



Foundational Skills Approach at Sherborne Abbey Primary School

1. Our Vision: Building Strong Foundations for Every Child

At Sherborne Abbey CE Primary School, we believe that strong foundations in reading, writing, spelling and handwriting open the door to all future learning. This policy explains how we support children — from their first phonics lesson through to confident, fluent reading and writing in Key Stage 2 — using approaches recommended in:

- The Reading Framework
- The Writing Framework
- The National Curriculum

National guidance emphasises that systematic phonics, fluent handwriting, secure spelling and strong language skills create the “firm foundations” children need to succeed throughout school.

2. Early Reading: Secure Phonics Foundations

Essential Letters and Sounds (ELS)

We use **Essential Letters and Sounds (ELS)**, a validated systematic synthetic phonics programme designed to help *all children learn to read quickly and securely*. It teaches children to recognise sounds, blend words and read fully decodable books.

Children receive **daily phonics lessons** that introduce or review sounds in a clear, consistent sequence.

Regular assessments and rapid interventions ensure pupils “keep up rather than catch up.”

Progression into Year 2: Abbey Readers & Fluency Practice

From Year 2, children move on to **Abbey Readers**, where they develop:

- Close reading
- Fluency and expression
- Continued reading of fully decodable texts until decoding is secure. We also use **Big Cat banded books** to broaden children’s reading experiences once they are ready for a wider range of texts.

This reflects Reading Framework guidance on fluency, book choice and ensuring children receive sufficient practice.

Echo and Choral Reading for Fluency

Teachers use **echo reading** to model fluent phrasing, intonation and expression before pupils repeat sentences.

Choral reading allows children to read together, building confidence, prosody and fluency.

1.) Pre-teach: Background Knowledge

- Listen to the Teacher**
 - Who wrote the book and what is it about?
 - When was it published and what is the context in which it was written?
- Vocabulary Exploration**
 - Children given opportunities to discuss and define the challenging words in the text.
 - Words are explored through the Frayer Model.
- Explain it Back**
 - Children have the opportunity to explain what they now know about the extract and make links with other stories or experiences they may have had.
- Address Misconceptions**
 - Teacher gives feedback and addresses any misconceptions.

Can you read and define these words?


fleet


strategies


chaos


decline

The Spanish Armada

The Spanish Armada was a large fleet of ships sent by Spain in 1588 to invade England. At that time, Spain was one of the most powerful countries in the world, and its king, Philip II, wanted to stop Queen Elizabeth I of England from supporting people who were against Spain.

The Armada had over 130 ships, making it one of the biggest fleets ever. The Spanish ships were loaded with weapons and thousands of soldiers. Their goal was to sail to England, defeat the English navy, and make Spain more powerful.

However, the English had smaller, faster ships. They used smart tactics to avoid the larger Spanish ships and attacked from a distance. One of their clever strategies was sending "fire ships." These were old boats set on fire and pushed toward the Spanish fleet, causing complete chaos.

The weather also played a big role in the defeat of the Armada. Strong winds and storms scattered the Spanish ships. Many were damaged, and some sank. Eventually, the Spanish were forced to sail around Scotland and Ireland to return home, but many ships did not make it.

In the end, the English won, and the defeat of the Spanish Armada was a huge victory for England. It showed that even the strongest fleets could be beaten with the right strategy and a little help from nature. This battle was important in history because it marked the beginning of the decline of Spain's power and the rise of England as a major world force.

3.) Choral/Echo Reading

- Listen to the Teacher**
 - Teacher reads the text and models intonation and expression, making children aware of punctuation and stresses throughout.
- Echo Read**
 - Teacher reads a section of text and children echo it back.
 - This is repeated until the text is complete.
- Choral Read**
 - Children read a larger section of the text in unison and teacher is able to assess individuals and support where necessary.
- Repeat**
 - Any of these steps can be repeated dependent on the feedback gained from the echo and choral read.

3. Developing a Love of Reading

The Reading Framework highlights that children thrive when they experience high-quality texts, daily reading aloud and a culture of reading for pleasure.

At our school we ensure this through:

- Inspiring classroom book corners
- Daily story time
- A wide range of fiction, non-fiction and poetry
- Strong home-school reading partnerships



Y6 summer 2	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7
Front cover							
Authors	Joseph Coelho	Helen Rutter	David Almond	Christian Foley	Gordon Korman	Matt Goodfellow	Tamsin Winter
Reading skill	Combining skills	Combining skills	Combining skills	Combining skills	Combining skills	Combining skills	Combining skills
Genre	Poetry	Humour	Magical realism	Non fiction	Humour	Poetry & prose	Realistic fiction
Themes & Big Ideas	Transition Urban environment Empathy Kindness Growing and changing	Kindness Acceptance Starting a new school	Weakness, strength and hardship Love, empathy and caregiving Curiosity Transformation	Transition Change Loss	Friendship Behavioural difficulties Overcoming adversity	Transition Change Friendship Family Real issues	Self expression Finding yourself Transition to secondary Cyber bullying Selective mutism
Rationale Text complexity	Resistant	Challenging stereotypes; complexity of character	Narratively complex; ambiguous character	Blend of formats and genre	Multiple narrators; complex themes	Complex themes; verse novel	Complex themes

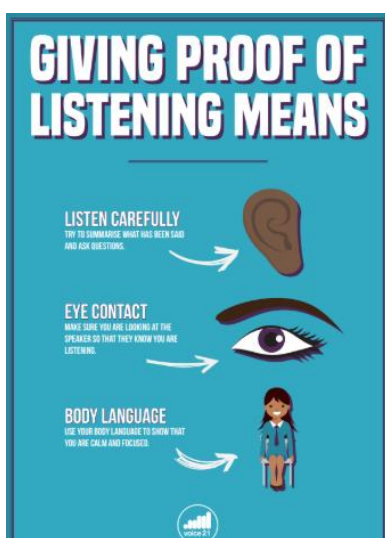
4. Oracy & Spoken Language: Building Confident, Articulate Learners

Strong spoken language forms the foundation for reading, writing, thinking and learning. We teach oracy explicitly and systematically, so all pupils develop the vocabulary, confidence and communication skills they need to succeed.

Voice 21: A Structured, Whole-School Approach

Using the **Voice 21 Oracy Framework**, children learn to:

- Express themselves clearly
- Listen actively
- Build on others' ideas
- Participate in discussions and presentations



History stems	
Cause and effect (causation)	Inferring
• One of the big causes was... • One effect of * is that...	• The evidence in * suggests... • It is evident from * that... • This makes me think... because...
Asking questions?	Evaluating usefulness (utility)
• What is it made of? • When was it made? • Who made it? • How does it work? • What does it look like? • Is it valuable? • Why was it made? • Who might have used it?	• * is useful because it shows/says... • However, * is not useful because...
Comparing beliefs (interpretation)	Perspective
• Source * is similar to source * because... • These two pieces of evidence agree because... • I think the two sources are different because... • The main difference is...	• The author of this source believes that... • The most important idea that is shown is that...

Graduated Release of Responsibility

We use the “**I do – We do – You do**” model, where teachers first model language, pupils rehearse ideas together and gradually take increasing ownership.

Talk Stems & Academic Language

To support structured, high-quality responses, we use talk stems such as:

- “I agree with... because...”
- “Another example of this is...”
- “I would like to challenge that idea...”

Talk for Writing

Talk for Writing strategies help children rehearse language patterns orally, develop cohesion and prepare for writing.



Enhanced Vocabulary Instruction

We teach vocabulary explicitly through:

- Tier 2 and Tier 3 instruction
- Frayer models

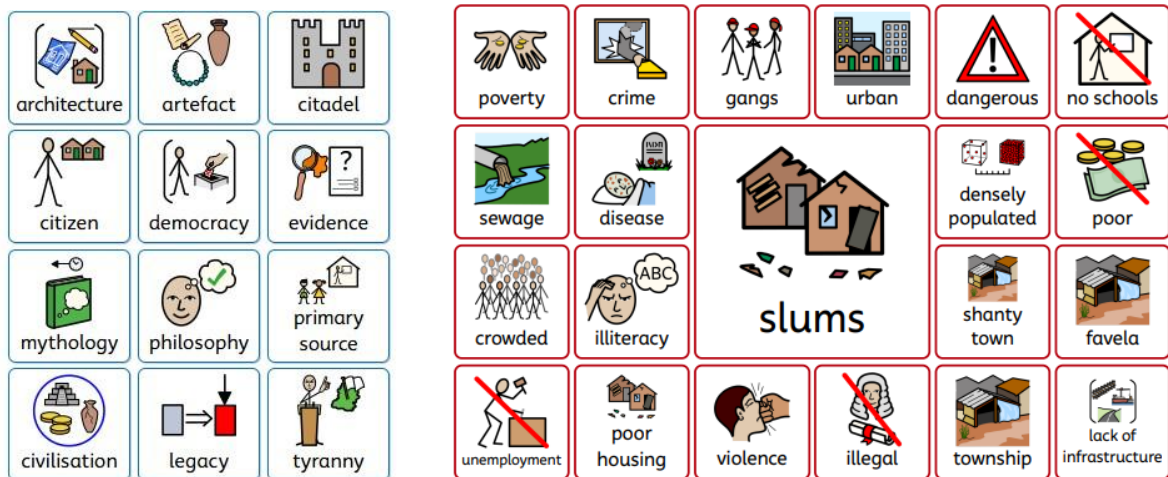
Definition Something that cannot be done without or is essential to a situation or task.	 Pictures
Examples - Following traffic rules is important for road safety. - Showing kindness and respect to others is important in building positive relationships.	Non-Examples irrelevant - unremarkable - minor -

important (adj.)
(im • por • tant)

Definition To do something in a way that shows a lack of comfort or happiness; very sadly.	 Pictures
Examples - The child looked disconsolately at his broken toy, unsure how to fix it. - He wandered disconsolately through the empty streets, feeling utterly alone.	Non-Examples happy/glad - delightfully - angrily -

disconsolately (adv.)
(dis • con • so • late • ly)

- Cornerstones curriculum links and vocabulary maps
- Communication in Print word banks



Early Interventions for Language Development

We provide targeted support for pupils who need additional help with early language:

- **Word Aware** (explicit vocabulary instruction)
- **Language for Thinking** (inference and verbal comprehension)
- **SALT** – Speech and Language Therapy programmes
- **Black Sheep: Spiral to Narrative** (narrative structure and cohesion)

How This Links to Reading and Writing

Strong oracy supports:

- Reading comprehension and fluency
- Writing structure and idea development

- Spelling through phonological and morphological awareness

5. Spelling & Word Knowledge (KS1–KS2)

Essential Spelling Year 2

Once children secure phonics, they move into **Essential Spelling**, which:

- Follows the structure recommended in **The Writing Framework**
- Teaches spelling patterns, rules and strategies
- Provides structured practice to aid retention and application in writing

Teach
Read these words.

knee	knight	knot
		
knew	kneel	known
		

Teach
Let's look at how the words are spelled.
Use the spelling sequence to help you.



kneel








Essential Spelling and Word Knowledge (KS2)

In Key Stage 2, children develop:

- Morphology (prefixes, suffixes)
- Etymology
- High-value vocabulary
- Strategies for longer, more complex spellings

autograph

autograph *noun*
the signature of a famous person

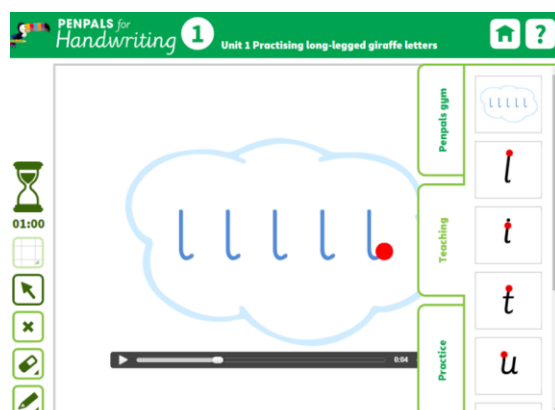
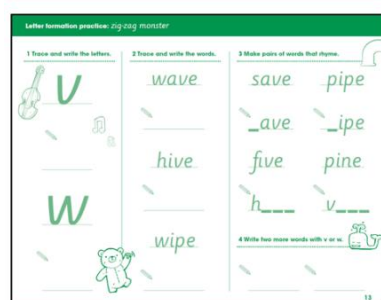
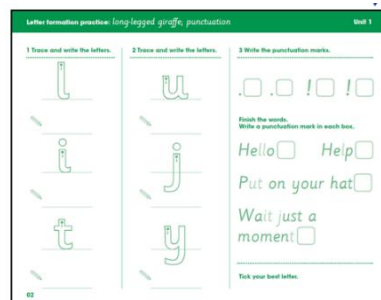
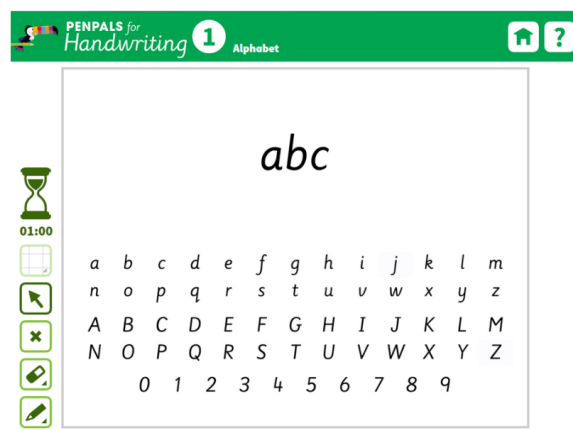
autograph *verb*
when a famous person autographs something, they sign it with their name

I waited at the side of the court to get an **autograph** from Andy Murray.

re back, again	appear cycle do fresh member play turn	auto self, own	biography graph matic
		anti against	clockwise septic social

Cambridge Hitachi Penpals

- Correct letter formation
- Joining patterns
- Fluency and speed
- Legible presentation
- Consistent modelling across the school



The Writing Framework notes that fluent handwriting frees working memory so children can focus on ideas.

Interventions and Adjustments

Support is provided through:

- Penpals intervention sessions
- Fine motor programmes
- Occupational therapy recommendations
- Desk aids (e.g., slanted boards)
- Pencil grips and adapted tools

7. Writing: Building Confident and Fluent Writers

Our writing approach follows the principles of **The Writing Framework (2025)**:

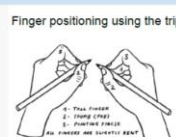
- Early emphasis on spoken language and oral composition
- Secure transcription skills (phonics, spelling, handwriting)
- Daily dictation
- Clear models, shared writing and scaffolded steps
- Focus on *quality over quantity* and refinement over time

Top handwriting tips for our daily dictations

- Sit ready to write: perfect posture, both feet on the floor, paper position, pencil grip;
- Aim for legible, fluent handwriting – not speed;
- Keep letter size, orientation and spacing consistent;
- Listen, hold the sentence and write confidently.



Paper positioning for left-handers: 



Finger positioning using the tripod grip:

1. Thumb (pencil)
2. Middle (finger)
3. Ring (finger)

FOR FINGERED AND DYNAMIC WRITING

The port town sweltered in the June heat; the sea glimmered like glass.



Quick Warm-Up (1 minute)

Teacher:

"Today we're practising some Year 3/4 spellings ending in -sure and -ture, and we'll use fronted adverbials to start our sentences."

(Clap out syllables / air write)

On the board:

measure • treasure • pleasure • adventure • creature • picture • nature • capture



Dictation (6 minutes total)

Teacher:

"I'll read each sentence. First just listen. Then we'll say it together. Then you'll write it."

Sentence 1

Before the adventure began, we used a ruler to measure the length of the path.

8. Assessment & Support

We use ongoing assessment to:

- Track progress in phonics, fluency, spelling and handwriting
 - Identify pupils needing additional practice
 - Provide early interventions
 - Work with parents to support learning at home
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9. How Parents Can Help at Home

- Read your child's decodable book together.
 - Encourage re-reading to build fluency.
 - Practise weekly spellings and explore word meanings.
 - Support handwriting through short, relaxed writing tasks.
 - Talk about books and stories to strengthen comprehension.
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10. Our Commitment

At Sherborne Abbey CE Primary School, we are committed to ensuring that every child leaves Key Stage 2 with strong, secure skills in reading, writing, spelling and handwriting. We strive to foster a genuine love of reading, develop confident and purposeful writers, and encourage every child to take pride in their progress and achievements.

Our approach is underpinned by a firm commitment to **research-informed practice**. Teachers continually develop their expertise through professional learning, including NPQ programmes, subject leader networks and wider professional forums. This ensures that our teaching remains current, reflective and grounded in the best available evidence.

Evidence-led approaches shape our pedagogy across the curriculum. We are dedicated to designing and refining a **coherent, carefully sequenced curriculum** that supports long-term retention and fluency. By maintaining consistency in teaching approaches and ensuring strong progression in knowledge and skills, we enable all pupils to build confidence, achieve success and develop as fluent, capable learners.