

## One Side Guide to...English Ofsted Research Review Foundational Components (Early Years and KS1)

Source: Research Review Series: English (Ofsted, 2022)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/curriculum-research-review-series-english/curriculum-research-review-series-english>

- More than any subject, English – especially Reading – gives pupils access to the rest of the curriculum and is fundamental to their educational success
- English is a complex subject that combines the disciplines of English language and literature.
- One distinctive feature of English teaching is that the modalities of speaking, reading and writing are not only the objects of study but also the means through which the subject is learned. The danger is that practice of using the different modalities becomes conflated with teaching the foundational knowledge and structures of language
- Curriculum plans should prioritise progression in knowledge of language, including its forms, grammar and vocabulary
- Regarding vocabulary, a range of research has found a ‘word gap’ exists between pupils from different socio-economic backgrounds. There is positive correlation between a pupil’s vocabulary size and their academic success
- Explicitly teaching pupils background knowledge is foundational to increasing pupils’ reading competency
- In the Early Years and KS1, teachers need to develop children’s spoken language as well as accurate word reading and spelling. They also need to teach fluent letter formation
- Pupils should be taught to read using a systematic synthetic phonics programme. Children who master the alphabetic code early on make better progress than their peers who do not.
- Phonics represents a body of knowledge needed for successful word reading. Children need explicit instruction in phonics
- In the early stages of learning to read, it is critical that children achieve both accuracy and sufficient speed in decoding (fluency).
- When children are taught phonics, they learn the alphabetic code for spelling (encoding) and for reading (decoding)
- Developing vocabulary explicitly, especially in the Early Years, is critically important. Otherwise the word gap grows
- The National Curriculum reflects the ‘simple view of reading’ – the equally important of word reading and comprehension. Once pupils are fluent in word reading, working memory is freed up so they are able to focus on comprehending what they read
- For writing, the National Curriculum distinguishes between transcription and composition (articulating ideas). Fluency in transcription (grammar, punctuation, spelling and handwriting) frees up working memory to focus on composing writing
- In early stages of writing instruction, it may be effective to teach composition and transcription separately. For example, children may practice composition through oral activities
- There is evidence that repeated practice in handwriting is necessary to go beyond accuracy to fluency in letter formation
- According to some research, teaching handwriting is quite closely associated with the quality, length and fluency of writing