



SET Free: Unlocking Writing for every pupil

Summary of unlocking writing at Soke Education Trust

We value writing as an important tool for giving a social voice to our pupils. We want every pupil to be able to express themselves through writing. Integrating evidence-based strategies and literacy-rich settings in our schools has resulted in a writing strategy that prioritises transcription, composition, motivation and engagement. We have maximised the physical, social, and instructional environments within schools and chosen task design, assessments, schemes, interventions and resources that, underpinned by high quality teaching, create the conditions for all pupils to write fluently, unlocking the door of communication in all its forms.

Our approach to unlocking writing

At Soke Education Trust, our strategy for teaching writing is grounded in the writing evidence-base. Highly skilled teachers and teaching assistants use explicit instruction, modelling and scaffolding, and provide plentiful practice and time for pupils to become fluent in transcription and text generation. Our daily writing lessons focus on building fluency in spelling, handwriting and accuracy of sentence building, both oral and written. Technology, such as chromebooks, are used for editing, promoting pupils' independence.

The methodology behind our approach

The Simple View of Writing

The simple view of writing shows the importance of reducing the load on working memory, by developing automaticity in transcription and language composition.

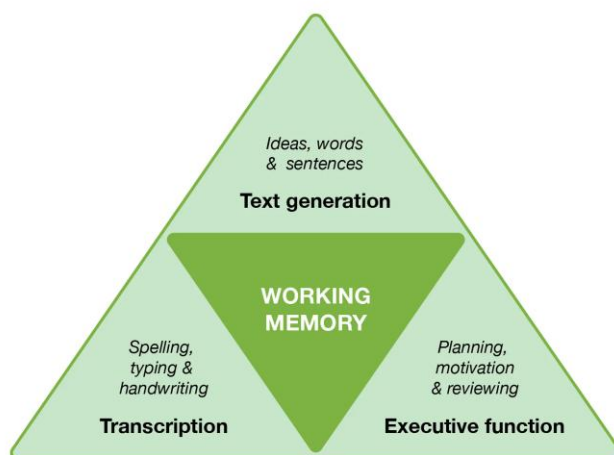
Transcription involves the physical process of writing, including spelling and handwriting or typing. It is the ability to accurately and fluently convert ideas into written language at the word level. Composition refers to the ability to develop and organise ideas, construct sentences, and convey meaning effectively in writing. This depends on pupils' language skills, including vocabulary, grammar, and the capacity to structure coherent texts.



Strong writing outcomes require simultaneous development of both transcription skills and compositional abilities. Pupils who struggle with language skills need targeted support to develop their spoken language and vocabulary, which underpin effective writing. High quality talk and language-rich environments are vital in developing these skills.

The simple view of writing highlights the importance of providing pupils with rich language experiences and explicit teaching of both the mechanics of writing and the skills to express ideas clearly and coherently.

Figure 10: Based on 'The Simple View of Writing'



The Simple View of Writing, EEF, 2025

The Writing Framework (DfE, July 2023)

The writing framework recommends prioritising early foundations for writing and focussing on automaticity in transcription to enable pupils to have available working memory to develop their voice as writers.

The framework provides the following recommendations for developing fluency in writing:

- Emphasise early language development and fine motor skills in Early Years to build writing readiness.
- Systematic teaching of phonics and spelling is crucial for early writing accuracy.





- Writing should move from transcription (spelling and handwriting) to composition (planning, drafting, revising).
- Develop fluency so pupils write with ease and confidence across genres and purposes.
- Explicit teaching of vocabulary and grammar supports effective writing.
- Pupils should understand how language choices impact meaning and style.
- Pupils should write for a range of real and imagined audiences and purposes.
- Encourage creativity alongside technical accuracy.

Our approach in practice

Phonics and handwriting

Phonics instruction is crucial in developing pupils' spelling and handwriting skills, which are foundational for fluent writing. Secure phonics skills reduce the cognitive load of spelling, allowing pupils to focus on composing their ideas clearly and effectively. All Soke Education Trust schools use approved Systematic Synthetic Phonics schemes, with fidelity; all have had support from the New Wave English Hub to ensure that staff have the CPD, systems and resources they need to effectively teach their chosen scheme, through EYFS, KS1 and into KS2.

By using the phonics schemes with fidelity, we can ensure pupils have the foundations for Spelling (Encoding): they learn the alphabetic code, helping them understand how sounds (phonemes) map to letters or groups of letters (graphemes). This skill is essential for spelling words correctly, which is a critical component of writing.

Writing fluently depends on transcription skills—handwriting and spelling. Phonics instruction strengthens spelling by enabling pupils to segment words into sounds and identify the corresponding graphemes, making spelling more accurate and automatic. When pupils have secure phonics skills, they spend less mental effort on spelling. This frees up working memory to focus on higher-level writing tasks such as planning, composing, and structuring their ideas effectively.

We prioritise development of gross and fine motor skills, correct pencil grip and fluent handwriting. We use dictation as a means of practice: dictated sentences use taught grapheme-phoneme correspondences and provide pupils with structured opportunities to practice spelling, handwriting and sentence construction without the added difficulty of composing independently, thus reinforcing transcription fluency.





By mastering phonics and handwriting, pupils gain confidence in their ability to write words fluently and correctly, which supports their motivation and ability to produce written work. Over time, these skills integrate to support fluent, effective writing.

Vocabulary and language development

Developing vocabulary and language is a crucial part of becoming a writer with a voice, who can choose words and phrases to have the desired impact on the reader.

We use high quality talk from Early Years onwards to recast and develop pupils vocabulary and grammar and engage them so they can express ideas and thoughts clearly. When pupils can say their complete thoughts, they can write them. Alongside explicit vocabulary instruction, this supports pupils in becoming confident and proficient writers.

Pupils who lack a well-developed vocabulary struggle to communicate effectively in writing. All pupils and especially those who are word-poor, benefit significantly from explicit vocabulary instruction, which helps to close word gaps early. We aim to develop a broad and deep vocabulary as we know this correlates with better writing outcomes. Teaching vocabulary explicitly is crucial, especially in early years and Key Stage 1 and we use CUSP Structured Story-time and the Drawing Club across the Trust to support this crucial aspect.

Writing quality improves when pupils have strong knowledge of the topic and understand the genre, linguistic, and grammatical features of texts. For this reason, teachers provide models of effective writing and ensure pupils write about curriculum content they have studied. They also focus on the audience in order to motivate and ensure that pupils develop awareness of their readers' needs and how their writing might be interpreted.

Effective writing instruction also includes explicit teaching of foundational skills such as sentence construction and grammar. This alongside the process of planning, drafting, revising and editing supports writing development. These elements are supported by our choice of writing scheme, which incorporates these aspects as part of daily writing, rather than a separate activity. This also helps pupils to develop their self-regulation and metacognitive skills in order that they can start to improve their writing independently.





CUSP writing

All Soke Education Trust schools use CUSP Writing to teach whole-class daily writing sessions. CUSP writing is aligned to the DfE's writing framework and has a clear evidence-based pedagogical framework, which engineers success for all learners.

The CUSP Writing curriculum focuses on fewer text types but with repeated engagement to deepen understanding. The curriculum is structured into two sequential blocks:

- Block A: Introduction to key sentence-level writing concepts through short tasks.
- Block B: Revisiting and building on prior knowledge, culminating in extended writing outcomes.

Each block is divided into two parts: initial mastery of sentence-level skills followed by application in extended writing, supported by model texts for structure and style. Flexible time is embedded within blocks and the long-term sequence to allow for reteaching, extended writing, or slow editing, ensuring all pupils can consolidate learning effectively.

Lessons follow six phases: Connect, Explain (including Explanation, Vocabulary Instruction), Example, Attempt, Apply, and Challenge, with Knowledge Notes guiding pupils through lessons. High-quality oracy is integrated throughout. This approach ensures pupils not only develop strong writing skills but also make meaningful connections across the wider curriculum, enhancing both literacy and subject knowledge.

Writing environments

A well-designed reading environment plays a vital role in fostering pupils' literacy development and motivation. To cultivate a love of writing, we create environments where writing is purposeful, collaborative, celebrated, and supported with rich resources and explicit teaching. We align this with a curriculum that encourages frequent, varied writing and develops pupils' self-regulation and metacognitive skills.

This approach aligns with OFSTED's research on high-quality English teaching, which connects motivation strongly with writing for real audiences, collaborative opportunities, and a supportive classroom culture.





We prioritise:

- Purposeful Writing Opportunities - writing for real audiences and purposes: Ensure pupils write for authentic reasons, such as letters, stories, presentations, or projects that will be shared beyond the classroom.
- Collaborative writing - we facilitate peer collaboration so pupils can share ideas and develop writing together, which boosts motivation.
- Choice: we allow pupils to select topics or formats that interest them to increase engagement and ownership of their writing.
- Celebration of writing achievements - we display pupils' writing prominently in the classroom and around the school to foster pride and a sense of accomplishment.
- Development of resilience - we promote a culture where overcoming writing challenges is valued, reinforcing the pride in mastering new skills.
- Connection of writing to life goals - we help pupils see the importance of writing skills for qualifications and future opportunities, enhancing motivation.
- Vocabulary support - we create word-rich environments with displays of subject-specific and general vocabulary to aid expression.

Teacher Modelling and Resources

Teachers are central to creating an effective writing environment by providing examples of good writing that help pupils understand different genres, structures, and language features. Use of live modelling helps to bring the process of writing to life, while analysing model texts demonstrates the features of text types and the devices writers use to convey meaning and impact the reader. We ensure easy access to suitable writing materials and technology that supports drafting and revising.

Writing Interventions

All writing interventions used at Soke Education Trust are evidence-based and only put into place once we are confident that they will have the desired impact, based upon formative and summative assessments. This is because we prioritise the right intervention for the right pupil at the right time. We monitor impact frequently, including how pupils attending the interventions are progressing and using the focus skills in the classroom. We aim for any intervention to enable pupils to catch up or keep up so they access classroom learning as fully as possible and progress with their peers, closing the gap as quickly as possible. Typically writing interventions focus on the skills





needed for automaticity so that cognitive load when writing is reduced: phonics, handwriting and basic sentence composition are prioritised.

Use of the Pupil Premium Grant to unlock writing

At Soke Education Trust, we are committed to using the Pupil Premium grant strategically to narrow the attainment gap for our disadvantaged pupils. We use Pupil Premium funding to enhance high-quality teaching, provide targeted academic support, and implement wider strategies addressing barriers to writing development. Emphasising structured writing strategies, fluent transcription skills, and targeted teaching will help close the writing attainment gap for disadvantaged pupils. We prioritise high-quality teaching and targeted academic support as the most effective means to accelerate progress in writing.

We invest in professional development for teachers, including training in systematic synthetic phonics and mastery-based approaches to literacy and then use additional CPD, coaching and mentoring to enhance teacher expertise in teaching writing. Providing high quality resources, such as CUSP writing and shared opportunities for moderation, leading to diagnostic assessment, enabling teaching to be tailored to pupil needs. This is supported by one-to-one and small group tuition focused on writing skills development, using targeted interventions to support language development and literacy, addressing specific needs of disadvantaged pupils.

To increase engagement and motivation for young writers, we support pupils' social and emotional needs and provide extra-curricular activities that promote literacy, develop confidence and enrich vocabulary, such as clubs, visits and experiences.





EEF literacy Guidance

To unlock writing for every pupil, we follow EEF guidance:

EEF preparing for literacy	EEF Improving literacy in KS1	EEF Improving literacy in KS2
EYFS and preschool	KS1	KS2
<p>Recommendation 1: Prioritise the development of communication and language - high quality interactions; shared and interactive reading; storytelling; explicit vocabulary instruction</p>	<p>Recommendation 1: Develop pupils' speaking and listening skills and wider understanding of language - high quality adult interactions; explicit and implicit approaches to teaching vocabulary; collaborative activities to use, learn and hear language</p>	<p>Recommendation 1: Develop pupils; language capabilities - purposeful speaking and listening activities such as discussing, reading aloud articulating ideas; high quality dialogue that develops thinking and use of language; explicit vocabulary instruction</p>
<p>Recommendation 3: Develop children's capability and motivation to write - Develop gross and fine motor skills; teach and use expressive language; develop motivation to write through a wide range of opportunities; support children to develop the foundations of a fast, accurate, and efficient handwriting style, providing additional support as necessary</p>	<p>Recommendation 5: Teach pupils to use strategies for planning and monitoring their writing - teach pupils to plan and monitor their writing; include pre-writing activities, drafting, editing and revising, sharing; provide teacher modelling and structured support for writing, with support gradually reducing to promote independence</p>	<p>Recommendation 4: Teach writing composition strategies through modelling and supported practice - engage pupils in planning, drafting, revising, editing and publishing their writing; model these strategies and support pupils with practice alongside feedback; gradually reduce support to increase independence; give reasons to write and an audience so that pupils adapt their writing for different audiences</p>
<p>Preparing for Literacy KS1, Recommendation 3: Effectively implement a systematic phonics programme - SSP that explicitly teach comprehension and spelling; training, responsiveness to formative assessment, engagement, adaptations and focused teaching; (rec.1 and 2 of engaging parents); talk to less-involved parents about what would help them; support parents to have regular reading routines at home; consider initiatives that involve summer reading</p>		



<p>Recommendation 4: Embed opportunities to develop self-regulation - use the 'Plan-Do-Review' cycle; embed opportunities to develop self-regulation within day-to-day activities; monitor the development of children's self-regulation and ensure activities remain suitably challenging.</p>	<p>Recommendation 6: Promote fluent written transcription skills by encouraging extensive and purposeful practice and explicitly teaching spelling - develop fluency in handwriting, typing and spelling to ensure transcription is accurate; provide purposeful practice and effective feedback; give time for practice and for pupils to engage in improving their writing; teach spellings explicitly</p>	<p>Recommendation 5: Develop pupils' transcription and sentence construction skills through extensive practice - focus on handwriting, spelling and sentence construction, giving extensive practice and support to develop fluency in these skills; monitor and promote fluent handwriting; identify strategies to improve pupils' spelling; explicitly teach spelling and provide opportunities to practice spelling and sentence construction, leading to fluency</p>
<p>Recommendation 6: use high-quality assessment to ensure all children make good progress: Keep up and catch up methodology; tracking through phonics scheme to ensure the right support at the right time; use of assessments to inform practice; adjustments to engineer success for all</p>	<p>Recommendation 7: Use high quality information about pupils; current capabilities to select the best steps for teaching - high quality, timely information; the right support at the right time; use models of reading to diagnose the next area of focus; alternative approaches to develop each aspect of reading</p>	<p>Recommendation 6: Target teaching and support by accurately assessing pupil needs - high quality, timely information; the right support at the right time; formative assessment as part of classroom strategies; diagnostic assessments to ensure accurate teaching; well trained staff</p>
<p>Recommendation 7: use high quality targeted support to help struggling children: Small group interventions; the most capable adults for our children with the greatest need; evidence-based approaches delivered with fidelity</p>	<p>Recommendation 8: Use high quality structured interventions to help pupils who are struggling with their literacy - quality first teaching of reading; interventions carefully matched to needs; one-to-one and small group tutoring with structured evidence-based interventions; regular review of progress to ensure impact</p>	<p>Recommendation 7: Use high quality structured interventions to help pupils who are struggling with literacy - quality first teaching of reading; interventions carefully matched to needs; carefully match pupils with structured evidence-based interventions; regular review of progress to ensure impact</p>



EEF guidance Special Educational Needs in mainstream Schools

<p>Recommendation 1: For all pupils: create a positive and supportive environment; promote positive relationships, active engagement, and wellbeing; the best possible teaching; positive behaviour management approaches</p>	<p>Recommendation 2: Build an ongoing, holistic understanding of your pupils and their needs - 'assess, plan, do, review' approach; assessment that is regular and purposeful; teachers who are empowered and trusted to use the information they collect to make a decision about the next steps for teaching that child</p>	<p>Recommendation 3: Ensure all pupils have access to high quality teaching - quality first teaching; flexible grouping, cognitive and metacognitive strategies, explicit instruction, using technology to support pupils with SEND, scaffolding</p>	<p>Recommendation 4: Complement high quality teaching with carefully selected small- group and one- to-one interventions - total inclusion; interventions that increase with need; accurate assessment and carefully targeted interventions</p>	<p>Recommendation 5: Work effectively with teaching assistants - Effective deployment of teaching assistants; ensure positive impact of TA deployment on pupils with SEND; TAs that supplement, not replace, teaching from the classroom teacher</p>
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