any gaps in the evidence.

INTRODUCTION

How was this guidance compiled?

This guidance report draws on the best available evidence regarding the teaching of literacy to primary-aged pupils. The primary source of evidence for the recommendations is the Teaching and Learning Toolkit, which is a synthesis of international research evidence developed by Professor Steve Higgins and colleagues at the University of Durham with the support of the Sutton Trust and the EEF. However, the report also draws on a wide range of evidence from other studies and reviews regarding literacy development and teaching. The emphasis is on rigorous evaluations that provide reliable evidence of an impact on pupil learning outcomes. The intention is to provide a reliable foundation of what is effective, based on robust evidence.

The first edition of the report was developed over several stages. The initial stage produced a scoping document that set out the headline recommendations and supporting evidence. This was subjected to an academic peer review. The feedback from this review informed the writing of a final draft of the report which was then subjected to a second external review by a group of academics, practitioners, and other stakeholders. The aim of the second edition was primarily to provide additional exemplification to support schools with embedding the recommendations, but also allowed some update of the evidence. The updated guidance was subjected to external review by a group of academics and practitioners.

What support is available for using this guidance?

We recognise that the effective implementation of these recommendations—so they can have a real impact on children’s learning—is both critical and challenging. Therefore, the EEF is collaborating with a range of organisations across England to support schools to use the guidance.

The [Research Schools Network](https://researchschool.org.uk) is an EEF initiative to fund a network of schools and settings that support the use of evidence to improve teaching practice. The network contains early years settings, primary schools, and secondary schools.

Research Schools work with the other schools and settings in their areas to help them make better use of evidence to inform their teaching by:

- encouraging schools and early years settings to make use of evidence-based programmes and practices through regular communication and events;
- providing training and professional development for senior leaders and practitioners on how to improve practice based on the best evidence; and

- supporting schools and early years settings to develop innovative ways of improving teaching and learning and providing them with the expertise to evaluate their impact.

More information about the Research School Network and how it can provide support on the use of EEF guidance reports can be found at: <https://researchschool.org.uk>

In addition, the EEF has a team of regional leads across the country that help foster and coordinate school improvement partnerships with local authorities, multi-academy trusts, teaching school alliances, and informal groups of schools and settings.

The EEF will also produce a number of additional resources that will sit alongside this guidance report to support practitioners to build on these recommendations and put them into practice. If you have examples of a recommendation that has been effectively implemented in your setting, then please get in touch: info@eefoundation.org.uk

Acting on the guidance

There are several key principles to consider when acting on this guidance.

These recommendations do not provide ‘one size fits all’ solutions. It is important to consider the delicate balance between implementing the recommendations faithfully and applying them appropriately to your school’s particular context. Implementing the recommendations effectively will require careful consideration of how they fit your setting’s context and the application of sound professional judgement.

The recommendations should be considered collectively, as a group, and should not be implemented selectively. For example, **Recommendation 6**, which focuses on targeting teaching and support by accurately assessing pupil needs, should be considered across all of the components of literacy discussed in this report. Furthermore, it is important

to consider the precise detail provided beneath the headline recommendations. For example, schools should not use **Recommendation 7** to justify the purchase of a large number of interventions. Rather, it should provoke thought about the most appropriate interventions to buy.

Inevitably, change takes time, and we recommend taking at least two terms to plan, develop, and pilot strategies on a small scale before rolling out new practices across the school. Gather support for change across the school and set aside regular time throughout the year to focus on this project and review progress. You can find out more about implementation in our guidance report, [Putting Evidence to Work: A School's Guide to Implementation](#).

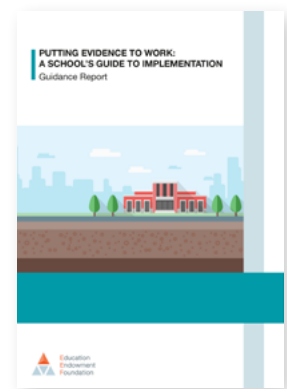
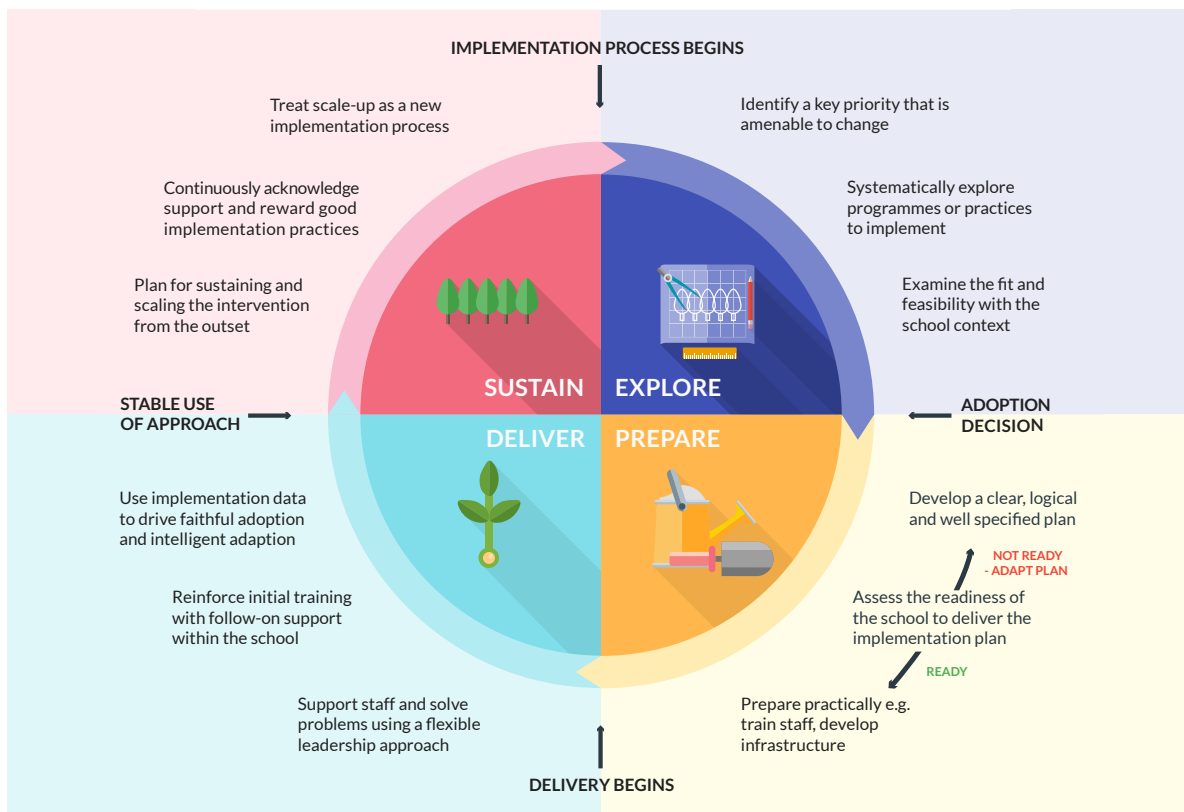


Figure 1: The school implementation process



INTRODUCTION

Building pupils' literacy

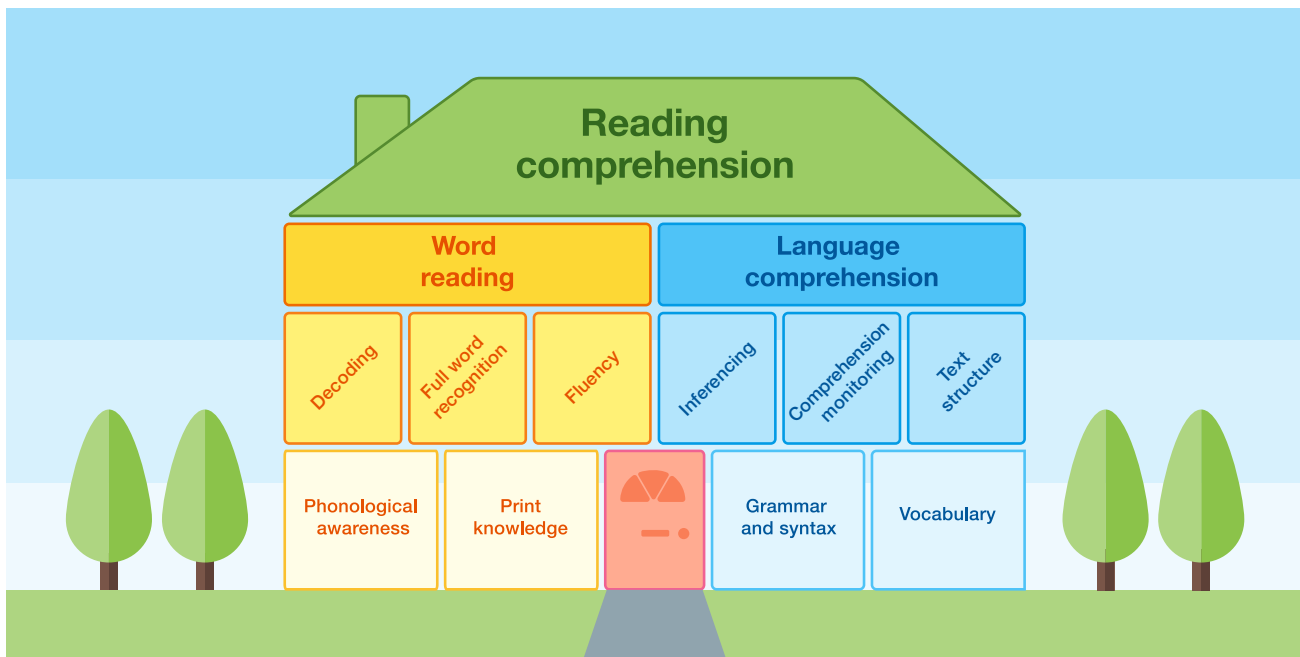
Literacy is complex. It encompasses both reading and writing as well as relying on oral language and cognitive processes that underpin use of the written word. As an educator, it is important to understand the foundations of literacy and how the processes involved are related, work together, or operate in isolation. Explicit instruction and extensive practise will be needed for pupils to become proficient at reading and writing.

The goal of teaching reading is to enable children to comprehend written texts. To do this, pupils need to build both word reading and language comprehension skills. These two key components of reading are supported by a broad academic consensus and underpinned by research evidence.³ The 'reading comprehension house' (see **Figure 2**) illustrates that word reading and language comprehension are underpinned by a number of other building blocks of reading.⁴ These component parts build on one another and connect together as children learn to read.

The left-hand side of the house illustrates that to become proficient at word reading, children need to build an awareness of the sound structures of language (phonological awareness) and knowledge of how language is represented in writing (print knowledge). This will support pupils to learn how to decode: translating written words into the sounds of spoken language. Skilled readers begin to recognise some full words automatically after repeated encounters with them and learn to read with fluency.

The right-hand side of the house illustrates that to build strong language comprehension skills, pupils need to develop an understanding of grammar and syntax and build up a wide-ranging vocabulary. They will also need to learn how to make inferences (using information in a text to understand things that are implied rather than explicitly stated) and monitor their own comprehension as they read. Additionally, pupils need to learn about different text structures and genres.

Figure 2: Reading comprehension—the sum of many parts
Adapted from Hogan, Bridges, Justice, and Cain (2011)



INTRODUCTION

Knowledge also plays an important role in enabling reading comprehension.⁵ Expanding children's knowledge of language, along with the rich variety of topics they might encounter when reading, can help to enable reading comprehension by equipping children to better understand written texts. When a sufficient level of reading comprehension has been reached, readers also can expand their knowledge through reading.

Similarly, writing is a process that is made up of a number of components, including transcription (spelling, typing, and handwriting), text generation (ideas, words, and sentence construction), and executive functions (such as attention, planning, monitoring, and reviewing).⁶ Pupils need to become skilled at each of these components of writing and learn to coordinate them to become skilled writers.



SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Sections are colour coded for ease of reference

1



Develop pupils' language capabilities

- Purposeful speaking and listening activities support pupils' language development. Purposeful activities include:
 - collaborative learning activities where pupils can share their thought processes;
 - reading books aloud and discussing them, including use of structured questioning; and
 - pupils articulating their ideas verbally before writing.
- Promote high quality dialogue in the classroom, between the teacher and the pupils and between pupils, to support pupils to develop their thinking and use of language.
- Extend pupils' vocabulary by explicitly teaching new words, providing repeated exposure to new words, and providing opportunities for pupils to use new words.

2



Support pupils to develop fluent reading capabilities

- Fluent reading supports comprehension because pupils' cognitive resources can be redirected from focusing on word recognition to comprehending the text.
- Develop pupils' fluency through:
 - guided oral reading instruction—teachers model fluent reading, then pupils read the same text aloud with appropriate feedback; and
 - repeated reading—pupils re-read a short and meaningful passage a set number of times or until they reach a suitable level of fluency.
- Prioritise understanding pupils' current capabilities and teaching accordingly. Most pupils benefit from an emphasis on reading fluency in Key Stage 2 but some may continue to need support with foundational reading capabilities such as decoding.

3



Teach reading comprehension strategies through modelling and supported practice

- Teach specific strategies that pupils can apply to monitor and overcome barriers to comprehension. These include:
 - prediction (based on text content and context);
 - questioning;
 - clarifying;
 - summarising; and
 - activating prior knowledge.
- Model and scaffold these strategies; then support pupils to increasingly use reading comprehension strategies independently, with less and less prompting from the teacher.
- Texts should be carefully selected to support the teaching of these strategies.

4



Teach writing composition strategies through modelling and supported practice

- Writing can be thought of as a process made up of five components:
 - planning;
 - drafting;
 - revising;
 - editing; and
 - publishing.
- Effective writers use a number of strategies to support each component of the writing process. For example, planning can be improved through the strategy of goal-setting. Describe and model how, when, and why pupils should use each strategy, support pupils to practise with feedback, then gradually reduce support as pupils increasingly use the strategies independently.
- Giving pupils a reason to write—and someone to write for—can support effective writing and provide opportunities to teach pupils how to adapt their writing for different audiences and purposes.

5



Develop pupils' transcription and sentence construction skills through extensive practice

- Fluent writing supports composition because pupils' cognitive resources are freed from focusing on handwriting, spelling, and sentence construction and can be redirected towards writing composition. Extensive practice, supported by effective feedback, is required to develop fluent transcription skills.
- Monitor pupils' handwriting to ensure accurate letter formation habits, providing effective feedback to promote efficient and fluent handwriting.
- Consider the types of spelling error pupils are making to identify appropriate strategies for improving pupils' spelling. Explicitly teach spellings and provide pupils with extensive opportunities to practice them. Pupils should also practise sentence combining and other sentence construction techniques.

6



Target teaching and support by accurately assessing pupil needs

- Use high quality assessment and diagnosis to target and adapt teaching to pupils' needs. Rapid provision of support is important, but it is critical to ensure it is the right support.
- Integrate formative assessment into classroom teaching strategies to help ensure that teaching is appropriately targeted and that pupil needs are identified.
- Diagnostic assessment can be used to inform professional judgement about the best next steps; it also makes teaching more efficient by ensuring that effort is not wasted on rehearsing skills or content that a pupil already knows well.
- A range of diagnostic assessments are available and staff should be trained to use and interpret these effectively.

7



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

- Schools should focus first on developing core classroom teaching strategies that improve the literacy capabilities of the whole class. With this in place, the need for additional support should decrease. Nevertheless, it is likely that a small number of pupils will require additional support.
- There is a strong and consistent body of evidence demonstrating the benefit of structured interventions for pupils who are struggling with their literacy. The first step should be to accurately diagnose capabilities and difficulties in order to match pupils to appropriate, evidence-informed interventions that target specific areas of difficulty.

1 Develop pupils' language capabilities



Ms Chowdhury is working to support her Year 5 class to expand their vocabulary. She delivers three 15-minute vocabulary sessions per week. The focus of the sessions is the introduction of a new word, with dictionary work to support understanding. In each lesson, the children are asked to look up the 'word of the day' in the dictionary and then write the word in a sentence.

The children are enjoying these vocabulary activities but Ms Chowdhury is disappointed that they are not retaining and using the vocabulary she has introduced them to. She considers whether this work is worth continuing and, if so, what she can do to improve the retention and use of new vocabulary in the children's expressive language (their use of language in speaking or writing).



Questions for discussion

Why should the teaching of vocabulary not be treated as a single event?

The explicit teaching of new vocabulary should not be seen as an isolated activity. To help pupils to retain and use new vocabulary, teachers should focus on providing pupils with repeated exposure to new vocabulary, including modelling and scaffolding of its use. Repeated exposure to new vocabulary also helps to build pupils' understanding of how new words can be used in different contexts. In the example above, Ms Chowdhury could plan opportunities to use the new words that are introduced during the vocabulary sessions across other periods of teaching and independent activities, providing pupils with the opportunity to hear, read, and use the words in a variety of contexts.

How could the teacher help to make new vocabulary meaningful and memorable for pupils?

Teaching new vocabulary that is linked to curriculum content currently being taught, or texts that pupils are currently reading, may help pupils to engage with the meaning of new vocabulary and see how it is used, as well as providing opportunities for pupils to actively use their new vocabulary in class. Exposing children to new vocabulary across all literacy activities and the wider curriculum also helps to ensure breadth and depth of vocabulary. Ms Chowdhury could therefore consider introducing her class to new vocabulary related to topics being taught that week in science, maths, or history lessons.

Speaking and listening

Speaking and listening are at the heart of all language development. They are foundational for reading and writing, whilst proving essential for thinking and communication.⁸ Teaching should focus on pupils' language development, particularly their expressive language, which will also support their writing. Speaking and listening can be used to model and develop expressive and receptive language:

- articulating ideas before writing means pupils are not hindered by handwriting and spelling skills; and
- listening activities can develop inference skills without the need to process the written text.

High quality classroom discussion can support pupils to articulate key ideas, consolidate understanding, and extend their vocabulary.⁹ Sometimes classroom interactions will take the form of closed questions from the teacher followed by short responses from pupils. This interaction style is useful and appropriate in some contexts. However, creating dialogues between teacher and pupils, or between pupils, is likely to provide more extensive opportunities for pupils to

articulate their thinking. Teachers can increase the quantity and quality of classroom talk by:¹⁰

- asking open questions, such as questions that require pupils to explain, reason, or argue;
- probing with follow-up questions that require pupils to expand on their answers;
- building on pupils' responses to move the dialogue forward;
- encouraging pupils to ask their own questions;
- ensuring every pupil has opportunities to articulate their ideas and be listened to;
- creating a classroom culture that encourages dialogue (for example, teaching pupils to listen when others are speaking); and
- incorporating opportunities for dialogue into lesson plans and classroom activities.

Collaborative learning

Collaborative learning activities can provide opportunities for pupils to engage in high quality classroom talk, thereby developing their language capabilities. Collaborative approaches are cost-effective and generally have a positive impact on learning, but this does vary so it is important to get the detail right.¹¹

Effective collaborative learning requires much more than just sitting pupils together and asking them to collaborate; structured approaches with well-designed tasks lead to the greatest learning gains.¹² Effective collaboration does not happen automatically so pupils will need support and practice. Approaches that promote talk and interaction between learners tend to result in the best gains.

The following should be considered when using a collaborative learning approach:

- Tasks need to be designed carefully so that working together is effective and efficient otherwise some pupils will struggle to participate or will try to work on their own.

- Competition between groups can be used to support pupils in working together more effectively, though over-use of competition can focus learners on the competition rather than succeeding in their learning, so it must be used cautiously.
- Ensure that all pupils, particularly pupils with low prior attainment, are supported to fully participate and articulate their thinking in collaborative tasks to ensure they benefit fully.
- Small groups of three to five pupils with shared responsibility for a task tends to be the most successful structure.¹³
- Professional development may be needed to support effective use of these strategies.

Box 1: Collaborative learning in 'jigsaw groups'—An example from the classroom



A Year 6 class are learning about biographies and the work of Michael Morpurgo. The class teacher organises the children into groups of four to research four different stages of his life.

Having researched their stage in detail, the children then come together in groups of four to create a jigsaw of the life of Michael Morpurgo. Each child takes turns to summarise the information they have found, telling the rest of their group about the stage of Michael Morpurgo's life that they researched. The teacher reminds the class to listen when others are speaking, and to ask each other questions about the information they have found. The children then discuss which events in each life stage are most important and agree what to write down.

Having collaborated effectively, the children are then able to write a complete biography of the life of Michael Morpurgo.

The organisation of this 'jigsaw' task ensures that each individual child has an equal and vital contribution to make to the collaborative activity. Without the information that each child brings to the final task, the biography will be incomplete. This sense of shared purpose, with individual responsibility, ensures the task is genuinely purposeful and engaging.

Language development through reading

Reading to pupils and discussing books also remains crucial for this age group. Exposing pupils to an increasingly wide range of texts, with an appropriate level of challenge, will develop their language capabilities. This should include active engagement with a wide range of genres and media. This variation is likely to be motivating and engaging and it provides an opportunity to explicitly teach the features and structures of different types of text, which can develop more advanced comprehension and reasoning skills.¹⁴

Motivation and engagement are important for pupils' progress in literacy. By creating a culture that puts reading and text discussions at the heart of the

school day, teachers can develop positive attitudes to reading among their pupils, supporting language and literacy development.¹⁵

The range of vocabulary within texts provides purposeful and varied opportunities for language development. Following introduction to this rich vocabulary, a breadth of opportunities to hear, embed, and use new language is crucial to enable the child to then use it precisely when expressing themselves. The ultimate aim is for children to know and use a wider vocabulary across the curriculum, supporting a successful and stimulating environment for learning through, and about, language and communication.

Box 2: The PEER Framework

The PEER Framework is a simple sequence that can be used to promote dialogue during shared reading activities.¹⁶ When reading with a child, adults can:

- **P**rompt the child to say something about the book;
- **E**valuate their response;
- **E**xpand their response by rephrasing or adding information to it; and
- **R**epeat the prompt to help them learn from the expansion.

The PEER Framework was developed for use with younger children,¹⁸ but approaches included within it, such as prompting and questioning to scaffold engagement with texts, can also be effective for older pupils and may support purposeful dialogue when reading with Key Stage 2 pupils.¹⁹

There are five main types of prompt that can be used as part of the PEER sequence. The prompts can be remembered using the acronym CROWD:

- **C**ompletion—leave a blank at the end of a sentence for children to complete (this works particularly well with books with rhymes or repetitive phrases);
- **R**ecall—ask children about something they have already read (these prompts support children to understand the story's plot);
- **O**pen-ended—ask children questions that cannot be answered with a short response such as 'yes' or 'no', prompting them to express their ideas;
- **W**h—prompts that begin with 'who', 'what', 'where', 'when', 'why', and 'how' ('why' and 'how' questions tend to prompt the most linguistically complex responses from children);¹⁷ and
- **D**istancing—connects the book to children's own life experiences and provides an opportunity for high quality discussion.

Expanding pupils' vocabulary

While pupils may have the decoding skills required to say a word out loud, they will only be able to fully understand what it means if it is already in their vocabulary. Approaches to develop vocabulary can be split into two groups: (1) explicit teaching of new vocabulary and (2) exposure to a rich language environment with opportunities to hear and confidently experiment with new words (this could be considered as implicit teaching of new vocabulary). Both approaches should be used and the following points should be considered.²⁰

- Repeated exposure to new vocabulary is necessary across spoken language, reading, and writing.
- Pre-teaching and discussing new words can support reading comprehension (see **Figure 4**).
- Pupils should learn new words as well as how to use familiar words in new contexts.
- Vocabulary learning should entail active engagement in learning tasks.
- Digital technology can be used to help develop and teach vocabulary.

When pre-teaching and discussing new words, it is useful for teachers to consider Beck and McKeown's tiers of vocabulary ²¹ (see **Figure 3**). Explicit teaching may best focus on Tier 2 words, words which can be considered as ambitious, and also those that children are likely to come across in a variety of contexts across the curriculum.

Beck and McKeown suggest these words 'are not the most basic or common ways of expressing ideas, but they are familiar to mature language users as ordinary as opposed to specialized language'.²²

Teaching vocabulary and spelling related to the curriculum content currently being studied can encourage active use of new words, helping to make new vocabulary meaningful and memorable to pupils.²³ Introducing vocabulary linked to curriculum content provides opportunities to explicitly teach Tier 2 vocabulary and also less common Tier 3 vocabulary—topic specific words that children might not have encountered in everyday conversations or while studying other topics. Supporting children to understand and use a widening range of Tier 2 and 3 vocabulary through Key Stage 2 is also an important part of preparing children for the increasing complexity of vocabulary they are likely to encounter in secondary school.

Building up a wide-ranging vocabulary is a priority for all pupils in Key Stage 2 and will often be particularly important for pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL).²⁴ Some EAL pupils will have had more limited exposure to English vocabulary than their peers and many benefit from targeted support in this area. [The Bell Foundation](#) provides a range of information about teaching EAL pupils, including resources aimed at supporting vocabulary development.

Figure 3: Tiered model of vocabulary—adapted from Beck & McKeown (1985)

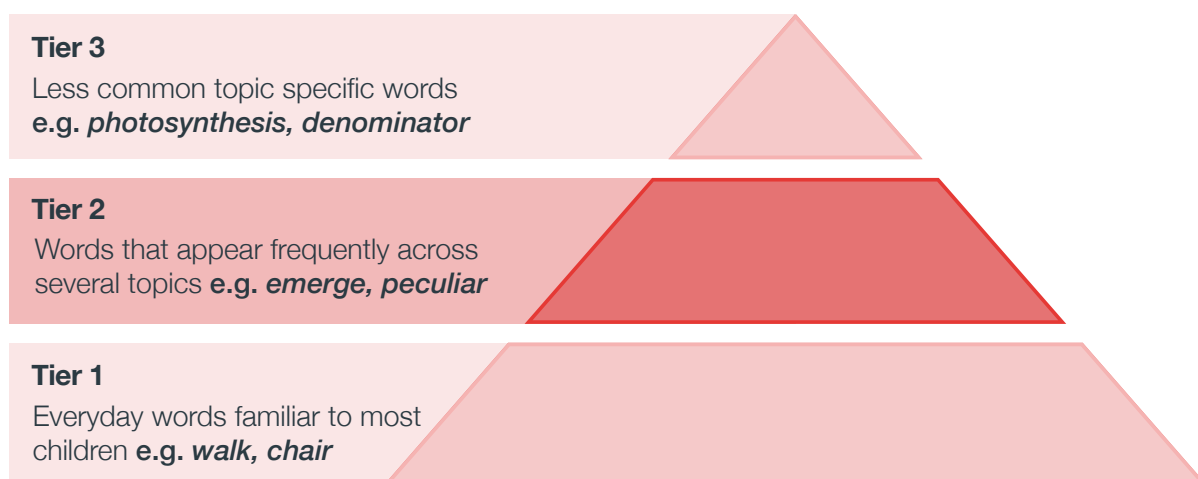




Figure 4: Ensuring breadth and depth of vocabulary teaching

1. Adult Pre-teaching tier two vocabulary

Before we start reading, I've got some words for you to think about. Can you make a pair by matching the word with the correct definition?

So, we've got three words to be on the lookout for...

STEALTHY, ANCESTOR and FLEXING...

Let's discuss the definition of each of them!

2. Children using and developing knowledge of the vocabulary within the text

Mr Said...?

When you were reading, I found the word **stealthy** in the story. It's describing Varjak Paw!

He doesn't want his dad to see him leave so he makes sure he is **stealthy** when he moves.

Yes, and we could also make **stealthy** into an adverb, 'stealthily'. He moved **stealthily** away.

3. Teacher providing further opportunities to embed the vocabulary

The author uses the word **ancestor** again here. That was one of the first three words we looked at last week, write a definition of ancestor on your whiteboards.

Josh, can you remind us who the **ancestor** of Varjak Paw's was please?

4. Children are using and applying their vocabulary across the curriculum, during independent tasks

LATER IN HISTORY CLASS

I wonder who Odin's ancestors were?

Yes, let's look for Thor's ancestors as well.

Do you think we might have Viking ancestors?

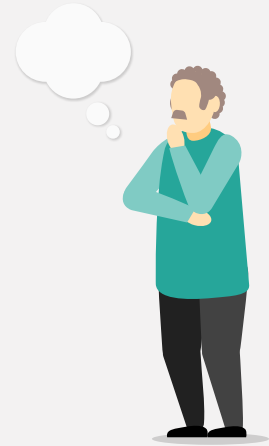
It would be great to know who our ancestors are... like Varjak Paw has Jamal!

2 Support pupils to develop fluent reading capabilities



Mr Turner has identified reading fluency as a significant area of focus for his Year 4 class. He has organised daily sessions of independent silent reading. He has also planned time for shared reading of a class text. During whole class reading sessions, each child takes their turn to read aloud. This 'round robin' approach, where children are asked to read aloud one after the other, is one Mr Turner uses regularly to facilitate opportunities to develop reading fluency.

Having undertaken these approaches for the first three weeks of the term, the teacher is concerned to see very little evidence of improvement in fluency. In addition, he notices that a number of children are reluctant to read aloud and do not seem to enjoy the lessons.



Questions for discussion

What further approaches should Mr Turner consider to improve pupils' reading fluency?

Mr Turner considers the importance of explicit teaching and how this may include opportunities for children to listen to reading fluency modelled by him during story time. Using that 'expert' model, the child can then be supported to 'have a go' and work to read with similar fluency. To support pupils to practice reading aloud with fluency, Mr Turner could plan guided repeated reading activities in small groups or reading pairs, with feedback to support improvements in fluency with each reading.

How could Mr Turner better understand pupils' fluency difficulties?

Having identified that pupils are struggling to read aloud with fluency, Mr Turner should consider why this might be. It could be that the pupils need further instruction, practice, and feedback in order to become more fluent. Equally, some pupils might be finding it difficult to read with fluency due to underlying weaknesses in decoding letters into sounds and may benefit from additional support in this area. Assessing pupils' strengths and weaknesses in relation to reading fluency and monitoring their progress will help to inform the teacher's next steps and tailor these to the needs of individual pupils (see **Box 3** for more information).

Developing reading fluency

Fluent readers can read accurately, at an appropriate speed without great effort (automaticity), and with appropriate stress and intonation (prosody). A fluent reading style can support comprehension because pupils' limited cognitive resources are freed from focusing on word recognition and can be redirected towards comprehending the text.²⁵ For this reason, fluency is sometimes described as a bridge from word recognition to comprehension.²⁶

There are no quick ways to develop reading fluency and most pupils will benefit from being explicitly taught and being encouraged to practise.²⁷ The following approaches are well supported by evidence:²⁸

- **guided oral reading instruction**—fluent reading of a text is modelled by an adult or peer and pupils then read the same text aloud with appropriate feedback; and

- **repeated reading**—pupils re-read a short and meaningful passage a set number of times or until they reach a suitable level of fluency.

The Wise Multi-Academy Trust in the North East of England uses Reader's Theatre²⁹ to support pupils to develop reading fluency.

Reader's Theatre is a widely used teaching strategy that exemplifies how guided oral reading instruction and repeated reading of texts can be used to support pupils to develop reading fluency.³⁰ The Trust have developed their own guide to support the use of Reader's Theatre in the classroom. (See **Figure 6** on the following page.)

Figure 5: Reading fluency

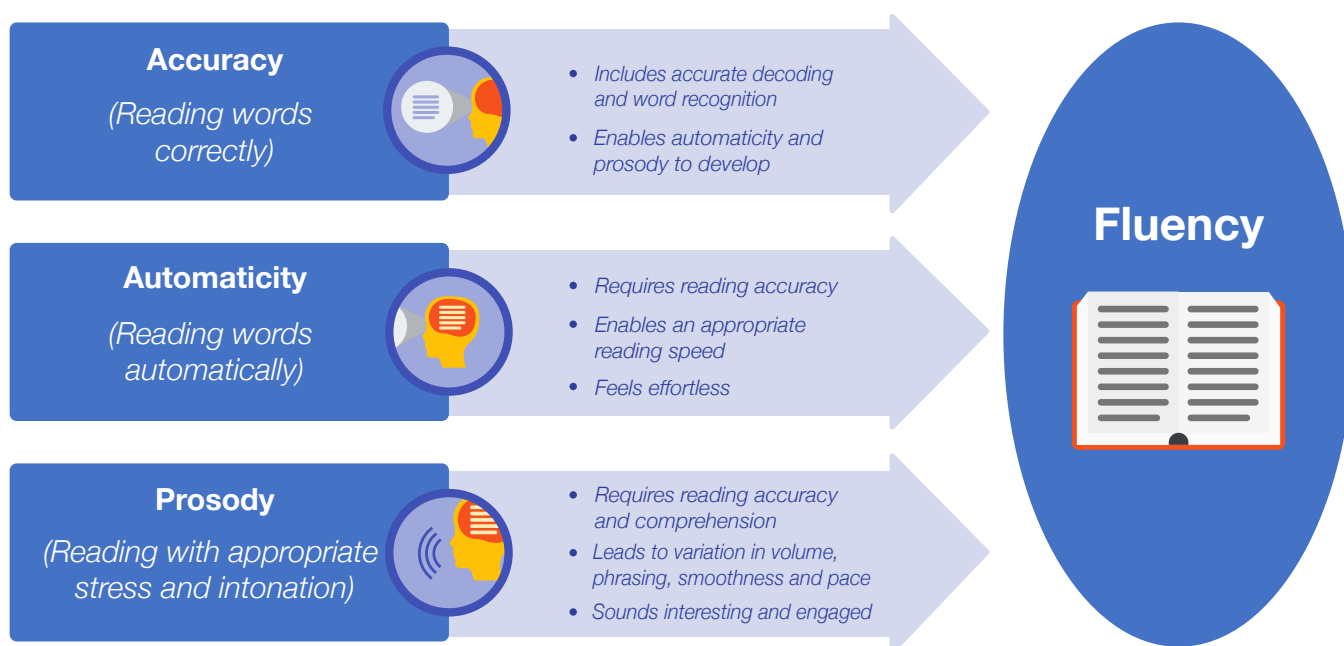


Figure 6: A guide to Reader's Theatre



<p>Step 1: Adult as model</p> <p>The adult reads the selected passage of the class text aloud as an 'expert model' of fluency whilst pupils follow the text with their own copy. This may be repeated multiple times as necessary.</p>	<p>Step 2: Echo reading</p> <p>Children echo back the section read by the adult, emulating their intonation, tone, speed, volume, expression, movement, use of punctuation, etc.</p>	<p>Step 3: Text allocation</p> <p>Children work in pairs or triads. Each group may:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. all have the exact same short section of text, or 2. a longer section might be split into short parts, so that each group has a different piece.
<p>Step 4: Repeated choral reading</p> <p>In their groups, children read their section aloud, echoing the initial reading by the adult.</p>	<p>Step 5: Close reading</p> <p>In their pairs/triads children make a close reading of their section of text and think about meaning, audience, and purpose. This requires children to look closely at the writer's use of language and consider characterisations, etc.</p>	<p>Step 6: Text marking</p> <p>Each child has a copy of the text to annotate in order to inform their performance. This is discussed and agreed as a group.</p> <p>Prompts are provided to direct their reading.</p>
<p>Step 7: Practise</p> <p>Time is provided for groups to rehearse their reading. They may decide to change or add to their performance slightly as a result of their rehearsal.</p>	<p>Step 8: Perform</p> <p>Each group performs their rehearsed piece.</p> <p>(Adult may record so that children can appraise their own performance).</p>	<p>Step 9: Reflect</p> <p>Children evaluate their own and/or others' performances and give feedback. They may use a reading fluency rubric or the prompts as success criteria to support articulation of evaluations.</p>

Understanding weaknesses in reading fluency

Actively teaching reading fluency is important for all pupils, with those judged to be struggling likely to benefit from targeted support. When considering targeted support, diagnosis of the specific issues should be the first step before selecting an intervention.³¹ For example, it is important to check for weaknesses in decoding or comprehension before concluding that reading fluency should be the primary focus of targeted support.

Most children learn how to decode words in Reception and Key Stage 1. However, pupils are likely to continue to benefit from some phonics work in Key Stage 2

to consolidate their understanding of grapheme-phoneme correspondences (the relationships between combinations of letters and sounds). There may also be some children who continue to struggle with decoding and word recognition in Key Stage 2. These children may benefit from additional targeted support. There is strong evidence that systematic synthetic phonics is an effective approach for teaching pupils to decode, including older pupils struggling with decoding.³²

Reading accuracy and automaticity can also be supported by building children's knowledge of aspects



of word structure such as common letter combinations (orthographic awareness) and the meaningful parts within words (morphological awareness).³³ More information about developing pupils' orthographic and morphological awareness can be found in **Recommendation 5**.

It is important to note that while fluent reading is a key skill that supports comprehension, fluency is not sufficient to guarantee comprehension.³⁴ Some children become skilled at word recognition while still struggling with comprehension, meaning they may be able to read aloud fluently but struggle to understand

what they are reading.³⁵ Children may find it more difficult to read aloud with appropriate expression and intonation if they are unsure of the meaning of the sentences that they are reading, although children may be able to mimic the expression and intonation of others during shared reading activities.

Fluency can be assessed by listening to pupils read from an appropriate text. Various tools, such as the fluency rubric below, can be used to inform accurate diagnosis and identify areas where pupils may need further support³⁶ (see **Figure 7**).

Figure 7: The fluency rubric—adapted from Zutell and Rasinski (1991)³⁷

	Expression and volume	Phrasing	Smoothness	Pace
4	Reads with <i>good expression and enthusiasm throughout the text</i> . Varies expression and volume to match his or her interpretation of the passage.	Generally reads with <i>good phrasing</i> , mostly in clause and sentence units, with adequate attention to expression.	<i>Generally reads smoothly</i> with some breaks, but resolves word and structure difficulties quickly, usually through self-correction.	Consistently reads at <i>conversational pace</i> ; appropriate rate throughout reading.
3	Make text sound like <i>natural language</i> throughout the better part of the passage. Occasionally slips into expressionless reading. Voice volume is generally appropriate throughout the text.	Reads with a <i>mixture of run-ons</i> , mid sentence pauses for breath, and some choppiness, reasonable stress and intonation.	<i>Occasionally breaks smooth rhythm</i> because of difficulties with specific words and/or structures.	Reads with an <i>uneven mixture of fast and slow pace</i> .
2	<i>Begins to use voice to make text sound like natural language</i> in some areas of the text but not in others. Focus remains largely on pronouncing the word. Still reads in a quiet voice.	Frequently reads in two- and three-word phrases, giving the impression of <i>choppy reading</i> ; improper stress and intonation fail to mark ends of sentences and clauses.	Experiences several <i>'rough spots'</i> in text where extended pauses or hesitations are more frequent and disruptive.	Reads <i>moderately slowly</i> .
1	<i>Reads words as if simply to get them out</i> . Little sense of trying to make text sound like natural language.	Reads in a <i>monotone</i> with little sense of boundaries; frequently reads <i>word-by-word</i> .	Makes frequent <i>extended pauses, hesitations, false starts, sound outs, repetitions, and/or multiple attempts</i> .	Reads <i>slowly and laboriously</i> .

3 Teach reading comprehension strategies through modelling and supported practice



A group of Key Stage 2 teachers are meeting to discuss reading test results, which identify that there are ongoing challenges with reading comprehension, showing that a number of children are struggling to understand texts and make inferences. They are keen to plan to address this issue and consider the approaches they could use.

They decide to buy a reading comprehension scheme which provides a series of texts with set questions for the children to provide written answers to in their English lessons. The questions are intended to be completed individually and as part of an ongoing weekly timetable. However, after some months of these lessons, there are ongoing concerns about the impact of this work.



Questions for discussion

Why is it important to explicitly teach reading comprehension strategies?

Some children may learn to read strategically through trial and error as they look to better understand texts that challenge them. However, many children benefit from being explicitly taught techniques and approaches to improve their comprehension of texts. There is evidence that disadvantaged pupils and pupils with lower prior attainment may particularly benefit from being explicitly taught reading comprehension strategies.³⁸ The Key Stage 2 teachers in this example could support their pupils' progress in reading by teaching pupils how and when to use specific reading comprehension strategies, modelling their use, and providing regular opportunities for pupils to practice the strategies.

Is it sufficient to use 'special texts' with set questions to teach reading comprehension strategies?

Modelling and scaffolding of reading comprehension strategies by the teacher supports children to learn to monitor their reading comprehension and make ongoing inferences when engaging with texts. The use of texts with set questions can provide helpful structure for reading comprehension work but reading comprehension practice can also be undertaken across the curriculum with a wide range of fiction and non-fiction texts, through which pupils learn to apply the strategies in different contexts.³⁹ Extensive practice should enable a gradual release of responsibility by the teacher, whereby pupils increasingly use reading comprehension strategies independently, with less and less prompting needed from the teacher.⁴⁰

Reading comprehension strategies

Reading comprehension can be improved by teaching pupils specific strategies that they can apply both to monitor and overcome barriers to comprehension.⁴¹ When used successfully, such strategies can improve pupils' understanding of written texts and ability to infer meaning from context. Where appropriate, these approaches can be combined with phonics activities, or collaborative learning approaches, to develop reading skills.

The following strategies should be modelled and practised to ensure they become embedded and fluent:⁴²

- **Prediction**—pupils predict what might happen as a text is read. This causes them to pay close attention to the text, which means they can closely monitor their own comprehension.
- **Questioning**—pupils generate their own questions about a text in order to check their comprehension.
- **Clarifying**—pupils identify areas of uncertainty, which may be individual words or phrases, and seek information to clarify meaning.
- **Summarising**—pupils describe succinctly the meaning of sections of the text. This causes pupils to focus on the key content, which in turn supports comprehension monitoring. This can be attempted using graphic organisers that illustrate concepts and the relationships between them using diagrams.
- **Activating prior knowledge**—pupils think about what they already know about a topic, from reading or other experiences, and try to make links. This helps pupils to infer and elaborate, fill in missing or incomplete information, and use existing mental structures to support recall.

The potential impact of these approaches is very high but can be hard to achieve, since pupils are required to take greater responsibility for their own learning.⁴³ This requires them to learn three things:

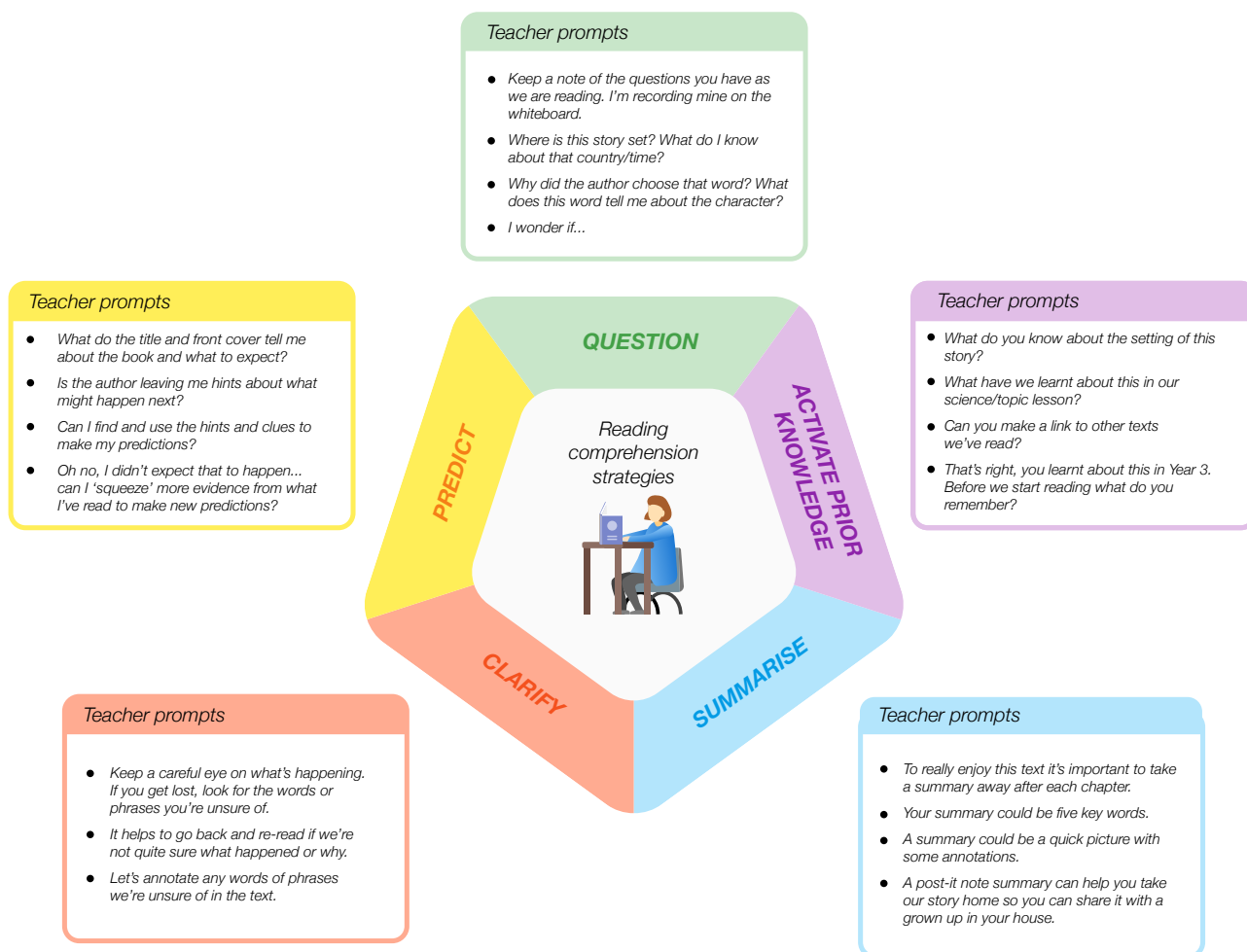
- what the strategy is;
- how the strategy is used; and
- why and when to use the strategy.⁴⁴

Developing each of the strategies requires explicit instruction and extensive practice. Evidence-based collaborative activities and approaches, such as reciprocal teaching, which structure interaction with peers, are likely to be beneficial.⁴⁵

These strategies can be introduced in isolation but pupils should also be taught how to integrate combinations of strategies to develop effective comprehension of different texts. The effectiveness of teaching pupils to integrate multiple strategies is well supported by research evidence and this approach is likely to be more effective than relying on single strategies in isolation.⁴⁶ It is also crucial to support learners to apply the comprehension strategies independently to a range of different reading tasks, contexts, and subjects.⁴⁷

Structured interventions can be effective for teaching children how to use reading comprehension strategies. Shorter interventions of up to ten weeks tend to be more successful than longer interventions.⁴⁸ Ultimately, the aim is for pupils themselves to take responsibility for automatically using these strategies to monitor and improve their reading comprehension.⁴⁹

Figure 8: Reading comprehension strategies with prompts to support practice



Explicitly teaching children these strategies supports them to become strategic readers.

What does a strategic reader do before, during, and after reading?

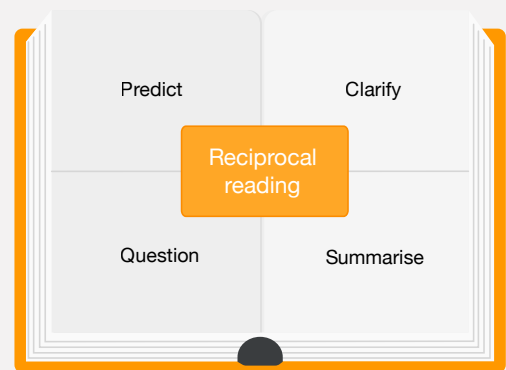
Before reading...	During reading...	After reading...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asks questions about the text. Activates prior knowledge. Makes predictions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitors understanding. Makes connections within and beyond the text. Makes mental models of the text. Updates and makes new predictions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarifies understanding of the text. Revisits and revises predictions. Asks further questions. Reflects on their own reading. Summarises key points from the text

BOX 4: Reciprocal Reading

The Reciprocal Reading programme is an example of a structured intervention designed to explicitly teach reading comprehension strategies to pupils. It was developed by FFT literacy and has been tested in a rigorous EEF trial. The programme teaches reading comprehension strategies through regular 20- to 30-minute paired reading and structured discussion sessions over a period of 12 weeks.

Pupils are explicitly taught four reading comprehension strategies: 'predict', 'clarify', 'question', and 'summarise'. A teacher or teaching assistant models these strategies and then children practise with their partners. The teacher or TA provides support as needed, providing less support as children become more confident and skilful in applying the strategies. Importantly, each child has a chance to practise all four of the reading comprehension strategies across the reading sessions rather than remaining in the same role throughout sessions (for example, 'the predictor', 'the summariser'). This approach ensures every child learns how and when to apply all four strategies and can use them independently.

An EEF evaluation found that a targeted version of Reciprocal Reading delivered by teaching assistants to small groups of Year 5 and Year 6 pupils who were struggling with reading comprehension positively impacted children's reading comprehension and overall reading ability.⁵⁰ The trial also tested the impact of a whole-class version of the programme delivered by teachers to Year 4 pupils, but found that children in schools that continued with their usual literacy provision performed just as well as children in Reciprocal Reading schools. These results suggest that this programme can be impactful when delivered as a targeted intervention for small groups of Year 5 and Year 6 pupils who are struggling with reading comprehension.



Enabling independent use of reading comprehension strategies

It is important for reading comprehension strategy interventions to focus on enabling pupils to use the strategies independently and habitually, with less and less prompting from the teacher. The gradual release of responsibility model below (see **Figure 9**) illustrates how greater responsibility for using these reading comprehension strategies can be transferred to the pupil.⁵¹ The EEF's guidance report on [Metacognition and Self-Regulated Learning](#) provides more detail on these approaches.⁵²

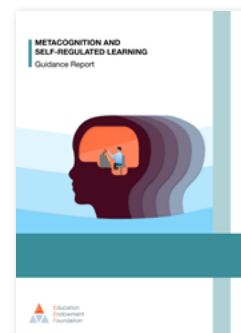
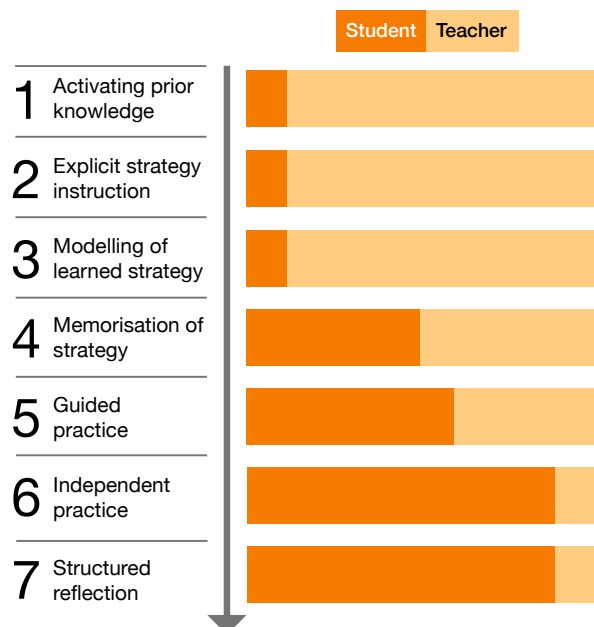


Figure 9: A process for transferring responsibility from adult to child





BOX 5: Supporting text choice

Choosing interesting and relevant texts that children are motivated to read and understand is an important consideration for reading comprehension activities.

It is important to consider how a text may extend pupils' reading comprehension capabilities: too easy and pupils do not need to use the strategies, too hard and they cannot understand the text.⁵³ An appropriate level of challenge can give pupils an opportunity to draw on the reading comprehension strategies they have learned and can help to prepare upper Key Stage 2 pupils for the more challenging texts they may encounter in secondary school. When considering an effective but not overwhelming challenge, the following may be useful to address:

Knowledge:

- What knowledge will the children bring to the classroom and their reading?
- What background knowledge will pupils need to understand the text? How far should this content be pre-taught?
- Does the text provide an opportunity to activate prior knowledge from another area of the curriculum?
- Does the text provide interesting opportunities to learn about life beyond the children's own experiences? Might the text challenge common stereotypes? Do characters evolve and grow supporting children to question and change their opinions of them?

Structure:

- Does the text structure provide an appropriate degree of complexity—for example, fiction which includes flashbacks in the plot, or non-fiction which presents information in unusual and interesting ways? Does this encourage revisiting and re-reading?
- Does this complexity encourage ongoing monitoring of comprehension?

Meaning:

- Is there more than one level of meaning? For example, might the behaviour of a main character be interpreted in different ways? How accessible are the levels of meaning?

Language:

- Does the text include vocabulary we have learnt in earlier texts? How does it build and support that prior learning?
- Are there opportunities to develop breadth and depth of new Tier 2 and 3 vocabulary? Does this language build on previously taught vocabulary? Does vocabulary in the text relate to the wider curriculum and therefore provide helpful support, including opportunities to build depth of understanding in foundation subjects?

Themes:

- How accessible are the experiences, themes, and ideas within the text? Are there themes and ideas that encourage children to question the text? Do they facilitate links to other texts read?
- Texts including thought-provoking themes and ideas can prove to be very powerful in the classroom. If the text provides these, consider what preparation you will need to undertake to support children to fully and sensitively engage.

4 Teach writing composition strategies through modelling and supported practice



Ms Howarth has been asked to encourage her Year 3 children to produce further examples of extended writing. She is keen to reflect her commitment to achieving this quickly and would like to demonstrate that the children are producing longer pieces of writing by the time of a review planned by the senior leadership team. To achieve this, she sets up a timetable which includes two sessions each week for longer writing.

After some weeks of following the new timetable, Ms Howarth is considering how to better support the children to engage more positively with the written tasks. Many of them are struggling and indeed some parents have discussed real anxiety for their child when coming to school on the days timetabled for longer pieces of writing.



Questions for discussion

Why is writing so challenging?

Ronald Kellogg, an American literacy expert, argues that writing can be as cognitively demanding as chess.⁵⁴ It is demanding because children need to coordinate several different processes. For instance, children need to work out what they want to communicate and how, handwrite or type accurately, regulate their own thoughts and behaviour, and monitor their work. Pupils will need extensive instruction, practice, and feedback to become skilled at coordinating these aspects of writing.

What can we do to make written tasks more accessible?

To develop pupils' ability to write at greater length, it can be helpful to think of writing as a task made up of five stages: planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. Children can be taught, through modelling and scaffolding, strategies which support them to undertake each of these stages of the writing process.

Ms Howarth may want to consider how to make extended writing less daunting for her class. This could be done by initially focusing on one element of the writing process in each session, for example, planning or drafting, with shorter, regular sessions over which the children can complete their extended writing task. Breaking the task down in this way and teaching pupils strategies for approaching each stage of the writing task will also allow children to have time to reflect on and understand the writing process.

The Simple View of Writing

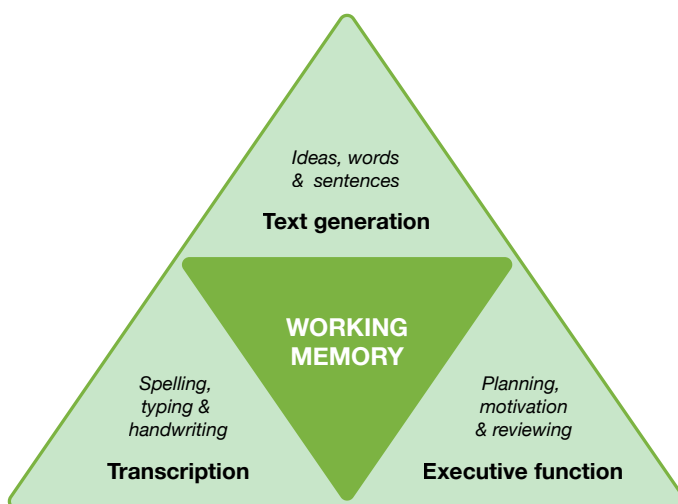
Writing is a complex task because it requires pupils to coordinate a number of different processes at once. The Simple View of Writing⁵⁵ highlights three overarching processes that are essential to writing:

- **text generation**—which involves thinking of ideas and using oral language skills to put those thoughts into words and sentences;
- **transcription**—which enables the writer to move oral language into written language; and
- **executive functions**—such as self-regulation (controlling one’s own behaviour, thoughts, and emotions), planning, problem-solving, and monitoring writing.

When writing, pupils must coordinate these processes in their working memory (the brain’s system for holding and using information while completing a task).

Working memory has a limited capacity so many children find this challenging. However, with extensive practice, explicit instruction, and encouragement pupils can become more adept at using these three overarching elements of writing and coordinating them in working memory can become less effortful.

Figure 10: Based on ‘The Simple View of Writing’ developed by Beringer et al. (2002).⁵⁶



Strategies to support the writing process

Writing can be thought of as a task made up of five stages: planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. Pupils should be taught each of these components and underlying strategies. A writing strategy is a series of actions that writers use to achieve their goals and may support one or more components of the writing process. Over time, pupils should take increasing responsibility for selecting and using strategies. The following strategies should be carefully modelled and practised.⁵⁷

1. Planning

Setting goals and generating ideas before pupils begin writing. Teachers may ask pupils to write down goals to refer back to as they write. This stage of the writing process may also involve gathering information, activating prior knowledge, and reading exemplar texts to identify key features and consider the writing style used.

Example strategy: *using a graphic organiser, such as a Venn diagram, to generate ideas for a balanced argument.*

2. Drafting

Noting down key ideas, setting out a logical order for points to be covered, and writing out a draft of each section. Although accurate spelling, grammar, and handwriting are important, at this stage they are not the main focus.

Example strategy: *using checklists to support structuring writing and monitoring progress towards goals (for example, 'Does my introduction paragraph explain what topic I'm writing about?'). Over time, pupils can be prompted to develop their own checklists before starting to write, instead of using checklists provided by their teacher.*

3. Revising

Making changes to the content of writing in light of feedback and self-evaluation. Pupils can be supported to re-read their writing to check whether it makes sense and whether their writing goals have been achieved. Ideas or drafts can also be shared with peers or adults for feedback. At this stage, the audience will be limited so anxieties about presentation can be avoided.

Example strategy: *using prompt questions to support children when revising their work (for example, 'Are there any places where it would be helpful to add more information?', 'Is any of the phrasing repetitive?', 'Can we make some vocabulary changes using your word bank?').*

4. Editing

Making changes to ensure the text is accurate and coherent. At this stage, spelling and grammar assume greater importance and pupils will need to recognise that their work will need to be accurate if readers are to engage with it and extract the intended information from it.

Example strategies: *checking capital letters and full stops, writing 'Sp' beside spellings pupils are unsure about and then checking spellings using a dictionary.*

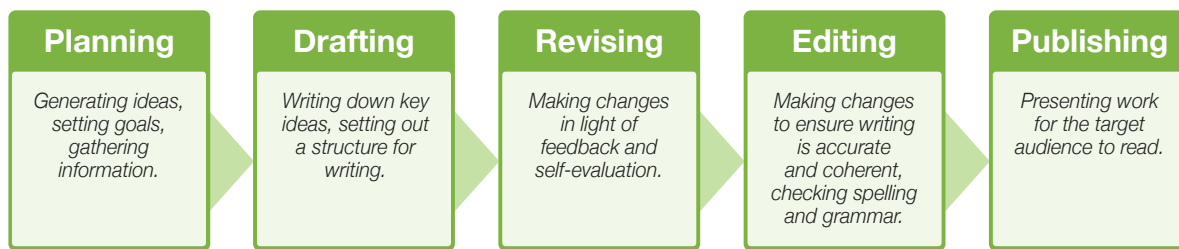
5. Publishing

Presenting the work so that others can read it. This may not be the outcome for all pieces of writing but when used appropriately it can provide a strong incentive for pupils to produce high quality writing and encourage them to carefully revise and edit.

Example strategies: *displaying work, presenting to other classes, and sending copies to parents and carers.*



Figure 11: The writing process



Writing strategies should be explicitly taught using the ‘gradual release of responsibility’ model (see **Figure 9**).⁵⁸ This can be repeated for each strategy. However, pupils will inevitably learn the strategies at different rates so it is important to recognise that the model is not a linear process. For example, based on observations of pupils’ guided practice it may be beneficial to provide repeated

modelling, emphasising different aspects of the strategy.

Teachers should introduce each strategy by describing how and when to use it. Then strategies should be modelled. Shared writing allows teachers to ‘think-aloud’ and share their thought process for each strategy with pupils.

Purpose and audience

Consideration of purpose and audience can support effective writing.⁵⁹ Like adults, children may benefit from having a reason to write and someone to write for. This can include pupils themselves being the audience, using their writing to clarify and organise understanding. There are four main purposes of writing: to describe, to narrate, to inform, and to persuade.⁶⁰

It is important that pupils learn to modify their writing according to the audience for whom they are writing, which includes selecting an appropriate form or genre. Pupils need to learn the features and conventions of different genres. Exposure to a rich range of genres and identification of key features can support this.

BOX 6: Combining writing instruction with reading—an example from a Year 6 classroom



The opportunities provided by reading rich, engaging texts should be considered when planning written tasks. Combining reading and writing instruction can support children’s development in both.⁶¹ Whilst reading supports children to gain knowledge, which can contribute to better writing, it may also provide a purposeful reason to write.

For example, when a Year 6 class are studying *The Eye of the Wolf* by Daniel Pennac,⁶² the teacher uses the children’s powerful responses to the wolf being trapped and pacing up and down in his zoo enclosure to provide a purpose for a piece of writing that articulates the wolf’s inner monologue. Capturing the wolf’s anger and frustrations at his entrapment becomes intensely purposeful and motivating for the pupils writing the piece.

Capitalising on children’s interest in and emotional responses to high quality texts may support engagement with writing tasks. When children are enjoying a particular book, for example, they may find it easier to gather the motivation to write, come up with ideas about what to say, and focus their attention when they are asked to write about it.

5 Develop pupils' transcription and sentence construction skills through extensive practice



In a staff meeting, lower Key Stage 2 teachers are discussing the importance of handwriting and what they should consider when planning handwriting practice lessons. They decide that regular, brief sessions would fit best to their timetable. They discuss the content of the sessions and identify the need for practise in order to avoid common errors in letter formation.

Having made these initial decisions, the teachers start the sessions. The format they adopt includes the use of worksheets that the children complete to practise forming the letters where mistakes are often made. Having completed the sheets, the teacher then checks the work and the children stick them in their books.

As the sessions develop, the teachers notice that several children are still struggling to develop efficient and legible handwriting styles.



Questions for discussion

Why is it important to explicitly teach children to develop an efficient handwriting style?

The aim of handwriting practice is to support children to develop a quick, efficient, and legible handwriting style. Slow or effortful transcription hinders writing composition as pupils have to concentrate on monitoring their handwriting and are less able to think about the content of their writing.⁶³

How can feedback support children to develop an efficient handwriting style?

It remains important in Key Stage 2 to monitor for errors in the direction and order of pen strokes during letter formation and to provide pupils with feedback on their handwriting. For example, a letter 't' that is written from bottom to top and then crossed from right to left may be legible on the page, but this approach will be slower and more effortful than writing the 't' from top to bottom and crossing it from left to right, especially when children begin to practise cursive or 'joined up' handwriting.

The Key Stage 2 teachers in the example above could consider focusing on observations and feedback during handwriting practice sessions—monitoring how children are forming the letters so that they can provide feedback that will support them to correct any errors in their letter formations.

It is important to promote the basic skills of writing—skills that need to become increasingly automatic so that pupils can concentrate on writing composition.⁶⁴ This includes the transcription skills of handwriting (or typing, where appropriate) and spelling, as well as sentence construction (forming sentences that effectively convey meaning, with appropriate grammar, syntax, and punctuation).⁶⁵

If these skills are slow or effortful then this will hinder progress in writing composition. High quality practice is essential to develop fluent transcription.

Practice should be:⁶⁶

- **extensive**—a large amount of regular practice is required for pupils to achieve fluency in these skills;
- **motivating and engaging**—achieving the necessary quantity of practice requires pupils to be motivated and fully engaged in improving their writing; and
- **supported by effective feedback**—with teachers providing feedback to help pupils focus their effort appropriately.

Developing handwriting accuracy and fluency

Teaching accurate letter formation is essential to improving the quality and fluency of pupil's handwriting.⁶⁷ Although children are explicitly taught letter formation in the early years and Key Stage 1, many children continue to struggle with letter formation or develop inaccurate letter formation habits in Key Stage 2. Developing pupils' handwriting fluency and accuracy is therefore important for this age group.

Teachers need to monitor both the *product* and the *process* of children's handwriting. This means both looking at children's written work once it has been

completed but also observing them as they write, watching for mistakes in letter formation. When areas of difficulty are identified, teachers should provide high quality feedback and explicit instruction.

Regular handwriting practice is also needed to support pupils to increase the speed at which they can handwrite and the automaticity of the process. As the process becomes quicker and less effortful, pupils will be able to focus more on other aspects of the writing process such as spelling and text generation.⁶⁸

BOX 7: Teacher feedback to improve pupil learning

Effective teacher feedback can have a high impact on pupil learning outcomes. However, the impacts of feedback are variable and feedback can sometimes have a negative effect on pupils.⁶⁹ Therefore, it is important to consider carefully how feedback is approached.

The EEF guidance report, *Teacher Feedback to Improve Pupil Learning*, provides six recommendations on how teachers can give pupils effective feedback across different subjects and key stages. The recommendations are summarised below with examples of how they could be applied to the teaching of transcription and sentence construction. More detail on these strategies can be found in the guidance report.



- 1. Lay the foundations for effective feedback**—for instance, before providing feedback on pupils' transcription it is important to ensure pupils have received high quality instruction on spelling, handwriting, and how to construct sentences.
- 2. Deliver appropriately timed feedback that focuses on moving learning forward**—for instance, it may be helpful to provide immediate feedback when you notice a pupil moving their pen in the wrong direction to form a specific letter, or depending on what is going on in the classroom at the time, it may be more appropriate to put aside time to provide the pupil with feedback on this at a later point.
- 3. Plan for how pupils will receive and use feedback**—for instance, if a pupil has been provided with feedback on using more complex sentence structures in writing tasks, ensure they have an opportunity to put the feedback into practice in another writing task soon.
- 4. Carefully consider how to use purposeful, and time-efficient, written feedback**—for instance, marking codes that are consistently used by teachers and understood by pupils may be a time-efficient way for teachers to direct pupils' attention to mistakes in their writing; for example, marking a sentence with a letter 'D' for 'describe' where pupils could expand the sentence by adding an additional adjective or adverb.
- 5. Carefully consider how to use purposeful verbal feedback**—for instance, providing verbal feedback on a pupils' writing while also showing the pupil an example from their recent work may help the pupil to understand how the feedback relates to tasks they have completed.
- 6. Design a school feedback policy that prioritises and exemplifies the principles of effective feedback**—for instance, it may be helpful for school feedback policies to provide worked examples to support teachers to enact effective feedback.

Teaching spelling and recognising types of spelling error

Fast and accurate spelling of an extensive vocabulary is a key component of writing fluency. Many of the skills that support word reading will also support spelling, but spelling demands great specificity and has different motor demands.⁷⁰ There is limited high quality evidence about how to teach spelling, but it is clear that spelling should be actively taught rather than simply tested.⁷¹

Phonics provides a foundation for effective spelling, which can be applied alongside other strategies such as focusing on morphemes. By analysing the types of spelling errors pupils make it is possible to provide support specific to their needs (see **Figure 12**).⁷²

The teaching of spelling is likely to work best when related to the current content being studied in school and when teachers encourage pupils to use new spellings in their writing. Other promising approaches

include paired learning approaches and the use of techniques such as ‘look-say-cover-write-check’.⁷³ In the absence of better evidence regarding the teaching of spelling, teachers should be aware of the other strategies that good spellers appear to use and consider teaching these strategies directly.⁷⁴ These include:

- **a phonic approach**—sounding out the word and spelling it the way it sounds (this approach also has reciprocal benefits on word reading);⁷⁵
- **analogy**—spelling it like other known words (for example, ‘call’ and ‘fall’); and
- **the identification of the ‘tricky’ parts of words** so that these can be learned (such as ‘separate’ and ‘miniature’); many of the most common words in English are ‘tricky’ (now known as ‘common exception words’ in the National Curriculum).



Figure 12: Types of spelling error and appropriate strategies to improve spelling

Phonological	Orthographical	Morphological
<p>Phonological errors are not phonologically plausible, for example, 'vriious' for 'various' or 'caterogy' for 'category'.</p> <p>These errors suggest a child might have gaps in their knowledge of letter-sound relationships, or in their knowledge of the sound structure of a particular word.</p>	<p>Orthographical errors are phonologically plausible but inaccurate, for example, 'erly' for 'early' or 'sircle' for 'circle'.</p> <p>These errors suggest a child is relying only on letter-sound rules to produce an invented spelling. The gap in their knowledge may be related to knowledge of common letter combinations or the word-specific spelling.</p>	<p>Morphological errors may be phonologically plausible but occur due to a lack of awareness of morphemes, for example, 'trapt' for 'trapped', 'imaginashun' for 'imagination' or 'desappear' for 'disappear'.</p> <p>These errors suggest that pupils have not learned the consistent spelling of the morphemes in the word.</p>
Strategies	Strategies	Strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explicit teaching of consonant and vowel phonemes. • Practise sounding phonemes all the way through words. • Focus on identification of common digraphs in words (pairs of letters used to write a single sound, for example, 'th'). <p><i>Look at the common digraphs the child is struggling with, focus on lots of examples and exceptions to practise.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look at patterns of letters and syllables within words. <p><i>Encourage this when teaching children to use 'look-say-cover-write-check'. Ensure children know what the 'look' stage involves. 'When you look at the word, you are looking for patterns of letters and syllables. Think about what helps you remember the patterns.'</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage automatic recognition of whole words in conjunction with an emphasis on careful decoding and encoding. <p><i>Teach strategies which support this.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — <i>Write the word and write again over the top, Write the word again, Write the word again, Write the word with your eyes closed.</i> — <i>Exaggerate the pronunciation or 'say it silly', for example, 'spec-i-al'.</i> — <i>Chunk longer words, for example, 'com-pe-ti-tion'.</i> — <i>Mnemonics: 'Big Elephants Can Always Understand Small Elephants'.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on prefixes, suffixes, and root words and learn common rules. For example, most words ending in 'f' or 'fe' change their plurals to 'ves', for example, 'half' to 'halves' and 'knife' to 'knives'. <p><i>Systematically teach spelling rules with regular practice consistently undertaken.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore the relationship between meaning and spelling by looking at etymology. <p><i>The history and origins of a word can be the key to making sense of a word's spelling. For example, knowing the Greek 'aer' (which means 'air') would help children to remember how to spell aeroplane, aerodynamic, aerosol, and aerobic.</i></p>



Figure 13: An example of a graphic organiser for morphology

Teaching pupils to use morphemes (root words, prefixes, and suffixes) can develop their vocabulary while also improving phonological awareness, decoding, and spelling.⁷⁶ The National Curriculum provides lists of words that pupils must learn to spell at Year 3–4 and Year 5–6.⁷⁷ Virtually all of these words can be modified by using morphemes, so if pupils learn the 100 words in the Year 5–6 list they should be able to read, spell, and understand several hundred words as well as having developed an understanding of word-building, which they can apply to other vocabulary. Morphemes combine information about spelling, meaning, and grammar and so morphological awareness can support every aspect of literacy.⁷⁸

re	appear <i>to become visible</i>	ed
		ing
dis		ance

Sentence construction

Sentence construction can be developed through activities like sentence-combining, where simple sentences are combined so that varied and more complex sentences are produced.⁷⁹ For example, the sentence ‘Sara was hungry’ could be combined with the sentence ‘she had not had breakfast’ to form the more complex sentence, ‘Sara was hungry because she had not had breakfast.’

Sentence-expanding activities, where pupils are encouraged to add additional detail into simple

sentences, can also support pupils to construct more complex sentences.⁸⁰ For instance, the sentence ‘the boy walked through the forest’ could be expanded to ‘the boy walked quickly through the gloomy forest’ by adding in the adverb ‘quickly’ and the adjective ‘gloomy’.

Initially, the teacher can model these sentence construction techniques but pupils should go on to work collaboratively and independently. Pupils need to learn to construct increasingly sophisticated sentences, for meaning and effect, with speed.

6 Target teaching and support by accurately assessing pupil needs



A senior leadership team are considering strategies to support the assessment of reading in their school. The current arrangements include teachers undertaking summative assessments at the end of each half term. There is recognition that these assessments have been useful when looking to discuss overall attainment but are limited in terms of better understanding pupils' specific areas of need to ensure sustained progress.

The leadership team are keen to support teachers to develop a repertoire of assessment techniques. For example, if a child is finding it difficult to make inferences from a text, formative and diagnostic assessment could be used to ensure clear and specific understanding of this difficulty to inform targeted teaching and support.



The senior leadership team are now reviewing the professional development and diagnostic assessments available to support teachers to undertake this work.

Questions for discussion

How can teachers be supported to develop formative assessment techniques?

Formative assessment is the process of monitoring pupil learning on an ongoing basis as part of day-to-day, whole-class teaching and adapting teaching to meet pupil's learning needs as they change over time.⁸¹ A focus on developing core classroom teaching strategies, with formative assessment integrated as part of good pedagogy, is a crucial starting point for supporting teachers to target teaching and support to pupils' needs. Therefore, in the example above, professional development that supports teachers to develop these formative assessment techniques is considered a priority by the school's leadership team.

How can diagnostic assessment tools support this work?

Diagnostic assessments are tools that help teachers to identify pupils' specific strengths and learning needs.⁸² There is a range of diagnostic assessment tools available to teachers. Having identified areas of need through formative assessment, these tools can be used to support the decision-making process for how best to target support. The leadership team recognises the need for these tools and selects a small number, with professional development included to ensure the tools are used as intended. The EEF's guidance report on [Effective Professional Development](#) provides further guidance on how schools can select and deliver effective professional development programmes.⁸³



As pupils develop their literacy skills, teaching should adapt to their changing needs. This makes teaching more efficient because effort is focused on the best

next step. This approach can support both high- and low-prior-attaining pupils by ensuring that the challenge and support that they receive is appropriate.

Formative assessment

Formative assessment can be integrated into classroom teaching strategies to help ensure that pupil needs are identified and teaching is appropriately targeted.⁸⁴ Formative assessment involves eliciting evidence of learning from pupils on an ongoing basis and adapting teaching to meet pupils' needs.

To do this, teachers need to plan activities that will reveal what pupils are thinking, bringing to light learning gaps or misconceptions. Strategies that can be used include:⁸⁵

- **effective questioning**—‘Yesterday we learned the word “amateur”. Can you tell me what amateur means?’;
- **all-student response systems**—‘Try spelling “immediately” on your mini-whiteboards then hold them up so I can see’; and
- **carefully designed tasks that aim to assess specific learning gaps**—‘Add apostrophes into the sentences on this handout.’

More information on these strategies is provided in the EEF’s guidance report on [Teacher Feedback to Improve Pupil Learning](#).



Diagnostic assessments

When a teacher identifies that a pupil is struggling with aspects of literacy, the next step should be to accurately diagnose the specific issue(s) and then carefully plan how to support the pupil. Prompt identification of pupils' specific literacy needs and the provision of appropriate support are critical to ensuring sustained progress.⁸⁶

A range of diagnostic assessments are available for different aspects of literacy and staff should be trained to use and interpret these effectively.⁸⁷ Many teachers also develop their own tools to support identification of pupil needs. However, the results of diagnostic assessments should be used to supplement, not replace, the use of professional judgement about a pupil's current capabilities.

Literacy assessments vary in their focus and aims. For example, some are designed for ranking pupils in a class, others for comparing pupils to a benchmarked sample; some aim to predict pupils' overall attainment in literacy while others are for understanding areas for improvement. Diagnostic assessments that aim to provide information about pupils' specific learning needs are likely to be helpful for informing targeted planning. Key areas that literacy assessments may aim to assess include (but are not limited to):⁸⁸

- **word reading**—including assessments of decoding and knowledge of print;
- **reading fluency**—including the use of tools such as the Fluency Rubric (see **Box 3**) to assess how well pupils can read aloud individual words and passages of text accurately, at an appropriate speed, and with appropriate stress and intonation;
- **reading comprehension**—including assessments of how well pupils can infer meaning from texts and assessments of pupils' understanding of grammar, syntax, or narrative and genre;
- **spelling**—including assessments of spelling accuracy and the nature of spelling errors;
- **writing fluency**—including assessments of handwriting or typing;
- **writing composition**—including assessments of sentence structure, text structure, grammar and punctuation, and composition of coherent, engaging texts appropriately adapted for purpose and audience; and
- **omnibus literacy tasks**—including tasks that assess more than one aspect of literacy in different questions or within each question: for example, sentence completion tasks require children to use both reading and writing processes.

Adapting support to pupil needs

Assessments should inform the next steps for teaching and sufficient time should be given for effective targeted planning. Targeted planning can appear daunting when pupils appear to have weaknesses in many areas, but more fully understanding such pupils' specific literacy needs before planning support will help teachers to work out which areas to prioritise. This is also true for pupils with special educational needs who may have specific or complex needs. There is evidence to suggest that all aspects of reading can be improved but it is important to get the targeting right.⁸⁹

Once a teacher has identified a pupil's specific needs, teaching can be adapted by:

- **changing the focus**—targeting an aspect of literacy where a pupil needs more support; or
- **changing the approach**—for example, using the principles of scaffolding to provide the right level of support that fades as responsibility transfers to the pupil.⁹⁰

Comparing the child's performance on an assessment before and after changing the focus or approach can provide useful information about the effectiveness of the change and whether further support is still needed. In some cases, the teacher may wish to consider the use of high quality structured interventions to support pupils who are struggling. If concerns about a child's progress continue after

targeted support is provided, a referral to a specialist team such as a speech and language therapist or an occupational therapist may be appropriate for more in-depth diagnostic assessment.

There are a variety of reasons why a child may be struggling with literacy, including the possibility that the child may have special educational needs that are impacting on their language and literacy development. The EEF's report on [Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools](#) provides guidance on whole-class teaching strategies that can be used flexibly in response to pupil needs to ensure that all pupils have access to high quality teaching.⁹¹ These strategies include flexible grouping, the use of cognitive and metacognitive strategies, explicit instruction, use of technology to support pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, and scaffolding.

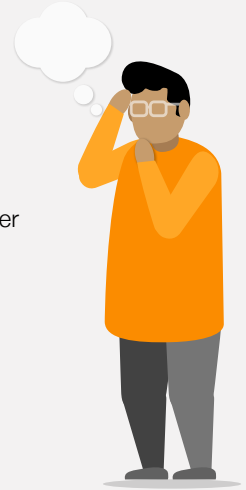


BOX 8: Effective diagnosis of need—a classroom based worked example



Ongoing group formative assessment

Mr Latif is increasingly concerned about the children in his class who are struggling to answer questions that require the ability to make inferences from the text. When the class read new texts, Mr Latif asks his pupils questions that require them to make inferences from the text so that he can monitor whether their inferencing skills are improving over time. However, some children in the class continue to struggle to answer these questions.



Additional individual assessment

Alongside Mr Latif's observations, he undertakes an assessment of inferencing skills. The assessment uses short pieces of text with questions developed to specifically assess the ability to make inferences.

For example:

Millie was going out for the day with her friend Josh. By the time they got there they were thirsty. Josh got a drink out of his backpack, and they shared it. The orange juice was refreshing. Millie put on her swimming costume but the water was too cold to swim in, so they made sandcastles instead. They played all afternoon and didn't notice how late it was. Then Millie spotted the clock on the pier. If she was late for dinner, her parents would be angry. They quickly packed up their things. Millie changed and wrapped her swimming suit in her towel. She put the bundle in a plastic bag. Then they set off for home, pedalling as fast as they could. Millie was very tired when she got home, but she was just in time for dinner.

Assessing inference:

1. *Where did Josh get the orange juice?*
2. *Where did Millie put her towel when she packed up her things?*
3. *Where did Millie and Josh spend the afternoon?*
4. *How did Millie and Josh travel home?*

Adapted from Cain and Oakhill (1999).⁹²

Continued on next page...



BOX 8: Continued...



Effective diagnosis

The assessment indicates that some children are struggling to use inferences to understand the text, for example, that the drink in the backpack was the orange juice. They are also struggling to fill the gaps that inferences allow, for example, that the mention of sandcastles and the pier indicates that Millie and Josh spent the day at the beach.

Mr Latif considers whether any further diagnostic assessment is needed. He knows that comprehension difficulties are sometimes, at least partly, due to an underlying oral language weakness.⁹³ For example, if the children did not know the word ‘pedalling’, they would not be able to answer question four.

From whole-class and then individual observation and assessment, Mr Latif now has enough information to plan shared reading sessions and intervention work to support inferencing and vocabulary.

Appropriate teacher actions

Mr Latif plans a series of actions to support pupils’ progress with inferencing. They include:

- **reading a range of texts aloud to the class, explicitly teaching and modelling the reading comprehension strategies that support children to make inferences**, for example, clarifying the vocabulary which indicates the setting: “I’m not sure what a pier is, I’m going to annotate that and check”;
- **working to support vocabulary acquisition**, both in terms of depth and breadth (see **Recommendation 1, Figure 3**: Ensuring breadth and depth of vocabulary teaching);
- **working with parents to support how they read with children at home**, for example, running an online information session about the questions you might ask when reading with children; and
- **planning targeted support for pupils who are particularly struggling**. Whilst class teaching is the most important lever Mr Latif has, he also recognises the importance of small group tuition. Having identified pupils who are particularly struggling with inferencing using the assessment, Mr Latif and the class’s teaching assistant make plans for an intervention group to undertake further work with shared texts and targeted questioning. These sessions are designed to build on the work pupils are doing in class.

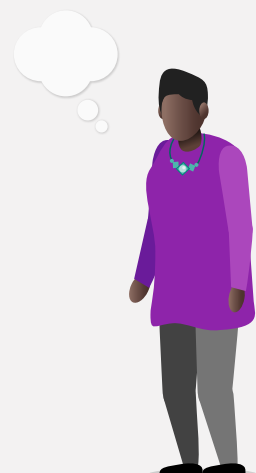
Having started to implement these actions, Mr Latif continues to use formative assessment to monitor pupils’ progress in reading and adapt his plans over time.

7 Use high quality structured interventions to help pupils who are struggling with their literacy



Ms Jegede, a headteacher, has been to a meeting in which a number of her fellow school leaders were praising a new evidence-informed intervention for reading. She reflects on the discussion and feels very positive about undertaking the same intervention in her own school. Following assessment of the school budget, she decides to purchase the full package of resources to support delivery of the intervention to children who are struggling to make expected progress in reading.

Having made such a significant financial commitment, Ms Jegede is increasingly disappointed with the lack of impact. She is concerned that the programme may not target the aspects of reading that the children in her school are struggling with. She is also worried about some of the challenges the teachers are facing to timetable the intervention, with constant discussion about how to fit it in to the already busy school timetable.

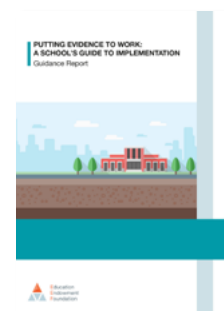


Ms Jegede reflects on this and considers how best to implement interventions in school.

Questions for discussion

Why might an intervention have varying degrees of success in different schools?

Introducing an evidence-informed intervention does not in itself guarantee impact and success. The unique circumstances of each school are important to consider alongside evidence of positive impact in other schools. This can be thought of as working at the intersection between evidence-informed practice and professional judgement, including knowledge of the unique circumstances in which the school is working. Ensuring conditions are in place to support effective implementation of interventions can also make a difference. The EEF's guidance report on [Putting evidence to work: A school's guide to implementation](#) provides further guidance on this.



What should school leaders consider when deciding on interventions to implement?

The first step when considering a targeted literacy intervention should always be to define the problem you want to solve, identifying a specific area for improvement and making use of diagnostic assessments where needed.⁹⁴ School leaders should then think carefully about the available evidence for how to improve pupil outcomes in this specific area, whether available interventions are supported by evidence, and how possible interventions might fit in with their own school context.

Schools should focus first on developing core classroom teaching strategies that improve the literacy capabilities of the whole class. With this in place, the need for additional support should decrease. Nevertheless, it is likely that a small number of pupils will require additional support in the form of high quality, structured, targeted interventions to make progress.⁹⁵

Regular monitoring can identify pupils who are struggling with their literacy. Diagnostic assessments should then be used to understand the specific nature of the pupil's difficulty in order to match them to an appropriate intervention or to plan targeted support.⁹⁶

Evidence-informed intervention choices

Many literacy programmes claim to be evidence-informed or to show evidence of impact on pupil outcomes but it can be challenging to assess these claims or make comparisons between different programmes. The following free online resources provide a good starting point for assessing claims by summarising the available evidence:

- the [literacy theme](#) on the EEF's website—an overview of the EEF's work on literacy including literacy research trials;⁹⁷
- the other guidance reports in the EEF's literacy series:
 - [Preparing for Literacy](#) ⁹⁸
 - [Improving Literacy in Key Stage 1](#) ⁹⁹
 - [Improving Literacy in Secondary Schools](#);
- the [Evidence for Impact \(E4I\) database](#)—a summary of evaluations of programmes conducted in the UK and abroad;¹⁰¹ and
- [What Works for Literacy Difficulties?](#)—an overview of the effectiveness of literacy intervention schemes.¹⁰²

Few programmes available in the U.K. currently have robust evidence of effectiveness: consider carefully, therefore, how well-aligned a programme is to the recommendations in this report and whether it has features associated with effective targeted interventions.¹⁰³ These are summarised in **Figure 14**.

Figure 14: Common elements of effective interventions

T iming	Intervention sessions are often brief (e.g. 15–60 mins) and regular (e.g. 2–5 per week).
A ssessment	Assessments are used to identify pupils, guide areas of focus and to track pupil progress.
R esourcing	The intervention has structured supporting resources and lesson plans, with clear objectives and possibly a delivery script.
G ive it time	Sessions are typically maintained over a sustained period of time (e.g. 8–20 weeks), although this may vary depending on the focus of the intervention. For example, interventions of up to 10 weeks tend to be more successful for reading comprehension. ¹⁰⁴
E xpert delivery	Interventions are delivered by a qualified teacher, or if they are unavailable, a trained teaching assistant. The intervention programme is followed precisely and suggested delivery protocols are followed.
T eacher links	If not delivered by the classroom teacher, the intervention deliverer and the teacher/s communicate regularly and make appropriate connections between out of class learning and classroom teaching, as well as the KS2 curriculum.

Considering school context and planning for implementation

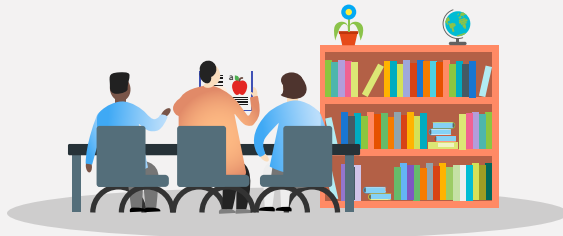
There is a consistent body of evidence demonstrating the benefits of using structured programmes for targeted interventions. Appraising the available evidence before selecting a programme is important, but it is critical, first, to consider your school's context. Research evidence indicates what was successful in various schools in the past but careful consideration is needed to determine if it is likely to work in your school.¹⁰⁵ Examples of questions schools may wish to consider before implementing an intervention include:¹⁰⁶

- **Have you identified a tight area for improvement using a robust diagnostic assessment process?** Programmes are likely to have the greatest impact where they meet a specific need. For example, if pupils are particularly struggling with transcription, an intervention focused on improving pupils spelling and handwriting may well be more effective than a more generic literacy programme. Start by identifying a tight area for improvement using a robust diagnosis process.¹⁰⁷
- **Is there ongoing support for staff from trainers or specialists in the approach?** Faithful implementation is critical to the success of any programme and this is likely to be improved by careful piloting and training for staff. Once a programme has become established it is important to consider ongoing training needs for new and experienced members of staff.
- **Will you be able to dedicate the time and resources required to implement the intervention well?** To implement an intervention effectively, staff need to have enough time and resource capacity. Support from the school's senior leadership team is likely to be important for ensuring this.
- **If pupils spend time away from regular classes to take part in an intervention, what are pupils missing by doing this? Will other children get less support because the teacher or TA is spending time elsewhere?** Investing in an intervention sometimes diverts time and resources away from other activities. Consider in advance whether there might be any unintended impacts of this and how they could be mitigated.
- **How will you monitor whether the intervention is having the intended impact?** Monitoring and evaluation should be used to ensure that the programme is having the intended impact. The EEF's guidance report '[Putting Evidence to Work: A School's Guide to Implementation](#)' provides valuable guidance on how to approach implementation in the school context, including the importance of monitoring progress.



BOX 9: Who should deliver targeted literacy interventions?

One to one or small group instruction from qualified teachers and reading specialists are among the most effective, but also the most expensive, interventions for struggling readers.¹⁰⁸ The cost may be justified if it makes a substantial difference to pupils at a critical point in their reading development and therefore reduces any later need for further intensive support. Structured interventions delivered by teaching assistants can also have a large positive impact on learner outcomes, equating to four additional months' progress, on average, although the average impact of structured interventions delivered by teaching assistants is less than that for interventions delivered by experienced, qualified teachers.



Crucially, it's possible for teaching assistants to have a large positive impact when provided with high quality support and training to deliver structured, targeted support for individuals and small groups.¹⁰⁹

Deploying teaching assistants in more informal, unsupported instructional roles in the classroom risks having a negative impact on pupils' learning outcomes.¹¹⁰ It is also important to ensure that receiving support from a teaching assistant does not result in a reduction in the amount of high quality interactions pupils have with their classroom teacher and their peers.¹¹¹ If children are being taken out of class to take part in a structured targeted intervention, teachers must be careful to ensure that pupils do not fall behind with other aspects of the curriculum.

In other words, what matters is not whether teaching assistants are delivering interventions but how they are doing so. In this context, structured evidence-based programmes provide an excellent means of aiding high quality delivery.

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GLOSSARY

Automaticity (in reading fluency)

The ability to read at an appropriate speed without great effort.

Decoding

Translating written words into the sounds of spoken language.

Diagnostic assessment

An assessment that aims to identify a pupil's current strengths and weaknesses so as to determine the most helpful teaching strategies and content to move the pupil forwards. It can be distinguished from tracking or monitoring where the aim is just to check progress. Diagnostic assessment aims to make teaching more efficient.

Etymology

The study of the origins and history of words and the way in which their meanings have changed. The etymology of 'phonics', for example, is from the Greek phone meaning 'voice'. It was originally used in the 17th century to mean the science of sound but has now come to mean an approach to teaching reading.

Executive functions

Cognitive processes involved in monitoring and controlling behaviour, including attention, planning, and self-regulation.

Expressive vocabulary

The words that a pupil can express through speaking or writing.

Formative assessment

The process of monitoring pupil learning on an ongoing basis as part of day-to-day, whole-class teaching and adapting teaching to meet pupil's learning needs as they change over time.

Grapheme

A letter or combination of letters used to represent a phoneme. Phonemes are the smallest units of speech sound.

Inference

Using information from a text in order to arrive at another piece of information that is implicit.

Metacognition

A critical awareness of one's own thinking and learning and an understanding of oneself as a thinker and learner. The process of metacognition is used when planning, monitoring, and evaluating tasks.

Morpheme

The smallest units of words that contain meaning, such as the 'root' word 'child' and the affix '-ish', which in combination make a new word, 'childish'.

Morphological awareness

Awareness of the form and meaning of a language, especially the smallest units of words that contain meaning.

Orthographic awareness

Awareness of the rules for writing a language, including spelling, punctuation, and capitalisation.

Phoneme

A phoneme is a speech sound. It is the smallest unit of spoken language that distinguishes one word (or word part) from another, for example, 't' and 'd' in 'tip' and 'dip'. Phonemes are represented with a range of symbols (see Grapheme above).

Phonemic awareness

This relates to the skill of manipulating the smallest unit of language—phonemes. It is one aspect of phonological awareness.

Phonics

An approach to teaching reading that focuses on the sounds represented by letters in words.

Phonological awareness

The ability to reflect upon and manipulate the sound structures of language at each level—word, syllable, and phoneme.

Print knowledge

Knowledge of how language is represented in writing, for instance letter names and sounds, and the distinction between sentences, words, and letters.

Prosody

The patterns of stress and intonation in spoken language.

Reading comprehension

The ability to understand the meaning of a text.

Reading fluency

The ability to read accurately, at an appropriate speed without great effort (automaticity), and with appropriate stress and intonation (prosody).

Receptive vocabulary

The words that can be understood by a person when they are reading or listening.

Sentence construction

Forming sentences that effectively convey meaning, with appropriate grammar, syntax, and punctuation.

Text generation

The process of thinking of ideas using oral language skills to put those thoughts into words and sentences.

Transcription

The physical process of handwriting or typing, and spelling.

Working memory

The part of our memory where we temporarily hold and process information. Working memory has a limited capacity.


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