

Summary of recommendations

1



Develop students' language capability to support their reading and writing

Purposeful speaking and listening activities support the development of students' language capability and provides a foundation for thinking and communication.

Purposeful activities include:

- reading books aloud and discussing them;
- activities that extend students' expressive and receptive vocabulary;
- collaborative learning activities where students can share their thought processes;
- structured questioning to develop reading comprehension;
- teachers modelling inference-making by thinking aloud; and
- students articulating their ideas verbally before they start writing.

2



Support students to develop fluent reading capabilities

Fluent readers can read quickly, accurately, and with appropriate stress and intonation.

Fluent reading supports comprehension because students' cognitive resources are freed from focusing on word recognition and can be redirected towards comprehending the text.

This can be developed through:

- supported reading instruction—teachers model fluent reading of a text, then students read the same text aloud with appropriate feedback; and
- repeated reading—students re-read a short and meaningful passage a set number of times or until they reach a suitable level of fluency.

It is important to understand students' current capabilities and teach accordingly. Most students will need an emphasis on developing reading fluency, but some students may need a focus on more basic skills, such as decoding and phonological awareness.

3



Teach reading comprehension strategies through modelling and supported practice

Reading comprehension can be improved by teaching specific strategies that students can apply both to monitor and overcome barriers to comprehension. These include:

- activating prior knowledge;
- prediction;
- questioning;
- clarifying;
- summarising; and
- inference.

The potential impact of these strategies is very high, but can be hard to achieve, since students are required to take greater responsibility for their own learning.

The strategies should be described and modelled before students practise the strategies with feedback. Support should then be gradually reduced as students take increasing responsibility.

Texts should be carefully selected to support the teaching of these strategies.

4



Teach writing composition strategies through modelling and supported practice

Purpose and audience are central to effective writing. Students need to have a reason to write and someone to write for.

Writing can be thought of as a process made up of seven components:

- planning;
- drafting;
- sharing;
- evaluating;
- revising;
- editing; and
- publishing.

Effective writers use a number of strategies to support each component of the writing process. Students should learn how, when, and why to use each strategy. For example, students' planning could be improved by teaching the strategies of goalsetting and activating prior knowledge.

The strategies should be described and modelled before students practise them with feedback.

Support should then be gradually reduced as students take increasing responsibility.

5



Develop students' transcription and sentence construction skills through extensive practice

A fluent writing style supports composition because students' cognitive resources are freed from focusing on handwriting, spelling, and sentence construction and can be redirected towards writing composition.

Extensive practice, supported by effective feedback, is required to develop fluent transcription skills.

Spelling should be explicitly taught, and diagnostic assessment should be used to focus effort on the spellings that students are finding difficult.

Students should practise sentence-combining and other sentence construction techniques.

6



Target teaching and support by accurately assessing student needs

High-quality assessment and diagnosis should be used to target and adapt teaching to students' needs.

Rapid provision of support is important, but it is critical to ensure it is the right support. Diagnostic assessment can be used to inform professional judgement about the best next steps. Diagnostic assessment makes teaching more efficient by ensuring that effort is not wasted on rehearsing skills or content that a student already knows well.

A range of diagnostic assessments are available, and staff should be trained to use and interpret these effectively.

This approach can be used for high- and low-attaining students and for whole-class and targeted interventions.

7



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

Schools should focus first on developing core classroom teaching strategies that improve the literacy capabilities of the whole class. With this in place, the need for additional support should decrease. Nevertheless, it is likely that a small number of students will require additional support.

There is a strong and consistent body of evidence demonstrating the benefit of structured interventions for students who are struggling with their literacy. The first step should be to use accurate diagnosis of capabilities and difficulties to match students to appropriate interventions.