

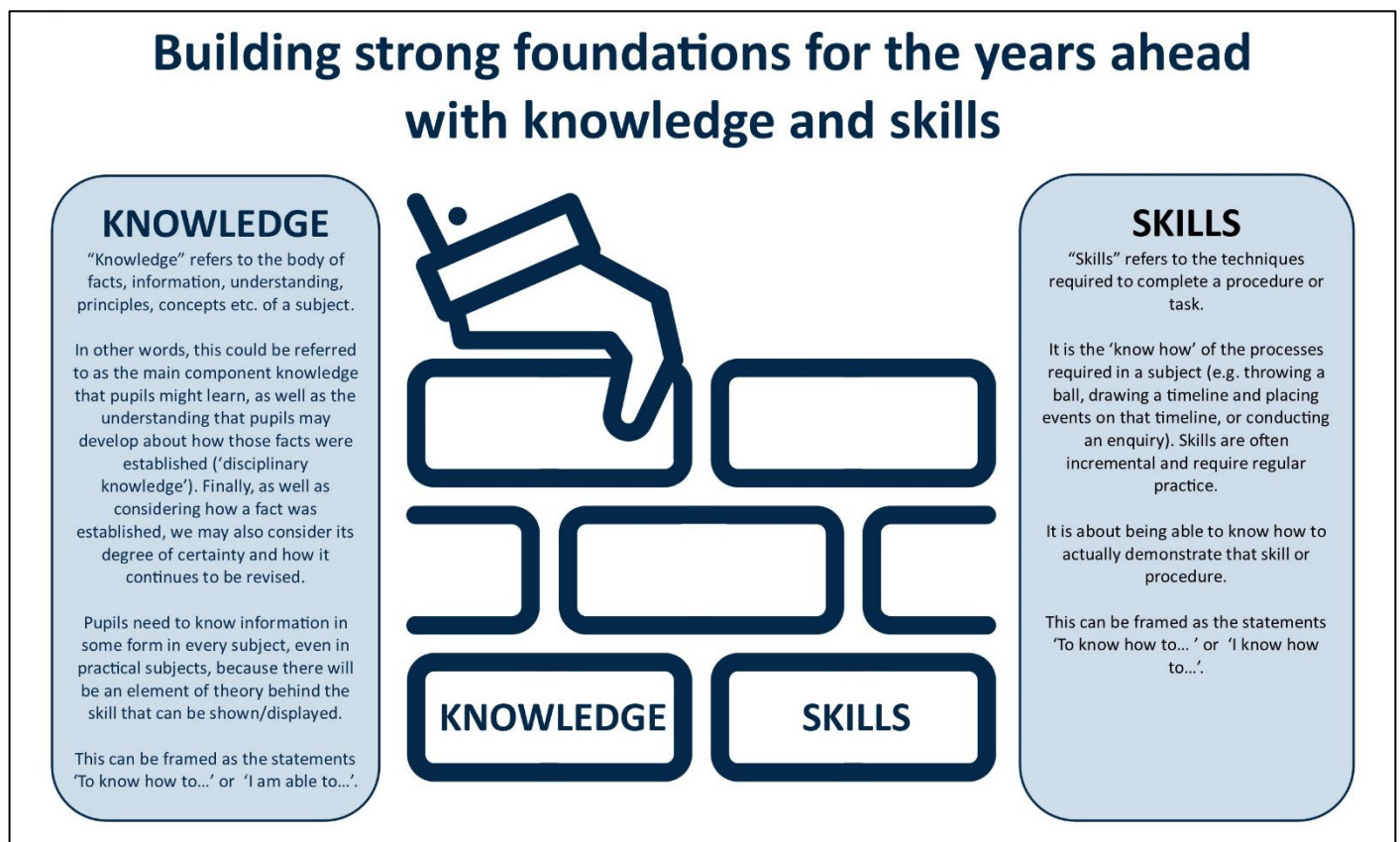


Knowledge and skills: introduction

At Sonning, we first considered the concept of knowing more, doing more and remembering more. Therefore, from our research, we have a shared and consistent understanding of different types of knowledge. Each subject will have a different ratio of distribution for these types of knowledge, and the types of knowledge can (and most often do) intersect.

1. Knowledge refers to the body of facts, information, understanding, principles and concepts etc. of a subject. In other words, this could be referred to as the main component knowledge that pupils might learn (e.g. specific writing techniques, or grammatical knowledge), as well as the understanding that pupils may develop about how those facts were established (aka disciplinary knowledge). Finally, as well as considering how a fact was established, we may also consider its degree of certainty and how it continues to be revised. Pupils need to know information in some form in every subject, even in practical subjects, because there will be an element of theory behind the skill that can be shown/displayed.

2. Skills refers to the techniques required to complete a procedure or task. It is the 'know how' of the processes required in a subject (e.g. the actual skill of being able to write or create a piece of text around a genre). Skills are often incremental and require regular practice. It is about being able to know how to actually demonstrate that skill or procedure.



Sonning's Infographic on Knowledge and Skills



Vision

At Sonning, we aim to produce writers who can express ideas and emotions for a wide range of purposes and audiences. Through high quality class texts and engaging experiences, children are inspired to write imaginative, informative or persuasive texts of varying lengths. They have a rich vocabulary and an appreciation of the nuances of language which they can apply in subjects across the curriculum. They are able to employ effective grammatical choices with which to communicate their intent in a range styles and registers. Children have the basic phonic and spelling skills to write with confidence words which are increasingly complex and their handwriting is fluent, joined and legible. They are able to use the full range of punctuation accurately and appropriately based on the style of writing and are able to use a range of layout features to help navigate the reader.

Curriculum implementation and pedagogy

Drawing Club (EYFS)

The "Drawing Club" approach in EYFS combines visual expression with early literacy, encouraging children to draw first, then add written labels or stories to their creations. This method fosters confidence in mark-making and storytelling, as children see their own drawings as a valuable starting point for writing. It builds vocabulary and narrative skills by connecting images to words, making writing less daunting and more engaging. Through expressive actions, children are introduced to advanced vocabulary, supporting their language and communication development. This not only enhances their storytelling abilities but also helps them use more sophisticated language in their writing. Ultimately, Drawing Club develops children's foundational writing skills in a playful and creative way, linking visual and written communication.

Years 1 to 5: The Write Stuff

Our core teaching of writing in Years 1 to 5 follows the principles of 'The Write Stuff'. The Write Stuff is taught through the modelling of precise sentences with the aim of producing coherent and cohesive texts with a clear purpose. Rich vocabulary is explicitly taught and children are expected to be able to justify their choices. Children are taught how to plan a piece by considering the 'plot points' or 'paragraph points'. They build up texts over time and are then given the opportunity to write independently, after which time they are taught how to rewrite and reimagine their work.

The Write Stuff in more detail

The focus is on the importance of the sentence and the precision of vocabulary chosen. Each sentence can be modelled under one of the three 'Zones of Writing':

- The **FANTASTICS** system uses a child-friendly acronym to represent the 9 ideas lenses e.g. touch, feelings.
- The **GRAMMARISTICS** – the tools of writing. It is an accessible way to target key weaknesses in pupils' grammatical and linguistic structures.
- The **BOOMTASTICS** – the techniques of writing. These are the magic ingredients that children need to begin developing their own writing voice.

Each writing lesson is taught in 'learning chunks' with each section of the lesson encompassing a separate chunk for each sentence (usually 3):

- An 'initiate phase' – where an idea is introduced and examples are generated. This part of the lesson utilises learner-centred pedagogical practices e.g. pair or group work, pupils drawing on their prior knowledge or being offered new experiences to learn for themselves;
- A 'modelling phase' – where the teacher explicitly models the sentence type in question.
- An 'enabling phase' – where children use their own ideas in the framework of the model provided for them.
- At the end of the teaching sequence, children are able to use self and peer assessment to evaluate their independent work before it is formally assessed by the teacher.



To enable children to construct effective sentences, they must have a broad and rich vocabulary upon which to draw. To this end, vocabulary is taught explicitly in all subjects and is pre-taught to children who may have more difficulty accessing more adventurous words. The expectations for the use of high-level vocab are maintained through the rejection of 'not quite right' words, modelled in teacher speech and through praise when children use words correctly.



The basis for sentence construction as advocated by 'The Write Stuff'

Additional approaches used in Years 1 to 5

Short burst writing may be focused on a key skill that the children need to practice. Teachers will offer opportunities for verbalisation of ideas, for children to work individually, in pairs and in groups. Teachers will model the key skill. Short burst writing offers an opportunity for the children to practice a range of skills in a genre or text type they have already encountered.

Certain text types or pieces may work best taught in a block rather than in the Write Stuff slow-write style. Teachers may model whole paragraphs or story starters of endings. Some poetry units are often taught as a block.

Year 6: Building independence and conscious control

In Year 6, block writes (modelled paragraphs followed by independent writing) and short-burst writes are used to practice the skills that have been taught, before children write more formal, independent pieces. These different approaches encourage engagement with the core texts and promote increasing independence and personal choice. Children are encouraged to write from different perspectives, using varying degrees of formality or create multi-modal texts, bringing together the skills they have been taught throughout their school journey as well as encouraging their self-expression.

Editing and proof-reading are key skills which are explicitly taught to enable children to improve their own writing.

Phonics – as it applies to spelling

At Sonning CE Primary School, our writing vision prioritises a structured, progressive approach, empowering children to become confident writers. We establish a strong foundation in phonics through systematic RWI teaching in EYFS and KS1, delivered in ability groups for targeted support. Once children have completed the RWI scheme, they begin to learn year group specific spelling rules through the Rising Stars Spelling scheme: this is continued in KS2. The learning of year group specific common exception words begins in EYFS (red words) and continues up to Year 5/6.

Building strong foundations for the years ahead (Matthew 7:24-25)

Love - Courage - Respect - Aspiration - Curiosity



Children's ability to segment phonemes and spell familiar words is tested weekly. Scores are tracked allowing us to promptly address learning gaps. Children are expected to use these strategies to make phonetically plausible attempts to spell words in their independent writing.

Handwriting

In EYFS and into Year 1, children use RWI handwriting formation guidance. Children use the RWI mnemonics (phrases) for each single letter to support them with their letter formation. Once correct letter formation is secure (which most often occurs in Year 2), children begin learning simple joins using the Nelson handwriting scheme. Explicit handwriting lessons continue until the end of Year 4. Where children in Years 5 and 6 require further support, small group interventions are provided.

Adaptations

Children who require more assistance are offered targeted support in class to access the quality first teaching. Intervention support may also be offered for a range of needs; this may include the following: precision spelling, handwriting, planning, vocabulary development and editing.

Curriculum structure

Across each year group, children are given the opportunity to experience different types of writing: narrative, playscripts, poetry, non-fiction writing initially through reading and then through explicit models and writing practice. Children will reinforce the skills learned in English lessons by writing in other curriculum areas. In KS1 and KS2, English is taught daily with additional sessions for whole class reading, guided reading, spelling/Phonics and handwriting. Writing opportunities are often drawn from our core texts.

Although key grammar concepts are taught in the designated year groups (as per National Curriculum), teachers within each Key Stage will, in the course of modelling writing, constantly reinforce what has gone before and talk about objectives exemplified in their sentences that have not yet been covered in detail.

Assessment

Writing is assessed through a variety of methods of verbal feedback and written feedback, with clear targets or next steps set. Success criteria, often generated by the children, are used to support children's writing, self-assessment and peer assessment. More general and progressively more challenging checklists are used by each year group half termly, to more formally assess pieces.

Children's writing is assessed against Sonar objectives (statements directly from the National Curriculum.) To enable teachers to more closely assess, we use a tracking spreadsheet which details objectives at different levels: working towards the expected standard, at the expected standard and at a greater depth within the expected standard: this allow staff to offer support, challenge and amend planning as appropriate. In Year 2 and 6, the Teacher Assessment Frameworks are used.

Outcomes (how we measure and evaluate)

We, as a school, use whole-school pieces to moderate our judgements and regular moderation events with Trust schools are used to ensure judgements are sound. In Year R, 2 and 6, government assessment frameworks are used to assess writing.

At the beginning of the autumn term, the whole of KS1 and 2 complete the same piece of writing which allows us to

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look at progression and standardise our judgements, and identify strengths and needs across the school. Moderation also takes place across the Trust, with all teachers attending training and moderation sessions for their year groups. In addition, EYFS, Year 2 and 6 teachers, participate in moderation activities within the local authority.

Standards in writing are monitored in variety of ways in addition to the above. Standards in writing are monitored in variety of ways in addition to the above. We use Sonar to record our ongoing and summative assessment: this allows us to analyse performance and assess standards in each year group/key stage and monitor the progress of key groups. Work and planning scrutiny and pupil conferencing also allow us to gauge attainment, engagement and progress in each class and for individual children.

Curriculum enhancement

There are a variety of ways in which writing is enhanced and enriched to ensure that it maintains a focus in school: World Book Day Events or other special workshops which stimulate pieces of writing; writing displays in classrooms and in corridors showcasing excellent writing; Spelling Bee competitions to raise the profile of spelling and challenge spellers at each level. Experiences which the children have enjoyed, such as visitors or excursions, are used to stimulate writing as is the use of pictures, videos, artefacts or current affairs. Writing for a real purpose is also important to the children's levels of engagement: groups of children use what they have learned in collective worship to contribute to a Collective Worship book; our children contribute to the school newsletter and Parish Magazine.

Writing also features heavily in staff training, with ideas drawn from evidence-based practice or from the identified needs of the children, e.g. the recent work on modelling. Work with other schools in the Trust is a core component of this.

Partnerships

Partnerships with parents are vital. Sessions are held to inform parents of key writing skills and pedagogy e.g. how they can support their child to learn spellings. Support materials are shared on the website. Work with Trust and other schools to share best practice occurs regularly throughout the year including moderation activities. Annually, Year 6 pupils work with Wokingham Library's Igniting Writing club to improve their creative writing.