



Department  
for Education

# **The reading framework**

**Teaching the foundations of literacy**

**Section 5: Leadership and  
management**

**July 2021**

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## Section 5: Leadership and management

### Headteachers

Headteachers are ultimately responsible for building the reading culture in their school and ensuring that the teaching of reading is as effective as possible.<sup>1</sup> They have to make sure that all their staff, including the special educational needs co-ordinator, and their ITT trainees, have the knowledge, skills, understanding and professional support to teach reading effectively and thus transform children's life chances.

This requires them to:

- believe that all children can learn to read, regardless of their background, needs or abilities and be determined to make this happen
- adopt a rigorous, systematic programme that includes well-conceived and structured resources for teaching phonics (see [Section 3](#))
- make sure all children make sufficient progress to meet or exceed age-related expectations
- build a team of expert teachers who know and understand the processes that underpin learning to read, and draw on expert training, practice and coaching to achieve this
- ensure that ongoing assessment (see [Section 3](#)) of children's progress in phonics is sufficiently frequent and detailed to identify those who begin to fall behind, and provide targeted support immediately<sup>2</sup>
- make efforts to involve families in supporting their children's reading<sup>3</sup>
- make sure children are taught to read from the beginning of their Reception year
- develop a programme for reading aloud to children and encouraging a love of reading (see [Section 2](#)).

In addition, teachers have a responsibility to demonstrate their understanding of systematic synthetic phonics (SSP) in their teaching so that ITT trainees can learn from them about how to teach early reading effectively.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ofsted (2010). ['Reading by six. How the best schools do it'](#) Manchester: Ofsted

<sup>2</sup> Ofsted (2021). ['School inspection handbook. Handbook for inspecting schools in England under section 5 of the Education Act 2005'](#) Manchester: Ofsted

<sup>3</sup> Ofsted (2010). ['Reading by six. How the best schools do it'](#) Manchester: Ofsted

<sup>4</sup> Department for Education (2019). ['ITT Core Content Framework'](#) London: Department for Education

## Time for teaching

The daily timetable for Reception and year 1 should include:

- a storytime
- a poetry/singing time
- one or more phonics sessions.

Finding sufficient time to teach every child to read can be challenging. Headteachers have a duty to support teachers in making literacy a priority and managing the rest of the curriculum realistically.

SSP programmes vary considerably and school leaders should carefully consider programmes that reflect this document before choosing one and training all staff to use it. See 'Appendix 7: Guidance for choosing a phonics programme' in [The reading framework: teaching the foundations of literacy](#).

Leaders should set out strong, school-wide routines and make sure that all teachers reinforce these consistently to support children's learning, as well as reinforcing those of the programme the school has chosen.

## Implementing a systematic programme

Implementation is a process rather than a single event; it needs to be planned and executed step by step. It is the responsibility of school leaders to ensure that the teaching of reading is as effective as possible and that a systematic programme is implemented successfully, because different schools or even teachers within the same school using the same systematic programme can achieve very different results. Ofsted has noted that 'compliance [with the programme] does not always guarantee effectiveness'.<sup>5</sup>

Writers of phonic programmes provide detailed guidance about how to teach phonics, reading and writing.<sup>6</sup> With the right programme and teaching, all children can learn to read, including those with learning difficulties.

However, it should be noted that some children who are diagnosed with a learning difficulty no longer have such issues when they have learned to read. Care is therefore needed when identifying learning difficulties early on. Stahl and McKenna have said:

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<sup>5</sup> Ofsted (2010). ['Reading by six. How the best schools do it'](#) Manchester: Ofsted

<sup>6</sup> Schools using a programme they have developed themselves should provide similar detailed guidance.

...generally, labels serve to excuse our failures to teach [reading] by blaming the students for their failure. Rather, we should accept that some children are harder to teach, and we need to work harder to reach those children.<sup>7</sup>

It might also be said that labelling teachers or their teaching as failing serves to excuse leaders' failures to put in place what teachers need. Headteachers are responsible for investing in the best teachers and teaching assistants they can find and scrupulously training or retraining them to teach phonics.

This section describes the implementation of a full SSP programme. Such programmes used by schools should provide:

all that is essential to teach SSP to children in reception and key stage 1 years of mainstream primary schools, up to or beyond the standards expected by the national curriculum, and provides sufficient support for them to become fluent readers.<sup>8</sup>

Schools that have developed their own programme to teach SSP should ensure they provide what is described above.

The programme should achieve excellent outcomes for all pupils, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

## **Building a team of expert teachers**

### **The literacy lead**

Headteachers should appoint a literacy lead (or reading lead): someone to manage the teaching of phonics, reading and writing.<sup>9</sup> That person should become an expert in the school's chosen phonics programme.

Together, the headteacher and the literacy lead should agree on:

- the detail of their roles
- expectations and assessment of progress for each age group
- timetables for phonics, reading and writing sessions, and storytimes
- the best organisation of teaching spaces and resources

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<sup>7</sup> Stahl KAD and McKenna MC editors (2006). 'Reading research at work. Foundations of effective practice' London: The Guilford Press

<sup>8</sup> [Validation of systematic synthetic phonics programmes: supporting documentation - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/362222/Validation_of_systematic_synthetic_phonics_programmes_supporting_documentation_-_GOV.UK.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Ofsted (2010). [Reading by six. How the best schools do it](https://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/reading-by-six-how-the-best-schools-do-it) Manchester: Ofsted

- extra practice for the children who are making the slowest progress
- systems to tackle any poor attendance and punctuality of the children who need the most support
- a timetable for practice and coaching for teaching staff
- systems for staff cover
- how they will help parents to support their children's reading.

## Effective professional development

Effective professional development is likely to be sustained over time, involve expert support, coaching and opportunities for collaboration.<sup>10</sup>

All staff responsible for leading and teaching reading should take part in the professional development for the school's chosen phonics programme: the headteacher, other leaders, newly qualified teachers, ITT trainees and others.

High quality in-service training, either face-to-face or online, is the first step. But training is just the beginning and, on its own, is insufficient to ensure consistency and effectiveness and to help teachers become experts. Acting, learning the violin and playing football all require the careful building up of skills and knowledge to be done as well as possible. Progress depends upon practice and coaching.

Practice builds mastery of a series of skills, and if you build up skills intentionally, you can master surprisingly complex tasks and in so doing free your active cognition to engage with other important tasks.<sup>11</sup>

This also applies to teaching reading and writing.

### In-school deliberate practice

Carefully constructed practice of teaching routines, sustained and developed, can help to make sure that all teachers become excellent teachers of reading, spelling and writing.

Practising together as a staff needs regular sessions. It builds consistency and accountability: everyone teaches reading in the same way. Sessions should be ring-fenced and not subsumed into staff meetings. This is also efficient for professional development, making the best use of the time of a literacy lead, because individuals then need less coaching.

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<sup>10</sup> Department for Education (2019). ['ITT Core Content Framework'](#) London: Department for Education

<sup>11</sup> Lemov D, Woolway E and Yezzi K (2012). 'Practice perfect' San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

The most basic activities should be practised first, in particular those that support the teaching of grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs) and how to blend sounds into words. Practice should focus on the activities that will make the biggest difference to the children who are making the slowest progress. Assessment data (see [Section 3](#)) will have identified them.

As teachers improve through practice, the literacy lead can identify an action for a teacher that would make a difference, there and then, to children's progress.

Great teaching is not learned through discussion. It's learned by doing – or, more specifically, by practising doing things well.<sup>12</sup>

## Coaching

Practice and coaching work hand in hand. The literacy lead should start by coaching teachers who are teaching the children who need the most support. Coaching, in this context, refers to a colleague identifying an action, so that the teacher can respond immediately and so improve children's progress. This might be in a practice session or during a lesson.

As teachers improve through practice, coaching can become more detailed and more focused.

Teachers are like tennis players: they develop most quickly when they receive frequent feedback and opportunities to practice [sic].<sup>13</sup>

Once the literacy lead is confident that a few teachers are good enough, one might be selected to act as the coach for the week. The literacy lead should practise with this teacher before the practice session. Leadership becomes shared and the teachers grow in confidence. This also embeds sustainability and continuity, protecting the school should the literacy lead be absent or leave.

## Reducing teachers' workload

One of the ways leaders can reduce teachers' workload is to make sure they use the resources produced as part of an SSP programme.

Ofsted reported that that 'the best of the products available to teachers for teaching systematic synthetic phonics were so well structured as to take much of the burden out of planning'. Ofsted also made the more important point that this gives teachers

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<sup>12</sup> Bambrick-Santoyo P (2012). 'Leverage leadership. A practical guide to building exceptional schools' San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

<sup>13</sup> Bambrick-Santoyo P (2012). 'Leverage leadership. A practical guide to building exceptional schools' San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

'time to think about how to teach rather than what to teach and enabling them to focus on the needs of individual children'.<sup>14</sup>

### **Audit: Leadership and management**

	<b>Current practice</b>
The headteacher takes responsibility for building a strong reading culture.	
The headteacher believes that virtually all children can learn to read, regardless of their background, needs or abilities, and acts to make this happen.	
Professional development, including training, practice and coaching, is planned and effective so all staff become experts in teaching reading and writing.	
The literacy lead has expertise in and experience of teaching phonics.	
The literacy lead has sufficient, dedicated time to fulfil the role.	
Sufficient time is planned for the teaching of phonics, reading and writing.	
Routines are strong, school-wide and reinforced consistently to support children's learning.	
<b>Actions to be taken (by term)</b>	

<sup>14</sup> Ofsted (2010). ['Reading by six. How the best schools do it'](#) Manchester: Ofsted





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