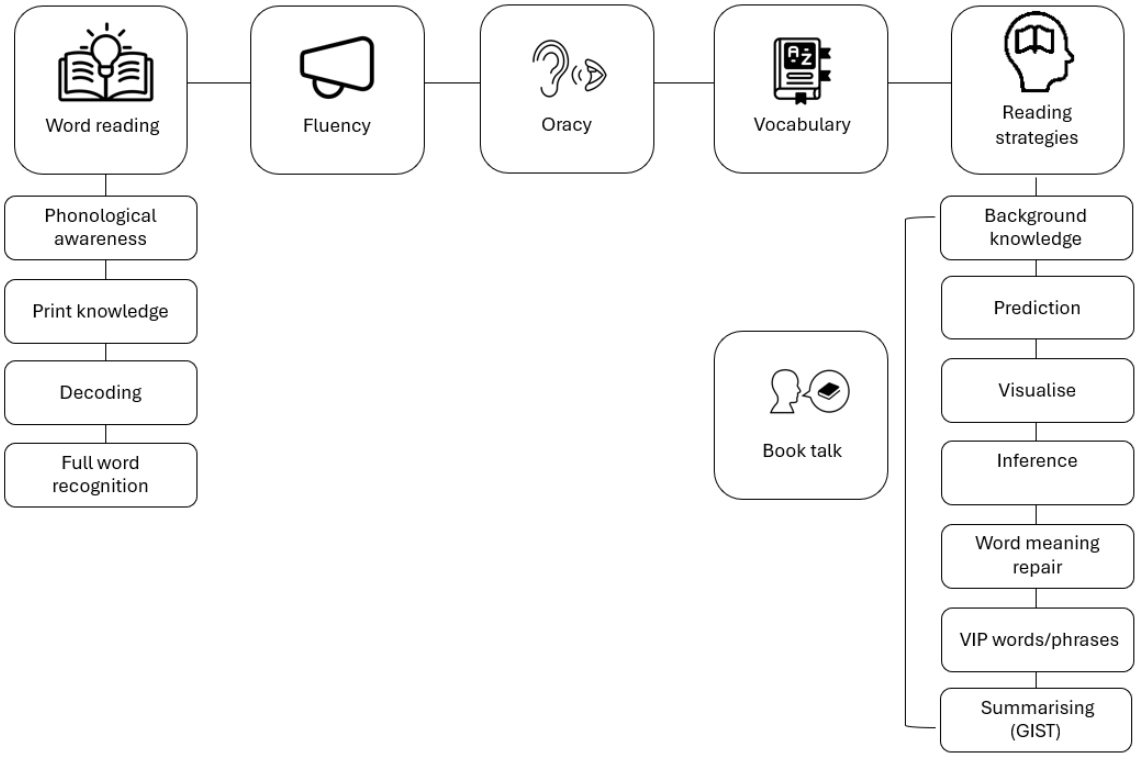
The Waltham Gateway Academy Approach to teaching English

Reading



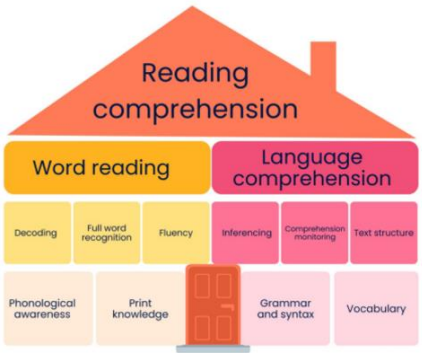
At Waltham Gateway, we believe that reading is the gateway to learning. Our aim is for every child to become a fluent, confident and enthusiastic reader who reads widely for pleasure, knowledge and understanding.

Reading is prioritised across the school because it enables pupils to access the full curriculum and develop independence as learners. Our reading curriculum is designed to ensure pupils develop:

- secure phonics and decoding skills
- fluency and automaticity
- strong vocabulary and language comprehension
- a love of literature and reading for pleasure
- the ability to apply reading across the wider curriculum

Carlie Smart

Our approach reflects established research including the Simple View of Reading *(Philip B. Gough and William E. Tunmer),* which recognises that reading comprehension is the product of word recognition and language comprehension. It is also informed by evidence from the Education Endowment Foundation, which highlights the importance of systematic phonics instruction, explicit teaching of comprehension strategies and opportunities for structured discussion around texts.



Early Reading and Phonics (Early Years and Key Stage One)

Early reading begins in the Early Years Foundation Stage, where children are immersed in language, stories and print.

We use Bug Club Phonics as our systematic synthetic phonics programme. This provides a clearly sequenced and cumulative progression for teaching:

- grapheme–phoneme correspondences
- blending for reading
- segmenting for spelling
- high-frequency and tricky words

Phonics is taught daily to ensure children develop secure decoding skills and the foundations for fluent reading.

Application in Reading

In Early Years, children apply the focus phonemes taught in phonics through reading opportunities within continuous provision, allowing them to practise decoding and comprehension skills in meaningful contexts.

Adults support learning by:

- modelling blending and decoding strategies

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- reinforcing phoneme recognition
- developing early comprehension through questioning and discussion

Children read decodable texts matched to their phonics knowledge, enabling them to practise reading with accuracy and confidence.

Reading Fluency

Reading fluency is a key focus of our reading curriculum as it bridges the gap between word recognition and comprehension.

Fluent readers are able to read with:

- **automaticity** – recognising words accurately and effortlessly
- **appropriate pace** – reading smoothly without unnecessary pauses
- **prosody** – using expression, phrasing and intonation to reflect meaning

Teachers model fluent reading regularly through shared and whole-class reading sessions. Pupils are provided with opportunities to practise reading aloud, reread texts and develop confidence and expression when reading.

Developing fluency allows pupils to focus their cognitive energy on understanding the meaning of the text, rather than decoding individual words. This aligns with research highlighted in the Ofsted Reading Framework, which identifies fluency as a critical component of reading development

Reading for Pleasure

Developing a love of reading is central to our curriculum.

We use The Power of Reading to engage pupils with high-quality literature. This approach places carefully selected texts at the centre of learning and promotes deep engagement with stories, language and ideas.

Through this approach pupils develop:

- a strong reading culture
- deep engagement with texts
- vocabulary knowledge
- creative and critical responses to literature

Carlie Smart

High-quality texts are used as drivers for learning, enabling pupils to explore themes, vocabulary and ideas through discussion, drama and writing.

Whole-Class Reading

From Key Stage one onwards, pupils participate in whole-class reading sessions where teachers model fluent reading and explicitly teach comprehension strategies.

Whole-class texts are selected to develop:

- reading fluency
- vocabulary knowledge
- background knowledge
- oracy and discussion skills

Teachers explicitly teach the **key reading domains**, including:

- vocabulary and word meaning
- visualisation
- skimming and scanning
- retrieval
- sequencing
- prediction
- identifying the main idea
- inference
- summarising

These strategies are explicitly modelled and practised to support pupils in understanding how skilled readers construct meaning from texts.

Collaborative Reading

Collaborative reading provides opportunities for pupils to read and discuss texts with peers and adults. Through dialogue, pupils articulate their thinking; justify their interpretations and respond to the ideas of others, strengthening both comprehension and oracy.

Adaptive Teaching and Inclusion

At Waltham Gateway, all pupils are supported to access reading through inclusive practice and adaptive teaching.

Teachers support pupils by:

- pre-teaching key vocabulary
- modelling comprehension strategies
- providing scaffolded questioning
- chunking texts and using visual supports
- adapting tasks to meet pupils' needs

Targeted interventions are provided for pupils who require additional support with decoding, fluency or comprehension to ensure all pupils become successful readers.

Reading Across the Curriculum

Reading is embedded across the wider curriculum to support knowledge acquisition and subject understanding.

Teachers select high-quality texts within foundation subjects to enrich topics and deepen learning. Through reading in subjects such as PSHE, history, geography and science, pupils develop:

- subject-specific vocabulary
- background knowledge
- the ability to read for information

This supports pupils in developing both reading comprehension and curriculum knowledge.

Assessment and Monitoring

Reading progress is monitored through:

- phonics assessments
- teacher assessment during reading lessons
- comprehension discussions
- observation of fluency and accuracy
- termly summative assessments

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Assessment information is used to inform teaching and ensure that instruction is responsive to pupils' needs.

Impact

Through our reading curriculum, pupils develop:

- secure phonics knowledge
- fluent and expressive reading
- strong comprehension strategies
- a rich and expanding vocabulary
- a lifelong enjoyment of reading

Reading enables pupils at Waltham Gateway to become curious, knowledgeable and independent learners.

Reading Culture

Across the academy, we prioritise daily opportunities for pupils to experience high-quality literature through Snack and Story sessions. During this time, pupils share rich, diverse class texts with their teacher in a relaxed environment that promotes enjoyment and engagement.

These sessions allow pupils to:

- hear fluent and expressive reading modelled by adults
- encounter a wide range of high-quality texts and authors
- develop vocabulary and language comprehension
- engage in meaningful discussion about books
- build cultural capital and background knowledge
- develop empathy and understanding of different perspectives

Research highlights that reading aloud beyond the early years significantly supports vocabulary development and comprehension, as pupils encounter language structures and vocabulary that may exceed their independent reading level. Work by Isabel L. Beck and Margaret McKeown emphasises the importance of explicit vocabulary discussion when engaging with rich texts.

Carlie Smart

Book Talk

Book Talk is embedded within reading sessions to promote discussion and deepen pupils' understanding of texts.

Through structured and informal dialogue, pupils are encouraged to:

- discuss characters, themes and authorial choices
- explain their thinking using evidence from the text
- ask questions and respond to the ideas of others
- make predictions and interpretations
- explore ambitious vocabulary

This dialogic approach supports language development and comprehension. Research by Robin Alexander highlights the importance of dialogic teaching in promoting deeper thinking through structured classroom talk.

Book Talk also supports the language comprehension strands of Scarborough's Reading Rope, particularly vocabulary, background knowledge and verbal reasoning.

Writing

At Waltham Gateway, our writing curriculum aims to develop confident, fluent and purposeful writers who can communicate their ideas effectively for a range of audiences and purposes. We recognise that writing is a complex process that requires pupils to coordinate multiple skills simultaneously.



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Transcription – spelling, handwriting and sentence construction
Composition – generating ideas, organising them and communicating meaning
Executive function-mental skills that help you plan, focus, manage tasks and regulate behaviour to achieve goals.

Our curriculum is designed so that pupils develop secure transcription skills which gradually become automatic, enabling them to focus their cognitive resources on composing and refining their ideas.

Our approach draws on guidance from the Writing Framework, which emphasises the importance of explicit teaching, modelling and meaningful practice in writing. Writing is taught through rich texts (Power of reading) and purposeful contexts so that pupils understand writing as a powerful form of communication rather than a purely technical exercise.

Writing development begins in the Early Years and builds progressively to Year 6. In the Early years, we recognise that gross motor development is a prerequisite to literacy and just as important as fine gross motor skills in early development. When we enable children to move big, freely and purposefully, we're setting the stage for strong, confident writers. The link between gross motor skills and the development of writing is increasingly supported by research and reflected within our practice. The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) highlights that developing strength and control in the core, shoulders, arms, hands and fingers is essential for children to access writing tasks confidently. Gross motor

development directly connects to writing readiness in the early years: Core strength helps our pupils sit upright at a table; Shoulder and arm stability allows for smooth, controlled hand movements and pencil control; balance and coordination build overall body awareness and posture and bilateral coordination allows pupils to stabilise paper while the other writes.

Once pupils are ready to write, we ensure they develop the foundational language, physical and cognitive skills required for writing before moving towards increasingly complex composition.

Through our curriculum, pupils learn to:

- Write with clarity, accuracy and purpose
- Develop automaticity in transcription
- Construct and manipulate sentences confidently
- Organise ideas effectively across a range of genres
- Apply grammar and vocabulary deliberately to shape meaning
- Develop stamina and independence as writers

Carlie Smart

High-quality literature underpins our curriculum. English units are planned using the Power of Reading approach, ensuring pupils are immersed in rich texts that inspire and motivate them to write.

Implementation

Writing development begins with the foundational skills that enable pupils to communicate ideas through mark-making and early writing. The Writing Framework highlights that successful writers require strong foundations in:

- oral language
- phonological awareness
- physical development
- knowledge of print and symbols
- extensive modelling and shared writing to support pupils in understanding how ideas are translated into sentences.

These experiences allow pupils to understand that writing is a tool for communication and expression. Engagement with writing is prioritised so that children develop positive attitudes and confidence as writers from the earliest stages.

As pupils move through Key Stage 2, transcription becomes increasingly automatic. This allows pupils to focus more on composition, including:

- Organising ideas across paragraphs
- Selecting vocabulary for effect
- Using grammatical structures deliberately
- Adapting writing for audience and purpose
- Maintaining cohesion within longer texts

From Year 2, We are implementing Active Spell. At Waltham Gateway, we are committed to developing pupils' spelling skills through effective, engaging and evidence-informed teaching. Through Active Spell, supported by L.E.A.D. Teaching School Hub, we aim to strengthen spelling instruction and equip teachers with practical strategies to support children's learning. This approach helps pupils develop confidence in spelling, broaden their vocabulary and improve the accuracy and quality of their written work.

Handwriting

For handwriting, we follow the ISHA (Improvement in Schools through Handwriting and Art) programme. ISHA provides a clear, consistent approach to teaching letter formation, spacing, alignment and pencil control. Lessons are modelled by teachers, and children practise regularly to develop a legible, fluent, and comfortable handwriting style. By

following this programme, children gain confidence in their writing and can focus on expressing their ideas clearly.

Cognitive Science and Managing Cognitive Load

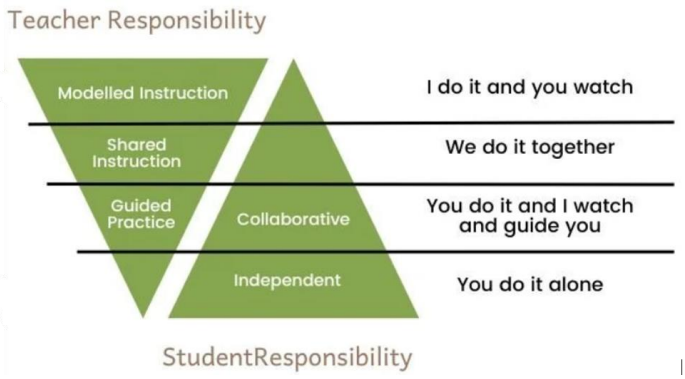
Writing places heavy demands on working memory. Pupils must simultaneously manage spelling, handwriting, grammar and idea generation.

Evidence from the Education Endowment Foundation and cognitive science shows that teaching complex skills is most effective when instruction reduces unnecessary cognitive load.

Teachers therefore must:

- Break writing down into manageable steps
- Explicitly model writing processes
- Provide structured scaffolds
- Ensure repeated practice so key skills become automatic

As pupils gain confidence, scaffolding is gradually removed to support independence. Teaching follows a gradual release model, moving pupils from supported learning to independent writing.



This typically involves:

- Teacher modelling
- Shared writing
- Guided practice
- Independent writing

During modelling, teachers explicitly verbalise their thinking as writers. Pupils see how writers make decisions about vocabulary, grammar and organisation. This explicit

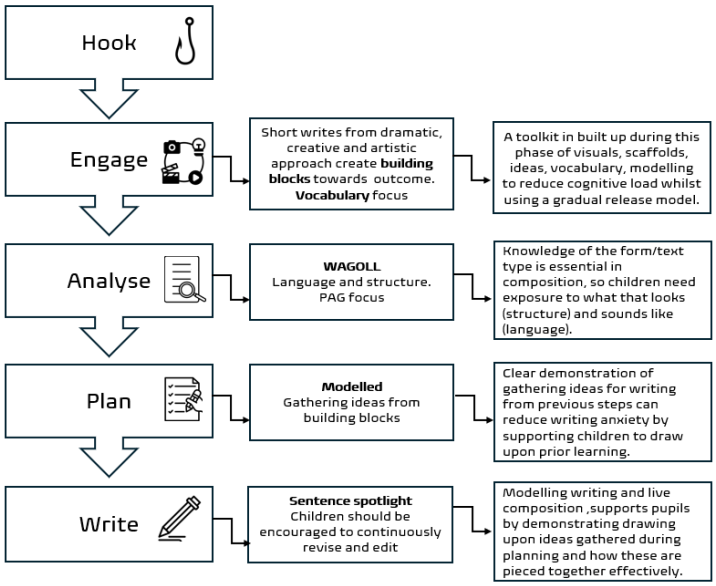
instruction is emphasised in the Writing Framework, which highlights the importance of demonstrating the writing process.

Dictation

Dictation is utilised within the early year's curriculum, starting with simple phrases/sentences; this allows pupils to focus/ practise transcription skills without the cognitive load of composition. As students advance, they can move on to more complex dictating in sentence activities that challenge their grammar and critical thinking skills. This process goes beyond mere transcription. Dictation exercises improve listening comprehension encourage students to focus on grammar, punctuation, spelling and sentence structure.

The Writing Sequence at Waltham Gateway Academy

English units follow a clear and consistent writing sequence:



Hook: Pupils are introduced to a stimulus that captures interest and establishes purpose.
Engage: Pupils explore characters, themes and ideas through discussion and creative activities from the Power of Reading.
Analyse: Pupils study model texts (WAGOLL) to identify language features, structure and authorial choices.
Plan: Pupils organise their ideas, using scaffolds, before writing.
Write: Pupils apply the knowledge and skills developed throughout the sequence to produce extended writing.

Texts studied through the Power of Reading provide high-quality language models that support vocabulary development and inspire pupils' writing.

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Sentence-Level Practice (Sentence spotlight)

Each writing lesson begins with daily sentence practice, which builds pupils' confidence and provides regular opportunities to practise and apply their knowledge of word classes, sentence structure and punctuation. This structured practice enables pupils to rehearse the essential components of writing in a focused and manageable way. Over time, pupils must demonstrate their ability to apply these skills across a range of extended writing in order to meet end-of-year expectations.

Daily sentence practice also supports the development of fluency and stamina, enabling pupils to write with increasing independence and accuracy. Example sentences are used by teachers in explicitly modelling the writing process, including the decisions writers make about vocabulary, grammar and punctuation. Through this modelling, teachers verbalise their thinking so pupils can understand how effective sentences are constructed.

As pupils engage in this practice, they build a bank of sentence structures and language patterns that they can draw upon in their own writing. This supports composition by allowing pupils to rehearse and refine sentences within a short, supported and low-risk environment before applying them to longer pieces of writing.

Explicit sentence instruction is a key component of effective writing teaching. Knowledge of grammar enables pupils to control sentence structure and convey meaning precisely; however, as emphasised in the Writing Framework, grammar teaching is most effective when embedded within meaningful writing rather than taught in isolation.

During Sentence spotlight practice:

- Teachers model sentence construction
- Teachers verbalise their thinking
- Pupils practise crafting sentences using specific grammatical structures
- Frequent rehearsal helps pupils develop sentence fluency, which supports extended writing.

Impact

As a result of our writing curriculum, pupils at Waltham Gateway Academy, are developing their skills to:

- Demonstrate secure transcription skills
- Write with increasing fluency, stamina and independence
- Organise ideas effectively across a range of genres
- Apply grammar and vocabulary purposefully
- Show a clear awareness of audience and purpose

Carlie Smart

Pupils develop positive attitudes towards writing and see themselves as capable writers. By the end of Year 6, pupils have the knowledge and skills required to write confidently across the curriculum and in preparation for the next stage of their education.

Assessment and Early Identification

Assessment for learning should be used to identify which part of writing is causing the barrier. By creating a safe, positive environment, pupils can verbalise how they feel about their writing and what is preventing them from being a confident writer.

Targeted Support and Interventions

Addressing needs should be part of your everyday teaching, not just something extra for few children (EEF, 2025).

- Oral rehearsal should be utilised to support struggling writers with composition.
- Writing scaffolds and sentence stems reduce cognitive load
- Word banks to support transcription
- Building vocabulary and oracy within lessons
- Quality-first teaching ensures lessons are clear, engaging and well-structured.
- Gross/Fine gross motor interventions

Oracy

At Waltham Gateway Academy, we recognise that spoken language is fundamental to pupils' learning, confidence and future success. Our curriculum ensures that pupils develop the ability to communicate clearly, listen attentively and articulate ideas effectively. We want every child to have the necessary skills and opportunity to find their voice; to articulate their ideas, thoughts and feelings clearly and coherently and develops understanding. Effective communication helps every child to fulfil their potential and thrive in school and beyond, regardless of their background.

"A strong focus on oracy, the ability to talk fluently and accurately and express ideas develops a pupil's confidence, self-esteem and communication skills". (OFSTED)



We aim for all pupils to:

- Speak clearly and confidently in a range of contexts
- Listen attentively and respond thoughtfully
- Use ambitious and subject-specific vocabulary
- Explain and justify their thinking
- Participate confidently in discussion and debate.

Carlie Smart

Oracy is therefore embedded across the curriculum and forms an essential part of teaching and learning at Waltham Gateway Academy.

Implementation

Oracy is developed through explicit teaching; structured classroom discussions and consistent opportunities to practise communication skills.

Classroom Practice

Teachers support oracy development through:

- Strong threads of oracy skills embedded throughout the curriculum.
- Structured partner and group discussion opportunities
- Talk partners and collaborative learning
- Questioning and dialogue
- Opportunities for explanation and reasoning (use of sentence stems)
- Debate and discussion activities
- Presentation and performance opportunities.

Teachers model high-quality spoken language and explicitly teach pupils how to listen actively **(ready)**, respond respectfully **(respectful)** and nurture an environment **(safe)** where pupils are confident to share their ideas and build on the ideas of others.

Vocabulary Development

Developing pupils' vocabulary is central to our approach.
Adults:

- Explicitly teach new vocabulary
- Encourage **ALL** pupils to use subject-specific language
- Model accurate sentence structures
- Provide opportunities for pupils to practise new vocabulary through discussion.

Assessment and Early Identification

Speech and language development is monitored to ensure pupils receive the support they need.

Pupils are assessed using the WellComm Speech and Language Toolkit, which helps staff identify pupils who may require additional support with speech, language and communication.

Targeted Support and Interventions

Where pupils are identified as needing additional support, targeted interventions are implemented. These may include:

- Quality-first teaching
- Small group language sessions
- Structured speaking and listening activities
- Vocabulary development programmes
- Individual support where appropriate (including external agencies/programmes)

This ensures that pupils' speech and language needs are identified early and supported effectively.

Impact

As a result of our oracy provision, pupils at Waltham Gateway Academy, are developing their skills to:

- Communicate confidently and clearly
- Demonstrate strong listening skills
- Use a wide and ambitious vocabulary
- Explain their thinking and reasoning effectively
- Participate confidently in discussions and presentations
- Show respect for the ideas and viewpoints of others.

Through strong classroom practice, effective assessment and targeted support, pupils develop the communication skills and confidence needed to succeed in the academy and beyond.

Parental engagement

Parental engagement is a key aspect of the promotion of English at Waltham Gateway Academy. Parents and carers are actively encouraged to support their children's reading at home through a structured home-reading programme, where pupils can gain certificates to celebrate regular reading and recognise the important role families play in developing strong literacy habits. The academy promotes both reading and oracy by encouraging families to discuss texts at home and engage in meaningful conversations about books. Parents are also invited to attend workshops, including an Early Reading Workshop and a Book Talk Workshop, where they are provided with practical strategies to support phonics, reading comprehension and oracy. In addition, the school shares monthly reading themes, writing opportunities and engaging writing hooks so that families can support and celebrate children's writing at home. These initiatives strengthen the partnership between school and families and ensure that pupils receive consistent support in developing their reading, writing and communication skills both in school and beyond the classroom.

Carlie Smart