
IMPROVING LITERACY IN KEY STAGE 1

A self-assessment guide

This Red Amber Green (RAG) self-assessment guide accompanies the Education Endowment Foundation's report, *Improving Literacy In Key Stage 1*, which sets out eight evidence-based recommendations on the effective teaching of literacy.

This guide describes what 'ineffective', 'improving' and 'exemplary' practice can look like in relation to each of the recommendations.

This guide can be used as part of an initial audit process to establish current practice (i.e. point of departure), as well as to monitor progress towards the development of more effective practice (i.e. direction of travel).

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The table 'Improving Literacy in Key Stage One – Recommendations Summary' contains 8 columns, each representing a recommendation. Column 1 is highlighted in green and corresponds to Recommendation 1. Each column includes a numbered title, a list of key messages, a list of specific recommendations, and a 'PROVIDE' section with a level of effectiveness (e.g., EXTENSIVE, MODERATE, LIMITED).

RECOMMENDATION 1

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

! INEFFECTIVE

Pupils usually begin writing activities without previously articulating their ideas.

Listening activities do not have clear outcomes and do not include the use of different comprehension strategies.

Before lessons, limited planning is done to predict words that may be problematic. During lessons, pupils often struggle with new words and this goes unnoticed.

Group work is not managed in a way that encourages all pupils to share their thoughts.

📈 IMPROVING

Pupils sometimes use speaking activities to articulate what they will later say in writing.

Listening activities are used to develop pupils' use of comprehension strategies, but only limited feedback, modelling and support is provided.

Teachers sometimes predict words that pupils may be unfamiliar with. They identify that pupils are struggling with certain words and support them to understand those words. Pupils are encouraged to ask for help when encountering words that they do not understand.

Group work and pair work are used to practise speaking and listening activities, but only some pupils actively participate. Pupils do not always actively listen to each other's ideas.

✅ EXEMPLARY

Pupils regularly use speaking activities to clearly articulate and refine what they will later say in writing.

Listening activities are focused and used to develop pupils' use of comprehension strategies. This is done with high-quality feedback, modelling and support.

Planning time is used to pre-identify words that pupils, or groups of pupils, may not be familiar with and these are then explicitly introduced. Teaching of vocabulary is responsive to pupils' emerging needs throughout a lesson and pupils actively seek support with unfamiliar vocabulary.

All pupils actively participate in speaking and listening activities both as a class and in small groups. Pupils actively listen to each other's ideas so that they can share their thought processes.

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The table 'Improving Literacy in Key Stage One – Recommendations Summary' is a multi-column document with 8 columns, each representing a recommendation. Column 2 is highlighted in orange and contains the text: 'Use a balanced and engaging approach to developing reading, which integrates both decoding and comprehension skills'. A magnifying glass icon is positioned over this text. The table also includes icons for each recommendation and a 'STRENGTH' indicator at the bottom of each column.

RECOMMENDATION 2

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

! INEFFECTIVE

Teaching of reading is unbalanced and much greater emphasis is placed on either decoding or comprehension skills.

Pupils are often unmotivated and disengaged when learning to read. Pupils demonstrate limited persistence and resilience in their reading.

Pupils experience a limited range of genres and texts, and the texts selected are ineffective at engaging and motivating pupils.

IMPROVING

Teaching uses a balanced approach to reading, but pupils are not supported to integrate their decoding and comprehension.

Most pupils are motivated and engaged when reading. Pupils demonstrate increasing persistence and resilience.

Pupils experience a range of texts, but this could be more carefully considered.

✓ EXEMPLARY

All pupils receive an appropriate balance between word recognition and language comprehension and are supported to integrate the two skills.

All pupils are motivated and engaged during lessons through exposure to a rich variety of experiences. Pupils increasingly get enjoyment and satisfaction from their reading.

Different genres of text are purposefully chosen to engage pupils and develop their comprehension skills.

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RECOMMENDATION 3

Effectively implement a systematic phonics programme

Improving Literacy in Key Stage One – Recommendations Summary

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Develop a school-wide literacy strategy that includes a systematic phonics programme	Use a systematic phonics programme that has robust evidence of impact	Effectively implement a systematic phonics programme	Use a systematic phonics programme that has robust evidence of impact	Use a systematic phonics programme that has robust evidence of impact	Use a systematic phonics programme that has robust evidence of impact	Use a systematic phonics programme that has robust evidence of impact	Use a systematic phonics programme that has robust evidence of impact

! INEFFECTIVE

A systematic phonics programme is used, but it has been significantly altered from how the developer intended it to be used and this may have affected the 'active ingredients'.

Teachers and teaching assistants have received patchy training in the teaching of phonics and many staff do not have the necessary pedagogical skills and content knowledge to teach phonics effectively.

Phonics teaching is unresponsive to pupils' needs. Where catch up support is provided it is ad hoc or there is a long delay from when pupils are first identified as struggling to when support is put in place.

Pupils and teachers are often unmotivated during phonics lessons and do not look forward to them.

📈 IMPROVING

A systematic phonics programme is used which does not have robust evidence of impact. However, the programme has the characteristics of an effective phonics programme. The programme is used broadly as the developer intended.

All teachers have received phonics training, but not necessarily focused on the school's specific programme. Some teaching staff may need updated training on the programme or may need to develop their pedagogical skills or content knowledge.

Catch up support is put in place for pupils in need of additional support with their phonics, however, this does not follow all the characteristics of effective interventions (recommendation 8).

Engagement with phonics teaching is varied between classes and over time. Phonics teaching may sometimes feel 'stale' and teachers or pupils do not always look forward to the lessons

✅ EXEMPLARY

The phonics programme used has robust evidence of impact and it is implemented in accordance with the developer's guidelines. Any adaptations from the suggested programme are minor and do not affect the 'active ingredients' of the programme.

Teachers and teaching assistants are appropriately trained for the phonics programme that they deliver; this is kept up-to-date and new staff are always appropriately trained. All teaching staff have sufficient pedagogical skills and content knowledge to teach the programme effectively.

Phonics teaching is responsive to pupils' progress (i.e. it is accelerated for pupils making rapid progress and additional support is put in place for those making slower progress). Any additional support adheres to the characteristics of effective interventions (e.g. effectively identifying the needs of individual pupils rather than just providing 'more of the same').

Pupils and teachers are motivated and engaged during phonics lessons and there is a feeling of 'purpose' during lessons.

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RECOMMENDATION 4

Teach pupils to use strategies for developing and monitoring reading comprehension

The table 'Improving Literacy in Key Stage One – Recommendations Summary' contains 8 columns, each representing a recommendation. Recommendation 4 is highlighted in red and contains the text: 'Teach pupils to use strategies for developing and monitoring their reading comprehension'. The table also includes a 'PROGRESS' row at the bottom of each column, with levels ranging from 'EXTENSIVE' to 'LIMITED'.

! INEFFECTIVE

Limited emphasis is placed on reading comprehension and there is very limited explicit teaching of reading comprehension strategies.

Pupils have limited opportunities to practise using the strategies. Any opportunities that they do have are not based on the principles of effective scaffolding (e.g. initial modelling and strategic withdrawal of support).

Pupils are not taught how to monitor their use of the different strategies or what to do if they are struggling to understand a text.

Feedback on the use and monitoring of the strategies has **one or fewer** of the following characteristics:

- Specific, accurate and clear
- Compares current to previous performance
- Encourages and supports further effort

Limited consideration is given to reading comprehension strategies when selecting texts.

📈 IMPROVING

Teachers are aware of the different reading comprehension strategies and sometimes encourage pupils to use them, but this is done inconsistently.

Pupils have frequent opportunities to practise using the strategies. Teachers model the strategies effectively, but scaffolding is inconsistent and does not support pupils to use the strategies with increasing sophistication and independence.

Pupils can recognise when something does not make sense and will try a different strategy with prompting and support.

Feedback on the use and monitoring of the strategies has **two** of the following characteristics:

- Specific, accurate and clear
- Compares current to previous performance
- Encourages and supports further effort

Texts are sometimes selected on the basis of their suitability to use different reading comprehension strategies.

✅ EXEMPLARY

The explicit teaching of strategies forms the core of reading comprehension teaching. A consistent approach is used between year groups that gives greater responsibility to pupils as they develop.

Pupils have extensive opportunities to use the strategies. Scaffolding is carefully matched to pupils' current capabilities and is strategically withdrawn so that pupils can use the strategies with increasing sophistication and independence.

Pupils are taught to plan and monitor their use of the different strategies. They know when each strategy might be most effective and are beginning to try alternative strategies if needed.

Feedback on the use and monitoring of the strategies has **all** of the following characteristics:

- Specific, accurate and clear
- Compares current to previous performance
- Encourages and supports further effort

Texts are carefully selected so that they match pupils' interests and allow them to practise each strategy. Pupils are supported to use and adapt the strategies across genres and types of text.

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1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Develop pupils' writing skills and confidence by using a range of writing opportunities.	Use a range of writing opportunities to develop pupils' writing skills and confidence.	Develop pupils' writing skills and confidence by using a range of writing opportunities.	Use a range of writing opportunities to develop pupils' writing skills and confidence.	Teach pupils to use strategies for planning and monitoring their writing.	Use a range of writing opportunities to develop pupils' writing skills and confidence.	Use a range of writing opportunities to develop pupils' writing skills and confidence.	Use a range of writing opportunities to develop pupils' writing skills and confidence.

RECOMMENDATION 5

Teach pupils to use strategies for planning and monitoring writing composition

! INEFFECTIVE

Pupils are rarely taught writing composition strategies and opportunities to practise are infrequent.

Pupils have limited opportunities to practise using the strategies. Any opportunities that they do have are not based on the principles of effective scaffolding (e.g. initial modelling and strategic withdrawal of support).

Pupils are not taught how to monitor their use of the different strategies or what to do if their chosen strategy is not working.

Feedback on the use and monitoring of the strategies has **one or fewer** of the following characteristics:

- Specific, accurate and clear
- Compares current to previous performance
- Encourages and supports further effort

📈 IMPROVING

Teachers are aware of the different writing composition strategies and sometimes encourage pupils to use them, but this is done inconsistently.

Pupils have frequent opportunities to practice using the strategies. Teachers model the strategies effectively, but scaffolding is inconsistent and does not support pupils to use the strategies with increasing sophistication and independence.

Pupils are taught how to monitor their use of the different strategies and with prompting will try alternative strategies.

Feedback on the use and monitoring of the strategies has **two** of the following characteristics:

- Specific, accurate and clear
- Compares current to previous performance
- Encourages and supports further effort

✅ EXEMPLARY

The explicit teaching of strategies forms the core of writing composition teaching. A consistent approach is used between year groups that gives greater responsibility to pupils as they develop.

Pupils have extensive opportunities to use the strategies. Scaffolding is carefully matched to pupils current capabilities and strategically withdrawn so that pupils can use the strategies with increasing sophistication and independence.

Pupils are taught to plan and monitor their use of the different strategies. They know when each strategy might be most effective and are beginning to try alternative strategies if needed.

Feedback on the use and monitoring of the strategies has **all** of the following characteristics:

- Specific, accurate and clear
- Compares current to previous performance
- Encourages and supports further effort

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RECOMMENDATION 6

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

The table 'Improving Literacy in Key Stage One - Recommendations Summary' contains 8 columns, each representing a recommendation. Recommendation 6 is highlighted in blue and includes the text: 'Promote fluent written transcription skills by encouraging extensive and effective practice and explicitly teaching spelling'. The table also includes a 'PROVIDE' column for each recommendation, indicating the level of implementation: EXTENSIVE, MODERATE, or LIMITED.

! INEFFECTIVE

Pupils receive limited opportunities to practise their handwriting and they rarely make good use of feedback.

Feedback on handwriting has **one or fewer** of the following characteristics:

- Specific, accurate and clear
- Compares current to previous performance
- Uses praise sparingly so it remains meaningful
- Encourages and supports further effort

Teaching of spelling is unrelated to other learning and could be characterised as mainly testing.

Teaching staff have **limited** knowledge about the strategies that effective spellers use:

- Phonic approach
- Analogy
- Identification and learning of 'tricky' parts of words
- Visual approach

📈 IMPROVING

Pupils receive frequent opportunities to practise their handwriting and feedback is used effectively.

Feedback on handwriting has **some** of the following characteristics:

- Specific, accurate and clear
- Compares current to previous performance
- Uses praise sparingly so it remains meaningful
- Encourages and supports further effort

Pupils are sometimes pre-taught the spelling of challenging vocabulary.

Teaching staff have **good** knowledge about the strategies that effective spellers use:

- Phonic approach
- Analogy
- Identification and learning of 'tricky' parts of words
- Visual approach

✅ EXEMPLARY

Pupils receive extensive, high-quality opportunities to practise their handwriting and make effective use of feedback.

Feedback on handwriting has **all** of the following characteristics:

- Specific, accurate and clear
- Compares current to previous performance
- Uses praise sparingly so it remains meaningful
- Encourages and supports further effort

Pupils are regularly and explicitly pre-taught key spellings to aid the fluency of their composition

Teaching staff have **excellent** knowledge about the strategies that effective spellers use and this informs their teaching.

- Phonic approach
- Analogy
- Identification and learning of 'tricky' parts of words
- Visual approach

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RECOMMENDATION 7

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

The table 'Improving Literacy in Key Stage One – Recommendations Summary' contains 7 columns, each representing a recommendation. Recommendation 7 is highlighted in yellow. The table includes a 'PROVIDE' column and a 'LEVEL' column for each recommendation.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Identify pupils struggling with reading and writing using appropriate diagnostic tools.	Use a range of diagnostic tools to identify pupils' current capabilities and needs.	Identify pupils' current capabilities and needs using diagnostic tools.	Identify pupils' current capabilities and needs using diagnostic tools.	Identify pupils' current capabilities and needs using diagnostic tools.	Identify pupils' current capabilities and needs using diagnostic tools.	Use high-quality information about pupils' current capabilities to select the best next steps for teaching.
PROVIDE	PROVIDE	PROVIDE	PROVIDE	PROVIDE	PROVIDE	PROVIDE
EXTENSIVE	EXTENSIVE	NEED EXTENSIVE	EXTENSIVE	MODERATE	LIMITED	MODERATE

! INEFFECTIVE

Identification of struggling pupils is often slow and action taken to support them is limited.

Diagnostic tools (such as the Simple View of Reading) are **rarely** used to identify the best next step for teaching.

Assessments are often set without careful consideration of their intended purpose.

📈 IMPROVING

When a pupil is identified as struggling with their literacy they are given extra support, but this may not be well matched to their specific needs.

Diagnostic tools (such as the Simple View of Reading) are **sometimes** used to identify the best next step for teaching.

Careful consideration is given to how the results of an assessment will be used before an appropriate assessment is selected.

✅ EXEMPLARY

When a pupil is identified as struggling the first thing a teacher does is to try to identify the specific reason(s) why they are struggling.

Diagnostic tools (such as the Simple View of Reading) are **routinely** used to identify the best next step for teaching.

Careful consideration is given to how the results of an assessment will be used before an appropriate assessment is selected. Teaching staff understand the differences between monitoring and diagnosis and select assessments appropriately.

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RECOMMENDATION 8

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

The table 'Improving Literacy in Key Stage One – Recommendations Summary' contains 8 columns, each representing a recommendation. Recommendation 8 is highlighted in a larger, circular callout box. The callout box contains the text: 'Use high-quality structured interventions to help pupils who are struggling with their literacy'. The table also includes a 'PROVIDER' column at the bottom of each recommendation, with values such as 'EXTENSIVE', 'MODERATE', and 'LIMITED'.

! INEFFECTIVE

TAs deliver mainly unstructured interventions, for which there is little reliable evidence for effectiveness. TAs may deliver commercial intervention programmes, but in an unstructured way (e.g. not as prescribed by the developer).

Intervention sessions are long (>30 minutes), poorly timetabled and irregular. Consequently, pupils routinely miss significant portions of classroom teaching.

TAs have little formal training in delivering interventions. Limited structured resources mean that sessions often have vague objectives and are slowly paced. As such, they may not be adequately compensating for the time pupils spend out of class.

Teachers have little or no awareness of the structure and coverage of intervention programmes.

Teachers rarely plan or review intervention sessions with TAs and there are few opportunities for meaningful feedback after sessions.

It is left largely to pupils to make the links between what is covered in interventions and their learning in general classroom teaching.

📈 IMPROVING

TAs deliver some well-chosen interventions that have the potential to effectively supplement classroom learning, although this is not always occurring (e.g. use of assessments to monitor and inform next stages of development is inconsistent).

Although interventions are structured, they are not always delivered as intended. Timetabling of sessions is reasonable although sessions are sometimes missed.

Some TAs have received training on intervention programmes, although this may need updating.

Teachers have limited awareness of the structure and coverage of intervention programmes.

Teachers and TAs meet occasionally to review the coverage and impact of interventions. Practice across the school is inconsistent.

Pupils receive some assistance in applying their learning from interventions to the wider curriculum, although again this is inconsistent.

✅ EXEMPLARY

TAs deliver one or two evidence-based and structured interventions, chosen to deliberately complement and extend class based teaching and learning.

Intervention sessions are brief (<30 minutes) regular (3-5 times a week) and sustained, with clear objectives and expectations. Sessions are well-placed, well-resourced and carefully timetabled to minimise time spent away from general class teaching.

TAs are extensively trained to deliver interventions faithfully (i.e. as intended by the developer), and over time develop deep expertise in the approach.

Teachers have good awareness of the structure and coverage of intervention programmes.

There are regular opportunities for teachers and TAs to plan and review learning taking place in interventions, with regular assessments in place to guide this process.

Teachers and TAs both help pupils make connections between the learning in interventions and the wider curriculum.