Department for Education

The writing framework

July 2025

Contents

Introduction

Learning to write is one of the hardest challenges pupils face at school but it is vitally important: learning to speak, read and write well are crucial for children and young people's success in education, life and work. Pupils who find it difficult to express their ideas in writing are likely to struggle across the curriculum, not just in English.

Aims

The national curriculum says that by the end of year 6:

> ... pupils' reading and writing should be sufficiently fluent and effortless for them to manage the general demands of the curriculum in year 7, across all subjects and not just in English.

In this document, writing fluency refers to how smoothly and quickly a pupil can write down their thoughts in words. Fluent writers show automaticity in writing words, allowing them to convey their intended meaning.

This document's key objective is to help schools meet the expectations set out in the Early years foundation stage (EYFS) statutory framework and the national curriculum. It aligns with Ofsted's education inspection framework and with the reading framework.

This guidance gives simple, practical advice about how to teach writing to pupils in the reception year, key stage 1 and key stage 2.

It aims to:

- set out some of the research underpinning the importance of talk, handwriting and spelling, sentence mastery, the teaching of grammar and punctuation, and feedback
- support schools to evaluate their teaching of writing from reception to year 6 and to identify how to improve their provision if they find weaknesses
- highlight the importance of developing language, from the early years onwards, in equipping children for writing, and encouraging oral composition, particularly while they are still developing the transcription skills they need to write down their ideas
- explain the importance of the reception year in building the foundations for writing and provide guidance on making sure children get off to the best start
- explain the importance of transcription (handwriting and spelling) through the effective teaching of phonics for spelling and explicit handwriting teaching from the beginning of reception, and continuing to build fluency throughout primary school
- explain the importance of, and provide guidance on, supporting pupils to master sentence construction
- explain the importance of grammar as a tool for conveying meaning and provide guidance on teaching it effectively so that pupils can apply to their writing what they have been taught

- set out an approach to teaching writing effectively
- support schools in motivating pupils to develop a love of writing

It also provides guidance on helping pupils who need more support. High-quality teaching that responds to the challenges individual pupils face in learning to write is essential for giving all of them the best chance to become proficient.

The document provides non-statutory guidance for primary schools. It will also be of interest to initial teacher training providers, early years providers and secondary teachers, as well as teachers in specialist settings who want to know more about how pupils learn to write. It is based on teachers' experiences, classroom observations and research, as well as the contributions of experts.

The national curriculum and the Curriculum and Assessment Review

In July 2024, the government commissioned Professor Becky Francis CBE to convene and chair a panel of experts to conduct the Curriculum and Assessment Review[1].

The review will ensure that the curriculum appropriately balances ambition, excellence, relevance, flexibility and inclusivity for all children and young people.

Specifically it will seek to deliver:

- an excellent foundation in core subjects of reading, writing and maths
- a broader curriculum, with improved access to music, art, sport and drama, as well as vocational subjects
- a curriculum that ensures children and young people leave compulsory education ready for life and ready for work
- a curriculum that reflects the issues and diversities of our society, ensuring all children and young people are represented
- an assessment system that captures the strengths of every child and young person and the breadth of the curriculum

The interim report of the Curriculum and Assessment Review[2] identified concerns with the way in which writing is currently taught in primary schools. It noted the importance of teaching textual features (grammar, punctuation and spelling) in the context of a sound understanding of reading and writing rather than in isolation, as is too often the case at present, with the result that pupils' ability to write fluently can suffer.

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[1] Department for Education (2025). Curriculum and assessment review - GOV.UK
[2] Department for Education (2025). 'Curriculum and Assessment Review: interim report - GOV.UK' London: Department for Education.

While acknowledging that changes to the current statutory national curriculum and statutory assessments may soon follow, we do not intend to pre-empt the findings of the review. This document focuses on the importance of understanding how to build and extend sentences and paragraphs, and the importance of grammar and punctuation in conveying meaning.

The Curriculum and Assessment Review has emphasised the importance of mastering foundational concepts in English. For writing, it is essential to teach pupils transcription skills (handwriting and spelling) from an early age, beginning in reception. This early instruction helps pupils to acquire these skills gradually, allowing them to free up working memory for composing. It may be sensible, therefore, for schools to focus on securing high-quality teaching of transcription now, pending publication of the revised national curriculum.

After the final review report is published and a revised national curriculum drafted, we will publish an updated version of this writing framework to align it to the revised national curriculum.

Overview

Section 1: The importance of writing and a conceptual model

This guidance explains that writing is essential for success. The ability to express themselves clearly and fluently opens doors and enables young people to take advantage of opportunities in education and employment. Conversely, pupils who struggle to express their ideas in writing are likely to face challenges across the curriculum, not just in English. The guidance also highlights how learning to write directly benefits pupils' reading and thinking skills.

Children first develop language through talk. Interactions with adults enable them to develop speech and their control of spoken language. This is vital for learning about written language, since reading and writing are acquired skills. The value of talk to children's mastery of language is as important for writing as it is for reading and pupils should be taught how to engage in dialogue that enhances learning.

However, writing is more than spoken words written down; it requires control of language in ways that differ from speech and must be explicitly taught. Both composition and transcription are necessary for proficient writing.

Writing places demands on working memory, requiring writers to manage everything consciously, from holding the pen correctly to forming letters legibly and then combining them accurately into words. These are the necessary precursors to expressing ideas effectively. This guidance recommends sequenced teaching to provide pupils with the best chance to master written language and understand the writing process.

Motivation is both a driver and an outcome of learning. It makes a difference to the writing pupils produce. It is therefore vital to nurture their belief in their own potential as writers through encouragement, helping them to manage their negative emotions, and ensuring they have successful writing experiences.

Section 2: The importance of the reception year

The guidance highlights the important role of the reception year in building the foundations for writing. These foundations support children throughout primary school and prepare them for secondary education.

To ensure children get off to the best start and have the best chance of later success in writing, it recommends a focus on building these foundations through oral composition and through developing handwriting and spelling. This means keeping things simple and doing them well. Children need to be able to compose orally (say out loud what they want to write) and know how to form letters, spell and punctuate correctly. Handwriting instruction should start at the beginning of reception, alongside phonics, and continue throughout the reception year and beyond.

The guidance explains that pupils should not be expected to produce extended pieces of writing. Rather they should be given plenty of opportunities to practise handwriting and spelling, write dictated sentences and develop oral composition.

It also provides guidance for teachers on making judgements against the early learning goal for Writing.

Section 3: Transcription: handwriting and spelling

The guidance explains the importance of teaching spelling and handwriting effectively to reduce the cognitive load on pupils and ensure they become skilled writers who write fluently and legibly. It emphasises the importance of teaching handwriting regularly, explicitly, precisely and cumulatively. There should be a clearly sequenced progression. Handwriting teaching and practice should be in addition to phonics teaching and should begin at the start of the reception year. The guidance explains how to support pupils with the physical demands of handwriting. It recommends implementing 'ready to write' routines and provides guidance on the choice of writing implement, the classroom set-up and adaptations for left-handed pupils.

The guidance emphasises the importance of teaching spelling systematically, starting with phonics in reception, and the need for pupils to have plenty of practice in applying spelling knowledge. It recommends dictation as a way for them to practise spelling.

The guidance considers the challenges of the complex alphabetic code in English and recommends developing pupils' knowledge of orthography, morphology and etymology, when appropriate, to help them to spell accurately.

It considers typing and, although this is a useful skill, it emphasises the value of ensuring pupils become fluent in handwriting, as this may support them to produce better-quality writing.

Section 4: Composition

This guidance explains that writing depends on articulating and structuring ideas, which the national curriculum refers to as composition.

It recommends that the best way to teach pupils to write is by teaching them to master sentences. Sentence-level teaching, which focuses on pupils' understanding about how to construct sentences, should be a key component of any writing curriculum. The guidance highlights that, in the early stages of learning to write, sentence-level composition should be practised orally.

Once pupils have a good understanding of how to write a sentence, paragraphs can be composed with much greater ease. Creating coherent texts relies on pupils' firm understanding of both sentence structure and paragraph organisation. The guidance explains that teaching approaches that gradually transfer responsibility from the teacher to the pupil have proven effective.

Additionally, it emphasises the importance of teaching grammar in the context of a sound understanding of reading and writing and how a broad and deep vocabulary enables pupils to communicate accurately, concisely and creatively.

The guidance stresses the importance of understanding the different phases of the writing process – planning, drafting, revising, editing, and sharing – and the value of each phase.

Section 5: Pupils who need the most support

This guidance emphasises the importance of high expectations and the need for teachers and leaders to be ambitious for all pupils to ensure they get the best possible opportunity to achieve in writing. High-quality teaching is central to this and every pupil, including those with more complex needs, should receive and be included in writing instruction. This section recommends that teachers are proactive in identifying when pupils need support in an aspect of writing and, recognising limited capacity, that they provide support within the writing lesson to ensure pupils progress. By having a sound knowledge of the pedagogy of teaching writing, teachers can respond flexibly to the challenges particular pupils face.

When pupils need further support, teachers should focus on understanding the specific barriers they face with writing, ensuring they are taught in a way that is accessible for them and enables them to make progress. This may include working with special educational needs co-ordinators (SENCOs) and other specialists when adaptations or

further support are required. Pupils may need teaching in smaller incremental steps and more practice so they can achieve alongside their peers.

Section 6: Writing across the curriculum

The guidance emphasises the importance of considering how writing lessons can draw on pupils' broader learning and how other lessons can incorporate writing skills. Writing about what they have learned in other subjects gives pupils a strong knowledge pool from which to draw.

While acknowledging the power of writing as a tool for thinking, the guidance cautions that writing tasks in other subjects should not detract from the primary focus of learning.

The guidance also acknowledges that the teaching of writing continues into secondary school, where pupils must learn to adapt their writing for each subject. Good writing routines and models should be embedded across all subject teaching. The guidance stresses the importance of supporting pupils who enter secondary school with a low level of literacy, as the impact and challenges of this are likely to be felt across the curriculum.

Section 7: Leadership and management of writing

A successful writing curriculum can only be achieved with leadership behind it. Headteachers are responsible for creating a positive writing culture in their schools, developing an effective, well-sequenced writing curriculum and ensuring that all classroom teachers, not just subject leads, are trained to teach writing effectively.

The guidance emphasises that the writing lead should become an expert in the school's writing curriculum and plan a well-sequenced curriculum across the entire primary stage, starting from reception. Ideally, the same person would lead both the writing and reading curriculum (a 'literacy lead' or similar), but not at the expense of reading. If school leaders decide to have separate leaders for reading and writing, it is vital that they work collaboratively.

Section 8: National assessments

This section provides a summary of the current primary assessments in English: the early years foundation stage profile (EYFSP), the phonics screening check (PSC), the non-statutory key stage 1 assessments, and the key stage 2 assessments.

Other sources of support

The national curriculum English programmes of study.

The reading framework, published in 2023, provides guidance, underpinned by theory and research, for primary and secondary schools on teaching reading.

The [Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework](#) sets out the standards and requirements that all early years providers must follow to ensure every child has the best start in life and is prepared for school.

[Development Matters](#), the non-statutory curriculum guidance for the EYFS, can help schools and providers meet the learning and development requirements set out in the EYFS statutory framework.

The [SEND Code of Practice 2015](#) includes guidance on the role of Early Years providers and schools in identifying and supporting children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

The DfE's 34 English Hubs offer support to primary schools to improve their teaching of early language, phonics in reception and year 1, and reading for pleasure from reception to year 6. The [English Hubs website](#) can help schools find their local English Hub, which can provide support and information.

The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) provides support for improving literacy, including writing, for [3-5 year olds](#), in [KS1](#), [KS2](#) and in [secondary schools](#). It suggests approaches and practices to support literacy in the early years in its [Evidence Store](#).

It also provides guidance on [Effective Professional Development](#).

The National Professional Qualification in Leading Literacy (NPQLL) is for teachers and middle leaders who have, or want to have, responsibilities for literacy across a school, year group, key stage or phase. More information can be found here: [Leading literacy NPQ](#).

[Ofsted's English Research Review](#), published in 2022, explores the research literature relating to English, including on how to teach writing. Ofsted's publication, [Telling the story: the English education subject report](#), outlines the common strengths and weaknesses in English in schools in England and makes it clear that high-quality early education establishes the foundations for later success.

Ofsted's research report, [Strong foundations in the first years of school](#), examines how schools secure the foundational knowledge and skills that every child needs by the end of key stage 1 to give them the best chance of educational success.

The Oak National Academy's English curriculum plans and teaching resources can be found here: [Oak National Academy (thenational.academy)](#).

Acknowledgements

This guidance would not have been possible without the support and input of many people.

Section 1: The importance of writing and a conceptual model

Why writing matters

Proficiency in writing is a key skill throughout school and life. Being able to express ideas clearly and write fluently creates opportunities. Gaining a good English GCSE opens doors to a much wider range of education and employment choices, but it is not only about English. Pupils who find it difficult to express their ideas in writing are likely to struggle across the curriculum.

Writing offers pupils opportunities to express attitudes, opinions, judgements and ideas. When we write, we have to consider the thoughts and ideas we are trying to convey and also reflect on how best to explain those ideas engagingly but clearly to a distant readership. A complex text may be cognitively taxing to read, but it will be less challenging than constructing it in the first place.

Writing helps thinking and learning[3]. It helps pupils to consider information more deeply than when they are simply reading it; it enhances the learning of subject matter and helps cement that learning in long-term memory. More experienced writers, for example, may find that they can resolve their thinking more effectively by actually writing than by spending time thinking about what to write. When writers abdicate composition to artificial intelligence (AI), none of these cognitive advantages applies.

Writing also has a range of wider benefits. Communication is important in developing social relationships. Much of our communication is written, including emails and social media. Writing is therefore key to social experiences as it enables participation in social communication.

Research suggests a reciprocal relationship exists between creative acts and well-being[4], and writing is a highly creative process, allowing people to create imaginary worlds, entertain others and paint with words. Writing can also be a form of self-expression: it offers young people an opportunity to reflect upon themselves, their interests and their worlds and to use, for example, stories, poetry or diaries to think about and make sense of their experiences. Writing is also important as an art form since, without writing, we would have nothing to read.

We refer to handwriting rather than typing in this document because its main focus is on pupils in primary schools, where the national curriculum requires them to learn to write by

[3] Horton, S.R., 1982. Thinking through writing. Johns Hopkins University Press.

[4] Tan, C.Y., Chuah, C.Q., Lee, S.T. and Tan, C.S., 2021. Being creative makes you happier: The positive effect of creativity on subjective well-being. International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 18(14), p.7244.

hand. Research also suggests learning benefits from handwriting in a way that is not replicated in typing. We recognise, however, that most adults type so pupils also need to learn to do this accurately and speedily. We discuss typing in Section 3 - Transcription: typing. Some pupils have physical barriers to handwriting. This is considered further in Section 5: Pupils who need the most support.

The development from spoken language to written language

The value of talk in children's mastery of language is discussed in the reading framework[5]; it is as important for writing as it is for reading.

Children's first encounters with language are typically through talk; human brains are naturally wired to speak. They depend on interactions with adults to develop their speech and, through exposure to stories and back-and-forth talk, they develop control over their spoken language. This, in turn, is vital for learning about written language, since reading and writing are acquired skills[6].

Talk itself can help pupils to build their understanding of written language and how sentences are formed. Collaborative talk can support their writing but, to be successful, it is essential that they are first taught how to engage in dialogue that enhances learning: to think critically, articulate their ideas clearly and engage constructively with others, with clear structures and routines put in place and modelled by teachers.

Writing is not merely talk written down. Learning to write involves developing control of language in a way that, increasingly, is different from everyday, conversational speech and must be explicitly taught.

> The…structures of writing are generally both longer and more complex; writing draws on a vocabulary which often requires a repertoire which extends beyond that of spoken vocabulary and requires mastery of a whole set of spelling and punctuation conventions which do not exist in talk[7].

Pupils need to be taught about these written structures, and how to use them accurately and effectively. The national curriculum reflects this, requiring that pupils are taught to distinguish between 'the language of speech and writing'[8].

In teaching pupils to write, therefore, teachers must support them to make links between talking and writing and to continue to use one to support the other. Pupils may, for

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[5] Department for Education (2023) 'The reading framework' Available at: The reading framework - GOV.UK
[6] Liberman, I.Y., Shankweiler, D. and Liberman, A.M., 1989. The alphabetic principle and learning to read.
[7] Fisher, R., Jones, S., Larkin, S., and Myhill, D. (2010). 'Using talk to support writing'. London: Sage, p. 67.
[8] Department for Education (2014) 'National curriculum in England: English programmes of study' Available at: National curriculum in England: English programmes of study - GOV.UK

example, use talk to generate and discuss ideas for writing, or make written notes to support them to deliver a speech.

What writing means for reading

Reading and writing support one another as they are acquired and developed, but they are not inverses; writing must be taught separately from reading. Reading, however, enhances pupils' grasp of the craft of writing, meaning that those with a broader reading repertoire are able to draw on a broader range of approaches to writing. Research suggests that the quality of narrative and descriptive writing is better for pupils who read more, that they want to write the kinds of texts they enjoy reading, and that they feel competent to do so[9].

Learning to write also has direct benefits for pupils' reading: writing helps pupils to understand better the authors they read[10], and familiarity with complex sentence structures gained from writing lessons can support pupils' comprehension when they encounter these structures[11]. Pupils also show greater understanding of a text's ideas when they write summaries or notes about it, and respond to questions in writing[12]. Improved spelling is also correlated with faster reading speeds, supporting reading fluency and comprehension[13]. At a simple level, every word a pupil can spell becomes a word they can read.

Teachers will want to use the interdependence of reading and writing to support teaching, but this must not come at the expense of pupils' enjoyment of reading. Frank Cottrell Boyce has argued that pupils are too often asked to analyse a text or respond to a story with their own story, 'which pollutes the reading experience by bringing something transactional into play'[14]. The reading framework has said:

[9] Taylor, L. and Clarke, P. (2021) 'We read, we write: reconsidering reading–writing relationships in primary school children'. Literacy, 55 (1), pp. 14-24

Jouhar, M. R. and Rupley., W. H. (2021) 'The Reading–Writing Connection Based on Independent Reading and Writing: A Systematic Review'. Reading and Writing Quarterly, 37 (2), pp. 136-156

[10] Mahurt, S.F., Metcalfe, R.E. and Gwyther, M.A., 2007. Building bridges from early to intermediate literacy, grades 2-4. Corwin Press.

[11] Scott, C.M., 2009. A case for the sentence in reading comprehension. Language, speech, and hearing services in schools, 40(2), pp.184-191

[12] Graham, S., Hebert, M. (2010) Writing to read: Evidence for how writing can improve reading Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education, Carnegie Corporation

[13] Ouellette, G., Martin-Chang, S., and Rossi, M. (2017). 'Learning From Our Mistakes: Improvements in Spelling Lead to Gains in Reading Speed' Scientific Studies of Reading, 21(4), pp. 350-357

[14] Cottrell Boyce, F. (2014) 'David Fickling lecture: literacy, reading, and children', The Guardian, 17 October. Available at: Frank Cottrell Boyce: excessive analysis of books puts kids off reading.

> If the reading in English lessons is merely transactional, undertaken only because it leads to writing or illustrates how a language feature works, the short-term goals are in danger of jeopardising the longer-term benefits of sustained reading[15].

It is important that pupils develop pleasure in reading and motivation to read: we can all think of pupils who read well and write well, and pupils who read poorly and write poorly, and some pupils who read well and write poorly, but pupils who write well and read poorly are very, very rare.

In key stage 2, pupils should be taught to discuss and draw on existing texts as part of planning their writing, but these should be separate from the books read for pleasure in class. This continues into key stage 3: the national curriculum requires pupils to draw on 'knowledge of literary and rhetorical devices from their reading and listening to enhance the impact of their writing'.

The Simple View of Writing

The Simple View of Reading[16], discussed in the reading framework, describes reading as the product of decoding (reading the words) and language comprehension (understanding the meaning of the text). Similarly, writing has been described as the product of transcription skills (spelling and handwriting) and composition (vocabulary, grammar and punctuation – sometimes referred to as text generation). This has been summarised as the Simple View of Writing[17].

As with the Simple View of Reading, the Simple View of Writing does not imply that writing is simple but, rather, that without developing the two aspects of composition and transcription, proficient writing is not possible. The authors of the Simple View of Reading were clear that reading comprehension is highly complex and enhanced by subject knowledge, but that developing comprehension was conditional on developing fast and accurate word reading. Berninger and others recognised that writing composition was at least as complex. Indeed, they revised their model into a Not So Simple View of Writing to highlight the importance of executive functions in the writing process: self-regulation, planning, problem solving and monitoring. In contrast to reading, writing has additional complexity in that writers also need to consider the context of, and purpose and audience for, their writing, and know about the topic they are writing about. The Education

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[15] Department for Education (2023) 'The reading framework' Available at: The reading framework - GOV.UK

[16] Gough, P. and Tunmer, W. (1986). 'Decoding, Reading, and Reading Disability. Remedial and Special Education' SAGE publications 7(1), pp.6-10

[17] Berninger, V. W., Vaughan, K., Abbott, R. D., Begay, K. K., Coleman, K. B., Curtin, G., Hawkins, J. M., and Graham, S. (2002). 'Teaching spelling and composition alone and together: Implications for the simple view of writing' Journal of Educational Psychology, 94(2), pp. 291–304

Endowment Foundation (EEF) discusses the implications of the Simple View of Writing in their Improving Literacy guidance reports[18].

Figure 1: An illustration of the simple view of writing

good language composition

a competent writer

poor transcription skills ——————————————— good transcription skills

poor language composition
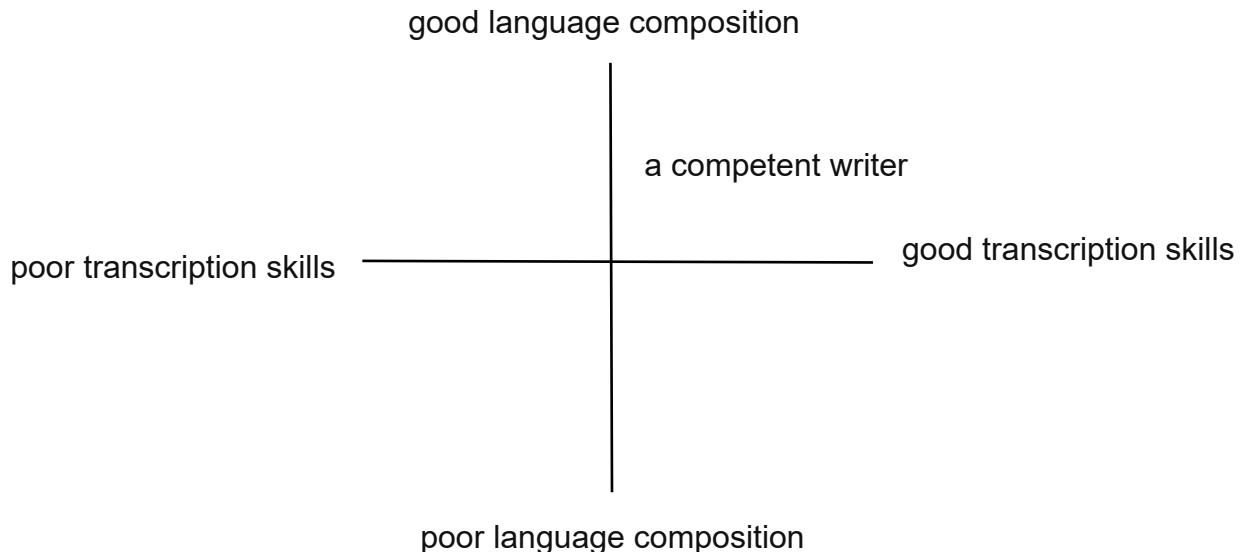
The national curriculum reflects the Simple View of Writing. The programmes of study for writing at key stages 1 and 2 are divided into transcription (spelling and handwriting) and composition (articulating ideas and structuring them into speech and writing). 'It is essential that teaching develops pupils' competence in these two dimensions' [19].

Berninger and others recognised that, as with decoding, without fluent and accurate transcription, composition (including text generation and executive function) would always falter, irrespective of the sophistication and clarity of the ideas that the writer wished to communicate. Therefore, to be a competent writer, a pupil needs good transcription skills and good composition skills (we call this language composition to allow for oral composition as well as written).

For the purposes of structuring this guidance, we use the simpler version of the model – that writing is made up of the elements of transcription and composition.

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[18] Education Endowment Foundation (2021) 'Improving Literacy in Key Stage 1'. Available at: Improving Literacy in Key Stage 1 | EEF
Education Endowment Foundation (2021) 'Improving Literacy in Key Stage 2'. Available at: Improving Literacy in Key Stage 2 | EEF
[19] Department for Education (2014) 'National Curriculum in England: English programmes of study' Available at: English programmes of study - GOV.UK

What proficient writers can do

Jamal has become a proficient writer because he has had high-quality teaching, combined with a language- and story-rich home environment.

Jamal

Now in year 6, Jamal is a confident and competent writer. He thinks of himself as a writer and that what he writes is of value and worth reading.

Before reception: Jamal was encouraged to speak and share his ideas at home. He enjoyed listening to stories read by his father. He learned to associate text with illustrations and pretended to write his own stories. Jamal developed good hand strength and coordination through nursery activities.

Reception and key stage 1: Daily handwriting lessons helped Jamal develop proper writing posture and pencil grip. Jamal was able to apply his handwriting skills in his phonics lessons, and he quickly developed an understanding of the grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs) he was learning through writing them and then writing the words he could read at a glance. He developed good spelling through applying the patterns of the alphabetic code he had learnt in his spelling lessons. Exposure to stories in school and at home helped him understand written language. His teacher used visual prompts and oral composition to support him to organise his ideas before writing sentences.

Key stage 2: Jamal's handwriting, spelling, and sentence structure improved, allowing him to focus on communicating ideas. He became ambitious to add more details to his writing and learned to use paragraphs effectively. His teacher's demonstrations of revising and improving work inspired Jamal to adopt the same practice. His love for writing grew. He felt confident in structuring his writing and expressing himself in different forms, using techniques he had been taught to enhance cohesion.

Key stage 3: Jamal's writing skills will help him focus on content demands in secondary school. He will express himself clearly, take effective notes, revise for exams, and become an articulate speaker. His writing will enhance his reading comprehension and engagement.

Why writing is challenging

Beginner writers are required to think consciously about everything they are doing while writing, from holding the pen correctly to forming letters legibly, combining them accurately in words, before they can even think about using those words to express ideas

effectively. In the same way that a pupil who is concentrating on decoding words in a book will struggle to comprehend much of the text, a pupil who is concentrating on their handwriting and spelling (transcription) will find it very challenging to put what they want to say on paper.

Composition is challenging in its own right: it has been suggested that planning, composing and rewriting a text is twice as mentally demanding as reading a complex text[20]. An effective writer has to attend to numerous elements simultaneously[21]. This can present an overwhelming challenge for pupils' working memory, that is, their limited workspace for thinking, learning and remembering. This is particularly the case for novice writers. As they become more skilled with the individual components, they are more able to manage all of them but it can be overwhelming while they are learning. Writing should not be rushed: pupils should concentrate on the quality of their writing rather than producing large amounts of lower-quality text.

Sophie, in the next subsection, is a strong reader but she struggles with writing. With higher-quality teaching of writing, as set out in this guidance, she should be able to become a proficient writer.

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[20] Kellogg, R.T., 1994. The psychology of writing. Oxford University Press.

[21] Bereiter, C., and Scardamalia, M. (1987b). The Psychology of Written Composition. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Kim, Y.-S. G., & Schatschneider, C. (2017) Expanding the developmental models of writing: A direct and indirect effects model of developmental writing (DIEW), *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 109(1), 35–50

Sophie

Now in year 6, Sophie is talkative, reads fluently, and has a good vocabulary. She finds writing demanding, often struggles to start, sticks closely to her plan, and is reserved in writing lessons.

Before reception: Sophie grew up in a supportive environment, developing good language skills and core strength, but her fine motor skills were less developed.

Reception and key stage 1: Sophie progressed well in reading through phonics but after she reached the threshold of the phonics screening check at year 1, phonics teaching did not continue long enough for her to develop well in spelling, and she struggled with the more complex letter patterns. She had no explicit handwriting instruction, leading to poor pencil grip and writing posture, making writing physically demanding. This affected her confidence in writing.

Key stage 2: Sophie had good ideas, but her transcription skills would not allow her to record her ideas quickly enough, and she often forgot the sentence she had rehearsed and wanted to write so ended up writing something far simpler. She avoided using more adventurous vocabulary due to her spelling difficulties. This also affected her grasp of sentence structure, where she often had to concentrate on her handwriting and spelling rather than on constructing the sentence. As a result, her sentences often ran on and lacked cohesion. Despite enjoying reading, she found her writing slow and untidy, affecting her confidence. Clear scaffolds, frameworks and goals improved her writing in year 4 and she started to experience a sense of success, but less support in years 5 and 6 slowed her progress.

Key stage 3: Sophie may find the increased writing demands in secondary school intimidating, affecting her ability to express herself across subjects. Support in English lessons might help, but she may find it increasingly difficult to take effective notes, articulate her ideas and adapt her writing style to the requirements of different disciplines.

Managing pupils' cognitive load

Ofsted's 2022 research review in English noted[22]:

> Pupils need sufficient capacity in their working memory to plan, compose and review effectively. This requires transcription skills to be secure… Once children are fluent in word reading, they are able to focus on comprehending what they

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[22] Ofsted (2022). 'Research review series: English'. Available at: Research review series: English - GOV.UK

read. Similarly, fluency in transcription frees up working memory to focus on composing writing.

A foundational part of teaching writing, therefore, is about ensuring pupils master the functional aspects of writing as early as possible.

Approaches to teaching transcription are referred to throughout Section 3: Transcription. But just as decoding is not reading, transcription is not writing: it is essential but not sufficient. Some pupils will have picked up a few writing conventions from their reading, but most will need to be taught how to compose and how to combine words accurately and with impact in their own narrative (fiction) and non-narrative (non-fiction) writing.

Writing is always challenging and the demands on working memory continue well beyond the point at which transcription becomes automatic. This is because, as a writer becomes more expert, expectations are raised, so the demands of what to say and how to say it increase; usually with expertise, task processing and execution speed up, but adult 'expert writers paradoxically spend more time on their text and operate more complex processes than novices'[23].

Sequenced teaching gives pupils the best chance of mastering the written language, and of understanding the writing process and models to support their writing. Such teaching gives them a framework as they learn to express their own narratives and arguments. Approaches to teaching composition are referred to throughout Section 4: Composition.

Pupils who are rushed to compose more than they can do confidently can feel overwhelmed and unsuccessful. Others may be turned off writing, if teaching is focused too heavily on learning lists of spellings and grammatical concepts, out of context and with little understanding of their potential for expressive impact.

The importance of motivation

Motivation is both a driver and an outcome of learning. Encouraging pupils to believe they can be successful and make progress, ensuring they have a chance of success and helping them to manage negative emotions supports motivation. These are all part of teaching writing[24]. Pupils will not always be motivated to write but, when they are, it makes a difference to the writing they produce.

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[23] Alamargot, D., Chanquoy, L., 2001. Development of expertise in writing. Through the models of writing, pp.185-218.

[24] MacArthur, C.A. and Graham, S., 2016. Writing research from a cognitive perspective.

One of the greatest influences on motivation is a pupil's self-belief; the most powerful driver of self-confidence is successful performance[25]. Achieving something difficult gives pupils a sense of pride and contributes to their well-being. They therefore need to be:

- taught effectively, with timely, supportive and constructive feedback
- given opportunities to develop competency over time
- given tasks that match the knowledge and skills they have been taught

If their knowledge and skills are insufficient for an activity, it is likely to cause frustration[26]. This may be a particular challenge for pupils with SEND.

While developing foundational skills builds much-needed confidence, purposeful and enjoyable writing experiences can also foster their motivation. Too often, pupils 'learn to write for the circular purpose of learning to write'[27] and find little personal purpose or value in it. Writing tasks that are interesting, challenging and meaningful can motivate pupils to view written communication as useful, important, enjoyable and fulfilling. Giving them opportunities to write collaboratively with their peers can also be motivating[28].

Ideally, pupils will be interested in the topic they are writing about because they have knowledge of it, perhaps because they have been taught about the Romans or because they are writing about their granny's cooking.

Motivation can be improved if composition has a goal, for example to persuade school leaders to change a policy, writing to local celebrities asking them to visit their school, or writing about concerns such as climate change. But sometimes pupils are motivated simply by the challenge and joy of learning, as in phonics or handwriting lessons, and by wanting the teacher to read their writing.

Research indicates that young people can enjoy writing and be more motivated to write when they can make choices about it[29]. The choices differ by age and stage of learning: while developing writers will need scaffolds and support to write accurately and confidently, they can still have agency to make choices within those structures, that is, about what they want to write and how they are going to express it. Even when composing a single sentence, pupils can choose which words to use to communicate

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[25] Bandura, A., 1997. Self-efficacy: The exercise of control. Macmillan.

[26] Csikszentmihalyi, M. and Csikszentmihalyi, I.S. eds., 1988. Optimal experience: Psychological studies of flow in consciousness. Cambridge university press.

[27] Frater, G., 2004. Improving Dean's writing: or, what shall we tell the children?. Literacy, 38(2), pp.78-82.

[28] Graham, S., Bollinger, A., Olson, C.B., D'Aoust, C., MacArthur, C., McCutchen, D. and Olinghouse, N., 2012. Teaching Elementary School Students to Be Effective Writers: A Practice Guide. NCEE 2012-4058. What Works Clearinghouse.

[29] Cremin, T. (2020) Apprenticing authors: Nurturing children's identities as writers in H. Chen, D., Myhill and H. Lewis Developing writers across primary and secondary years pp.113-130. London and Sydney: Routledge.

Fletcher, A. (2016) 'Exceeding expectations: Scaffolding agentic engagement through assessment as learning'. Educational Research, 58(4), pp. 400-419.

their ideas, the subject they want to focus on, perhaps which grammatical structures to deploy to create the desired effect, and more.

Pupils may also choose to write about books they are enjoying outside school or write in the style of those books. Choosing to read and write for enjoyment develops autonomy and fluency, and provides further opportunities for practice.

However, while providing choice can be motivating for pupils, it can also create additional pressure: some pupils may feel safer being given a task to complete, particularly novice writers or those with SEND. Allowing inexperienced writers to choose their own topics can also get in the way of teaching writing effectively. It is harder for teachers to manage lessons in which pupils are working on different outputs, since effective composition is complex and requires teachers to provide explicit instruction and feedback.

Although it is important not to expect novice writers to compose beyond their capability, it is also important that they are not discouraged from pursuing their own personal writing. This could take place in a variety of ways, both timetabled and otherwise, for example providing opportunities to use writing within continuous provision in the early years, in timetabled sessions, in extra-curricular writing clubs, or by encouraging writing independently outside school. Schools should celebrate the compositions pupils produce of their own accord. However, this should not be instead of teacher-directed time that focuses on foundational knowledge for writing.

Conclusion

Pupils need to gain a large amount of knowledge to be able to write well and this knowledge has to be built cumulatively, throughout their time at school. Teachers must consider how to build pupils' knowledge in everything from letter formation and spelling to grammar and vocabulary, to how to create suspense in a narrative or persuade someone to do something.

This guidance draws from the best available evidence about and practice in teaching writing effectively. It focuses on securing the foundations so pupils can attend to increasingly complex written tasks, thus coming to see writing as a powerful medium for learning, expression and creativity.

Section 2: The importance of reception

The government's Plan for Change sets a milestone of 75% of children reaching a Good Level of Development (GLD) at the end of reception by 2028. This is measured through the early learning goals at the end of EYFS. A child is deemed to reach a GLD if they have met the expected level for the 12 early learning goals that sit across the three prime areas of learning (communication and language; personal, social and emotional development; physical development), as well as the specific areas of mathematics and literacy. Three early learning goals focus explicitly on literacy, including one on writing. Schools cannot deem a child to have reached a GLD if they have not achieved the early learning goal for Writing.

School leaders should understand the important role that reception plays in building the foundations for writing. These foundations support children throughout primary school and eventually underpin their success in the end of key stage tests in year 6, preparing them effectively for secondary education. Children who are behind in communication, language and literacy development at age 5 are less than half as likely to achieve grade 4 or higher in GCSE English Language[30].

To make sure children get off to the best start, and to give them the best chance of later success in writing, the emphasis in reception should be on building the foundations for it: transcription and composition. This means keeping things simple and doing things well.

The early learning goal for Writing includes transcription. (Section 3 - Transcription: handwriting and spelling of this framework gives more details on teaching and assessing it.) This is because mastering transcription prepares children to become writers. Learning to control a pencil to form letters, then words and then sentences means their minds are free to concentrate on the ideas they want to convey through transcription. Teachers should therefore introduce regular explicit handwriting instruction, in addition to phonics, early in reception.

Teachers should plan for regular teaching and practice (many schools do this daily) so that correct letter formation becomes automatic, efficient and fluent over time. On joining reception, some children may need teaching and practice in using and manoeuvring their thumb, wrist and shoulder muscles in the way they need for handwriting. Initially, handwriting lessons could include learning the movements needed to form letters, practising these movements at a range of sizes (for example, in the air or, for some children, with fingers on a surface that leaves a trace), learning how to hold and control a pencil and the correct position for writing. They may also need additional support to

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[30] Elliot Major, L. and Parsons, S. (2022) 'The forgotten fifth: Examining the early education trajectories of teenagers who fall below the expected standards in GCSE English language and maths examinations at age 16'. CLS Working Paper 2022/6. London: UCL Centre for Longitudinal Studies. Available at: The forgotten fifth

ensure they are secure in their understanding of key directional words such as, 'up', 'down', 'round' and 'back'.

Teaching should then progress to specific handwriting lessons and practice. This might initially include systematic teaching of and practice in moving the pencil to master the horizontal, diagonal, vertical and circular strokes needed for writing. It should progress to teaching letter formation, focusing on where to start each letter, the direction of formation, its shape, position and, later on, its spacing relative to other letters.

As with reading, writing composition depends on language, so it is important to develop children's skills in communication and language, including the ability to speak in sentences, and to compose orally (to say out loud what they want to write)[31]. In the early years, high-quality interactions between children and adults, where adults' own language provides a model, and where adults follow the child's lead, narrate their play, and echo and expand on what they say in complete sentences, play a vital role, as does helping children to join in and repeat using call and response. The EEF guidance: Improving early education through high quality interactions[32] supports schools to develop the quality of these interactions in the early years. Combined with shared reading, storytelling, and the learning and repetition of rhymes, poems, and songs, these interactions foster a love of language.

Children need plenty of opportunity to share and elaborate on their ideas. They should be encouraged and supported by adults who are effective at modelling high-quality language and questioning sensitively. This will support them to develop and use a wide range of vocabulary and language structures. This, in turn, will help them to become adept at using these structures in their own writing. The non-statutory early years curriculum guidance Development Matters[33] provides further guidance on supporting children's developing understanding of language and on developing handwriting.

While children are developing their ability to form letters and spell in reception, the majority of composition will be oral. They should therefore be taught how to compose simple sentences orally, preparing the ground for writing sentences later and for punctuating them accurately with a capital letter and a full-stop. Ofsted[34] recommends providing sufficient high-quality opportunities for children to practise using foundational knowledge and skills, and warns against introducing complex tasks too early and expecting children to work on tasks that are beyond their competence. They should not be expected to produce extended pieces of writing. Instead, they should be taught and

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[31] Ofsted (2024) 'Strong foundations in the first years of school'. Available at: Strong foundations in the first years of school - GOV.UK

[32] Education Endowment Foundation (2024) 'Improving early education through high-quality interactions' Available at: Improving early education through high-quality interactions | EEF

[33] Department for Education (2023) 'Development Matters'. Available at: Development Matters' - GOV.UK

[34] Ofsted (2024) 'Strong Foundations in the First Years of School' Available at: Strong Foundations in the First Years of School - GOV.UK

should practise transcription and oral composition skills. Teachers should focus on developing the quality of children's writing (letter formation and spelling) and not the length. Some children will experiment with what has been called 'emergent writing'. They will draw and make marks, perhaps beginning to write single letters, their name or whole words as they notice print in books and the wider world. They may start to think of themselves as 'writers' and enjoy the feeling of conveying their ideas on paper, even if no-one else can decipher what they have written or drawn.

By making sure pencils and paper are available across the classroom, children can 'write' during play, such as writing menu cards in role-play kitchens, creating labels for construction models or instructions for obstacle courses. Teachers can demonstrate drawing and writing in play. However, unlike babies babbling before they speak, 'emergent writing' is not a necessary stage that children have to go through before they can be taught to write letters and words.

Not all children will play at writing. Given a choice in their play, some children may choose other physical activities, such as building, climbing and balancing rather than sitting and writing. Therefore, introducing regular explicit handwriting instruction, in addition to phonics, early in reception ensures such children continue to be included and take the first steps towards thinking of themselves as people who can write. Development Matters[35] has some ideas on supporting children who do not often choose to write, and how to engage them in structured activities that build the foundations for writing, in addition to their handwriting lessons.

Alongside learning to read and write, the reception year provides plenty of opportunities for children to develop body strength and co-ordination as well as fine motor skills, that support them to meet the physical development early learning goals. Activities such as threading, playing with water, using tweezers, and cutting with scissors, can also be beneficial for handwriting. Even a simple activity such as encouraging children to pick up gravel stones can reinforce their ability to use a tripod grip that is necessary for holding a pencil. This may be particularly important for some children, such as summer-born boys[36], who may need more intentional, intensive support alongside teaching writing to develop the fine motor skills that underpin writing.

Dictation is helpful for all children so that they can practise the transcription they are taught. It takes different forms: asking children to write individual letters or a single word, or to write a sentence after saying it. It can be particularly useful for less confident writers

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[35] Department for Education (2023) 'Development Matters'. Available at: Development Matters' - GOV.UK
[36] At a national level, there are gaps in achievement between children with different characteristics – for example, girls and children born in earlier in the academic year tend to out-perform boys and summer-born children respectively (see the Academic year 2023/24 EYFSP results as an example: Early years foundation stage profile results, Academic year 2023/24 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK).

because, until they become more expert in handwriting, it removes the additional demand of thinking of their own words to write down.

Leaders therefore need to ensure that, in addition to a good phonics programme that will teach children to recognise letters and spell words, they have an agreed, whole-school approach to teaching handwriting so that children have the best chance to learn to handwrite. Section 3: Transcription and Section 4: Composition cover the beginnings of transcription and composition and are also relevant to teaching in reception.

Making judgements against the early learning goal for Writing

The EYFS statutory framework[37] sets out the early learning goals for the areas of learning, including Literacy and Physical Development.

For the early learning goal for Writing, children at the expected level of development will:

- write recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed
- spell words by identifying sounds in them and representing the sounds with a letter or letters
- write simple phrases and sentences that can be read by others

When making a judgement about 'writing simple phrases and sentences that can be read by others', children do not need to be able to compose the phrases and sentences themselves (dictated sentences can be assessed) and they do not need to write extended pieces. A 'simple' phrase could be 'Clap hands' and a 'simple' sentence could be 'The man is happy'. In making a judgement, teachers will consider multiple phrases and sentences the child has written. These are likely to vary in length and include a range of vocabulary and grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs) they have been taught. What is important is that children can use their knowledge of the GPCs to write simple phrases and sentences that others can read.

It is important that all children have opportunities to develop their writing as far as they can in reception, but teachers must ensure letter formation is secure before text gets longer. By the end of the reception year, children who have been following a phonics programme may well be writing longer sentences in which the spelling is phonically plausible and which are correctly punctuated. They may also be writing more extended pieces. However, this is not necessary for them to be judged to have achieved this aspect of the early learning goal for Writing. Children may spell some words correctly, including some common exception words, and make phonically plausible attempts at others using GPCs that have been taught but are not correctly selected, for example,

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'seet', 'skigh', 'flowt'. As with all the early learning goals, teachers should base their judgements only against the criteria in the early learning goal for Writing.

In summary, to meet the early learning goal for Writing:

- sentences and phrases can be transcribed (from dictation) rather than independently composed
- sentences and phrases can be simple rather than extended
- sentences and phrases must be readable, but may contain some mistakes in letter formation
- sentences and phrases do not need to contain punctuation (including capital letters)
- not all words need to be correctly spelt

As outlined in the EYFS statutory framework, the early learning goals should not be used as a curriculum but are the framework for assessing a child's development at the end of the reception year. Therefore, while punctuation is not a requirement of the Writing early learning goal, children in reception should still be taught it. Using capital letters and full stops reinforces their growing understanding of sentences.

The early learning goal for Fine Motor Skills sets out that children at the expected level of development will be able to hold a pencil effectively in preparation for fluent writing, using the tripod grip in almost all cases.

To support writing in reception, it is therefore important to support children to develop:

- gross and fine motor skills to develop strength, coordination and positional awareness
- core strength, stability, balance and spatial awareness
- fine motor control and precision

Teachers are required to consider the whole description of each early learning goal when making judgements. The best-fit model does not mean that the child has equal mastery of all the aspects of it. Further guidance on the best fit model can be found in the Early years foundation stage profile handbook[38].

To support teachers in assessing children's development in writing at the end of the EYFS, case study materials and supporting information can be found on GOV.UK: Early years foundation stage: exemplification materials - GOV.UK[39].

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[38] Department for Education (2014) 'Early years foundation stage profile handbook' Available at: Early years foundation stage profile handbook - GOV.UK

[39] Department for Education (2022) 'Early years foundation stage: exemplification materials' Available at Early years foundation stage: exemplification materials - GOV.UK

Audit: Writing in reception

Writing in reception	Current practice
Leaders make sure that every child is supported to reach the expected level of development in the early learning goal for Writing by the end of the reception year.	
Plans are put in place to support all children who do not meet the expected level of development in Writing by the end of reception to access and meet the expectations of the year 1 curriculum.	
A clearly defined curriculum extends children's language and vocabulary in each of the Early Years Foundation Stage areas of learning.	
Explicit handwriting instruction, in addition to phonics, begins early in reception for all children.	
Children are taught transcription skills and practise them. They should practise what they have been taught through dictation.	
Teachers focus on developing the quality of children's writing (letter formation and spelling) and not the length. Children are not expected to write extended pieces.	
Children are taught to practise oral composition. They compose sentences orally and say out loud what they want to write.	
Children are supported to hold their pencil comfortably for writing through a range of activities that develop fine and gross motor skills and strength, in addition to handwriting instruction and practice.	

Writing in reception	Current practice
Teachers systematically pass on information about children's knowledge gaps to year 1 staff as part of transition.	
Actions to be taken:	**Term actions to be reviewed by:**

Section 3: Transcription: handwriting and spelling

Transcription (handwriting and spelling) is a key element of the Simple View of Writing[40] (more information about this can be found in <u>Section 1: The importance of writing and a conceptual model</u>). It refers to the skills needed to transfer what the writer wants to say into symbols on the page.

For skilled writers, transcription is mainly automatic and unconscious, but novice writers need to expend considerable attention and effort on it. The EEF says: 'If children have to concentrate to ensure their handwriting and spelling is accurate, they will be less able to think about the content of their writing…'[41]. Gaining automaticity with both requires explicit teaching, extensive practice and effective feedback, yet Ofsted found:

> In most schools visited [for its survey], pupils at the earliest stages of learning to write are often asked to complete complex tasks, such as writing a character description, before they have the phonics knowledge to spell the words or the manual skills to form the letters easily and speedily. [42]

The reading framework[43] also cautions against requiring children 'to write independently before they have the necessary skills' because this can confuse and discourage them.

Pupils can gain great satisfaction and pleasure in learning how to write if the teaching is explicit, cumulative and engaging. As they see progress and sense growing competence, their motivation to improve increases. Gaining a new skill becomes a source of pride, in the same way as learning to play a musical instrument. It gives them freedom to express their ideas without being hampered by an uncomfortable pencil grip, poor letter formation or inaccurate spelling.

Handwriting

The importance of handwriting in developing pupils' writing cannot be overstated. Fluent handwriting is a significant predictor of positive writing outcomes, while a lack of such fluency can constrain pupils by:

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[40] Berninger, V. W., Vaughan, K., Abbott, R. D., Begay, K. K., Coleman, K. B., Curtin, G., Hawkins, J. M., and Graham, S. (2002). 'Teaching spelling and composition alone and together: Implications for the simple view of writing'. Journal of Educational Psychology, 94(2), pp. 291–304. Available at: <u>https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.94.2.291</u>

[41] Education Endowment Foundation (2021) 'Improving Literacy in Key Stage 1'. Available at: <u>Improving Literacy in Key Stage 1 | EEF</u>

[42] Ofsted (2024) Telling the story: the English education subject report. Available at: <u>Telling the story: the English education subject report - GOV.UK</u>

[43] Department for Education (2023) 'The reading framework' Available at: <u>The reading framework - GOV.UK</u>

- hindering their composition – the cognitive demands of handwriting can divert attention away from other elements of writing, such as planning, composing and revising
- reducing motivation – handwriting difficulties can make writing more effortful and frustrating, which may affect pupils' motivation, especially if they lack support or alternative strategies to express their ideas
- preventing others understanding what they have written – poor handwriting devalues the content, with a detrimental impact: texts in poor handwriting are often assessed as being of lower quality

A key objective, therefore, is for pupils to achieve automaticity in handwriting.

Teaching handwriting

Pupils should be taught handwriting precisely, in a clearly sequenced progression, starting from reception, to support their gradual acquisition of skills.

Teachers should expect consistently high standards, making sure pupils practise handwriting regularly and consistently throughout primary school to develop and maintain fluency and legibility. However, asking them to copy from the board or book, trace around dotted letters or practise without supervision can hinder their ability to build a strong mental model of the movement patterns that underpin letter formation: pupils may not pay attention to how letters and joins are formed and thus continue with the same poor formation.

Handwriting can be taught effectively to the whole class, with additional support during practice time for those who need it, including left-handed children, summer-born children and new arrivals.

To avoid children practising and reinforcing incorrect letter formation, teaching should be consolidated before moving on.

Teachers' own handwriting should provide a model of high standards, across the curriculum and not just in handwriting lessons, but particularly when pupils are learning to write.

To build strong foundations, handwriting instruction should start in term 1 of reception and be taught by trained teachers and practitioners. For the first few weeks, this may include building the foundations for handwriting, such as practising making the movements needed to form letters in the air (see Section 2: The importance of reception). It should be:

- daily, until pupils can write legibly and easily
- taught in small steps, with lots of opportunity for practice
- cumulative: teachers should build on what pupils have learned previously

- consolidated before teaching moves on so that pupils do not practise letters incorrectly
- revisited when further practice is needed
- demonstrated by the teacher
- additional to any handwriting that forms part of teaching phonics

Section 2: The importance of reception sets out what children at the expected level of development should be able to do by the end of reception to meet the EYFS early learning goal for Writing.

The national curriculum programmes of study for English: key stages 1 and 2[44] set out expectations of progress in handwriting.

In year 1, pupils should be taught to:

- sit correctly at a table, holding a pencil comfortably and correctly
- begin to form lower-case letters in the correct direction, starting and finishing in the right place
- form capital letters
- form digits 0–9
- understand which letters belong to which handwriting 'families' (i.e. letters that are formed in similar ways) and to practise these

Wide-lined paper is essential at this stage. Mid-line guides can also help pupils to position letters. Pupils should be introduced to paper with narrower lines once they can write legibly and easily on wide-lined paper.

In year 2, pupils should be taught to:

- form lower-case letters of the correct size relative to one another
- start using some of the diagonal and horizontal strokes needed to join letters and understand which letters, when adjacent to one another, are best left unjoined
- write capital letters and digits of the correct size, orientation and relationship to one another and to lower-case letters
- use spacing between words that reflects the size of the letters, so that later joins do not create extra, confusing shapes

To join letters easily and legibly, pupils first need to form the shape of each letter correctly, starting and finishing each one at the correct point and ensuring that its size is properly related to other letters in the same family.

Joined handwriting should not be taught until pupils can form these unjoined letters (print forms) correctly and consistently. Once they can join letters to write words, they should

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[44] Department for Education (2014) 'National curriculum in England: English programmes of study' Available at: English programmes of study - GOV.UK

continue to practise handwriting discretely to develop automaticity. Appendix A: Handwriting guidance provides information about the basic joins.

In key stage 2, the national curriculum focuses on increasing the legibility, consistency and quality of pupils' handwriting, with the aim of increasing the fluency and speed with which they are able to write down what they want to say.

Once pupils are fluent writers, teachers should make their expectations clear about the nature of the handwriting that is appropriate for a particular task, for example, quick notes or a final handwritten version. In writing tasks other than in English, it is too challenging for pupils to use a newly learnt letter or letter join straightaway. But they might be asked to write the title and the first line in joined writing, and increase, week by week, the number of sentences written in this way.

There is no expectation that schools teach lead-ins for joined handwriting from the start and the national curriculum does not require this, but some schools continue to do this. If they do so, they should also consider teaching unjoined handwriting for specific tasks, such as labelling a diagram or data, writing an email address, or for letters in algebra.

Supporting children with the physical demands of handwriting

Handwriting fluency rests on developing both physical and cognitive skills. However, Ofsted found that:

> In many schools, the reception and year 1 curriculum do not sufficiently emphasise the need for pupils to learn how to hold a pencil comfortably and sit at a table to write. Weaknesses in letter formation and pen grip make it difficult for pupils to learn to join their handwriting and can be significantly harder to address at a later stage[45].

Teachers should not underestimate the need to focus on the explicit teaching of both letter formation (controlling the size, speed and direction) and the physical elements (holding and manoeuvring the pencil, positioning the body, positioning the paper). Teachers should model the correct way to hold a pencil and maintain posture when writing. Developing the physical skills for handwriting requires substantial, explicit teaching and practice, as well as an appropriate classroom set-up. This does not mean children should be sitting at a table for the rest of the day: it is important that there is sufficient opportunity for physical activity and, particularly in reception, intentional play.

While teaching handwriting, teachers should encourage pupils to sit comfortably by:

- explaining why sitting comfortably helps them to write easily

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[45] Ofsted (2024) 'Telling the story: the English education subject report' Available at: Telling the story: the English education subject report - GOV.UK

- reminding pupils with pupil-friendly prompts: feet on the floor; bottom to the back of the chair; pencil in one hand and the other hand on the paper
- showing pupils what 'poor' sitting looks like: leaning forward, close to the paper; resting their head in their hand or on the table; dangling their non-writing arm or hand instead of using it to steady the paper
- checking whether a pupil might have a condition that might mediate against their sitting comfortably, for example, if poor eyesight is causing them to peer closely at their writing

Pupils who have an uncomfortable pencil hold or lack the body strength to maintain a comfortable writing position will be distracted by the physical difficulties and unable to concentrate on the content of their writing. Poor postural control can cause difficulties such as pain or fatigue. These then show themselves in pupils' reluctance to write, poor presentation or legibility, slow writing and reduced output. Adaptive equipment is available for those that struggle with underlying stability, gross and fine motor skills.

Establishing good habits of posture and position early on is helpful; correcting bad habits later is much more difficult (further guidance can be found in Appendix A: Handwriting guidance).

Pupils should always be taught to use a stable writing position which supports their forearm, wrist and hand when writing, in order to be able to write without discomfort and to develop speed and stamina. This will also support their concentration. The writing position should enable the arm to move freely and support the hand so the fingers can manipulate the writing implement in the tiny movements required to write letters. The easiest way to achieve this is sitting at a table. The paper should rest on a flat surface. Handwriting lessons should use paper and pencil as pupils benefit from experiencing the friction these create[46].

Although activities such as painting, holding a knife and fork, and playing with playdough develop finger and hand strength, pupils need to be taught explicitly how to hold a pencil. An inefficient pencil grip can cause discomfort, which can affect motivation, fluency, legibility and create difficulty in sustaining speed. Schools should also support pupils to apply appropriate pressure as they write, since this is important for fluency and reduces the risk of pain. The same routines for finding the correct and comfortable pencil grip and sitting position should be used throughout the school and practised until they are automatic, so that only shorthand reminders to pupils are necessary. These can be referred to as 'ready to write' routines. Schools should consider the choice of writing implement and the classroom set-up.

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[46] Danna, J. and Velay, J.L. (2015). 'Basic and supplementary sensory feedback in handwriting'. Frontiers in Psychology, 6, p.169. Available at: Basic and supplementary sensory feedback in handwriting

Choice of writing implement

The national curriculum[47] says:

> The size of the writing implement (pencil, pen) should not be too large for a young pupil's hand. Whatever is being used should allow pupils to hold it easily and correctly so that bad habits are avoided.

Schools should consider choosing a writing surface and implement that is suitable for the purpose of the activity. Some experts agree that pencil and paper give greater sensory feedback and greater control over handwriting strokes than whiteboards. If schools choose to use whiteboard marker pens, it is recommended that the whiteboard pen is of a similar size to a standard pen or pencil.

Classroom set-up

From the beginning, seating pupils at a table for handwriting will best support them to hold their pencil and position themselves properly to write. This does not mean children should be sitting at a table for the rest of the day.

Before any handwriting teaching starts, pupils should have pencils sharpened, ready on tables; grip-supports and finger markers in place on pencils, if needed; paper in position; and any necessary adjusted equipment in place. All pupils can be taught to slant their paper: slightly anti-clockwise for right handers and clockwise for left-handers (Appendix A: Handwriting guidance illustrates this). The slanting particularly helps left-handers to have a good view of what they are writing, since their left hand moves away from what they have written.

Every pupil should have a good view of the adult and what is being modelled, including pencil grip, have space to write and be seated at the right height.

Left-handed pupils and adaptations

When a right-handed person writes in English, the hand is being drawn away from the writing as they write, allowing them to see what they have written. However, the left-handed person's hand follows behind the writing. About 10% of pupils are left-handed and face some of the following problems:

- smudging
- obscuring their writing with their writing hand
- difficulty making 'finger spaces' between words

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[47] Department for Education (2014) 'National Curriculum in England: English programmes of study' Available at: National curriculum in England: English programmes of study - GOV.UK

Left-handed pupils need specific demonstration and adjustments, including by making sure they:

- have space to write
- sit to the left of any right-handed pupil to prevent their arms colliding
- slant their paper to the right
- use softer pencils that require less pressure
- grip the pencil at a slightly higher point so they can see around their fingers
- do not hold the pencil too tightly or press down too hard

Handwriting and phonics

The order in which letter formation is taught in handwriting lessons differs from the order in which phonemes are introduced in a phonics programme. This is because all phonics programmes teach letters in an order that will generate the most words for reading. Handwriting programmes, in contrast, sequence teaching by grouping letters with similar formation. Pupils should be taught both phonics and handwriting consistently and systematically, in line with the programme for each.

In phonics lessons, pupils are taught to recognise (read) the shape of the letters and to write them, the writing of these letters embedding their knowledge of GPCs for reading. They then apply this GPC knowledge to spell. As well as learning to read and spell words, this writing supports them to memorise letters[48]. However, pupils need explicit handwriting teaching in addition to the writing they do in phonics lessons. Handwriting practice also gives teachers good opportunities to observe pupils in order to spot errors in letter formation and to give feedback and support.

Audit: Handwriting

Handwriting routines	Current practice
Handwriting is taught explicitly and regularly across the school to all pupils. This begins early in reception and is in addition to writing in phonics lessons.	
Pupils across the school are taught consistent routines for handwriting that support a comfortable writing position and enable them to form letters legibly and to develop fluency. Routines consider	

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[48] Dinehart, L. H. (2015). 'Handwriting in early childhood education: Current research and future implications'. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, 15(1), pp. 97-118. Available at: Handwriting in early childhood education: Current research and future implications

Handwriting routines	Current practice
posture, paper positioning and pencil hold (including for left-handed pupils).	
All adults who work with pupils expect consistently high standards of handwriting and provide good models of handwriting that align with the school's agreed style, across all areas of the curriculum.	
Handwriting instruction focuses on letter formation, size, orientation, spacing and consistency.	
Teachers make sure all pupils in every year group regularly practise handwriting to develop physical skill and control, and maintain fluency and legibility.	
Teachers teach pupils how to hold the pencil using the tripod grip, and support and encourage them to use it when they write.	
Pupils who need support have access to appropriate resources and equipment to enable them to make progress in handwriting in line with their peers.	
Teachers routinely model handwriting in the writing lesson to enable pupils to see how letters are formed.	
Teachers seek advice and work with the SENCO and other adults to support pupils needing adaptations or further support.	
Actions to be taken:	**Term actions to be reviewed by:**

Handwriting progression	Current practice
A consistent, school-wide approach to handwriting that follows a clearly sequenced progression and supports the gradual acquisition of skills is embedded across every year group. Once print handwriting is mastered, handwriting instruction encourages speed, legibility and consistency.	
Teachers begin teaching letter formation at the start of reception for all pupils.	
Joined handwriting is not taught until pupils have mastered print handwriting.	
Teachers monitor pupils' progress in handwriting and take action to support those who are not progressing in line with their peers.	
Pupils who struggle with handwriting and/or are at risk of falling behind are identified early on and are taught and practise the knowledge they are missing. Teachers focus on these pupils during the handwriting lesson and provide individual support.	
Teachers focus on the pupils who need the most support as they practise handwriting during the handwriting lesson. They observe them as they write and provide feedback and support, preventing them from practising letter formation incorrectly.	
Actions to be taken:	**Term actions to be reviewed by:**

Spelling

Spelling, along with handwriting, is part of transcription. The goal is to make sure pupils can spell accurately, so that it becomes automatic.

Pupils who spell well are more confident about using advanced vocabulary than poorer spellers. This is because the latter feel they need to use words they can spell correctly. Further, spelling difficulties increase the cognitive load. Pupils who struggle with spelling write less, do so less fluently and produce lower-quality writing.

Spelling can be challenging, in part because of the complex nature of the English alphabetic code, that is, the way in which sounds (phonemes) in English correspond to the letter or combination of letters (graphemes) that symbolise them. As described in Section 3 of the reading framework[49], in English, 26 alphabet letters must do duty, singly or in combination, to represent the 44 or so sounds of the language, and they do so inconsistently.

While children are learning to read and write in reception and year 1 (and above, if necessary), the teaching of spelling should follow the progression of the school's phonic programme. Because children learn to read more quickly than they learn to spell, it is important that their reading must not be held back by whether they can spell accurately.

All validated systematic synthetic phonics (SSP) programmes support children to develop their spelling by ensuring that they learn to segment spoken words into their constituent phonemes. To encode (spell) words, children are first taught to identify the phonemes in spoken words. (This is also referred to as 'segmenting' spoken words.) Then they write the graphemes that represent each of the constituent phonemes.

Children:

1. hear the spoken word 'dog'
2. say 'dog' – /d/ /o/ /g/
3. write the three corresponding graphemes 'd', 'o', 'g' to spell the word 'dog'

SSP programmes also include common words that contain GPCs that are unusual or have not yet been taught. The national curriculum refers to these as 'common exception words' (sometimes referred to as 'tricky words'). For example:

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[49] Department for Education (2023) 'The reading framework' Available at: The reading framework - GOV.UK

said   to   was   I   the   me   no   of   all   he   you

they   she   we   are   my   be   some   so   were   go

Children should be taught to spell these words by noting the part that is an exception to what they have learnt so far. For example, in the word 'said', 's' and 'd' correspond to the phonemes /s/ and /d/ as usual, but 'ai' corresponds to the phoneme /e/, which is tricky.

Planning for teaching spelling

Most children need systematic teaching, with opportunities to practise and reinforce their spelling knowledge. As with handwriting, spelling teaching should be explicit, cumulative and engaging. It should be regular and consistent, taught in small steps, with lots of opportunity for practice.

As set out in the EYFS[50], to meet the early learning goal for Word Reading, children at the expected level of development will:

- say a sound for each letter in the alphabet and at least 10 digraphs
- read words consistent with their phonic knowledge by sound-blending
- read aloud simple sentences and books that are consistent with their phonic knowledge, including some common exception words

The national curriculum takes this forward, setting out, step by step, what pupils should be taught from year 1 to year 6.

From the start of the reception year until year 2 (for the majority of children), spelling should be taught through phonics. Children should be taught to spell words by saying the target word clearly before segmenting it into the correct phonemes. After that, they then use known GPCs to represent the individual phonemes with the correct corresponding graphemes. Pupils are asked to write at other times of the day so they are able to apply their phonics knowledge and begin to build their identity as a writer. Dictation as part of phonics teaching should also begin at the start of reception to help improve spelling.

Schools need to decide how best to organise their spelling lessons. Among other options, they might consider:

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[50] Department for Education (2024) 'Early years foundation stage (EYFS) statutory framework' Available at: Early years foundation stage (EYFS) statutory framework - GOV.UK

- splitting a class into two or three focus groups. One group is taught by the teacher directly while the other group or groups practise spelling words independently
- teaching the whole class together and giving extra support to some pupils during the lesson

Orthography, morphology and etymology

Pupils should continue to use phonics throughout primary school to help them spell. However, the fact that one phoneme can be spelt with many different graphemes is a significant challenge. For example, the long vowel phoneme /ā/ is written with 'ay' in day, 'a-e' in make, 'ai' in snail, 'a' in apron, 'aigh' in straight, 'eigh' in weight, 'ei' in rein, 'ea' in break and 'é' in café. Some of these are common and some less so.

The national curriculum emphasises both teaching GPCs and building pupils' wider understanding to help them choose the correct grapheme to represent each phoneme. This can be supported if pupils know letter pattern conventions (orthography), the units of meaning in words (morphology) and (to a more limited extent) the origins of words (etymology), all strengthened by their exposure to words in their reading.

The national curriculum spelling appendix does not expect pupils to understand the theoretical concepts of orthography, morphology or etymology but, rather, it provides a clear sequence of stage-appropriate knowledge. It sets out rules, conventions and the origins of words to help teachers to support pupils to spell accurately.

Orthography

Once pupils start to read words 'at a glance'[51], they build their knowledge of the legitimate spelling patterns in English (orthography), for example that 'ck' is never used at the start of words to represent the sound /k/. Such understanding of allowable sequences of letters helps pupils to develop their spelling knowledge and thus select the correct spelling. This is essential if they are to become good at spelling.

Morphology

Morphology relates to the parts of words that hold meaning (morphemes). The suffix '–ed', for example, often signals the past tense, even though it is pronounced differently in 'busted', 'snored' and 'kicked'. The word 'horrid' has a similar sound but is not spelled with '–ed' at the end because it is nothing to do with the past. So, some explicit teaching of morphology can support spelling. Morpheme matrices[52] unpack words like 'reformed' into the prefix 're–', the root word 'form' and the suffix '–ed'; pupils draw on phonic and

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[51] Department for Education (2023) 'The reading framework' page 17. Available at: The reading framework - GOV.UK

[52] Frank, M. (2018) 'Morpheme Matrices: Sequential or Standalone Lessons for Assembling Common Prefixes, Latin Roots, Greek Forms, and Suffixes'. ATLAS, Hamline University. Available at: Morpheme Matrices: A Tool for Assembling Multi-Syllable Words - ATLAS ABE

morphemic knowledge to spell each part. Understanding the three morphemes makes it more likely that the pupil will spell it correctly. Examples of morpheme matrices can be found in Appendix B: Morpheme matrices.

Etymology

Studying the origin of a word, especially when linked to morphology, promotes spelling. Etymology appears to be able to support vocabulary development and can be used to support spelling, along with morphology, but it may be less relevant to or useful for younger pupils than phonics, orthography and morphology because of the challenging historical, linguistic and cultural contexts.

Practising spelling

Spelling practice should be regular and consistent throughout primary school. It should include:

- learning new words - teaching words before pupils encounter them in texts can be helpful; supporting pupils to say the words and understand their meanings will support them to apply learnt spellings in their writing
- practising previously taught words to develop speed and automaticity, and writing dictated sentences containing words that have already been practised
- learning common exception words - pupils will often learn these through identifying the tricky part of the word or by using a mnemonic
- independent practice activities, so that the teacher can work with other groups or provide extra support for pupils who need it. A handwriting task that includes the new spellings can also support pupils to commit spellings to their long-term memory
- planned opportunities to explore the morphology of words, such as using morpheme matrices
- encouragement, acknowledgement and feedback

Suggestions for marking and assessing spelling

Correcting every misspelling is unnecessary. Instead, teachers should underline, lightly in pencil, common errors in words that pupils have been taught and already practised. A wavy line might be used under words that pupils have attempted to spell, but incorrectly; the correct spelling can be added in pencil.

Teachers should decide how to best support children to learn a misspelt word correctly. Pupils should not be asked to correct the spelling themselves by looking it up in a dictionary for two reasons:

- pupils may be put off trying out new words if they have to look it up each time
- checking in a dictionary is useful only for good spellers, since pupils need to know the first few letters to look up the word successfully in the first place

The important thing is that pupils are supported and encouraged to take an active role in learning how to spell the word correctly (for example, by writing it correctly in their personal spelling book).

Teachers of younger children may consider using underwriting as a teaching tool (transcribing a child's writing using conventional spelling), if time is available. This can be helpful when it is difficult to read a child's writing.

Assessing spelling can help to make sure that pupils are on track to spell new and previously taught words. Effective assessment requires more than just a simple spelling test, since pupils are likely to learn new spellings for the test but then not apply them in their writing. Low-stakes testing that prompts them to recall previously taught spellings is likely to provide a more accurate picture of progress as well as providing the retrieval practice that is essential for long-term recall.

Expectations of spelling in other lessons

Pupils should be encouraged to write freely when they are writing their own compositions. If too much pressure is put on them to spell correctly, the danger is that they select words they know they can spell rather than interesting or appropriate words that they cannot spell. Teachers should discuss pupils' ideas and use of language before focusing, later, on punctuation, spelling and handwriting. Keeping a check of common errors, particularly in words that have been taught in the spelling lesson, is important, because these can then be reviewed, revised and, ideally, the correct spelling consolidated in the next spelling lesson. It may be useful to display these words in the classroom as a visual reminder.

Audit: Spelling

Spelling	Current practice
A school-wide systematic approach to spelling that acknowledges and includes phonics, orthography and morphology is taught in all year groups.	
A clearly defined curriculum ensures that spelling instruction begins in reception and progresses throughout the school.	
Direct spelling instruction takes place regularly.	
For pupils learning systematic synthetic phonics, instruction includes regular spelling practice.	
Pupils are taught how to apply their knowledge of grapheme-phoneme correspondences to spell using dictation.	
Pupils are given tasks that allow them to practise and apply what they have been taught.	
Spelling is monitored consistently in all year groups. Teachers assess whether pupils are on track to spell all words on the national curriculum word lists correctly.	
Effective procedures identify pupils who struggle with spelling.	
When editing written work, feedback to pupils on incorrect spelling relates to spelling patterns, morphology and etymology.	
Actions to be taken:	**Term actions to be reviewed by:**

Typing

The national curriculum for English does not refer to typing as a statutory requirement. For developing writers, research suggests that handwriting has some advantages for learning over typing. The act of handwriting:

- supports letter recognition
- helps pupils develop their orthographic processing skills (the permissible letter patterns of the language), thereby supporting reading and spelling
- enhances memorising of new information

Research also indicates that handwriting rather than typing may produce better-quality writing.

However, typing is a skill that pupils will eventually need to develop. For primary schools, it would be most appropriate to introduce it formally in upper key stage 2: by then, most pupils will have developed a sufficient level of motor dexterity, coordination and hand span to engage with it. Before this, familiarisation with keyboards in computing appears to be sufficient.

Typing, like handwriting, requires sequential teaching in small steps with considerable opportunities for practice and an expert instructor. However, learning to type such that it is automatic takes considerable time. Even with a 30-minute lesson every week for 36 weeks, research suggests that pupils are unlikely to reach any level of automaticity and will type more slowly than they can write. For most pupils, teaching typing should therefore not be prioritised at the expense of teaching handwriting. For guidance on children who need additional support, see Section 5: Pupils who need the most support.

Dictation in handwriting and spelling

Dictation in the classroom refers to a trained adult reading a sentence aloud so that pupils can write down, word for word, what is being said. Pupils might then check their own writing against the original sentence and correct any errors. It integrates listening, spelling and reading.

Ofsted's English subject report[53] recommended using dictation as a way for pupils to practise transcription without overloading their working memory and to help them write more automatically. Similarly, the national curriculum says that dictated sentences enable pupils to 'apply and practise their spelling'.

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[53] Ofsted (2022). 'Research review series: English'. Available at: Research review series: English - GOV.UK

Section 4: Composition

Just as decoding is not sufficient to become a reader, transcription is not enough for developing writing. As the Simple View of Writing shows, writing depends on articulating ideas and structuring them (see Section 1: The importance of writing and a conceptual model). The national curriculum describes this as composition.

While pupils engage in various forms of writing at school, including note-taking, answering questions, and writing to support their learning, this section focuses specifically on the explicit teaching of writing during writing lessons to meet the composition requirements of the national curriculum. Section 6: Writing across the curriculum discusses writing across the wider curriculum.

A growing consensus from research and practice in schools indicates that the best way to teach pupils to write is by teaching them to master sentences. All writing is ultimately made up of sentences: only once the concept of a sentence is understood will paragraphs and longer pieces of writing make sense, let alone convey meaning[54] [55].

In a 2021 blog, Daisy Christodoulou gives an example of a survey illustrating what too many teachers encounter in their pupils' writing.

Year 5 pupils were asked to identify the correct sentence from a list of five possibilities:

Only one of the following sentences is correct. Select it:

    A. We went to the shops they played football. 10%

    B. They like football. 24%

    C. I prefer tennis it's easier. 30%

    D. The shops are warm the park is cold. 13%

    E. The park is free the cinema costs money. 21%

Only one in four pupils was able to pick out the correct sentence (sentence B).

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[54] Saddler, B. (2012) Teacher's Guide to Effective Sentence Writing. New York: Guilford Press.

[55] Christodoulou, D. (2021) 'What do Year 5s find difficult about writing? Part two: run-on sentences', The No More Marking Blog. Available at: What do Year 5s find difficult about writing? Part two: run-on sentences | by Daisy Christodoulou | The No More Marking Blog.

Supporting pupils to understand sentences

Initially, talk is essential for building pupils' understanding of written language. Teachers should support their understanding of composition and, particularly, sentence construction by reading stories, talking to them, re-phrasing what they have said and providing oral models of appropriate sentence structure[56]. This supports pupils to understand how a sentence sounds and how this informs a writer's choices.

To further support this, if appropriate, teachers can:

- explicitly model written language structures when speaking (such as rephrasing and extending what the pupils say)
- use voice pitch, timing and prominence of certain sounds/words to indicate sentence boundaries and varied sentence types and structures (also known as prosody) – for example, emphasising a question with a high pitch at the end, or pausing to indicate a comma or ellipsis for effect
- provide pupils with sentence stems and frames to build a sentence orally and to link it to the written structure

Reading is vital in giving pupils examples of different sentence structures. The more pupils read, or are read to, the wider their exposure to these different structures, with potential benefits to their writing.

As pupils progress, teachers can maximise the benefits by integrating the reading of model texts (see Appendix C: Selecting model texts) into their teaching of writing and using this as an opportunity to guide pupils to notice and understand a variety of written language structures. This might include drawing attention to how sentences are constructed, their grammar and their punctuation. However, care should be taken not to detract from pupils' reading enjoyment (see Section 1: The importance of writing and a conceptual model). It is important to distinguish clearly between reading as a reader and analysing as a writer.

Explicit teaching of sentences

Sentence-level teaching focusing on building understanding of how to construct sentences should be an important component of any writing curriculum. It is the engine that propels pupils from writing the way they speak to using the structures of written language[57].

Teaching well-formed sentences needs to be done step by step. Although English has a vast vocabulary and writers have many words from which to choose to express their

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[56] Department for Education (2022) 'Help for early years providers: Writing'. Available at: Help for early years providers - GOV.UK

[57] Hochman, J., Wexler, N. and Lemov, D. (2017) The writing revolution: a guide to advancing thinking through writing in all subjects and grades. San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass.

ideas, a sentence consists of a subject (such as a noun or pronoun) and a verb (action, occurrence or state of being). A subject and a verb lie at the heart of any sentence. All the other word classes add additional information. For pupils to master writing more complex sentences, it is important to spend time teaching them how to construct single-clause sentences with a subject and verb.

For an idea to be expressed, someone or something (the subject) acts, occurs or exists:

'The giant roared.' More information may be added: 'The giant roared at Jack.' Even more information may be added: 'All of a sudden, the giant roared at Jack who leapt in the air and screamed.' However, at the heart of the sentence is a subject and a verb.

'The giant' is not a sentence: the subject has no verb. 'Roared at Jack' is not a sentence: the verb has no subject. 'All of a sudden' is not a sentence: there is no subject or verb. 'The giant roared' is a sentence: there is a subject and a verb[58].

Teachers may find that beginner writers compose multi-clause sentences without any specific instruction to do so. This should not be discouraged. However, to begin with, a teacher should focus on demonstrating single-clause sentences. As pupils become more proficient, they will have the tools and confidence to choose when to use different sentence structures, for example choosing a short, single-clause sentence for dramatic effect over a more complicated one and extending shorter sentences to add detail.

Oral composition of sentences

In the early stages of learning to write, sentence-level composition should be carried out orally. Visual prompts (such as images from a story book or photographs), along with sentence stems, can support pupils to organise their spoken language into structures that are suitable for written language. Teachers should model oral composition, demonstrating their thought processes when writing.

Even when pupils are able to transcribe, oral composition still has value. Composing orally before writing reduces cognitive demand when pupils transcribe the phrase or sentence, because they have already formulated their ideas and made choices about sentence structure and vocabulary. It also gives them the opportunity to test ideas before writing them down[59].

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[58] Note: Experienced writers will understand that the subject or verb may not always be explicit in a sentence. For example, 'Stop!' is a sentence; the subject of the verb 'stop' is implied. 'Jack was scared.' is a sentence as the word 'was' is a state of being (the verb). Teachers should start by teaching sentences containing an explicit subject and an action verb to help beginner writers.

[59] Zimmerman, B. J. and Risemberg, R. (1997) 'Becoming a Self-Regulated Writer: A Social Cognitive Perspective', Contemporary Educational Psychology, 22(1), pp. 73-101.

Generally, pupils orally compose only a sentence at a time and should practise oral composition regularly. The aim is for the process of formulating text before writing it down to move from oral composition to something pupils do in their head.

Activities to support mastery of sentences

Pupils should not be expected to produce extended pieces of writing until they are ready. Instead, they should be given ample opportunities to practise their basic sentence construction skills.

Activities can be planned to support the mastery of sentences and encourage pupils to use sentence structures effectively and creatively. These include:

- combining sentence fragments (words, phrases or clauses) to create complete sentences
- combining sentences (combining two or more single-clause sentences to make one grammatically accurate sentence)
- remedying inaccurate sentence structure
- extending single-clause sentences using conjunctions and additional detail
- using pictures and animations to reduce cognitive load
- adding information using adverbials
- using the passive voice
- writing the four different sentence types (statements, questions, commands and exclamations)

Specific guidance on these activities can be found in Appendix D: Examples of sentence structure.

Sentence combining

Research suggests that one of the most effective activities for improving sentence structure is that of sentence combining[60].

Sentence combining activities teach pupils to combine two or more sentences to make one grammatically accurate sentence. Studies have found this leads to significant

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[60]Saddler, B. and Graham, S. (2005) 'The Effects of Peer-Assisted Sentence-Combining Instruction on the Writing Performance of More and Less Skilled Young Writers', Journal of Educational Psychology, 97(1), pp. 43–54. Available at: The Effects of Peer-Assisted Sentence-Combining Instruction on the Writing Performance of More and Less Skilled Young Writers.

Graham, S. and Perin, D. (2007) 'A meta-analysis of writing instruction for adolescent students', Journal of Educational Psychology, 99, pp. 445-476.

Saddler, B., Ellis-Robinson, T., & Asaro-Saddler, K. (2018). Using sentence combining instruction to enhance the writing skills of children with learning disabilities. Learning Disabilities: A Contemporary Journal, 16(2), 191–202.

Santangelo, T., & Olinghouse, N. G. (2009). Effective Writing Instruction for Students Who Have Writing Difficulties. Focus on Exceptional Children, 42(4). https://doi.org/10.17161/foec.v42i4.6903

improvements in sentence construction and appears to improve pupils' composition. It supports them to consider their writing from a reader's perspective, experiment with sentence length and develop accurate punctuation. Sentence combining activities can be done discretely as a short, regular starter, as a regular grammar activity or may be used as an effective intervention activity for struggling writers. Sentence combining may also be used after composition, during revising.

Example sentence combining activity:

A year 3 teacher teaches their class to write a short narrative. The class can all tell the story orally. The teacher asks the pupils to draw a pictorial flow-chart of their narrative (to support memory) and to write the story using only single-clause sentences, encouraging them to use their drawings to plan each sentence in their head before writing it.

Then, the pupils share their writing with their partner and feed back on the sentence structure and punctuation. Corrections are made. The class repeat the process but add in three conjunctions to form multi-clause sentences, share and correct. The teacher and the class analyse and reflect on the effect of using multi-clause sentences as opposed to only single-clause sentences.

Pupils embed their knowledge of single-clause sentences and multi-clause sentences through systematic practice. Pupils consider the writing from the perspective of the reader. Working memory limitations are better managed through the memorised story. The flow-chart further supports access to the learning for all.

Grammar and punctuation

The Curriculum and Assessment Review has indicated in its interim report[61] that it intends to look at grammar in more detail before publishing its final report so that schools are able to teach pupils to write fluently.

Until the revised curriculum is in place, the current national curriculum and assessment framework remain. Appendix 2[62] of the current curriculum sets out the vocabulary, grammar and punctuation that pupils should be taught in each year. These, and spelling

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[61] Department for Education (2025). 'Curriculum and Assessment Review: Interim Report' London: Department for Education. Available at: Curriculum and Assessment Review: interim report - GOV.UK'.
[62] Department for Education (2014) 'National curriculum in England: English Programmes of Study – key stages 1 and 2'. Available at: English programmes of study: key stages 1 and 2

(Appendix 1[63]), are currently assessed in the grammar, punctuation and spelling test in year 6 (see Section 8: National assessments).

It is worth emphasising that grammar teaching will improve writing only if pupils apply what they have been taught to their writing. Grammar instruction is most effective when taught in the context of a writing task but with an explicit focus on the rules being learned so that pupils can make informed choices about their writing. Having a shared understanding of grammatical terminology is useful for this to be effective. It is also helpful to increase pupils' awareness of grammar through speaking and reading.

Whether the content of Appendix 2 and the assessment framework has that balance right is for further discussion. For example, fronted adverbials and the subjunctive are commonly cited as grammatical concepts that are given excessive prominence. However, what the current national curriculum says about teaching grammar is consistent with the evidence:

> The grammar of our first language is learnt naturally and implicitly through interactions with other speakers and from reading. Explicit knowledge of grammar is, however, very important, as it gives us more conscious control and choice in our language. Building this knowledge is best achieved through a focus on grammar within the teaching of reading, writing and speaking[64].

Pupils should be taught not only how to apply their grammatical knowledge to their writing, but also the effect grammar creates. Encouraging them to consider the effects of their grammatical choices carefully will help them to understand better the purpose of grammar[65].

This document emphasises the importance of using grammar to convey meaning by constructing and extending sentences and by punctuating them accurately. Grammar describes the way in which words, phrases, clauses and sentences are put together. Punctuation indicates boundaries between sentences, phrases and clauses to clarify meaning. Knowledge of grammar and punctuation, therefore, supports pupils to write accurately, and in a way that a reader can understand.

Focusing on writing single-clause sentences teaches pupils to understand what a subject and verb are and how a sentence is punctuated.

Jack saw a giant. Jack ran.

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[63] Department for Education (2014) 'The National Curriculum: English Programmes of Study – key stages 1 and 2'. Available at: English programmes of study: key stages 1 and 2

[64] Department for Education (2014) 'The National Curriculum'. Available at: National curriculum - GOV.UK

[65] Myhill, D. (2021) 'Grammar re-imagined: foregrounding understanding of language choice in writing', English in Education, 55(3), pp. 265-278.

Understanding single-clause sentences helps pupils to grasp the structure of multi-clause sentences and the use of different conjunctions to connect them.

Jack saw a giant, so he ran away.

Jack ran away, because he saw a giant.

This foundational knowledge about single-clauses sentences helps pupils to control multi-clause sentences, should they choose to add more clauses (or phrases).

Jack, who was at the top of the beanstalk, was hoping to find the gold, but he ran away when he saw a terrifying giant.

Pupils' knowledge of the grammar of this sentence (fronted adverbial, relative clause, expanded noun phrase, etc.) will be both implicit from what they have learned as native speakers (and readers) and explicit from what they have been taught.

The revised programmes of study will clarify any changes to the grammar and terminology to be taught in key stages 1 and 2, following the Curriculum and Assessment Review's final report. In the meantime, prioritising the teaching of grammar that helps pupils to master written sentences to convey meaning should be the focus in supporting their writing development.

Sentences aligned with the requirements related to grammar and punctuation in the current national curriculum can be found in Appendix E: Sentence examples aligned with the grammar and punctuation in the national curriculum.

Vocabulary

The national curriculum says:

> Effective composition…requires…an increasingly wide knowledge of vocabulary[66].

Being able to draw on a broad and deep vocabulary when writing allows pupils to communicate accurately, concisely and creatively:

- pupils are able to convey ideas with greater clarity in different subjects by selecting specific words, including correct technical terms when they are needed
- writers with a broad vocabulary are able expand upon descriptions in their writing, such as by extending noun phrases to describe a character or setting
- writers with a broad vocabulary can be more effective through their precise vocabulary choices, eliminating unclear language or weak expression, such as 'she was very, very scared' becoming 'she was terrified'

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[66] Department for Education (2014) 'National Curriculum'. Available at: National curriculum - GOV.UK

- a wider vocabulary offers pupils more ways to engage the reader, such as by using metaphors and other rhetorical devices

Comparing one word with others and considering the connotations of each can help pupils to choose words precisely with the reader in mind.

Explicit vocabulary instruction

There is growing evidence that pupils' vocabulary can be built through robust, purposeful, explicit instruction. The EEF advises that schools extend vocabulary by explicitly teaching new words, providing repeated exposure to them, and providing opportunities for pupils to use them[67].'

Beck et al. broadly categorise words into three 'tiers'[68]:

Figure 2: An illustration of the three tiers of vocabulary

Tier 3
Less common, subject specific words that are encountered only when studying the specific subject and are taught within the subject domain (e.g. photosynthesis)

Tier 2
Words that appear frequently across several topics but are unlikely to be heard in everyday conversation (e.g. grinned, enormous, ponder, influence, notion)

Tier 1
Everyday words that are familiar to most children and can be acquired easily through speech (e.g. cat, walk, run, happy)

Tier 1 words rarely require instructional attention to be given to their meanings in school as pupils are exposed to them at high frequency from a very early age. Tier 3 words would not be of high utility for most learners and are probably best learned when a specific need arises, such as in a science lesson. Rich knowledge of words in the second tier, however, can have a powerful impact on verbal functioning. So, instruction directed toward Tier 2 words can be productive. When teaching words as part of a wider writing

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[67] Education Endowment Foundation (2021) 'Improving Literacy in Key Stage 2'. Available at: Improving Literacy in Key Stage 2 | EEF
[68] Beck, I. L., McKeown, M. G. and Kucan, L. (2013) Bringing Words to Life: Robust vocabulary instruction. New York: Guilford Press.

activity, teachers should prioritise words and phrases that will improve the quality of the writing. Depending on the age of the pupils, the following approaches can help to teach vocabulary effectively:

- providing pupil-friendly explanations of the meaning of the word in the context in which it is encountered
- enabling pupils to encounter the words in different ways e.g. in a sentence linked to their experiences; in talk and in writing; analysing both literal and abstract meanings
- analysing the word's morphology and etymology
- using visuals to help in defining vocabulary, with the use of physical objects

The EEF suggest several strategies (adapted from Beck & McKeown) for teaching vocabulary and modelling language use in the classroom[69]. The following techniques can be used as part of teacher modelling, explanation and practice for pupils:

- introduce words through explanations in everyday language, rather than dictionary definitions
- provide several contexts in which the word can be used purposefully or with different meanings
- develop activities that require pupils to process the meanings of words thoughtfully e.g. getting pupils to think about meanings, by identifying and explaining how words are used
- provide examples, situations and questions that are interesting and create discussion
- create retrieval activities to assess pupils' understanding over time

The reading framework emphasises the importance of building a rich vocabulary that is then available to be drawn on for writing[70]. Children's books contain far richer language and vocabulary than pupils encounter in speech. The books that teachers read to them should therefore be chosen, among other things, with a view to widen their vocabulary.

The writing process

As pupils progress through school, and particularly on entering secondary school where regular writing is required across subjects such as science, geography, and English, they will rely on their fluent transcription skills, extensive vocabulary, and knowledge of sentence structure. Understanding that the writing process involves different phases will aid them further in composing.

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[69] Education Endowment Foundation. (n.d.). Vocabulary in action: Classroom strategies for vocabulary and language. Available at: Vocabulary in action: Classroom strategies for vocabulary and langauge
[70] Department for Education (2023) 'The Reading Framework'. Available at: The reading framework - GOV.UK

Writing is not a linear process, like following directions on a map. Pupils do not need to apply every phase of the writing process for all types of writing or at all times, and they will often move back and forth between phases, altering their plans and revising as they go. However, even in the initial stages of composing, they will benefit from thinking about what they want to write, re-reading to ensure clarity, and reading their work aloud to check for coherence.

The writing process mirrors the thinking process and has clear phases[71]:

- we have an idea that we want to share – the goal
- we plan what we want to communicate and gather our ideas together – the plan
- we put those ideas into a form that can be articulated – the draft
- we review those ideas and change and adapt them before we share them – the revision
- we check for accuracy – the edit
- we share our ideas

Figure 3 is adapted from EEF's illustration of the phases of the writing process[72]. (Note that EEF's final phase is called "Publishing" but "Sharing" has been used here to acknowledge that not every piece of writing requires publication.)

Figure 3: An illustration of the phases of the writing process

Planning:	Drafting:	Revising:	Editing:	Sharing:
Generating ideas, setting goals, gathering Information.	Writing down key ideas, setting out a structure for writing	Making changes in light of feedback and self-evaluation.	Making changes to ensure writing is accurate and coherent, checking spelling and grammar.	Presenting work for the target audience.

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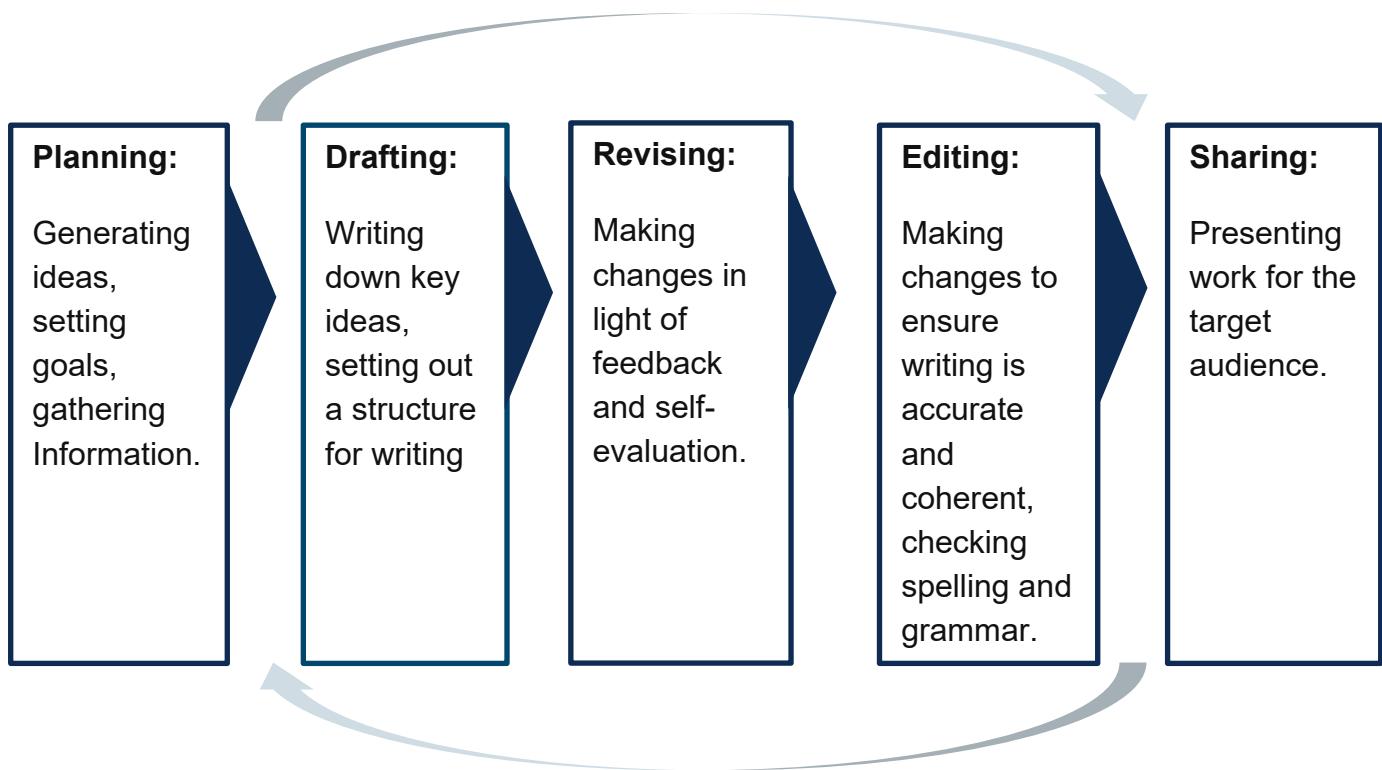
[71] Kellogg, R.T. (1994) The Psychology of Writing. USA: Oxford University Press.
[72] Education Endowment Foundation (2021) 'Improving Literacy in Key Stage 2'. Available at: Improving Literacy in Key Stage 2 | EEF

The writing process can be used with pupils of all ages, but the degree to which a pupil engages with each phase will vary depending on the nature of the task and the pupils' ages.

In reception and year 1, where the focus is on transcription, the writing process for composition is less relevant. However, generating ideas orally as a class offers a manageable planning process for sentence-level composition or a teacher may encourage a pupil to say aloud what they are going to write about and share any writing they produce with their peers or parents/carers. The phases of the writing process can thus be applied in a light-touch manner.

The national curriculum requires pupils in year 2 to begin to:

- consider what they are going to write before starting (plan)
- write for different purposes (draft)
- make simple additions, revisions and corrections to their writing (revise and edit)
- read aloud what they have written (share)

The writing process is likely to be used only at the sentence level in year 2 and may sometimes be completed orally. For example, a planning process may ask pupils to identify apt words for improving their sentences before their composition. Similarly, simple revisions can include strategies such as reading their sentence aloud to the class and receiving feedback on how they might improve it to make it more compelling for the reader.

It is in key stage 2, when pupils begin to compose whole texts, that the process will become more developed and pupils begin to understand that the process is not linear, with phases being returned to as part of composition. For example, during the drafting of an argument, pupils may be encouraged to make 'planning stops' to check their writing includes the appropriate evidence, before making revisions. As composition develops, they will, increasingly, make their own choices about the process they use to improve their writing.

To help manage the cognitive demands of writing, it is important that pupils write about topics with which they are already familiar. The adage, 'write about what you know' could not be more important for developing writers. All writers dedicate time to researching, developing ideas, reading around the topic, and sometimes even visiting relevant settings. Before planning a piece of writing, pupils in key stage 2 should be provided with the opportunity to research and develop their ideas, build a vocabulary bank and practise relevant sentence structures. This research and preparation will significantly influence the quality of their writing. Pupils who are expected to write with minimal preparation are unlikely to succeed.

Planning

Planning can be as simple or as complex as necessary, depending on the task and each pupil's writing competence. The results of the planning stage will vary for pupils of different ages and abilities; planning is also a continuing process.

At key stage 1, planning may engage pupils in activities that help them think of and organise their ideas before they write[73]. This might include tasks to encourage them to remember what they already know or arrange their ideas visually, such as using pictures (for example, images from a story or photographs from a school visit) or outlining their narrative as a storyboard.

At key stage 2, planning may involve pupils in setting goals before writing; activating prior knowledge, often prompted by the teacher, and may include discussing with their peers what they remember from another subject; gathering information from their previous work; and reading model texts to identify key features and consider the writing style used.

Drafting

Drafting is the stage where pupils transform their ideas or plans into writing. Although accurate spelling, punctuation, and handwriting are important, they are not the main focus at this stage.

For key stage 1 pupils, it is helpful to compose individual sentences orally before writing them down.

From key stage 2, pupils will need to develop strategies to write coherently in paragraphs and to develop extended writing routinely, which is likely to require appropriate scaffolds and stopping points during drafting so that pupils retain a focus on their goals for writing.

Revising

The revising stage involves pupils improving their writing to meet the goals of the audience and purpose for their writing. For example, pupils may flesh out initial ideas with details and examples or combine sentences for effect. The teacher, typically, initiates and scaffolds this stage, possibly incorporating peer feedback, but it should be something that, over time, the pupil can learn to manage independently. Teachers can show that first attempts at writing are seldom very polished, even for expert writers, and that when ideas are transcribed, the words can be revised and improved.

Pupils in key stage 1 should be supported to make simple additions and revisions to their own writing. This may involve evaluating their writing with the teacher or their peers, and

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[73] Education Endowment Foundation (2020) 'Improving Literacy in Key Stage 1'. Available at: Improving Literacy in Key Stage 1 | EEF

re-reading their writing to check that it makes sense. However, revising is less likely to be a significant part of writing at this stage. The extent to which pupils engage in the revising phase will depend on their ability and the task, as often just completing the first draft requires considerable effort for them at this stage.

Pupils in key stage 2 should be given the opportunity to assess the effectiveness of their own and others' writing, proposing changes for improvement. Pupils are far more confident to identify the need to include cohesive devices when revising rather than when drafting[74]. The revising stage is important and cognitively demanding; pupils should therefore be given plenty of time to craft their work and should not be rushed to complete the whole text. Writing tools such as checklists may be useful to scaffold this cognitively demanding act.

Most writing requires revision; improvements come as a result of re-reading, reflection, sharing and feedback.

Editing

Editing is different from revising and involves identifying and correcting errors in grammar, punctuation and spelling. Pupils will need support to edit their own and others' writing.

Pupils in reception and year 1 should not be expected to edit their own writing.

From year 2, pupils should be supported to edit their work, being helped to identify and correct errors in spelling and punctuation (see Section 3: Transcription - suggestions for marking and assessing spelling for more details). This may include reviewing their writing with the teacher. Teachers may prompt pupils to deal with inaccuracies with increasing independence, such as using editing symbols that are common across the school.

Pupils in key stage 2 should proofread their work for spelling, grammar and punctuation errors with growing independence. Editing other pupils' writing can be effective in developing an awareness of writing with a reader in mind and is practice for when checking their own work. An editing checklist can also be helpful in reminding pupils of what to check when editing their own or others' writing. Regular editing stops during the process of drafting may make this task more manageable for them.

Explicit practice using an example of a text which contains deliberate errors that are commonly made by the class can improve editing of pupils' own work and can be a useful activity when teaching specific punctuation and spelling.

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[74] Whitaker, D., Berninger, V., Johnston, J. and Swanson, H.L. (1994) 'Intraindividual Differences in Levels of Language in Intermediate Grade Writers: Implications for the Translating Process', Learning and Individual Differences, 6(1), pp. 107-130.

Sharing

Understanding that their writing is going to be read or heard develops pupils' understanding that writing is purposeful[75]. It gives them the opportunity for feedback and can also build motivation, although it can be intimidating for some pupils. Developing a whole-school approach to sharing pupils' work, with reasonable expectations regarding publication and performance, develops an environment where writing is seen as valued.

Sharing can be as simple as writing their final version knowing that their teacher is looking forward to reading their work, reading written work out to the class or sharing the finished piece with peers across the school or with parents/carers. It can be more sophisticated, for example by publishing blogs, or sending letters and emails to headteachers and local politicians, where a response may be expected.

Sometimes, it is appropriate for pupils to publish their work formally (where writing appears in a format accessible for multiple readers related to the purpose of the writing). However, it should not be at the expense of time spent teaching and developing writing.

Progression in the writing process: years 2, 4 and 6

The following are examples of how the writing process might look in different year groups dealing with the same topic. The elements of the process remain the same.

In the examples that follow, all the year groups have read and studied age-appropriate versions of Homer's Odyssey and have spent extended time on the story of Polyphemus the Cyclops and Odysseus' capture and escape. Their goal is to create their own mythological creature from which Odysseus escapes.

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[75] Bazerman, C. (2017) 'What do sociocultural studies of writing tell us about learning to write', in MacArthur, C. A., Graham, S. W. and Fitzgerald, J. (eds) Handbook of Writing Research. New York: Guilford Press, pp. 11-23.

Year 2

The class discuss the features that Cyclops have and how their specific characteristics create a threat for humans. They may refer to the texts, illustrations and develop their ideas through discussion. They list ideas about which features their mythological creature may have and what threats they may pose, in keeping with the style of Greek myths – **planning**.

Pupils draw and label their mythological creature, referring specifically to the particular threat these features present to humans. If transcription skills are sufficiently developed, pupils use their illustration to describe their creature in sentences. Some pupils may use digital transcription and oral composition to support this stage of the process – **drafting**.

Through discussion and collaboration with their teacher and peers, pupils review and improve their creature, its features and threats. They may be supported by a rubric of elements to be included and possible vocabulary. Oral compositions and illustrations can be similarly developed and, with support, transcribed into written text – **revising**.

Pupils, with support, check their sentences to correct spelling and punctuation – **editing**.

Pupils create a display of their mythological creatures and present these to the whole class – **sharing**.

Year 4

Pupils gather their collective knowledge of the mythological creatures Odysseus faced and list their common features and threats. They analyse the structure of the story of Odysseus and Polyphemus and how the features and threats of a Cyclops are overcome by Odysseus and his followers – **planning**.

They use their list of possible features to develop their own mythological creature and, following the same plot structure, develop a plan of how their creature is overcome by Odysseus, in keeping with the structure and language of Greek myths – **planning**.

Using their list of features, pupils create a labelled drawing of their mythological creature with particular attention to the threats but also the vulnerabilities. They develop this into a written description – **drafting.**

By using the planned story structure, pupils sketch, in sentences, the basic plot points about how their creature captures Odysseus and how he escapes, elaborating these into paragraphs – **drafting**.

Working with their writing partners, pupils **share** their writing. Feedback focuses on the creature's features, threats and vulnerabilities and whether the plot points of the plan have been included. The teacher's feedback focuses on language, vocabulary and cohesion with suggestions that pupils can act on to improve the draft. Pupils improve their writing based on the feedback – **revising**.

Peer and teacher feedback then focuses on transcription, punctuation and spelling to ensure accuracy – **editing**.

Pupils write their compositions for publication into a class book and read their compositions to the class, evaluating the texts against the goal – **sharing**.

Year 6

Using their knowledge of the Odyssey, and the Cyclops in particular, pupils create a science-fiction story of space traveller Captain Odysseus' attempt to return to earth.

Crash-landing on a seemingly hospitable planet, he is captured by an alien.

Pupils sketch the features, threats and vulnerabilities of the creature and then, using the same plot structure as the Greek myth, construct a story for their tale whereby Captain Odysseus outwits the alien and escapes – **planning**.

Using their plans, pupils sketch initial ideas into paragraphs that open the story, introduce the alien and the threat, place Odysseus and his crew in jeopardy and resolve the story through overcoming the threat, outwitting the alien and escaping – **drafting**.

The stories are reviewed and improved, paragraph by paragraph, through a combination of self-reflective re-reading, peer-to-peer feedback against agreed criteria and feedback from the teacher, with attention paid to the reader's perspective. Ensuring cohesion through checking and adding cohesive devices has a strong focus – **revising**.

Self-reflective re-reading, and peer and teacher feedback check for accurate spelling, grammar and punctuation – **editing**.

All finished stories are written up as 'best' for publication in a class book – **sharing**.

Non-fiction examples for the writing process in years 2, 4 and 6 can be found in Appendix F: Progression of the writing process.

Strategies to support the writing process

Writing is demanding and it is important to teach pupils strategies to help them manage this. The explicit teaching of many of these writing strategies has been shown to be effective to help pupils manage, create and improve writing and is associated with highly effective teaching[76].

Treating writing as a process is a strategy in itself, and different strategies will be useful for each aspect of the writing process. A range of strategies has been referred to

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[76] Zimmerman, B.J. and Risemberg, R. (1997) 'Becoming a Self-Regulated Writer: A Social Cognitive Perspective', Contemporary Educational Psychology, 22, pp. 73-101.

throughout this document, such as generating ideas for writing, oral composition and using visuals to support cognitive load.

Another well-evidenced strategy is goal setting[77], an approach in which pupils receive a variety of concrete goals to help them improve the quality of their writing. For example, when writing a persuasive text, rather than instructing pupils to convince the teacher of their opinion on a topic, the teacher could set them a goal of presenting three or more reasons, backed by facts and evidence, to support their viewpoint.

As they become more skilled, pupils can gradually take on a greater role in setting their own goals. They can also be encouraged to monitor those goals themselves to establish whether they have met them. This helps them to take responsibility for their learning and to become more independent as writers.

Another strategy well-supported by evidence is modelling. Showing what skilled writers do is a vital part of teaching writing[78]. Pupils need to have the whole process demonstrated for them and see 'the struggle, the thinking, the pondering, the messiness of it all – because most struggling writers believe good writers are born, not honed through practice'[79].

Teaching approaches that allow a slow release of responsibility from the teacher to the pupil have been shown to be effective. Useful approaches include:

- Modelled writing (I do)
- Shared writing (we do)
- Independent writing (you do)
- Guided writing

Modelled writing (I do)

The teacher takes the lead while pupils observe the expert writer. This provides the opportunity for the teacher to show, in small steps, how to apply new knowledge.

The teacher should think aloud, focusing pupils' attention on the choices of language and structure, helping them to understand the steps involved in problem-solving and critical thinking. It enables them to 'sit beside the author and study how the text is constructed and how it communicates'[80].

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[77]Graham, S. and Harris, K.R. (2019) 'Evidence-based practices in writing', in Graham, S., MacArthur, C. and Hebert, M. (eds.) Best Practices in Writing Instruction. New York: Guildford Press.

[78] Harris, K. R., Graham, S. and Mason, L. (2006) 'Self-regulated strategy development for 2nd-grade students who struggle with writing', American Educational Research Journal, 43, pp. 295-340.

[79] Graham, S and Harris, K. (2019). Evidence-based practices in writing. In Best Practices in Writing Instruction, Eds. Graham, S, MacArthur, C and Hebert, M. New York: Guildford Press.

[80] Culham, R., 2016. The writing thief: Using mentor texts to teach the craft of writing. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers

Shared writing (we do)

Shared writing involves pupils constructing texts with the teacher. This provides the opportunity for them to share ideas in a supportive and safe environment while the teacher can control the focus as the expert writer and focus pupils' attention on specific elements. It offers pupils the opportunity to move beyond imitating a model text and develops their awareness of possible language choices. The teacher's frequent questions during shared writing can be directed at specific pupils. Shared writing is particularly supportive for struggling writers[81].

Independent writing (you do)

In independent writing, pupils write individually and independently after modelled or shared writing, practising what they have observed. The modelled and shared writing should allow pupils to gain confidence when writing independently.

Guided writing

Guided writing involves the teacher working with a selected group of pupils, who share a similar need for challenge or support, to help them to draft their writing. This can take place while the rest of the class writes independently.

Pupils can share their ideas and work together to edit sentence structures. The teacher has oversight to monitor their focus and misconceptions and to be encouraging, while the pupils have peer support to develop their ideas. This strategy is particularly effective when adjusting and adapting teaching to target those who might fall behind.

Establishing the audience for and purpose of writing

For successful writing, it is important to establish a clear purpose from the beginning. Pupils should be guided to articulate their ideas and consider their audience.

The national curriculum for key stage 2 requires pupils to write for a range of contexts, purposes, and audiences, but it doesn't specify the types of texts to be taught. The purpose and audience should guide the choice of writing form, whether it is a narrative, explanation or description.

Since pupils are more familiar with narrative forms from their early listening and reading experiences, they have a stronger grasp of narrative texts compared to non-narrative ones[82]. Therefore, they may need additional support to understand non-narrative texts.

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[81] Routman, R. (2005) Writing Essentials. Portsmouth, NJ: Heinemann.

[82] Andriessen, J. and Coirier, P. (eds.) (1999) Foundations of argumentative text processing. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Teachers should plan a balanced mix of narrative and non-narrative texts throughout the curriculum, emphasising the structure and organisation of non-narrative writing.

Additionally, pupils also need to understand a subject or topic thoroughly before they can write effectively about it. Much of this content knowledge is likely to come from other curriculum areas, class reading books or personal interest.

Developing an understanding of the non-present reader

In key stage 2, pupils should be taught to increase their awareness of their audience. This could include but is not limited to:

- tailoring content – they might modify the complexity of language and concepts according to the audience's age and level of knowledge, such as using simple terms and visuals (a picture, photo or diagram) for younger audiences and more technical language and detailed diagrams for older audiences
- adjusting tone – they might adopt a formal tone when writing to the local MP, but switch to a more casual tone when writing for their peers

Understanding that writing involves communicating with someone who is not present and cannot give immediate feedback is crucial as pupils develop their composition skills. Pupils need to imagine their readers and how they might respond to the text, known as 'writing like a reader'[83].

Although keeping the reader in mind adds to pupils' cognitive load, teachers can support them in a number of ways to develop an awareness that they are writing for a potential absent readership. Specific guidance on strategies for developing their awareness of the reader can be found in Appendix G: Strategies for developing children's awareness of the reader.

Structuring writing

In key stage 1, reading and listening to whole books, not simply extracts, helps pupils to understand how different types of writing are structured. All these can be drawn on for their writing[84].

Teaching in key stage 1 should focus on supporting pupils to articulate what they want to say, sentence by sentence. The national curriculum requires pupils in year 2 to write

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[83] Myhill, D., Lines, H. and Jones, S. (2020) 'Writing Like a Reader: Developing Metalinguistic Understanding to Support Reading-Writing Connections'. In: Alves, R.A., Limpo, T. and Joshi, R.M. (eds) Reading-Writing Connections. Literacy Studies, vol 19. Cham: Springer.

[84] Department for Education (2014) 'National Curriculum'. Available at: National curriculum - GOV.UK

narratives about personal experiences and those of others. However, a narrative does not need to be lengthy and complex; it might require only a few sentences:

- A trip to the park: "I went to the park with my family. We played on the swings and had ice cream. It was fun!"
- A school event: "We had a sports day at school. I ran in a race and won a medal. My friends cheered for me. I felt very happy."
- A favourite hobby: "I love drawing pictures. I drew a picture of my cat called Whiskers sitting by the window. My teacher said it was very good."

In key stage 2, pupils need to see and often study model texts to develop their mental representations of different text structures. As previously referred to, Appendix C: Selecting model texts provides guidance.

For pupils in key stage 2, investigating model texts to identify their key features and consider the writing style is an integral part of planning and provides pupils with opportunities to read, analyse and emulate good writing[85].

As teachers analyse the model text with pupils, they can draw their attention to the characteristic structure and language features that they want pupils to include in their own writing. Teachers can also model how that text might have been planned, using a structure that pupils can use.

Planning models for whole texts

'After learning to spell words and write sentences, pupils do not move smoothly to producing well-structured texts that serve different purposes[86].' It is therefore important that teachers assist pupils to bridge this gap and help them to acquire appropriate mental representations of different text structures that serve different purposes[87].

Teachers must help them move from writing individual sentences to creating coherent texts. Detailed planning models are unlikely to be needed at key stage 1. When planning, pupils may arrange their ideas visually (for example, by arranging images from a story or photographs from a school trip) before writing each sentence or identify key words and ideas for their draft.

In key stage 2, pupils should use simple, memorable, whole-school planning models to help them build mental models of different text structures. This supports them to structure

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[85] Graham, S. and Perin, D. (2007) 'A meta-analysis of writing instruction for adolescent students', Journal of Educational Psychology, 99, pp. 445-476.

[86] Tolchinsky, L. (2017) 'From Text to Language and Back: The Emergence of Written Language', in MacArthur, C.A., Graham, S. and Fitzgerald, J. (eds.) Handbook of Writing Research. New York: Guilford Press, pp. 211–226.

[87] Berman, R.A. and Nir-Sagiv, B. (2007) 'Comparing narrative and expository text construction across adolescence: A developmental paradox', Discourse Processes, 43(2), pp. 79-120.

their ideas and reduce the cognitive demands of composition. These models can become more sophisticated as pupils' writing develops but the essential structure should remain consistent. Pupils should be able to refer to them during drafting.

An effective planning model should:

- clearly indicate where paragraphs will be placed in the text and what single idea each paragraph develops, with some indication of the development
- record the vocabulary and language features the text needs
- reflect a clear understanding of the purpose and audience[88]
- always be available for pupils when they write

Teachers may offer pupils the chance to review their plans and adjust them, based on feedback, to make sure that both the structure and content align with the intended purpose. This then helps pupils during drafting.

For confident and competent writers who can plan independently, teachers may decide that pupils can choose their own planning method.

Appendix H: Models for whole text structures provides examples of whole-text planning models for fiction and non-fiction texts.

Building paragraphs

In key stage 1, the important focus is sentence structure and recording ideas in accurate sentences.

Once pupils have a good understanding of how to write a sentence, paragraphs can be composed with much greater ease. For instance, the act of sentence combining gives pupils a strong sense of how to cohere multiple sentences across extended paragraphs. Teachers should introduce paragraphs at lower key stage 2 as a way for pupils to group related material. A school-wide outline for paragraph structure and consistent teaching will help pupils understand how to construct paragraphs.

Joan Sedita suggests that the 'burger' or 'temple' models are visuals that can be used as a scaffold to help pupils to remember paragraph parts[89].

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[88] Note: This will increase pupils' motivation as discussed in Section 1, but it will also affect the choices that pupils make about their composition, including sentence structure and vocabulary.
[89] Sedita, J. (2023) The Writing Rope. Baltimore: Paul H Brookes Publishing Co.

Figure 4: Illustrations of the burger and temple models

- Topic sentence (TS)
- Supporting, detailed sentences
- Concluding sentences (CS)
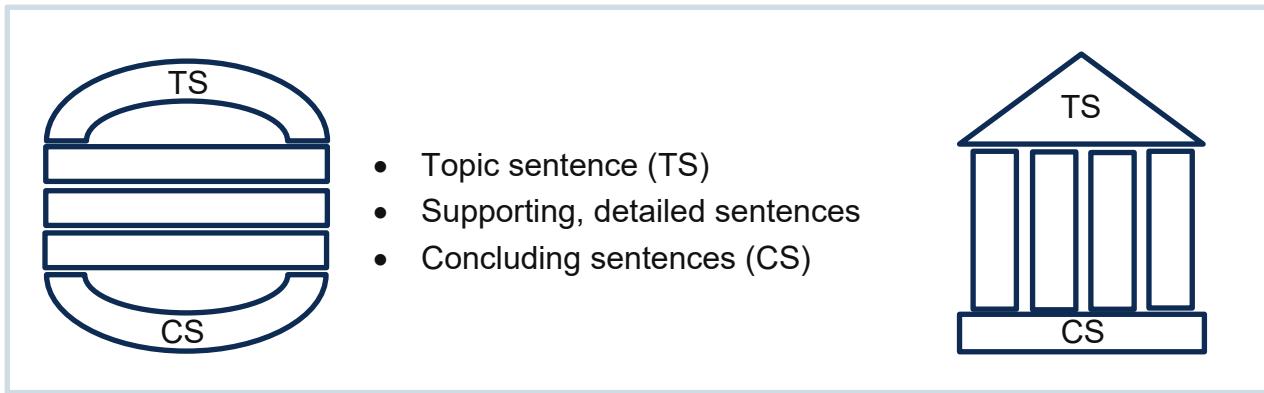
Teachers can use colour coding to help pupils grow their knowledge of paragraph structure. This strategy uses different colours to highlight paragraphs parts. For example, teachers highlight or underline topic sentences in green, supporting sentences in yellow and concluding sentences in red.

Pupils should not be rushed to produce lengthy texts but encouraged (and given time) to draft well-honed paragraphs that convey single ideas, avoiding combining and confusing unrelated points.

Before writing a paragraph, planning using agreed paragraph structures should help to avoid repetition, ensure essential information is included, and support sequencing and coherence. Planning each paragraph also offers opportunities for the teacher to provide feedback before pupils start drafting. Paragraphs require planning before writing just as much as whole texts do.

To embed understanding of how paragraphs are constructed, teachers may also give pupils a model paragraph for the text type they are writing. With the teacher, pupils could read, analyse and deconstruct it before they plan their structure.

Coherence and cohesion

Both cohesion and coherence are crucial for clear and effective writing, although they address different elements of a text. Cohesion relates to the links within and between sentences and paragraphs, employing grammatical devices to connect ideas. Coherence involves the logical arrangement and progression of ideas throughout the text, ensuring that the reader can understand the content.

The national curriculum requires year 2 pupils to use the present and past tenses correctly and consistently. This marks the beginning of their understanding of cohesion. In years 3 and 4, this foundation is expanded as pupils learn to choose nouns or pronouns appropriately for clarity and cohesion. However, it is only in upper key stage 2 that pupils start to learn how to use a wider range of devices to build cohesion within and across paragraphs to create a coherent text.

Creating a coherent text largely depends on pupils having a secure understanding of sentence structure and a rich vocabulary to draw from to ease transition from one sentence to the next. Appendix I: Cohesion contains examples of words and phrases that can be provided to pupils during their writing to support cohesive transitions between sentences and paragraphs.

Cohesive devices can be explicitly taught to support pupils in establishing cohesion[90]:

- pronouns and determiners that refer the reader back to information previously mentioned, e.g., *Jack climbed the beanstalk. He saw a giant and a pot of gold.*
- conjunctions to link ideas across phrases, clauses and sentences, e.g., *Jack sniffed the air, but he could smell nothing.*
- adverbials that indicate to the reader when, where, how or why the action in the sentence is occurring or as a way of providing a transition between two ideas, e.g., *With great difficulty, Jack climbed the beanstalk.*
- connecting adverbials as a way of providing a transition between two ideas, e.g., *Jack was climbing the beanstalk. Meanwhile, his mother was waiting at home.*
- substitution – substituting a pronoun for a noun to avoid repetition, e.g., *Jack really wanted the gold. He got it.*
- ellipsis to eliminate elements with no loss of meaning as the meaning is implied and clear, e.g., *Jack was going to run but [he] didn't [run].*
- consistent use of verb tense – This is particularly important as inconsistent tenses undermine coherence

Further guidance on each of these devices can be found in Appendix I: Cohesion.

Feedback

Pupils require regular, frequent and timely feedback about their writing, with an opportunity to review and edit it. The more frequent the feedback is and the closer it is to the opportunity to edit writing, the more it improves writing[91].

Feedback needs to be encouraging but something that pupils can act upon. It may tackle sentence-level issues or broader aspects, such as the overall structure of the text.

Effective feedback:

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[90] Halliday, M. A. K. and Hasan, R. (1976) Cohesion in English. London, UK: Longman Group.

[91] Graham, S. and Harris, K.R. (2019) 'Evidence-based practices in writing', in Graham, S., MacArthur, C. and Hebert, M. (eds.) Best Practices in Writing Instruction. New York: Guildford Press.

- tends to be more oral than written[92] and is more discussion-based than directive[93]
- can be provided throughout the writing process. However, oral feedback during drafting and revising is particularly effective[94]
- is specific to the writing task rather than a general comment. It explains clearly and precisely what the problem is and what the solution is[95]. For example, 'You need to add some more information' is less useful than 'I think you could add some more information about the temperature of lava here. How could you do that?'
- needs to be supportive and encouraging but always giving a reason. For example, 'I liked that sentence because the relative clause helped me picture the woman's hair…' rather than 'Great sentence!'

If the teacher plans it well, peer-to-peer feedback can also be effective when pupils are revising their writing. It can be as powerful for the pupil giving the feedback as for the one receiving it. Again, such feedback needs to be specific and something to be acted on, with clear instructions from the teacher as to what the feedback should focus on. Explaining to pupils (particularly younger pupils) how to give feedback – and on what – is vital[96]. It encourages them to read critically, apply recommended solutions to their own writing and embeds knowledge of the subject matter they are giving feedback on.

Pupils will need time to absorb and act upon feedback, with sufficient space on the page to edit. Writing on alternate lines or on only one side of a double page may be helpful for pupils, and the results indicate clearly that feedback has been given and acted on.

Encouraging pupils to reflect on feedback is essential for their growth as independent and reflective writers. They should decide whether and how to use feedback, based on their goals for writing.

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[92] Hillocks, G. and Mavrognes, N. (1986) 'Sentence combining'. In: Hillocks, G. (ed) Research on written composition: New directions for teaching. Urbana: National Council for the Teaching of English, pp. 142-146.

[93] Newell, G. E. (1994) 'The effects of written between-draft responses on students' writing and reasoning about literature', Written Communication, 11(3), pp. 311-347.

[94] Graham, S., McKeown, D., Kiuhara, S. and Harris, K. R. (2012) 'A meta-analysis of writing instruction for students in the elementary grades', Journal of Educational Psychology, 104(4), pp. 879-896.

[95] Beach, R. and Friedrich, T. (2006) 'Response to Writing'. In: MacArthur, C. A., Graham, S. and Fitzgerald, J. (eds) Handbook of Writing Research. New York: Guilford Press, pp. 222–234.

[96] MacArthur, A. (2017) 'Instruction in Evaluation and Revision'. In: MacArthur, C. A., Graham, S. W. and Fitzgerald, J. (eds) Handbook of Writing Research. New York: Guilford Press.

Audit: Composition

Composition	Current practice
There is an understanding across the school that, for most pupils, composition begins orally and that talk is valuable through the whole writing process.	
Teaching about sentences is at the heart of teaching composition. There is an understanding that the best way to teach pupils to write is by teaching them to master sentences first.	
Sentence structure activities constitute a part of writing lessons.	
Teachers ensure pupils are taught to apply their grammatical knowledge to build sentences.	
All staff understand that the writing process encompasses planning, drafting, revising, editing, and sharing, and that these steps are relevant for composing sentences as well as longer texts.	
All staff understand that the writing process can be used with pupils of all ages, but the degree to which a pupil engages with each phase will vary, depending on the nature of the task.	
The school's approach to the teaching of writing affords pupils sufficient time for planning, writing and reviewing their work and emphasises quality over quantity.	
Teachers develop pupils' writing strategies through modelled and shared writing.	

Composition	Current practice
All staff are aware that the cognitive demands of handwriting and spelling can divert attention away from other elements of writing.	
Rich and expressive spoken language is used and shared in classrooms and across the school.	
Vocabulary is built through robust, purposeful, explicit instruction.	
When transcription skills are not sufficiently automatic, composition may be practised orally.	
Teachers make sure pupils always have sufficient content knowledge of a subject before writing about it.	
Planning models, that are consistent across the school, are used to support pupils to structure whole texts and paragraphs.	
Model texts are used to develop pupils' awareness of written structures and authorial techniques.	
Feedback from teachers is regular, usually oral, specific, practical, actionable and encouraging. Pupils are able to respond close to the point of feedback and improve their written work.	
There is a whole-school approach to sharing pupils' work, creating an environment where writing is valued.	
Actions to be taken:	**Term actions to be reviewed by:**

Section 5: Pupils who need the most support

Keeping up from the start

Leaders and teachers should aim to ensure that all pupils get the best start in writing, from the very beginning. High-quality teaching is central to ensuring that all pupils are given the best possible opportunity to achieve.

However, some pupils may find it more difficult than others to make progress in writing and teachers should consider how to adapt their practice and provide the support that might be needed to enable this from the start. Schools should aim to provide this support within the writing lesson.

Pupils who find writing difficult are likely to struggle across the curriculum. They may also have other difficulties, such as with speaking or reading or both. This includes some pupils with SEND and with English as an additional language[97]. It is therefore important to consider their needs as a whole, including how speaking and/or reading support should be prioritised. Focusing support on writing when there are difficulties with reading or speaking may not be beneficial.

It is vital to make sure all pupils are given every opportunity early on to progress. They should have regular, successful writing experiences so they do not lose faith in themselves and become demotivated. Praise should be encouraging and linked to improvements and goals. When used well, metacognitive approaches (that is, approaches that get pupils to think about their own learning) can motivate them to engage in, and improve, their learning and help them progress; the potential impact can be particularly high for disadvantaged pupils[98].

Identifying pupils who need support

It is vital to identify which pupils need additional support as early as possible and determine the right approach to adapt teaching to respond to their strengths and needs[99]. Regular formative assessment (see Section 7: Leadership and management of writing), including observing pupils as they write, will help to identify those who are likely to need additional support. Ideally, teachers would try to pre-empt writing difficulties before they occur. For example, if a child joins reception with speech, language and communication

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[97] Education Endowment Foundation (2015) 'A systematic review of intervention research examining English language and literacy development in children with English as an Additional Language (EAL)' Available at: English as an additional language (EAL) | EEF

[98] Education Endowment Foundation (2021) 'Metacognition and self regulated learning' Available at: Metacognition and Self-regulated Learning | EEF

[99] Department for Education (2021) 'Teachers' standards guidance for school leaders, school staff and governing bodies' Available at: Teachers' standards - GOV.UK

needs, teachers should be alert to the effect this may have on their writing development and be pro-active in supporting them.

Identifying developmental delays in writing may begin in reception. Phonics programmes usually include comprehensive assessment tools, both to identify children who need more support and to provide the means to do this.

Other difficulties with writing can show up in several ways. Teachers should look out for pupils who:

- write slowly
- struggle to apply knowledge from one context to another
- are demotivated
- are quiet in class

Some pupils who have writing problems may appear slow to write, even when they have had plenty of teaching and practice and even when they are improving. They may pause frequently when writing, although this may not always be immediately obvious to the teacher. Some pupils may feel pain or discomfort when writing, or a lack of stamina to write may reduce their handwriting speed. Since there may be more than one factor contributing to slowness, it is important to understand which are relevant for each pupil in order to support their progress.

Teachers, working with others if necessary, should investigate why a pupil is finding writing difficult, for example, whether they might have a hearing or visual impairment, or speech, language and communication needs or a specific learning difficulty.

However, many pupils experience difficulties when learning to write, regardless of whether they have an identified SEND. While diagnostic labels may be useful, evidence suggests that writing difficulties are similar across pupils with and without disabilities[100].

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[100] Connelly, V., & Dockrell, J. (2016). 'Writing Development and Instruction for Students with Learning Disabilities: Using Diagnostic Categories to Study Writing Difficulties'. In MacArthur, C. A., Graham, S., & Fitzgerald, J. (Eds.), Handbook of Writing Research (2nd ed., pages 349–363). New York: Guilford Press

When specific instructional choices have to be made, teachers will need to move beyond diagnostic labels and identify the areas in the writing process that are challenging the pupil. Accurate targeting of interventions requires that the pupil's difficulties can be reliably ascertained, and that these differ from what would be expected by children developing typically in that educational and social context. It is also implicit that children have been exposed to appropriate instruction.[101]

Supporting pupils in class

Teachers should try to understand what aspect of writing a pupil finds difficult: handwriting, knowledge of GPCs to use for spelling, other aspects of spelling, sentence structure and grammar, composition or language. It isn't always possible to know what the problem is by looking at a piece of writing. However, a sound knowledge of the processes that underpin writing enables teachers to respond flexibly to the challenges faced by pupils with writing difficulties.

Teachers should aim to tackle the aspects of writing that a pupil finds difficult and tackle individual needs during whole-class teaching. This will make sure such pupils are included and it avoids them missing out on other areas of the curriculum. This individualised approach should support the consolidation of their prior learning.

There may be circumstances where individual support, separate from whole-class teaching, is required. For example, a child joining a school in year five and who is unable to form letters accurately may be given appropriate support to learn and practise letter formation. This should be carefully considered.

Handwriting

In handwriting, teachers will easily spot pupils who are struggling through noticing, for example, poor letter formation or poor pencil grip. These pupils will find composition difficult, as their working memory is heavily loaded with the demands of transcription. They may also lack motivation to write due to the discomfort they experience or may struggle to read their own work if their writing is illegible.

Teachers should consider:

- closely observing the way in which the pupil forms a letter or letters, since the incorrect direction and sequencing of strokes to form letters are common in handwriting difficulties

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[101] Dockrell, J. & Arfé, J. (2014). 'The Role of Oral Language in Developing Written Language Skills: Questions for European Pedagogy'. In Arfé, B., Dockrell, J. E. & Berninger, V. W. (eds) Writing Development in Children with Hearing Loss, Dyslexia or Oral Language Problems: Implications for Assessment and Instruction. New York: Oxford University Press, pages 3 to 15

- providing individual support during the handwriting lesson to improve the aspect the pupil struggles with
- providing regular instruction and opportunity to practise handwriting which should be done urgently – and the outcomes monitored
- whether it might be appropriate to provide extra time to complete writing activities, since more time can be helpful for pupils who have difficulty writing
- supporting pupils with writing through digital devices, particularly when transcription is a barrier to composition

Assistive technology such as scribing, dictation software and word-processors can support older pupils who struggle with transcription; they should not be excluded from composition elements of writing. However, they still need handwriting instruction and practice.

Spelling

Pupils who struggle with spelling will find it difficult to attend to composition. Some studies[102] have shown that many pupils with some types of SEND struggle with spelling, which can slow down their writing as greater hesitations occur. This is usually because English has a complex alphabetic code (for further guidance on spelling see Section 3: Transcription). This is true even when the demands on working memory are fewer and composition is not required, such as during dictation and copying tasks. Phonics is the primary way to teach spelling. Teachers should assess pupils' knowledge of GPCs and their spelling should also be regularly assessed. Pupils who continue to struggle with spelling beyond the end of their key stage 1 phonics programmes may benefit from continuing with phonics for spelling. They may also benefit from explicit teaching of morphology and etymology.

Composition

Pupils may struggle with composition at any or all phases of the writing process. For example, they may struggle to write sentences and make their writing understood; to combine sentences; or to formulate and organise their ideas. Pupils need their teacher's support to master the individual elements of composition that are more difficult for them. Teachers, therefore, need to work to understand what the difficulty is and provide focused teaching and additional instruction during the whole-class lesson to tackle it. Support could include, for example, providing additional scaffolding such as sentence

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[102] Sumner, E., Connelly, V. & Barnett, A. L. (2014). 'The influence of spelling ability on handwriting production: Children with and without dyslexia'. Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition, 40(5), pp. 1441-1447. Available at: The Influence of Spelling Ability on Vocabulary Choices When Writing for Children With Dyslexia

Alves, R. A., Branco, M., Castro, S. L. & Olive, T. (2012). 'Effects of handwriting skill, output modes and gender of fourth graders on pauses, written language bursts, fluency and quality'. In Berninger, V. W. (ed) Past, Present, and Future Contributions of Cognitive Writing Research to Cognitive Psychology. New York: Psychology Press, pages 389-402

stems and longer or increased opportunities for oral rehearsal. Additionally, using recording devices can help pupils play back their work in stages as they write. These can be particularly useful when problems with working memory mean a pupil forgets the beginning of a sentence or paragraph they have composed in their head. Section 4: Composition provides guidance on supporting all pupils with composition, including for pupils who find it difficult.

Language

Pupils who experience difficulties with vocabulary will be less articulate and precise in their writing. Difficulties could include struggling to understand and use subject-specific vocabulary or selecting appropriate words or more ambitious vocabulary. Pupils may struggle with the meaning of words (semantics) and when to use them (pragmatics). These pupils may need extra support during the lesson in each phase of the writing process. This could include providing additional opportunities for talking during the planning stage, consolidating teaching and learning of subject-specific vocabulary, more opportunity for oral rehearsal or more extended use of sentence stems. Creating a language-rich school helps to support writing. (See Section 2: Language comprehension in reception and key stage 1 of the reading framework.)

Audit: Keeping up from the start

Supporting pupils in class	Current practice
Writing teaching is of the highest quality to give all pupils the best opportunity to achieve.	
Teachers use assessment to make sure writing teaching is sequenced to match pupils' existing knowledge.	
A well-planned writing curriculum ensures pupils are taught and have sufficient opportunity to practise and apply the foundational writing skills of handwriting, spelling and sentence building.	
Pupils who find writing difficult and are at risk of falling behind in any aspect of transcription or composition are identified quickly.	
Pupils who find writing difficult receive the teaching and practice they need to become fluent with transcription.	
The progress of each pupil is monitored and sufficient support accelerates progress, including for new arrivals and pupils who are learning English as an additional language.	
Adults value pupils' spoken composition and support all pupils to compose orally, including and especially when transcription is more challenging for the pupil.	
Actions to be taken:	**Term actions to be reviewed by:**

When writing is challenging

Harry is an example of a pupil who finds writing challenging and needs support in the lesson. He does not have identified SEND.

Harry

Harry is in year 4. He is talkative and contributes regularly to class discussions. He likes to make up stories and tell them to his friends. He is happy to collaborate when generating ideas for writing but is resistant when moving to drafting. At this point he often shows avoidance strategies when the rest of the class start to write and he can be disruptive.

Next steps for Harry

Harry's assessments show that his writing speed is around 20 letters per minute (significantly below the expected rate for his age), and his letter formation is often inaccurate. A spelling assessment shows that he spells words that conform to the simple code accurately but often misspells words with more complex patterns. A reading fluency assessment revealed that he reads more slowly than his peers and often stumbles over words.

The assessments indicate that Harry needs:

- targeted handwriting instruction that particularly focuses on accurate letter formation (using correct direction and sequence of strokes) during the handwriting lesson. He also needs significant practice.
- adults to check if his writing posture and pencil hold are contributing to his difficulties; teaching him how to hold a pencil comfortably and correctly should remedy this.
- targeted spelling teaching linked to the school's phonics programme, with particular focus on the complex code. Developing his knowledge of morphology should also support his spelling.
- continued praise for thinking of ideas and expressing them orally.
- scribing support, if adults are available, so that his ideas can be transcribed, until he can write more for himself.

Harry is already having some interventions outside the classroom to support his reading. Any writing support therefore needs to happen in the classroom as part of whole-class writing lessons to avoid him missing more of the curriculum.

Pupils who need further support

This document is primarily written to support teachers of the vast majority of pupils who, with the right support, will be able to make expected progress. Nevertheless, much of the document may also be relevant to and useful for teachers and leaders across the full range of primary provision.

Teachers should have high expectations and be ambitious for all pupils, including those identified as having SEND. Difficulties with writing can occur across all broad areas of need (cognition and learning; communication and interaction; social, emotional, and mental health; and sensory and physical needs). Pupils with SEND may progress at a different rate to their peers and teachers should be focused on understanding the specific barriers the pupil faces with writing and what they need. The graduated approach of 'assess, plan, do, review'[103] will help teachers, working with the SENCO where needed, to build an ongoing understanding of pupils' needs and to provide support that is tailored to individuals.

Although some pupils in more specialist provision, where the range of need may be broader, may leave school writing at the level expected for their age, for others, attainment in writing may look different. Because progress may well be slower, the time taken to develop writing skills for some pupils is likely to be longer.

Developmental language disorder

Developmental language disorder (DLD) is a common neurodevelopmental condition where individuals experience ongoing difficulties in understanding and using spoken language. This can affect their ability to communicate effectively, learn new information and form social connections. Research shows pupils with DLD are more likely to have difficulty with accurate spelling, grammar, and organising and linking ideas throughout a text[104]. They are likely to produce texts that are shorter and use fewer and less complex sentences. In particular, they are likely to struggle with word endings such as tense markers and plurals and use fewer verbs and conjunctions. Their difficulties are likely to mirror the challenges they have with spoken language, including slower processing times, poor working memory and difficulties with identifying the phonemes that make up words[105]. The guidance in this framework will support pupils with DLD to write. A focus on developing spoken language skills and oral composition before moving on to writing will help. Breaking down tasks and using visual prompts can also help to reduce the load on

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[103] Department for Education (2015) 'Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years' Available at: SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years - GOV.UK

[104] Tucci, A. and Choi, E. 'Developmental Language Disorder and Writing: A Scoping Review From Childhood to Adulthood' Journal of Speech, Language and Hearing Research 2023: volume 66, pages 2900 to 2920.

[105] Andreou G and others. 'Written Language Production in Children With Developmental Language Disorder'. Frontiers in Psychology Journal 2022: volume 13.

their memory and processing skills. Section 4: Composition of this guidance recommends approaches that will support pupils' spoken language.

Dyslexia

Dyslexia is generally understood to be a specific learning difficulty that primarily affects reading and writing[106]. Dyslexia is often associated with poor spelling because of the complexity of the English alphabetic code. The reading framework sets out strategies that will support pupils with dyslexia to embed their knowledge of GPCs. Pupils with dyslexia may also find composition challenging. There is strong evidence that these pupils do not progress as well as their peers in writing[107]. It is important, therefore, for schools to identify pupils who are struggling with writing early on and to consider what, if any, additional support they might need.

Pupils with dyslexia may benefit from explicit writing teaching in smaller, incremental steps with lots of opportunity for practice and repetition, even more than their peers so that they can achieve alongside them. Writing teaching which aims to reduce pupils' cognitive load will support them: orally composing sentences and planning before writing can help with the organisation of ideas. Section 4: Composition includes guidance on supporting oral composition as well as planning and structuring writing, including using colour coding as a way of supporting children to structure their ideas, and modelling the saying of words aloud while writing. It will be important to give pupils many opportunities to use their composition skills without transcription, for example through dictation or paired writing with a peer. This will help them see themselves as good writers, even if their spelling and other aspects of transcription may still require support.

Pupils with dyslexia may benefit particularly from explicit teaching of orthography, morphology and etymology, alongside their peers, as is required in the national curriculum[108] (guidance on this can be found in Section 3: Transcription). Teachers can provide support to develop pupils' understanding using a range of tools, including morpheme matrices (see Appendix B: Morpheme matrices).

With support from specialists, teachers might also consider the use of assistive technology and keyboards to help pupils to organise their ideas. This should not be in place of teaching the components of writing.

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[106] Rose, J. (2009) 'Identifying and Teaching Children and Young People with Dyslexia and Literacy Difficulties: An Independent Report' London: Department for Children, Schools and Families page 10
NHS (2022) 'Overview Dyslexia' Available at: https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/dyslexia/

[107] Connelly, V. & Dockrell, J. (2016). 'Writing Development and Instruction for Students with Learning Disabilities: Using Diagnostic Categories to Study Writing Difficulties'. In MacArthur, C. A., Graham, S. & Fitzgerald, J. (eds) Handbook of Writing Research. 2nd ed. New York: Guilford Press, pp. 349-363

[108] Department for Education (2014) 'National Curriculum in England: English Programmes of Study' Available at: National curriculum in England: English programmes of study - GOV.UK

Developmental coordination disorder/Dyspraxia

Pupils with developmental coordination disorder (DCD)/dyspraxia have difficulty performing and learning everyday movement tasks and this often includes difficulties with handwriting[109]. Pupils with DCD/dyspraxia may take longer to develop the necessary movement skills to write fluently and legibly and will need ample teaching and practice. They may require additional handwriting intervention.

Many pupils with DCD/dyspraxia have difficulties with legibility and speed, sometimes both. They often miss strokes in handwriting, direct strokes incorrectly and add strokes where they are not needed. It is therefore important to watch the pupil as they write letters so they practise and develop the skills needed for correct letter formation.

Any handwriting difficulties that pupils with DCD/dyspraxia experience may affect all aspects of writing. This could be a result of transcription placing greater demands on working memory to the detriment of other elements of the writing process. It could also be due to co-occurring difficulties in reading, spelling and/or attention[110]. Teachers should be aware of the impact of any co-occurring difficulty and tailor intervention and support to a pupil's individual needs, providing appropriate feedback and strategies to support development of the required skills. With support from specialists, teachers might consider the use of assistive technology and keyboards to help when handwriting is a problem. If keyboards and devices that involve fine motor skills (for example, keyboarding and swiping) are used, pupils will need explicit teaching, practice and support to develop the skills to use them. This should be in parallel with, not in place of, handwriting teaching[111].

Pupils with more complex needs

Literacy is as important for pupils with more complex needs as it is for all pupils and teachers should have high expectations and be ambitious for them. Every pupil, including those with more complex needs, should receive and be included in writing instruction. A

[109] Purcell, C., Dahl, A., Gentle, J., Hill, E., Kirby, A., Mason, A., McQuillan, V., Meek, A., Payne, S., Scott-Roberts, S., Shaw, K., & Wilmut, K. (2024) 'Harnessing real-life experiences: the development of guidelines to communicate research findings on Developmental Coordination Disorder/dyspraxia', Research Involvement and Engagement, 10, Article 84. Available at: Harnessing real-life experiences

[110] Prunty, M., Barnett, AL., Wilmut, K., Plumb, M. (2016). 'The impact of handwriting difficulties on compositional quality in children with developmental coordination disorder' British Journal of Occupational Therapy, 79(10), 591-597. Available at: The impact of handwriting difficulties on compositional quality in children with developmental coordination disorder

[111] Blank R, Barnett AL, Cairney J, Green D, Kirby A, Polatajko H, Rosenblum S, Smits-Engelsman B, Sugden D, Wilson P, Vinçon S. (2019). 'International clinical practice recommendations on the definition, diagnosis, assessment, intervention, and psychosocial aspects of developmental coordination disorder'. Journal of Developmental Medicine and Child Neurology. 61(3):242-285. Available at: International clinical practice recommendations on the definition, diagnosis, assessment, intervention, and psychosocial aspects of developmental coordination disorder

very few pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) might not be able to access direct literacy instruction in the same way as their peers. Literacy instruction may look different for some pupils. However, all pupils can be supported to engage with writing. For example, at the start of the writing process, pupils could be supported to engage through story telling with objects. Later in the writing process, they may engage through making marks using a range of tools. Whatever the approach, it should be realistic and provide a practical means of communicating and recording for use in everyday life[112].

The role of leaders

School leaders in primary schools and secondary schools are responsible for making sure all pupils, including those with special educational needs and disabilities, have high-quality writing teaching in a way that is accessible to them, is appropriate for their needs and enables them to make rapid progress. Leaders should work with the SENCO and teachers, and use extended support networks and locally available sources of advice, to do this.

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[112] Longhorn, F. (2001). 'Literacy for Very Special People: Developing the Communication Skills of People with Severe Learning Difficulties through Books and Stories'. London: David Fulton Publishers.

Audit: Pupils who need further support

Pupils who need further support	Current practice
Teachers use the graduated approach of 'assess, plan, do, review' to help build an ongoing understanding of pupils' needs and to provide individualised support that accelerates their progress.	
Effective teaching supports pupils to catch up rapidly.	
Each pupil receiving extra support is profiled to identify any SEND (if not already identified); any speech, communication and language needs; their attendance; time at the school, and previous teaching.	
Leaders support and monitor interventions closely and evaluate the impact on pupils' progress regularly.	
Actions to be taken:	**Term actions to be reviewed by:**

Section 6: Writing across the curriculum

Teaching writing should be planned not only in the context of the English lesson, but also across the wider curriculum. This means considering both how the writing lesson can draw on pupils' wider learning and how their other lessons can draw on what they are learning about writing.

Writing across the wider curriculum offers pupils useful opportunities for practice. These lessons are not focused directly on teaching writing, but they can provide opportunities for pupils to apply their writing knowledge and skills more independently and with less scaffolding than in dedicated English lessons, provided that the complexity of the task matches their stage of development in writing.

The writing routines and models described in this framework should be embedded across subject teaching, not limited to English lessons, such as 'ready to write' approaches for handwriting, and using planning and text structure models. Expectations about writing and the use of terminology should be consistent across subjects.

The power of writing as a means for thinking and remembering should be embedded throughout the curriculum. However, writing tasks in other subjects should not detract from the intended focus of the learning in that subject.

The transition from writing in KS2 to KS3

The transition from primary to secondary school is an important step in pupils' writing development, as well as 'one of the most difficult [periods] in pupils' educational careers'[113], one of vulnerability and challenge, including for struggling writers.

This document's key objective has been to help primary schools to make sure that their pupils start secondary school as confident and engaged writers. It also helps secondary teachers to understand the complexity of teaching pupils – of whatever age – to write.

It is important that secondary teachers are familiar with the primary English curriculum and understand what is expected of pupils by the end of primary education – and vice versa. Good communication between primary and secondary schools will support pupils' transition to secondary school.

Although not dealt with in this document, it is important to note that the teaching of writing continues into secondary school, where pupils have to learn how to adapt their writing for

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[113] Zeedyk, M. S., Gallacher, J., Henderson, M., Hope, G., Husband, B. and Lindsay, K. (2003) 'Negotiating the transition from primary to secondary school: perceptions of pupils, parents and teachers', Psychology International, 24(1), pp. 67–79.

each subject. Even pupils who are fluent writers at the end of primary school will need to be taught new knowledge and skills for success in education, life and work.

As in primary schools, good writing routines and models should be embedded across subject teaching in secondary schools. The routines and models this document describes are also applicable to secondary subjects.

The EEF's guidance to support secondary schools in improving literacy across all subject areas makes seven recommendations related to reading, writing, speaking, vocabulary development, and supporting pupils who are struggling:

- prioritise 'disciplinary literacy' across the curriculum
- provide targeted vocabulary instruction in every subject
- develop students' ability to read complex academic texts
- break down complex writing tasks
- combine writing instruction with reading in every subject
- provide opportunities for structured talk
- provide high quality literacy intervention for struggling students[114]

Secondary teachers also need to be alert to the fact that, if pupils are writing about unfamiliar topics, this will affect the quality of that writing.

Throughout its recommendations, the EEF's guidance consistently highlights the significance of disciplinary literacy, challenging the idea that literacy in secondary schools is solely the responsibility of English teachers or literacy coordinators. By emphasising disciplinary literacy, it makes clear that every teacher conveys their subject through academic language, and that reading, writing, speaking, and listening are integral to understanding and engaging with subjects such as science, art, history, and all other areas in secondary education.

Identifying pupils who need additional support

High-quality teaching across the curriculum will reduce the need for additional literacy support. However, to make progress, a small number of pupils are likely to continue to require extra support through high-quality, structured and targeted interventions.

Pupils who start secondary school with low levels of literacy are in particular need of support, since the consequences are highly likely to be felt across the curriculum – by both the pupils and their teachers.

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[114] Education Endowment Foundation (2018) Improving Literacy in Secondary Schools. Available at: Improving Literacy in Secondary Schools | EEF

Loss of learning over the summer holidays might account for some pupils' initial struggles in secondary school, but any dips rebound quickly[115] if pupils are already strong writers. Struggling writers, however, falter at the first secondary hurdle. They face a different teacher in every lesson who expects them to write texts that use subject-specific language and use a range of structures. Therefore, identifying the pupils early on whose writing is poor and who may, as a result, have negative attitudes towards school on transition is vital. Key stage 3 teachers must know who these pupils are and take action to support their writing during their lessons.

While providing additional support should not replace efforts to enhance the quality of classroom teaching, the EEF recommends developing a strategy with tiers of support for struggling pupils. These tiers range from whole-class instruction to small-group tuition and one-to-one support, with the intensity of support increasing based on each pupil's assessed needs.

In most instances, schools should consider small-group tuition as the initial approach, grouping pupils with similar literacy challenges together. If small group tuition proves ineffective, then one-to-one tuition should be considered as the next step.

Effective intervention relies on assessment which:

- identifies pupils needing additional support
- pinpoints their specific needs for targeted support
- evaluates their progress and the effectiveness of interventions

Secondary pupils may face various literacy challenges. For example, some pupils may struggle with reading and a reading intervention may therefore be the first priority for them. For others, developing spoken language may be a priority. Additional support must be tailored to be effective.

Teachers can conduct some assessments through regular classroom monitoring and evaluation. However, while these assessments can identify broad categories of challenges like reading or writing, more detailed diagnostic assessments are often necessary to pinpoint specific areas of weakness, such as difficulties with pencil control or limited vocabulary, so that support can be targeted precisely.

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[115] Shinwell, J. and Defeyter, M.A. (2017) 'Investigation of Summer Learning Loss in the UK - Implications for Holiday Club Provision', Frontiers in Public Health, 6(5), p. 270.

Section 7: Leadership and management of writing

Headteachers are responsible for creating a positive writing culture in their schools, as well as for developing an effective, well-sequenced writing curriculum and ensuring that all classroom teachers, not just subject leads, are trained to teach writing effectively. All staff play a role in fostering a supportive writing environment, but leaders establish the culture and set the standards.

Creating a writing culture

Creating a positive writing culture is essential. It should emphasise a commitment to the success of all pupils, ensuring that none falls behind. The culture should encompass both reading and writing; maintaining a balance between the two is important.

In primary schools, pupils write daily. Their experiences must be meaningful and integral to the writing culture. They require explicit teaching, time for practising and the chance to explore topics they enjoy, thus nurturing of a love for writing.

Building a team of expert teachers

Headteachers should appoint someone to manage the teaching of writing across the school. Ideally, the same person would lead the writing and reading curriculum (a 'literacy lead' or similar), but not at the expense of reading. If school leaders decide to have separate leaders for reading and writing, it is vital that they work collaboratively, together with the SENCO.

The teacher or teachers appointed should be given the time and training needed to lead the subject and should consider taking the National Professional Qualification in Leading Literacy (NPQLL). The NPQLL is designed to train and support current and aspiring literacy leads to teach and promote literacy effectively across the whole school, year group, key stage or phase[116].

The writing lead should become an expert in the school's writing curriculum, understand the principles of both the physical and cognitive aspects of writing development, and understand how to assess pupils' writing effectively, knowing what support may be needed.

All classroom teachers should be aware of the rationale and research behind curriculum decisions. If schools are using commercially developed programmes, teachers should take part in related professional development.

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[116] More information about the qualification can be found at: Leading literacy national professional qualification - GOV.UK

Headteachers should make sure senior leaders and key stage 1 teachers know and understand the EYFS statutory framework[117] requirements for writing and how to support pupils who did not reach the expected level of development in Writing by the end of reception.

Developing an effective writing curriculum

Leaders should plan a well-sequenced curriculum across the whole of the primary stage, starting in reception. They need to consider how the different elements of writing fit together to ensure pupils' working memories are not overloaded. Reading and writing should be considered together to support pupils' progress as effectively as possible; the writing curriculum, however, should not come at the expense of the reading curriculum.

Developing an effective writing curriculum and seeing its impact takes time. A multi-year plan considers the changes that are needed across the whole school and how to prioritise them. Given the importance of securing automaticity with transcription, it may be sensible to secure the high-quality teaching of this first, while developing plans for the broader elements of writing, particularly teaching about sentences.

Time must be provided for teaching writing effectively, including for practice. However, the emphasis will shift. Early on, transcription and oral composition should be the focus until pupils achieve sufficient fluency with handwriting and spelling to free enough cognitive space to focus on composition. Once this is achieved, pupils should be provided with plenty of opportunities to practise their sentence construction skills, which will help them to become fluent writers. It is important that they are not expected to produce lengthy pieces of writing that are beyond their capability or unnecessary for the task.

Because they are exposed to many more narrative forms in their early listening and reading, pupils' understanding of narrative texts is much stronger than of non-narrative, so they need more support to build understanding of the latter. Leaders need to plan for the right mixture of narrative and non-narrative texts across the curriculum, with a clear focus on drawing attention to the different ways of organising non-narrative writing.

The national curriculum requires pupils in key stage 2 to write for a range of contexts, purposes and audiences. However, it does not specify the text types that should be taught. Purpose and audience should underpin decisions about the form any writing should take, such as a narrative, an explanation or a description.

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[117] Department for Education. (2014). Early Years Foundation Stage Framework. Last updated 1 November 2024. Available at: Early Years Foundation Stage Framework

The importance of getting writing right in reception

Leaders must start building the foundations for writing from the start of reception. Writing requires considerable effort and attention, but getting writing right in the early years is key to ensuring pupils continue to make the expected progress in key stage 1 and beyond (see Section 2: The importance of reception). This is reflected in the government's target that 75% of 5-year-olds should reach a good level of development in the EYFSP assessment by 2028. The target recognises the importance of the early years in breaking down barriers to opportunity.

Ensuring progress for all pupils

Leaders are responsible for making sure all pupils, including those with SEND, have high-quality writing teaching that is accessible for them, appropriate for their needs and enables them to make progress. Leaders should work with the SENCO and teachers to do this. Time should be given to identify where effective teaching practices can remove barriers to learning and to decide on an approach that is in line with pupils' starting points and makes sure they progress. The approach may involve adapting teaching resources to cater for pupils' needs and scaffolding learning; this can be reduced as they become increasingly independent. Leaders should understand the graduated approach and how it can be implemented to ensure teaching is as precise as possible for all pupils[118].

Given the competing demands on class timetables and the need to ensure reading is prioritised, teachers should aim to teach writing for all within English lessons rather than planning additional teaching that requires some pupils to miss lessons. However, leaders may occasionally decide that extra teaching and practice are necessary for pupils who are at risk of falling behind in an aspect of writing (see Section 5: Pupils who need the most support).

Writing programmes

Leaders may consider purchasing a writing programme to support the teaching of one or more aspects of the writing curriculum. There may also be a role for programmes in training and guiding teachers. A rigorous programme that includes well-conceived and structured resources can help to ensure consistency if a school has a strong, clear rationale for using one.

Considering that developing an effective writing curriculum and seeing its impact takes time, schools should spend time carefully evaluating their current provision to identify areas for improvement. If leaders conclude that a programme would be beneficial for certain aspects of their writing curriculum, schools should use the guidance provided in

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[118] Department for Education and Department of Health (2015). Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years. Available at: Special educational needs and disability code of practice

this framework to help them review programmes, so they can be confident in their design. Some schools may have developed their own programmes that they prefer. If they are successful with their own writing curriculum, there is no expectation that schools should use commercially produced programmes.

Assessment

Teachers are required to make statutory teacher assessment judgements about writing at the end of reception (see Section 2: The importance of reception) and in year 6. Inevitably, teaching is influenced by these assessments, but while preparing pupils for the assessments is valuable, it can take time away from developing a wider range of skills and knowledge, potentially stifling creativity and critical thinking. The Standards and Testing Agency (STA) says, 'The frameworks [for teacher assessment] are not …intended to guide individual programmes of study, classroom practice or methodology[119].' Leaders need to consider what they want their pupils to learn; this – rather than statutory assessments – should inform their writing curriculum and teaching.

The Ofsted inspection framework expects leaders to recognise the limitations of assessment and avoid using it in a manner that imposes unnecessary burdens on staff or pupils.

Both formative and summative assessments are essential for a comprehensive understanding of pupils' writing and for supporting their development effectively.

Formative assessment

Most assessment of writing should be formative. It is integrated into daily classroom activities, focusing on ongoing feedback, pinpointing areas where pupils need additional support and informing teaching to meet the needs of individuals and the whole class. Formative assessment can include peer reviews and teachers' observations. Leaders should encourage teachers to use their formative assessment to adjust their lesson plans and teaching strategies.

Pupils' views of themselves as writers can also be valuable and might highlight a lack of self-confidence and motivation. Pupil surveys can therefore be a useful formative assessment tool to monitor pupils' self-belief.

Summative assessment

Summative assessments, typically, are conducted at the end of a unit, term or academic year to evaluate pupils' overall achievement and determine whether learning targets have

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[119] The Standards and Testing Agency (2017) Teacher assessment frameworks at the end of key stage 2. Available at: Teacher assessment frameworks at the end of key stage 2 - GOV.UK

been met. They should provide a clear picture of pupils' progress against a set of standards. Teachers can therefore use summative assessments to inform planning and teaching.

Leaders should build in summative assessment points in each year group.

Objective and subjective measures

Objective and subjective measures are two main forms of writing assessment[120]. Leaders should monitor and moderate these processes and ensure that teachers are familiar with and use both in assessing writing.

Objective measures are specific and often require a list of criteria. Examples include:

- handwriting speed
- grammar
- spelling
- punctuation
- accuracy of sentence structure

Some of these measures can be particularly useful for identifying gaps or weaknesses in transcription.

Subjective measures tend to assess a complete piece of writing for its overall effect. These can be particularly useful for identifying gaps in composition, vocabulary and language development. Examples include:

- success criteria
- comparative judgement
- writing moderation

Subjective assessment can be open to bias, but this can be mitigated by:

- clarifying success criteria and assessing against worked examples and rubrics
- using comparative judgements with large samples and extensive numbers of expert assessors[121]
- using experts rather than novices to assess the writing. Teacher assessment and, particularly, subject expert teacher assessment is more effective than peer assessment[122]

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[120] Kellogg, R.T. (1994) The Psychology of Writing. New York: Oxford University Press.

[121] Verhavert, S., Bouwer, R., Donche, V. and De Maeyer, S. (2019) 'A meta-analysis on the reliability of comparative judgement', Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice, 26(5), pp. 541-562.

[122] Graham, S., Hebert, M. and Harris, K.R. (2015) 'Formative assessment and writing: a meta-analysis', The Elementary School Journal, 115(4), pp. 523-547

Automated Writing Evaluation (AI assessment)

Computer-based writing assessments have been available for some time, but an increasing number of automated writing evaluation (AWE) programmes are now available. Not only can these convert pupils' handwriting into digital text, but they can also evaluate writing against wide-ranging assessment criteria.

There is a growing consensus that, if used appropriately, feedback from AWE can have a positive effect on pupils' writing. Meta-studies indicate that automated feedback can significantly enhance the quality of pupils' writing[123].

AWE offers some significant advantages, including the capacity to assess large amounts of text consistently[124] against clear, specified goals and to offer pupils almost instant formative feedback.

There are, nevertheless, some potential shortcomings. AWE systems are built on statistical analysis of large datasets so are more suited to objective rather than subjective assessment. AWE therefore tends to be more effective at the earlier stages of writing development[125] and for providing feedback on grammatical accuracy and lexical appropriateness rather than on content or structure[126].

It is therefore important that teachers use their professional judgement when using such tools. Although they can make tasks quicker and easier, they cannot replace the judgement and deep subject knowledge of a human expert.

At the time of writing, technology in this area is evolving rapidly. Leaders need to monitor developments and make choices, bearing in mind the best evidence on both writing development and technology.

Further information about the Department for Education's position on using generative AI in the education sector can be found in the policy paper, 'Generative artificial intelligence (AI) in education'[127].

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[123] Nunes, A., Cordeiro, C., Limpo, T., & Castro, S. L. (2022). Effectiveness of automated writing evaluation systems in school settings: A systematic review of studies from 2000 to 2020. Journal of Computer Assisted Learning, 38(2), 599–620. Link, S., Mehrzad, M., & Rahimi, M. (2020). Impact of automated writing evaluation on teacher feedback, student revision, and writing improvement. Computer Assisted Language Learning, 35(4), 605–634.

[124] Godwin-Jones, R. (2022) 'Partnering with AI: Intelligent writing assistance and instructed language learning', Language Learning & Technology, 26(2), pp. 5–24.

[125] Huang, Y. and Wilson, J. (2021) 'Using automated feedback to develop writing proficiency', Computers and Composition, 62.

[126] Bridgeman, B. and Ramineni, C. (2017) 'Design and evaluation of automated writing evaluation models: Relationships with writing in naturalistic settings', Assessing Writing, 34, pp. 62–71.

[127] Department for Education. (2025). Generative artificial intelligence (AI) in education. Available at: Generative artificial intelligence (AI) in education

Audit: Leadership and management of writing

Leadership and management of writing	Current practice
The headteacher takes responsibility for building a positive writing culture that is motivating for pupils and encompasses both reading and writing, acknowledging that they are interrelated but not inverses.	
Those responsible for leading literacy have the expertise, skills and experience to lead high-quality writing teaching and rigorous assessment.	
Those responsible for leading literacy have sufficient, dedicated time to fulfil the role.	
The leadership of writing is not at the expense of reading.	
Literacy leaders work collaboratively with the SENCO to make sure that all pupils access high-quality writing instruction that is precise, accessible and enables them to make progress.	
Leaders ensure the writing curriculum is well-sequenced and provides sufficient time for pupils to apply, practise and revisit what they have learnt.	
Leaders make sure the writing curriculum begins by securing pupils' foundational transcription and oral composition skills, and then builds on composition skills once pupils' transcription is sufficiently fluent.	
Leaders make sure routines for teaching handwriting are consistent across the school, enabling pupils to form letters legibly and develop fluency. These routines are monitored and embedded.	
If leaders select a writing programme to support the teaching of one or more aspects of the	

Leadership and management of writing	Current practice
writing curriculum, they have a clear rationale for its use.	
Professional development, including training and coaching, is planned and effective so all staff become experts in teaching writing.	
Leaders ensure that teachers have good knowledge of specific areas of writing, such as grammatical terminology, and plan appropriate CPD for teachers who need additional support.	
Leaders ensure that a shared terminology for teaching writing is used and understood across the school. For example, planning formats and grammatical terminology are consistent in and across year groups.	
The headteacher and senior leaders understand the importance of the reception year in establishing the foundations for later success and ensure that every child is supported to reach the expected level of development in Writing by the end of reception.	
The routines and models this framework describes, such as 'ready to write' approaches for handwriting and planning models for writing activities, are embedded across subjects and not limited to English lessons.	
Leaders ensure that formative and summative assessments are effective in informing and refining planning and teaching for individuals, groups and whole classes.	
Actions to be taken:	**Term actions to be reviewed by:**

Section 8: National assessments

This section summarises the current literacy primary assessments.

Early years foundation stage profile

The Early years foundation stage profile (EYFSP) assessment is a summative assessment which early years providers, usually schools, are required to complete for each child at the end of the academic year in which the child turns 5. This is usually the reception year.

Schools assess each child's level of development against 17 early learning goals across all seven areas of learning in the EYFS. Three early learning goals focus explicitly on literacy, including one on writing. For each early learning goal, practitioners must assess whether a child is meeting the expected level of development; if they are not at the 'expected' level, they are assessed as 'emerging'.

This assessment informs year 1 teachers about each child's development and learning needs. This is so that they can plan to meet the needs of all children and ensure that they move successfully from the EYFS into year 1. For example, an indication of challenges with fine motor skills might suggest specific support might be needed with handwriting in year 1. For more information on making judgments against the early learning goal for Writing see Section 2: The importance of reception.

Phonics screening check

The government introduced the statutory PSC in September 2011 for all pupils in year 1. Its purpose is to assess whether pupils can read accurately a selection of words that include common GPCs, the first step in learning to read. The screening check does not assess pupils' attainment in writing, but it may provide teachers with useful information. For example, difficulties with GPCs may indicate the need for additional support with spelling.

Key stage 1 assessments

End of key stage 1 national curriculum tests in reading, writing and mathematics became non-statutory from the 2023 to 2024 academic year. However, the STA intends to continue to develop and supply guidance and materials for optional end of key stage 1 tests. Optional key stage 1 test administration guidance can be found here. Schools can administer them how they see fit or choose not to use them at all.

Key stage 2 assessments

The key stage 2 tests and assessments are an essential part of ensuring that all pupils master the basics of reading, writing and mathematics to prepare them for secondary school.

They help teachers and parents understand how pupils are performing in relation to the age-related expectations of the national curriculum and enable primary and secondary schools to identify where pupils might need more support or where teaching could be improved.

Teacher assessment framework for writing

Teacher assessment judgements at the end of key stage 2 in writing are statutory. Teachers should use the teacher assessment frameworks[128] for this purpose.

The teacher assessment framework for writing is not an exhaustive list of criteria and should not be used as a formative assessment tool or a set of criteria for teaching. Pupils who write competently and creatively across a range of subjects and text types are likely to produce sufficient evidence to show achievement against all the relevant 'pupil can' statements to have reached (or have exceeded) the 'expected standard'.

Teachers' judgments are moderated externally each year. Local authorities conduct statutory moderation to validate judgements and ensure they are consistent with national standards. Local authorities are required to moderate at least 25% of maintained schools, academies and participating independent schools that have opted into the local authority's external moderation process.

Internal moderation is a non-statutory, but vital, process conducted in schools and, where possible, with other schools. Moderation should be collaborative, undertaken throughout the year and normally with teachers across key stages. This supports the quality assurance of teacher assessment judgements and provides an opportunity for professional development.

English grammar, punctuation and spelling test

The key stage 2 English grammar, punctuation and spelling test forms part of the statutory assessment arrangements for pupils at the end of year 6. The test assesses aspects of the national curriculum statutory programme of study, including Appendix 1: Spelling and Appendix 2: Vocabulary, grammar and punctuation.

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[128] Standards and Testing Agency. (2017) Teacher assessment frameworks at the end of key stage 2. Available at: Teacher assessment frameworks.

The English grammar, punctuation and spelling test framework[129] sets out the specific elements from the national curriculum that the grammar, punctuation and spelling test assesses. The framework, however, should not be used to guide teaching and learning. It should also not be assumed that pupils who have a comprehensive knowledge of grammar and achieve well on the assessment also have a comprehensive understanding of how to construct sentences.

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[129] Standards and Testing Agency. (2014) Key stage 2: English grammar, punctuation and spelling test framework. Available at: English grammar, punctuation and spelling test.

Appendices

Appendix A: Handwriting guidance

Maintaining a correct and comfortable sitting position and pencil grip

Teachers should encourage pupils to maintain correct finger positioning. Most pupils find the tripod grip the easiest to learn and support grips can help. Teachers should show pupils how to pinch the pencil with the index ('pointing') finger and the thumb, about a finger space from the end (on the coloured part just above the sharpened point); and how to rest the middle finger underneath the pencil to support it. If necessary, a sticker can show pupils where to place their fingers. The way a child grips the pencil will affect the quality, speed and flow of the handwriting. The grip should be relaxed, not pressing too hard on the pencil or the paper.

Finger positioning using the tripod grip:
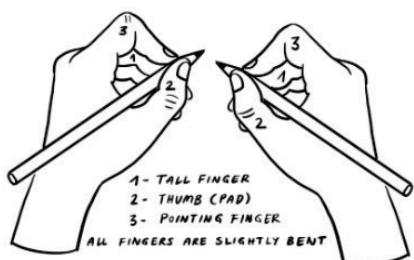
Paper positioning for left-handers:

Paper positioning for right-handers:

Letter families and relative sizes

Pupils should be taught to develop a consistent style by paying attention to how letters in each family are formed.

The 'families' are grouped according to where each letter starts, although these families may differ slightly, depending on the handwriting programme used.

Typical families are:

- c o a g q d
- i l t k j
- v w u y f
- r n m h p b
- e s x z

Pupils should be taught to write each 'family' of lower-case letters correctly on the line, and then to write words that include letters from that family.

Diagonal and horizontal joins

Pupils should be taught two basic joins: diagonal joins and horizontal joins.

The diagonal join connects:

- letters from the line to small letters
- letters from the line to tall letters
- letters from the line to a, d, g, c, o, q (These letters need an extra stroke backwards across the top of a, d, g, c, o.)

The horizontal join connects:

- v, w, x, f, r to small letters
- v, w, x, f, r to tall letters
- v, w, x, f, r to a, d, g, c, o, q

Appendix B: Morpheme Matrices

Morpheme matrices[130] can help pupils to understand and learn how to combine Latin and Greek prefixes, roots and suffixes to support their spelling and comprehension. There are other versions.

Using morpheme matrices to assemble Latin forms

Teachers can pronounce the root, explain its meaning and then show how to assemble roots and suffixes to form new words. A discussion on meanings and changes should follow. The same process can be followed for assembling prefixes and roots, building to assembling prefixes, roots and suffixes.

The teacher can then guide pupils to re-read, spell, say and write new words, including using them in sentences.

Example morpheme matrices (Latin form):

Prefixes	Latin root and meaning	Suffixes	New word
dis	**rupt** to break or burst	s ed	disrupts disrupted
inter	**rupt** to break or burst	er ible	interrupter interruptible

Using morpheme matrices to assemble Greek forms

Words in subjects such as geography, history and science often include a combination of Greek forms.

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[130] Frank, M. (2018) 'Morpheme Matrices: Sequential or Standalone Lessons for Assembling Common Prefixes, Latin Roots, Greek Forms, and Suffixes'. ATLAS, Hamline University. Available at: Morpheme Matrices: A Tool for Assembling Multi-Syllable Words - ATLAS ABE

Example morpheme matrices (Greek forms):

Teachers can introduce the prefix and root, pronounce the word and explain its meaning. They can then show how to combine the prefix and root to make subject-specific words, discuss their meanings and how the words change.

They can then progress to guiding pupils to combine the new Greek-based words with the suffixes and discuss meanings and changes. As with the Latin forms, the teacher can then guide pupils to re-read, spell, say and write new words, including using them in sentences.

Greek prefix and meanings	Greek root and meaning	Suffixes and meanings	New word
bio (life)	**graph** written or drawn	er (one who) y (subject or science)	biographer biography
geo (earth)	**graph** written or drawn	er (one who) y (subject or science)	geographer geography

Appendix C: Selecting model texts

To develop their understanding of the structures of different types of text, pupils need to study model texts which provide 'opportunities to read, analyse, and emulate models of good writing'[131]. The following four principles can be useful:

- the writing of texts should be integrated with the reading of similar texts
- the exemplar text needs to highlight the features, including the structural features of that specific text type
- teachers must scaffold the analysis of the exemplar text to ensure pupils attend to the specific features – both organisational (structural) and language features
- the texts must illustrate clearly the specific features of effective writing. The teachers may therefore need to write the text

Selecting models to exemplify the particular structure being taught requires a nuanced approach, depending on the purpose of the text and what is being analysed and taught.

It is important that pupils are not asked to write a text when they have little or limited experience of reading such texts. They need to have sufficient support to feel confident about success.

Teacher-written text

A teacher-written text is often most effective when it exemplifies the structure and language devices that are the focus of the teaching. Advantages include:

- production of a text based on the teacher's knowledge of the class
- the teacher's knowledge and authority as the author of the text
- the teacher's control of all the content of the text, which might include recently taught content for revisiting and assessment
- the opportunity for the teacher to refer to their own choices and strategies – and, possibly, changes – when discussing and analysing the text with the class
- the opportunity to adapt and adjust the text so that it is accessible for all pupils

Mentor text

If the teacher wishes to draw attention explicitly to the choices writers make in order to develop pupils' metalinguistic awareness and strengthen the link between reading and writing, a text written by a recognised and published writer/author is a good choice. Often known as 'mentor texts', such texts allow the teacher to:

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[131] Graham, S. and Perin, D., 2007. A meta-analysis of writing instruction for adolescent students. Journal of Educational Psychology, 99.

- focus on the devices and language structures the author has chosen and analyse their effects on the reader
- encourage deeper thinking about the relationship between linguistic choices and meaning
- draw on the authority of a recognised author
- enable the pupils to 'sit beside the author and study how the text is constructed and how it communicates'[132]
- highlight how the author develops clarity and coherence for a non-present reader
- link the text to the socially determined location in which the writing is situated: where is the text published? in what format? for whom? why did the author write it?

WAGOLL (What A Good One Looks Like)

If a text is to exemplify the quality to which pupils are to aspire, a text written by a proficient writer might be used. It could be written by a teacher but could also be selected from a bank of exemplar texts created by the school or available elsewhere. Such texts:

- are written above the pupils' instructional level
- are written at a level that is achievable by some pupils but that will motivate and support all pupils
- contain all the language features and structures that would be included if a pupil were to achieve all the objectives

All types of model texts can support pupils' writing, and a variety may be used over a sequence of lessons, depending on the objectives.

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[132] Culham, R., 2016. The writing thief: Using mentor texts to teach the craft of writing. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers.

Appendix D: Examples of sentence structure activities

Using sentence fragments to create complete sentences

Activity: Using sentence fragments to create complete sentences

Explanation: Pupils who are learning to form complete sentences benefit from understanding that there are two parts to a sentence:

Subject: a word naming a person, place, or thing (such as a noun or pronoun).

Verb: an action, occurrence or a state of being.

This activity reinforces this point. It can be done with pupils who have not developed transcription skills.

Example:

Pupils are given fragments of sentences and are asked to join the naming part of the sentence (subject) with an appropriate action, occurrence or state of being (verb).

| climbed the beanstalk | | he | | Jack |

| saw a giant |
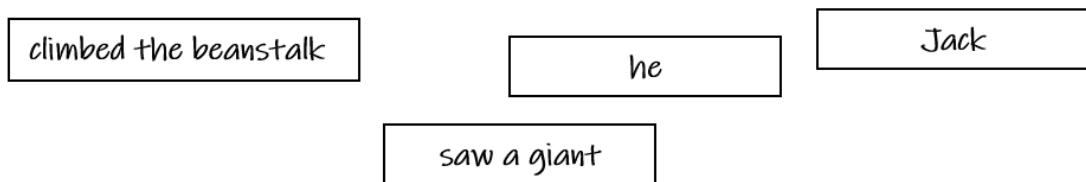
Subject: a word naming a person, place or thing (such as a noun or pronoun).	Verb: an action or state of being.
Jack	saw a giant.
He	climbed the beanstalk.

Fragments can be expanded further to use other elements of a sentence, such as adverbials, expanded noun phrases and subordinate clauses.

he	ran away	because he was scared
after	Jack	saw a giant
he	climbed	the tall, green beanstalk
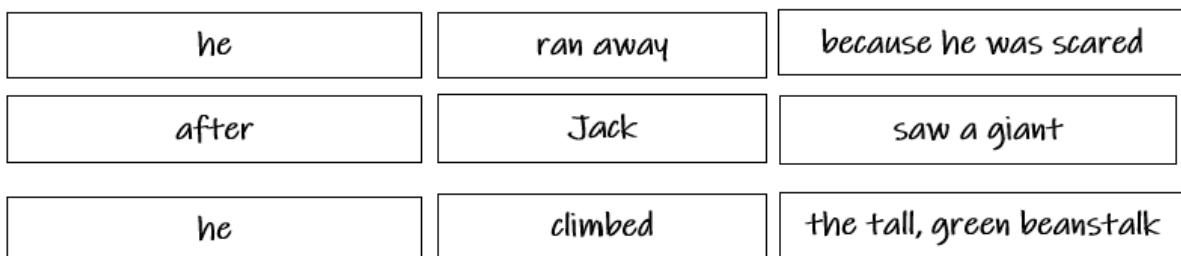
Pupils can also be given sentences and be asked to identify the subject and verb.

Jack, the bravest boy in the village, saw a terrifying giant at the top of the beanstalk.

Correcting incorrect sentence structure

Activity: Correcting incorrect sentence structure

Explanation: Asking pupils to identity and correct incorrect sentences develops a deeper understanding and awareness of:

- sentence structure
- correct punctuation

Example:

The teacher can provide pupils with lines such as:

The tall, green beanstalk. (no verb)

Saw a terrifying giant at the top of the beanstalk. (no subject)

he saw a giant (no punctuation)

Pupils are then asked to complete the lines as sentences, including the correct punctuation.

Extending sentences using conjunctions

Activity: Extending sentences using conjunctions

Explanation: Activities that encourage pupils to extend single-clause sentences using conjunctions develop pupils' understanding and use of sentence structure.

A conjunction links two words, phrases or clauses together. There are two main types of conjunctions:

- co-ordinating conjunctions (e.g. and) link two words, phrases or clauses together as an equal pair
- subordinating conjunctions (e.g. when) introduce a subordinate clause

Example:

A teacher may encourage a pupil to complete the following sentence starters:

Jack climbed the beanstalk because...

Jack stole the gold so...

Jack climbed the beanstalk but...

Jack ran away when ...

Sentence combining

Activity: Sentence combining

Explanation: This activity encourages pupils to combine two or more single-clause sentences to make one or more grammatically correct sentences that contain all the relevant information and ideas.

It promotes the use of word classes such as pronouns and promotes cohesion within and across sentences.

Example:

Jack climbed the beanstalk. Jack saw a giant. The giant was terrifying.

These three single-clause sentences might become:

Jack climbed the beanstalk and saw a terrifying giant.

Sentence combining can begin orally in reception using single-clause sentences and can be developed by adding further single-clause sentences joined by conjunctions.

Using pictures

Activity: Using pictures

Explanation: Using simple pictures representing subjects and verbs clearly can reduce cognitive load when pupils are practising sentence structure.

They can be used later to develop sentences into paragraphs.

Example:

A picture of a boy looking at and climbing a beanstalk can generate:

Jack saw a beanstalk. He decided to climb it.

This can be developed into:

After noticing the beanstalk, Jack decided to climb it.

The picture ensures that the pupils can concentrate on the sentence structure and not on generating the idea, but it also leaves room for some creativity.

Jack decided to climb the beanstalk that had magically appeared in the garden.

Adding information using adverbials

Activity: Adding information using adverbials

Explanation: Asking pupils to extend a sentence using an adverbial develops understanding and awareness of:

- sentence structure
- clauses and phrases
- punctuation

Adverbial: a word or phrase that is used, like an adverb, to modify a verb or clause. Of course, adverbs can be used as adverbials, but many other types of words and phrases can be used this way, including preposition phrases and subordinate clauses[133]. They can give extra information about time (when), place (where) and manner (how).

Example:

Pupils can practise adding adverbials to sentences by answering when, where and how the main action happened. For example:

Jack climbed the beanstalk.

Time, place or manner	Example sentence
When?	Shortly after dawn, Jack climbed the beanstalk. Jack climbed the beanstalk straight after breakfast.
Where?	At the outskirts of the village, Jack climbed the beanstalk Jack climbed the beanstalk in the next field.
How?	With great difficulty, Jack climbed the beanstalk. Jack, with a very deep breath, climbed the beanstalk.

Using the passive voice

Activity: Using the passive voice

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[133] Department for Education, 2014. The national curriculum in England. Framework document, December 2014. London: Department for Education.

Explanation: Asking pupils to change sentences using the passive voice shows them how to change the emphasis of a sentence. It develops their understanding and awareness of:

- subject and object
- verb forms
- sentence structure

Example:

Pupils identify the subject and object of a sentence and reverse their position.

The giant shut the heavy, wooden door.

becomes…

The heavy, wooden door was shut by the giant.

Distinguishing between and practising the four types of sentence

Activity: Distinguishing between and practising the four different sentence types

Explanation: The national curriculum requires that, from year 2, pupils learn how to use sentences with different forms: statement, question, exclamation and command.

Statement: tells you something.

Question: asks something and usually requires an answer.

Exclamation: starts with 'What' or 'How'.

Command: starts with an imperative verb. It orders or commands someone to do something.

Example:

The teacher provides sentences and asks the pupils to identify the sentence type (statement, question, command, exclamation).

Sentence type	Example sentence
Statement	Jack climbed the beanstalk.
Question	Did Jack climb the beanstalk?
Command	Climb the beanstalk, Jack!
Exclamation	What an enormous beanstalk!

Pupils can be asked to write a statement, command, question or exclamation. Asking them to do this can support their understanding of sentence structure in a number of ways:

- embeds understanding of the 4 sentence types
- develops understanding of the way in which the grammar of a sentence reflects the sentence type
- develops an understanding of the punctuation required by sentences of different types

Appendix E: Sentence examples aligned with the grammar and punctuation in the national curriculum

Schools should plan for progression from straightforward, single-clause sentences to more varied sentence structures, drawing on the grammar and punctuation requirements of the national curriculum.

Knowing about grammar and punctuation supports pupils to write accurately and in a way that the reader can understand. It also gives them the tools to make explicit choices as they construct sentences and express themselves with increasing clarity and sophistication.

Reception

Early learning goal for Writing:

Write simple phrases and sentences that can be read by others.

Sentence examples:

- Jack had magic beans. *(Phonetically plausible: majic, beens)
- Mum was sad.

Year 1

Grammar and punctuation:

Sentence

- How words can combine to make sentences
- Joining words and joining clauses using *and*

Punctuation

- Separation of words with spaces
- Introduction to capital letters, full stops, question marks and exclamation marks to demarcate sentences
- Capital letters for names and for the personal pronoun *I*

Sentence examples:

- Jack went to the market.
- Mum was sad and she threw the beans.
- He saw a giant and a pot of gold.
- Jack took the hen and the harp.

Year 2

Grammar and punctuation:

Sentence

- Subordination (using when, if, that, because) and co-ordination (using or, and, but)
- Expanded noun phrases for description and specification
- How the grammatical patterns in a sentence indicate its function as a statement, question, exclamation or command

Punctuation

- Use of capital letters, full stops, question marks and exclamation marks to demarcate sentences
- Commas to separate items in a list
- Apostrophes to mark where letters are missing in spelling and to mark singular possession in nouns

Sentence examples:

- Jack's mother told him to sell the cow because they needed money.
- Jack got magic beans from an old man but his mum was angry.
- Jack saw an enormous, sleeping giant.
- The beans grew into a big beanstalk.
- Why did Jack climb the beanstalk?
- What a beautiful castle!
- Climb the beanstalk.

Year 3

Grammar and punctuation:

Sentence

- Expressing time, place and cause using conjunctions, adverbs and prepositions

Punctuation

- Introduction to inverted commas to punctuate direct speech

Sentence examples:

- Jack climbed the beanstalk once his mother had gone to bed.
- Finally, Jack arrived at the castle on top of the clouds.
- Carefully, Jack climbed the beanstalk so that he could satisfy his curiosity.

Year 4

Grammar and punctuation:

Sentence

- Noun phrases expanded by the addition of modifying adjectives, nouns and preposition phrases
- Fronted adverbials

Punctuation

- Use of inverted commas and other punctuation to indicate direct speech
- Apostrophes to mark plural possession
- Use of commas after fronted adverbials

Sentence examples:

- After saying farewell to his mother, Jack carefully climbed the gigantic beanstalk until he reached the magnificent castle in the clouds.
- When he eventually reached the top of the gigantic beanstalk, Jack was exhausted.

Year 5

Grammar and punctuation:

Sentence

- Relative clauses beginning with who, which, where, when, whose, that, or an omitted relative pronoun
- Indicating degrees of possibility using adverbs or modal verbs

Punctuation

- Brackets, dashes or commas to indicate parenthesis
- Use of commas to clarify meaning or avoid ambiguity

Sentence examples:

- Through the small crack in the castle door, Jack could see the enormous giant who was asleep in the kitchen.
- A magnificent castle, which had a huge front door, stood on top of the clouds.
- Tiptoeing past the sleeping giant, Jack wondered whether he could make it out of the castle alive.
- The giant was certainly going to be angry when he noticed his harp was missing.

Year 6

Grammar and punctuation:

Sentence

- Use of the passive to affect the presentation of information in a sentence
- The difference between structures typical of informal speech and structures appropriate for formal speech and writing or the use of subjunctive forms

Punctuation

- Use of the semi-colon, colon and dash to mark the boundary between independent clauses
- Use of the colon to introduce a list and use of semi-colons within lists
- Punctuation of bullet points to list information
- How hyphens can be used to avoid ambiguity

Sentence examples:

- The enraged giant chased Jack down the gigantic beanstalk.
- Jack was chased down the gigantic beanstalk by the enraged giant.

Appendix F: Progression of the writing process

The writing process mirrors the thinking process. The process is the same for all ages. It means that teachers can use the writing process in all year groups, even when transcription skills are not well developed. The differences will be mediated by how much procedural knowledge has been automatised – handwriting, spelling, sentence structure – along with language development and content knowledge.

The following examples show the progression of the process in different year groups but with the same topic. The elements of the process are consistent through the year groups.

Example: Volcanoes – Years 2, 4 and 6.

All pupils have been studying the destruction and preservation of Pompeii. As part of that study, they are also learning how Vesuvius erupted.

Year 2

Pupils have a good knowledge of the effects of a volcanic eruption through their study and they have gained some tier 3 vocabulary knowledge. Using a labelled diagram, pupils will explain to their class how Vesuvius erupted (**goal**).

Through videos, animations and explanations from class reading, they create a diagram of Vesuvius, and a flow diagram of the process and order of its eruption, along with a bank of relevant tier 2 and 3 vocabulary. Pupils have an outline of the volcano and a number and heading for each stage of the process of eruption – **planning**.

Pupils create a diagram of Vesuvius with labels and text boxes explaining the stages that led to the eruption and the results for Pompeii. (Where transcription skills are not sufficiently developed, support will be needed.) – **drafting**.

After each numbered text box is complete, pupils share their work with peers and teachers, make adjustments and additions, and ensure they have included appropriate vocabulary. This process continues until the explanatory diagram is complete – **revising**.

The teachers feed back to pupils regarding the accuracy of their spelling and punctuation – **editing**.

Using their labelled diagrams, pupils present to other groups an explanation of how Vesuvius erupted – **sharing**.

Year 4

Pupils compose an explanation text of the stages of Vesuvius' eruption and the effects on Pompeii. The text will be supported by a labelled diagram (**goal**).

Pupils use their current knowledge through their study of Pompeii, along with their study of the eruption of explosive volcanoes in geography, to develop an outline of the stages that led to Vesuvius' eruption. They fill in any gaps in their knowledge through discussion. They sketch an outline of their text using a non-narrative planning format to plot paragraphs and draw an outline diagram highlighting the stages – **planning**.

They list useful tier 3 vocabulary along with necessary connecting adverbials relevant to explanation writing – **planning**.

Pupils make a first sketch of an introduction, the stages of eruption, the effects and a concluding paragraph – **drafting**.

Each paragraph is reviewed with peers and the teacher for accuracy and alignment with the plan and added to and/or adjusted for clarity and use of the connecting adverbials – **revising.**

Pupils all check their own and their partner's writing for accurate spelling and punctuation. Feedback from the teacher acts as a final check – **editing**.

Final drafts are copied into writing book that will be taken home for parents to read – **sharing**.

Year 6

Pupils have a good knowledge of the eruption of Vesuvius through their studies, and their learning around explosive volcanoes in year 4. They have read a version of Pliny the Younger's letter describing some of the events. They are now going to write their own eyewitness account of an eruption but from the perspective of a volcanologist who understands how explosive eruptions occur (**goal**).

Using Pliny's letter and their work from year 4, pupils sketch out not only the process of an explosive eruption but also what an eyewitness would actually see, experience and feel, and link these together. They plot their ideas for paragraphs into a standard non-fiction structure – **planning**.

Appropriate scientific vocabulary is listed, along with relevant language and connecting adverbials and phrases – **planning**.

Pupils write their initial ideas into paragraphs, linking the stages of the eruption with what they might see, feel or experience – **drafting**.

Pupils reread and improve each paragraph, consult peers and adults for further improvement of ideas, language and content, and ensure cohesive devices support coherence for the reader – **revising**.

Most pupils will be able to ensure accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar through self-reflection but may consult peers and teachers – **editing**.

Once revised and edited to the satisfaction of the pupil and teacher, pupils use the text as a prompt for interviews when they are recorded as eyewitnesses following an eruption – **sharing**.

Fiction examples for the writing process in years 2, 4 and 6 can be found in Section 4: Composition.

Appendix G: Strategies for developing children's awareness of the reader

Strategy 1

Teachers explicitly acknowledge the non-present reader in demonstrating writing for pupils.

Example

I'm not sure if I've been clear enough here for the reader, so I'm going to add another sentence to explain this point further or maybe check with someone whether this makes sense[134].

Strategy 2

In reading, teachers question the fallibility of the author when there may be ambiguity, thereby connecting the writer to the reader.

Example

Are we all clear what the author is saying? Is anyone confused? What more information could the author have given us to explain it better?[135]

Strategy 3

Present readers are used as a simple bridge to the non-present reader.

Example

Peer-to-peer review of writing encourages young writers to understand that the purpose of writing is for it to be read. By having a reader close at hand, the writer can receive feedback close to the composing task but also gains the idea that the writing will be read after composition.

Strategy 4

The teacher's feedback on pupils' writing explicitly refers to the reader, making the connection between the writing and the reader

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[134] MacArthur, A. (2017). Instruction in Evaluation and Revision. In MacArthur, C. A., Graham, S. W., & Fitzgerald, J. (Eds.), Handbook of Writing Research. New York: Guildford Press.

[135] Beck, I., McGowan, M., Hamilton, R., & Kucan, L. (2004). Questioning the Author: An Approach for Enhancing Student Engagement with Text. International Reading Association.

Example

Is the character old? I can't tell from reading the description. Perhaps add a relative clause to help the reader get a better picture.

I am not quite sure from your text what lava is. Can you add more detail in parenthesis so that it is clear for the reader?

Strategy 5

The teacher not only teaches the use of cohesive devices but is also explicit about their effects, in terms of the writer's clarity and the reader's understanding.

Example

Why has the writer linked these clauses with the word 'although'? What is that telling the reader about the first idea? What would change if the writer had used 'and'?' What might the reader think if the word was missing altogether?

Appendix H: Models for whole-text structures

Pupils can use models for whole texts in the planning phase of the writing process. Simple, memorable whole-school planning models can reduce the cognitive demands of composition. The models can become more sophisticated as pupils' writing develops but the essential structure should remain consistent. Pupils should be able to refer to them during drafting.

Many simple structures are available for planning stories, covering similar elements. For example:

Figure 4: Box plan

|	
Opening: *Where is it?* *Who are the characters?*	
Build up: *What happens leading up to the problem?*	
Problem: *What goes wrong?*	
Resolution: *How is the problem resolved?*	

Figure 5: Story mountain
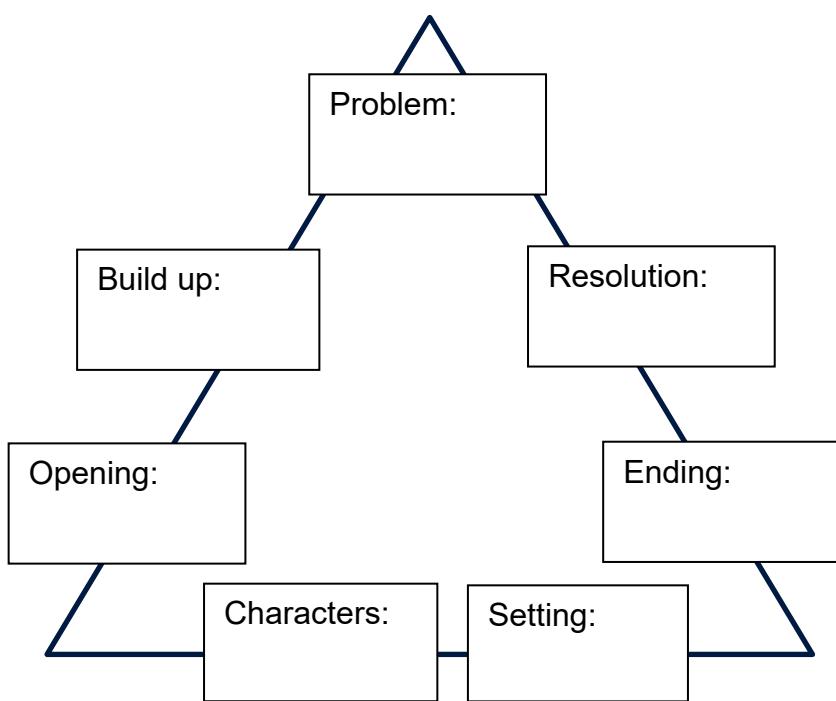
The 'burger' or 'temple' models can be used for most writing. Both these models focus attention on paragraphs, helping to develop pupils' understanding that longer texts depend on writing and organising good paragraphs. They also reflect the fact that texts usually require an introduction and a conclusion, with the 'meat' or 'pillars' of the composition, the key points to be made, as the paragraphs in the middle, so that all sections build into a coherent and cohesive whole.

The completed model should show each paragraph's main idea or topic, with some indication about how the idea is to be expanded. Using paragraphs effectively is important for the overall coherence of a text.

Figure 6: Burger model and temple model
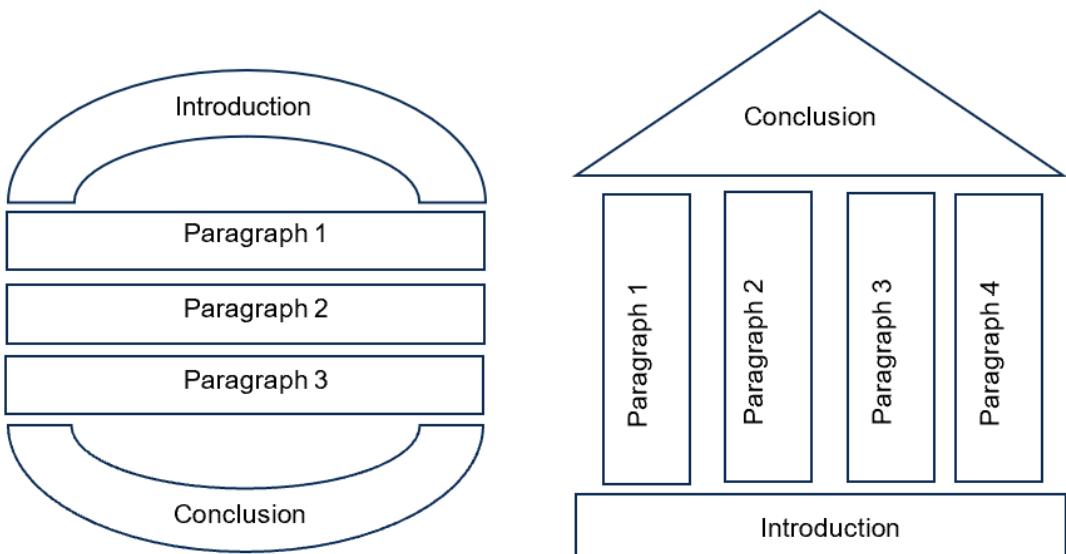
Appendix I: Cohesion

To produce coherent texts, the writer must provide a sense of connectedness between different elements of their writing. Although readers decide whether a text is coherent, writers can create connectedness and cohesion through the use of cohesive devices. A number of cohesive devices can be explicitly taught to support pupil to establish cohesion in their writing.

Pupils who are developing their use of cohesive devices in their writing tend to start by using reference and conjunctions before integrating lexical cohesion. They find using substitution and ellipsis more demanding, since this requires a wider vocabulary and confidence with sentence structure. Sentence combining activities greatly enhance the development of cohesion at a local level.

Cohesive devices

Reference

Using pronouns and determiners can refer the reader back to information previously mentioned and enhance local connectedness.

Examples

- Jack climbed the beanstalk. He saw a giant and a pot of gold.
- Jack didn't want to see that giant again.

Conjunctions

These link ideas across phrases, clauses and sentences and also enhance local connectedness.

Examples

- Jack sniffed the air, but he could smell nothing.
- Jack's mother told him to sell the cow because they needed money.

Adverbials

These indicate to the reader when, where, how or why the action in the sentence is occurring and enhance local and topic connectedness. They are vital for creating mental models of a text for readers and are significant aids to coherence[136].

Examples

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[136] Gernsbacher, M. A. (1997). Two decades of structure building. Discourse Processes, 23(3), 265–304.

- Shortly after dawn, Jack climbed the beanstalk.
- On the outskirts of the village, Jack climbed the beanstalk.
- With great difficulty, Jack climbed the beanstalk.
- To reach the giant's castle, Jack climbed the beanstalk

Connecting adverbs

These provide a way of providing a transition between two ideas and enhance local connectedness across sentences and topic coherence across paragraphs.

Moreover, meanwhile, next, then, instead, finally, nonetheless.

Examples

- Jack was climbing the beanstalk. Meanwhile, his mother was waiting at home.
- Jack was nervous before he climbed the beanstalk. Nonetheless, he reached the top.

Lexical cohesion

This is the use of related words throughout a text to help both local and topic cohesion.

Examples

- Repetition of the same word: The giant is a greedy and fearsome villain. The giant lives in a castle in the sky.
- Use of synonyms: The beanstalk stood next to the river. It was the main waterway through the town.

Substitution

This uses a generic term to avoid repetition.

Examples

- Jack really wanted the gold. He got it.

Ellipsis

This eliminates elements with no loss of meaning as the meaning is implied and clear.

Examples

- Jack was going to run but [he] didn't [run].

Consistent use of verb tense

Using verb tense consistently is particularly important. Inconsistency dramatically undermines cohesion and reduces the coherence of the text for the reader[137].

Paragraphs

Logically sequenced paragraphs greatly enhance coherence[138]. See Appendix H.

Table 1: Words and phrases for cohesion within paragraphs

Time and time order	Giving examples	Contrasting information/argument	Emphasising	Conclusion
first	for example	however	especially	in conclusion
in addition	for instance	even though	particularly	in closing
after	specifically	in contrast	in particular	in summary
last	particularly	otherwise	obviously	as a result
then	in particular	on the other hand	above all	consequently
next	as an illustration	although	most important(ly)	finally
before	namely	but	primarily	therefore
finally	such as	yet	certainly	thus
later	expressly	instead	moreover	in the end
meanwhile	research indicates	therefore	notably	as a result of
	like		keep in mind	
	including			

[137] Perera, K. (1984). Children's Writing and Reading. Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell.
[138] Halliday, M. A. K., & Hasan, R. (1976). Cohesion in English. London: Longman.

Table 2: Words and phrases for cohesion between paragraphs

Equal importance	Greater importance	Less importance
Another important point	Even more important	It is also worth considering
Just as important as	Of even more importance	Seemingly unimportant to many but
We should also consider	An even greater consideration	A small but important consideration
Another consideration	The most crucial point is	
Of equal importance	Perhaps even more important	

Glossary

Adverbial

Meaning: An adverbial is a word or phrase that is used, like an adverb, to modify a verb or clause.

Adverbs can be used as adverbials, but many other types of words and phrases can be used this way, including preposition phrases and subordinate clauses.

Alphabetic code

Meaning: How letters or groups of letters represent the sounds of the language.

Automaticity

Meaning: The ability to do things without conscious thought or attention.

Cognitive load

Meaning: The mental effort needed to process information or complete a task. When working memory is overloaded, it can lead to difficulty in processing and retaining information. (See **working memory**.)

Coherence

Meaning: The relationships within a text (spoken or written) that contribute to its meaning.

Topic coherence (also referred to as global coherence) refers to how sentences and paragraphs contribute to the unity of the whole text (i.e. whether it is coherent and so makes sense).

Local coherence is about how sentences and ideas are logically connected to one another.

Cohesion

Meaning: A text has cohesion if it is clear how the meanings of its parts fit together. Cohesive devices can help to do this.

Cohesive device

Meaning: Cohesive devices are words used to show how the different parts of a text fit together. In other words, they create cohesion.

Some examples of cohesive devices are:

- determiners and pronouns, which can refer to earlier or later words
- conjunctions and adverbs, which can make relations between words clear

- ellipsis of expected words.

Comparative judgement

Meaning: Judges compare two responses and decide which is better. Following repeated comparisons, the resulting data is statistically modelled and responses placed on a scale of relative quality.

Decoding

Meaning: In decoding, pupils are taught to look at graphemes in written words from left to right and to say each corresponding phoneme in turn. Then they blend the phonemes to say the whole word.

Drafting

Meaning: Stage of writing involving writing down key ideas and determining a structure for writing.

Editing

Meaning: Stage of writing involving making changes to ensure writing is accurate, cohesive and coherent; checking spelling and grammar.

Emergent writing

Meaning: Children experimenting with mark-making or playing at writing before they formally start writing.

Etymology

Meaning: A word's etymology is its history: its origins in earlier forms of English or other languages, and how its form and meaning have changed. Many words in English have come from Greek, Latin or French.

Executive function

Meaning: Higher-order cognitive skills that help manage and organise thinking, emotions, and behaviour.

Grammatical structures

Meaning: The rules and patterns that govern how words, phrases, and clauses are arranged in a language to form sentences.

Grapheme

Meaning: A letter, or combination of letters, that corresponds to a single phoneme within a word.

Grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs)

Meaning: The links between letters, or combinations of letters (graphemes) and the speech sounds (phonemes) that they represent. A single phoneme may be represented in writing in English by one, two, three or four letters constituting a single grapheme; a single grapheme may correspond to different phonemes in different words.

Gross motor skills

Meaning: The skills that pupils develop using their whole body.

Long-term memory

Meaning: The process of storing and retrieving information over an extended period, allowing pupils to retain knowledge and skills for future use.

Model text

Meaning: Examples of writing which the teacher can use to illustrate specific features to pupils.

Modelled writing

Meaning: Teacher assumes the role of the expert writer to demonstrate writing techniques to pupils.

Morpheme matrices

Meaning: Tools used to demonstrate how to combine prefixes, roots and suffixes and to support pupils' understanding of their meanings.

Pupils draw on phonic, orthographic and morphemic knowledge to spell each morpheme.

Morpheme

Meaning: A morpheme is the smallest unit of meaning in grammar. Free morphemes can stand alone (e.g. dog). Roots, prefixes and suffixes in a word are all morphemes. Bound morphemes are attached to other morphemes. Inflections are examples of bound morphemes (e.g. dog + s). (See **morphology**.)

Morphology

Meaning: A word's morphology is its internal make-up in terms of root words and suffixes or prefixes, as well as other kinds of change such as the change of mouse to mice.

Morphology may be used to produce different inflections of the same word (e.g. boy – boys), or entirely new words (e.g. boy – boyish) belonging to the same word family. A

word that contains two or more root words is a compound (e.g. news+paper, bird+house).

Motor dexterity/fine motor skills

Meaning: Fine motor skills involve small muscles working with the brain and nervous system to control movements in areas such as the hands, fingers, lips, tongue and eyes.

Noun

Meaning: The surest way to identify nouns is by the ways they can be used after determiners such as the: for example, most nouns will fit into the frame "The __ matters/matter."

Nouns are sometimes called 'naming words' because they name people, places and 'things'; this is often true, but it doesn't help to distinguish nouns from other word classes. For example, prepositions can name places and verbs can name 'things' such as actions.

Nouns may be classified as common (e.g. boy, day) or proper (e.g. Ivan, Wednesday), and also as countable (e.g. thing, boy) or non-countable (e.g. stuff, money). These classes can be recognised by the determiners they combine with.

Orthography

Meaning: The legitimate spelling patterns of a language (from the Greek orthos – straight, right or correct – and the Greek graphos – written).

Passive

Meaning: The sentence '*It was eaten by our dog.*' is the passive of '*Our dog ate it.*' A passive is recognisable from:

- the past participle form (eaten)
- the normal object (it) turned into the subject
- the normal subject (our dog) turned into an optional preposition phrase with by as its head
- the verb be (was), or some other verb such as get.

A verb is not 'passive' just because it has a passive meaning: it must be the passive version of an active verb.

Phoneme

Meaning: A phoneme is the smallest unit of sound that signals a distinct, contrasting meaning.

For example: the sound /t/ contrasts with /k/ to signal the difference between tap and cap; the sound /t/ contrasts with /l/ to signal the difference between bought and ball.

It is this contrast in meaning that tells us there are two distinct phonemes at work.

There are around 44 phonemes in English; the exact number depends on regional accents.

A single phoneme may be represented in writing by one, two, three or four letters constituting a single grapheme.

Rhetorical devices

Meaning: Techniques used to communicate and persuade in speech and writing.

Root word

A word's morphology is its internal make-up in terms of root words and suffixes or prefixes, as well as other kinds of change such as the change of mouse to mice.

Morphology may be used to produce different inflections of the same word (e.g. boy – boys), or entirely new words (e.g. boy – boyish) belonging to the same word family.

A word that contains two or more root words is a compound (e.g. news+paper, bird+house). When looking in a dictionary, we sometimes have to look for the root word (or words) of the word we are interested in.

Scaffold/scaffolding

Meaning: Providing enough support so that pupils can successfully complete tasks that they could not yet do independently.

Sentence stems/sentence frames

Meaning: Phrases that provide a structure or starting point for writing, helping pupils to construct clear, complete sentences.

Sentence

Meaning: A sentence is a group of words which are grammatically connected to each other but not to any words outside the sentence.

The form of a sentence's main clause shows whether it is being used as a statement, a question, a command or an exclamation.

A sentence may consist of a single clause or it may contain several clauses held together by subordination or co-ordination.

Classifying sentences as 'simple', 'complex' or 'compound' can be confusing, because a 'simple' sentence may be complicated, and a 'complex' one may be straightforward.

The terms 'single-clause sentence' and 'multi-clause sentence' may be more helpful.

Text type

Meaning: The purpose of the text determines what type of text it is and therefore the structure and language it requires.

Transcription

Meaning: The skills needed to transfer what the writer wants to say into symbols on the page.

Underwriting

Meaning: Transcribing a pupil's writing using conventional spelling, either directly under or above the child's writing, or at the bottom of the page.

Worked example

Meaning: A problem that has already been solved, with every step fully explained and clearly shown, as an example pupils can learn from.

Working memory

Meaning: The short-term memory used for holding and processing information in a readily accessible form. It has limited capacity.

Writing fluency

Meaning: How smoothly and quickly a pupil can put their thoughts into written words. Fluent writers demonstrate automaticity in writing words, allowing them to convey their intended meaning.

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