



Shotton Hall
Research School

LEADING TARGETED INTERVENTIONS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS



Introduction

Why create this handbook?

We have created this handbook to help primary schools make the most of their targeted interventions. All primary schools use targeted interventions in some form and the evidence is clear: done well, targeted interventions can have a real impact on pupils' learning. However, when tested thoroughly many interventions are found to make no difference and some even have a negative impact. Clearly, good intentions are not enough: we need to combine evidence with professional wisdom.

Targeted interventions are especially important for some of the most vulnerable pupils, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds or with special educational needs. Quite simply, these pupils need these interventions to be effective and the choices that school leaders make are critical.

This handbook is for leaders who are responsible for leading targeted interventions. Although the advice can be used to support any intervention, most of the examples are focused on reading as this is where we see the greatest need. This handbook is structured into seven sections. Section one explores the key leadership issues about targeted interventions. Sections two to five focus on ensuring that the right pupils receive the right interventions. Section six focuses on the intervention sessions themselves and how to make the most of them. Finally, section seven focuses on preparing to lead and implement change in schools.

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Three important themes

There are a lot of good things going on in schools regarding interventions. This handbook aims to guide school leaders to focus their efforts on the right things when it comes to interventions so they can make what is already good, really great. We can do this, more broadly, by defining quality at every phase of delivery, and creating a system that is cohesive and integrated. The handbook contains lots of different ideas to support schools to lead better interventions, but the three ideas below are the golden thread running through it:

Do you really do it already?

A common reaction when engaging with any evidence is to think that 'we do this already'. If you find yourself thinking this, try reflecting on the quality, consistency and purposefulness with which things are implemented. A striking insight from working with many schools is that some of the most effective and least effective schools are often focusing on similar areas of improvement, but there can be vast differences in how things are done or implemented.

Uncommon common sense.

The EEF's guide to implementation states that 'often, individuals and schools that implement well tend to do so by instinct, or what might be called common sense. Unfortunately, good implementation occupies a rarefied space of 'uncommon common sense', with too few explicit discussions of the characteristics and qualities that make it effective.' (EEF, 2019, p3.). The report goes on to highlight that implementation is an area of school practice that rarely receives sufficient attention, because 'in our collective haste to do better for pupils, new ideas are often introduced with too little consideration for how the changes will be managed and what steps are needed to maximise the chances of success.' (EEF, 2019, p3.). In short, the evidence underscores that even the best intervention in the world will fail if implemented poorly. Careful implementation might not be flashy, but it really does matter.

Integrated systems

The best interventions are part of a coherent, integrated system. Components of this system might include assessment, quality assurance, professional development, curriculum, communication between staff and so on. If we integrate these different components into a cohesive 'system', using them to support and inform one another, it means we can be more confident in the interventions we offer because we have considered them in their totality.

The tiered model for school planning

The EEF encourage schools to think about their improvement planning using a tiered model. The DfE have also adopted this model to structure Pupil Premium strategies around quality teaching, targeted interventions and wider strategies.

- **Quality teaching** – there is a growing consensus from research that what happens in classrooms is one of the most influential factors in schools. Therefore, schools should prioritise maximising teacher quality in their improvement planning.
- **Targeted interventions** – targeted interventions can never make up for weak teaching. However, targeted interventions are critical as many pupils arrive at school behind their peers so struggle to keep up.
- **Wider strategies** – schools should also make use of wider strategies that ensure pupils are ready to learn and that enrich their learning.

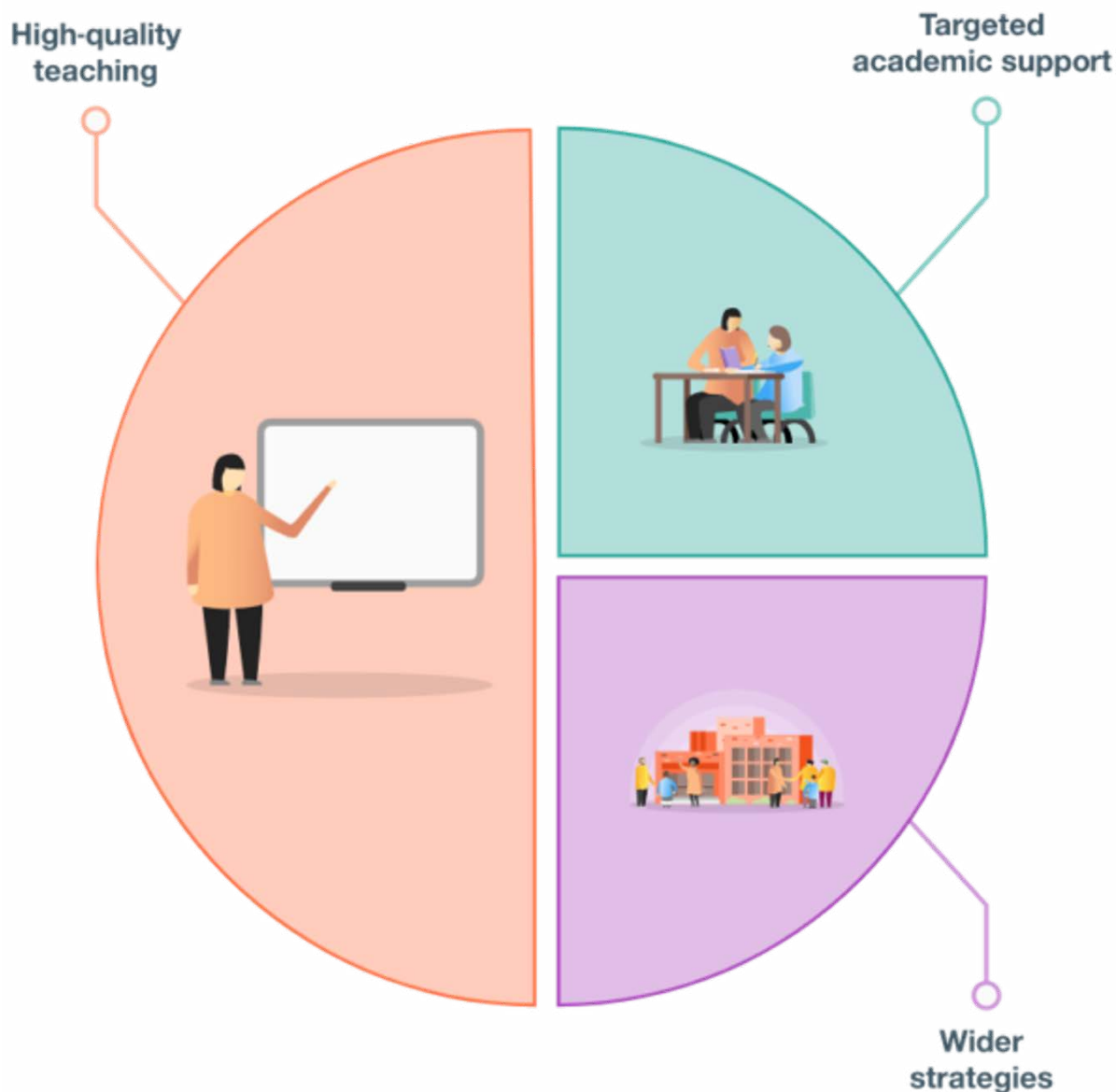


Diagram 1: EEF 'The EEF Guide to the Pupil Premium'. (2023), p.3.

While many schools are using the tiered model to structure planning, it can be easy to overlook the key insights.

- **Get the balance right between tiers** – The EEF's diagram indicates that schools should focus their efforts in a 2:1:1 ratio. This is an extremely rough estimate, so should be used as a starting point for discussion. However, it does underscore the point that targeted interventions can never be a substitute for weak teaching. What matters most is what is happens in the classroom.
- **Focus on quality within each tier** – all schools have plans for teaching, targeted interventions and wider strategies. However, the critical insight that the EEF offer is that it really matters is what is actually happening within each of these tiers. We might 'do it' but do we do it with quality?

1. Make targeted interventions a leadership priority

Why does this matter?

Quality interventions can be transformational for pupils if they are done well. While all schools make use of targeted interventions, their success hinges on the quality of leadership and implementation. Many aspects of leading targeted interventions come down to attending to detail or sweating the small stuff. However, other factors that are critical for effective leadership rely on deeper technical knowledge about assessment and the underlying principles behind the interventions chosen.

Key considerations

- Great leadership of interventions involves ensuring that the right pupils receive the right interventions, at the right time and that they are delivered excellently.
- The golden rule for leading interventions is to ensure that any intervention pupils attend should be much better than what they are missing.
- Schools should align their resources with their priorities when it comes to interventions.

Key leadership actions

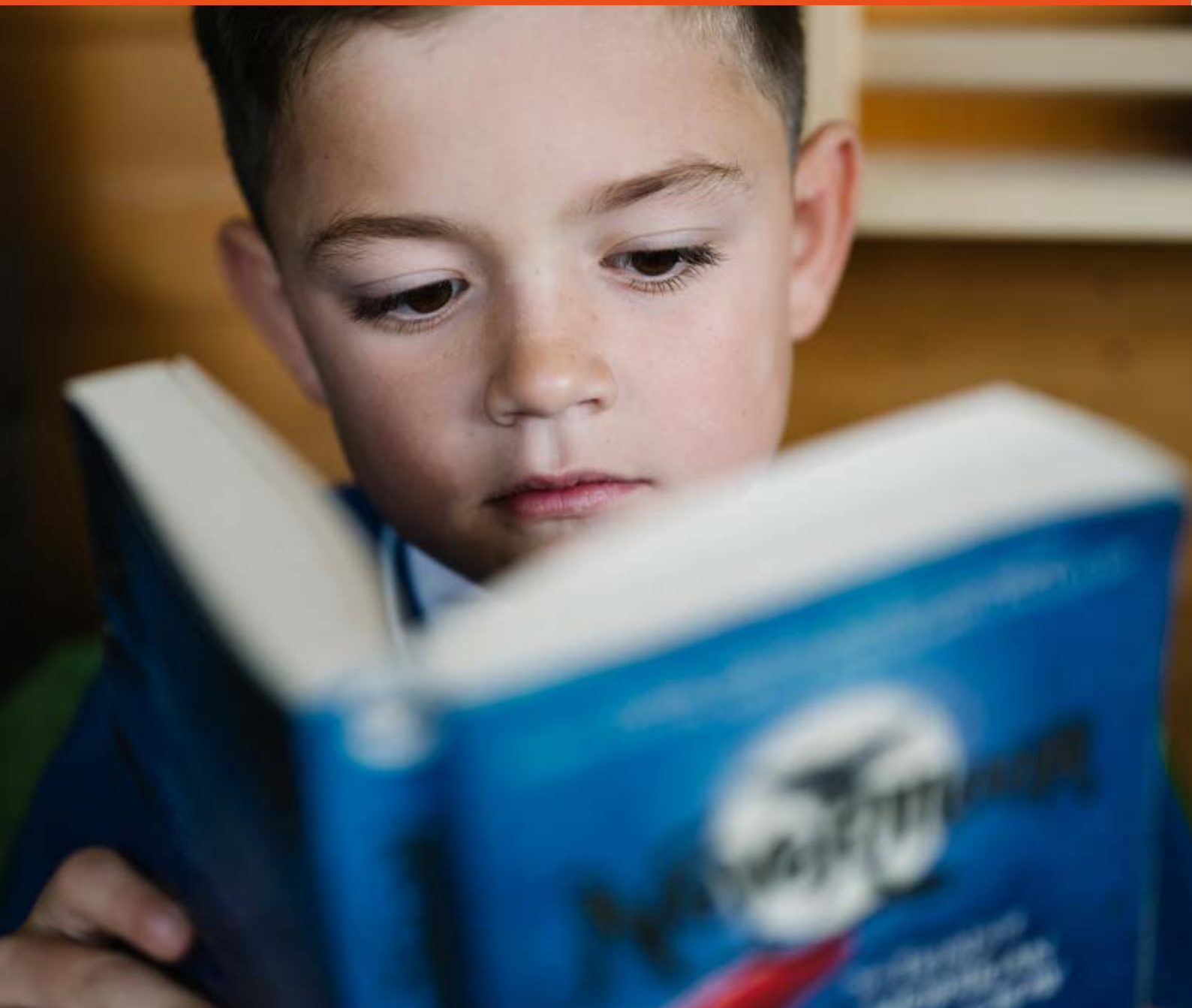
- **Focus on quality.** Getting the detail right is essential when it comes to targeted interventions. Regularly reflecting on the golden rule (interventions must be much better than whatever they replace) helps to clarify this focus.
- **Align resources with priorities.** Ensure that targeted interventions are appropriately resourced and try to minimise the diversion of these resources. Too often, valuable resources – particularly staff – can get diverted or distracted from the focus of interventions.
- **Clarify roles and responsibilities.** Ensure that those who are involved in interventions have clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Great interventions involve everyone consistently playing their part.
- **Select the best people to deliver the intervention.** Whoever delivers the intervention should have a deep understanding of its purpose and what quality looks like. As a rough rule, the most capable staff should work with the most vulnerable pupils, and this should be a key consideration in the preparation phase. Often in primary schools, the delivery of interventions is the responsibility of teaching assistants.
- **Prioritise staff development.** Well-planned, structured interventions led by staff who have been trained and supported can improve pupils' learning considerably. The evidence is quite clear around the impact of interventions and there are three key areas to consider: the quality of sessions; the quality of training received and the specificity of what is going on in intervention sessions.
- **Plan monitoring and evaluation.** The terms 'monitoring' and 'evaluation' can sometimes be used interchangeably, even though they have very different purposes. The purpose of monitoring is to check that we are doing things with fidelity and that we are doing them well. Evaluation, however, judges the overall impact of what we have done or, in this case, an intervention programme.

What does the evidence tell us about teaching assistants?

There is now a considerable evidence base about how to make best use of teaching assistants. The Education Endowment Foundation have funded many trials involving thousands of schools and they have also supported multiple initiatives to help schools apply their learning. The EEF have also summarised the wider international evidence through their Teaching and Learning Toolkit, which currently synthesises findings from 65 different studies. The guidance report 'Making Best Use of Teaching Assistants' also offers detailed advice.

Five themes have emerged through all this work.

- **Leadership** – Leaders need to prioritise making best use of teaching assistants for improvements to happen. While the insights are relatively simple to understand, making the changes happen is more challenging and it requires the long-term commitment of the headteacher.
- **Deployment** – Teaching assistants are deployed for diverse purposes. From helping to contain disruptive behaviour and supporting the physical needs of pupils with physical disabilities through to directly supporting learning. Each of these purposes is legitimate. When it comes to supporting learning, the evidence is clear that teaching assistants are most effective when they lead targeted interventions, rather than when they are deployed informally in the classroom. Another striking insight about deployment is that small group interventions are often of a similar effectiveness to one-to-one interventions, but they can be much more cost-effective.
- **Professional development** – Ensuring that teaching assistants have a deep understanding of the interventions is critical. As a minimum, teaching assistants should understand how interventions they lead are intended to work. Teaching assistants also need to develop fluency in any instructional or pedagogical techniques required for the intervention.
- **Preparation** – The golden rule of interventions is they need to be much better than what pupils are missing. If teaching assistants are not sufficiently prepared for interventions, then this is unlikely to be true. Ensuring teaching assistants have the time to prepare before interventions and follow up afterwards will maximise their impact.
- **Separation** – Many of the ways that teaching assistants are deployed can lead to separation. Pupils can become separated from the curriculum, from their peers and from their teacher. Thinking hard about any potential benefits and downsides of interventions is also important. Separation can also happen when teaching assistants are deployed informally in the classroom. Counter-intuitively, teaching assistants may have a negative impact on the pupils they work most closely with in the long-term by over scaffolding pupils' learning – this is particularly likely to happen if teaching assistants focus on task completion, rather than learning.



Discussion and reflection prompts

1. How consistently do your interventions meet the golden rule?
2. For what purposes are teaching assistants currently deployed in your school?
3. How do teaching assistants spend a typical day?
4. Are there some lower impact activities that could be stopped or reduced to free up capacity?
5. Who is responsible for overseeing all targeted interventions in the school?

Find out more

- Teaching and Learning Toolkit | [EEF \(educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk\)](https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk)
- Making Best Use of Teaching Assistants | [EEF \(educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk\)](https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk)

2. Use assessment intelligently

Why does this matter?

Assessment is a core theme running through this guide because it enables schools to make the very most of scarce resources. An assessment is a process for making an inference. Assessment processes often make use of written assessments, but they can also involve closely observing pupils, observing something they have made or talking with them. We then use these inferences to make decisions. The information we get matters: we need to ensure we get good information so that we can make good decisions.

Clarify the purpose

To make the most of assessments, we need to make inferences linked to four purposes.

- **Screening** – identifying the pupils that might require additional support. A wide range of data sources can be useful, including teacher judgement. At this stage, it is helpful to include any pupils where there may be concerns so that they can be investigated further through diagnosis.
- **Diagnosis** – Identifying the specific capabilities and difficulties for individual pupils. Diagnosis ensures that interventions are precisely focused on the best next step in learning. Assessors with a deep understanding of the topic under investigation can make the most of diagnostics.
- **Monitoring** – Knowing if interventions are on track to achieve the intended outcomes is crucial. Pupils receiving interventions need them to work. We need to have early indicators of success and concern so that we can intervene early, where necessary.
- **Evaluation** – Knowing if interventions achieve what we hope allows us to make good choices: we can decide how well an intervention has worked for a single child; we can also decide how well an intervention is working in general and if it is sufficiently cost effective.

Clarify the constructs of assessments

Assessment is often thought of in terms of individual tests: for example, the Sats papers or the Phonics Screening Check. Further, commercial assessments like NGRT, Star or PIRA are all examples of standardised reading tests. All these tests can provide schools useful information with useful information of their pupils' reading abilities. However, if we want to make the most of these assessments, we need to think hard about what it is we want to know about.

Assessment specialists call the 'things' that we want to assess constructs. Constructs can be very specific or 'narrow': for example, can pupils accurately write the letter S? But say we wanted to assess a broader construct like reading: this much broader construct is comprised of many smaller ones. For instance, reading fluency is a major part of reading. Reading fluency is also made up of the smaller constructs of accuracy, automaticity, and prosody. So, if we wanted to assess pupils' reading, we would need to decide what – specifically – it is we want to know about. Clarifying the constructs allows us to select or design appropriate assessments. Clarifying the constructs also allows us to interpret information we gain effectively.

Maximise validity

Validity is the extent to which an assessment measures what it is supposed to measure. We want our assessments to be good measures of the things – or constructs – we want to know about. Unfortunately, no assessment is perfect, so we need to think about appropriate trade-offs. Our assessments need to be good enough for our purposes, but this is often easier said than done.

There are two ways that an assessment becomes less valid:

- **Too big** – these assessments might measure things that they are not supposed to measure. For instance, markers of written assessments are often unduly influenced by handwriting. What might your assessments measure that you do not want them to measure?
- **Too small** – these assessments very rarely measure the entire construct. They often sample from the full construct, as with a 20 question times table quiz. Sometimes there are also constructs we think matter that are not assessed at all. For instance, science assessments rarely assess pupils' practical capabilities.

Inferences you might want to make about reading

1. Overall, how good are our pupils at reading?
2. What are the next best next steps in learning in reading for different children?
3. What progress, if any, are pupils making in their reading?
4. Does the reading intervention seem to be working? Does it do what we intended it to do?
5. Should the intervention stop?

Discussion and reflection prompts

1. What assessments do you currently use in school?
2. For what purpose(s) is each assessment used?
3. What specific construct(s) does each assessment aim to measure?
4. How well does each assessment measure the constructs of interest?
5. Are there purposes you would like to better fulfil or constructs you would like to better measure?

Find out more

- Christodoulou, D. *Making Good Progress? The future of Assessment for Learning*. OUP Oxford. (2017)
- Bennett, T., Donarski, S. *The researchED Guide to Assessment*. John Catt Educational Ltd. (2020)
- Evidence Based Education. *Four Pillars of Assessment: Purpose* - Evidence Based Education (2017).
- Evidence Based Education. *Four Pillars of Assessment: Validity* - Evidence Based Education (2017).
- Evidence Based Education. *Four Pillars of Assessment: Value* - Evidence Based Education (2017).
- Evidence Based Education. *Four Pillars of Assessment: Reliability* - Evidence Based Education (2017).

3. Become an expert in your pupils

Why does this matter?

The better we know our pupils, the better we can prioritise and optimise any interventions. We need to be intensely curious about pupils' capabilities and difficulties. We should also take a keen interest in what motivates and influences them.

As we outlined in the previous section, reading is a complex activity made up of many different components. Suppose that a group of pupils have completed a standardised reading assessment, and they all scored the same score. If we dig beneath the surface of these scores, we might realise that the best next step in learning is quite different for each of these pupils. One pupil, for instance, may have secure phonic knowledge but fail to apply it with longer words. Another might have difficulties with verbal reasoning. A further pupil may easily lose their place while reading, making it hard to read longer texts.

Knowing more about our pupils allows us to match them to suitable interventions. Knowing more about our pupils also allows us to decide the best next steps in learning specifically for them, as well as address their wider barriers to learning. For instance, there is clear evidence that some pupils struggle with reading because they have an untreated vision problem – these pupils would need a pair of glasses, and to wear them regularly, before we administer any further reading interventions.

An easily overlooked consideration is to ask what relevant previous educational experience pupils have had. For instance, if a pupil joins your school in Year 4 and has not yet mastered phonics, then it is very valuable to know which of the following three things is true.

1. Has the pupil never experienced any phonics teaching?
2. Have they been taught phonics, albeit not brilliantly?
3. Or have they experienced great systematic phonics teaching, but not responded to it? If they haven't responded, why is that?

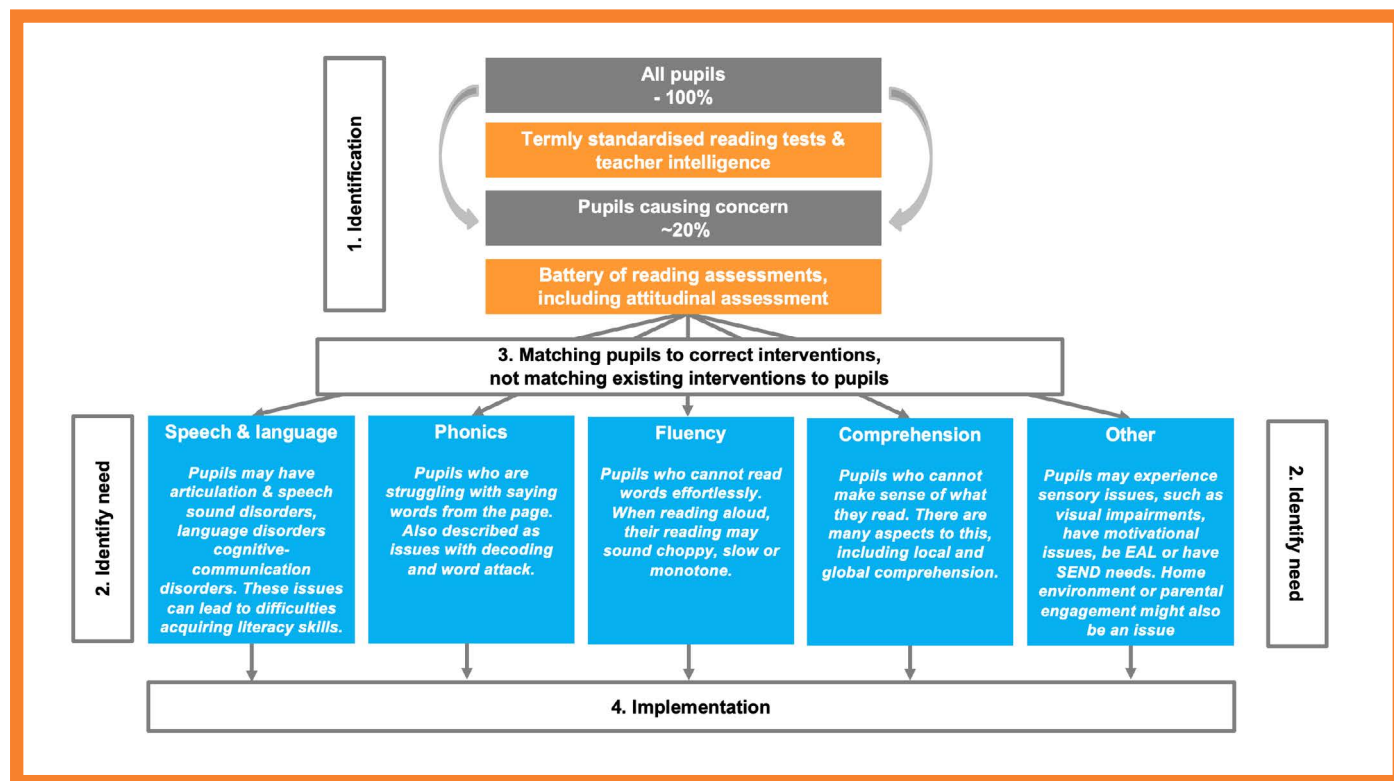
What are the key things to think about?

- **Use diagnostic assessments.** When it comes to assessments, we often think of written assessments that can be completed in groups. These kinds of assessments are valuable for screening, monitoring and evaluation. However, they tend to be less good at providing diagnostic information, unless they are very well designed.

An assessment is simply a process for making an inference and many of the best processes for making diagnostic inferences involve close observation of pupils. For instance, reading fluency is very hard to assess through a written assessment, but a trained teacher can make good inferences about fluency by listening to a pupil read aloud.

- **Quality information.** Section two introduced the idea of validity, which is the extent to which an assessment measures what it is supposed to measure. Reflecting on the quality of the information produced from assessments can help you to optimise them. Does the assessment measure the construct you actually need it to measure? If it doesn't, then any data obtained from it will lack validity, and any decisions made will be equally lacking.

• **Synthesise and share information.** Becoming an expert in your pupils is not a one-off process, but an ongoing event. Think carefully about how you will synthesise, or bring together, information. Effective synthesis includes deciding how much trust to place in different pieces of information. Ensuring an effective and appropriate flow of information amongst school staff and families is also an important way of becoming an expert in your pupils. It is also useful to consider how you learn with and from specialist colleagues, like educational psychologists.



Using standardised data to identify pupils for further assessment

Pupils can have the same scaled scores on standardised reading tests yet have very different reading needs. Group or standardised reading tests can be useful for screening purposes, but they will not give us the information or data we need with regards to pupils' specific difficulties, unless they are very well designed. However, sifting and analysing that same standardised data can support us in identifying pupils who would benefit from further detailed diagnostic assessment. At this point, we can administer a battery of diagnostic assessments to identify pupils' specific strengths and weaknesses in reading.

Discussion and reflection prompts

1. Is there a strong culture of professional curiosity about pupils' learning?
2. How are diagnostic assessments used to learn more about pupils' capabilities and needs?
3. How is any information from assessments synthesised?
4. How is any information shared among staff across the school?
5. How is any information gathered and shared with families?

Find out more

- Great Teaching Toolkit Evidence Review.pdf (hubspotusercontent-na1.net)
- Official DIBELS Home Page | DIBELS® (uoregon.edu)
- How we use diagnostic assessments | [Shotton Hall Research School](https://www.shottonhallresearchschool.co.uk)
- Context is key | [Research Schools Network](https://www.researchschoolsnetwork.co.uk)

Combining insights from sections 2 and 3

Reflection task – are your current assessments fit for purpose?

Sometimes, we can lack clarity around the purposes of our assessments and think they are sufficient to measure constructs that they do not. Based on your reading so far, think carefully about the assessments that you currently use to inform reading interventions in your school.

- Do they meet their intended purpose?
- Are they valid, accurately measuring the constructs that you need them to measure?
- Is there anything you might need to change about how you use them going forwards? Are there further assessments that you need to begin using?

| Assessment | Purpose | Actual construct/s measured | Is it valid? Does it do what you need it to do? Does it measure what you need it to measure? | Any changes to current use needed? |
|--|---|---|--|--|
| Termly digital standardised reading test | Our intended purpose – measures reading ages to diagnose reading difficulties in phonics and comprehension and target reading interventions (phonics, fluency or comprehension). To test the impact of reading interventions and monitor pupils who might need support. | Measures broad components of reading: - phonics and phonemic awareness - sentence completion/local comprehension - passage or global comprehension. Does NOT measure: - reading fluency - speech and language | Not fully: - can be used as a measure of comprehension and some phonics interventions (evaluate their impact), as well as to generate a standardised age score. | - New assessment needed to measure impact of reading fluency interventions more precisely. - Use to screen all pupils and identify those who might require further support, followed by further diagnostic testing. - Continue to use standardised reading test to monitor the impact of reading comprehension interventions. - Continue to use to monitor the progress of pupils termly. |
| | Test's actual purpose – measures broad components of reading and screen all pupils. Pupils then have further diagnostic reading assessment. To test the impact of reading interventions and monitor pupils who might need support. | | | |

| Assessment | Purpose | Actual construct/s measured | Is it valid? Does it do what you need it to do? Does it measure what you need it to measure? | Any changes to current use needed? |
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4. Become expert in your interventions

Why does this matter?

To make the most of any intervention, all staff involved need to have deep knowledge about it. For any interventions that were not developed in your school, you will benefit from engaging with whichever organisation developed them, but there are some challenges to consider:

- **Overstated benefits.** All providers of interventions are incentivised to overstate the benefits of their interventions. Testimonials, misleading claims or not sharing studies that have found less positive results are increasingly common.
- **Repeat customers.** Many interventions operate based on a subscription model. Alternatively, they will often require you to engage in training that comes with a fee.

Bespoke, evidence-informed interventions designed by schools can often have the most impact because they are tailored to schools' specific needs. But this does not mean that they do not come without challenges. For instance, the 'Ikea Effect' is a cognitive bias that causes us to overestimate the quality of things that we have built. The name comes from studies that have found customers were willing to pay more for furniture that they had partially assembled compared to the equivalent furniture that was pre-assembled.

Five questions to build your knowledge around

Across each of these questions, you will notice the importance of prioritising staff development and attending to small details.

1. What is the theory behind the intervention?
2. What does it look like when implemented brilliantly?
3. What are the pitfalls to avoid when using the intervention?
4. Which pupils are likely to benefit from the intervention?
5. How will you know how well the intervention is working?

Staff development

Whether the intervention is externally developed or bespoke, professional development matters. For interventions not developed in your school, avoid relying solely on development from external providers. If used, ask them for an overview of the intended learning outcomes. It is also important that you think hard about any specific questions you have about the intervention.

Thinking hard about the specific questions you have

Ensure that adequate, sustained development takes place in school. It is essential that all staff involved in the intervention understand its evidence base and are aware of the fundamental mechanisms and principles that underpin what they are delivering. High quality, extensive professional development needs to be delivered to all staff involved in the intervention. This training will need to be underpinned by a robust programme of support. Evidence tells us that the key difference between effective and less-effective TA-led interventions is the amount and type of training, coaching and support provided by leaders and schools, as well as the quality of resources provided. This is because professional development provides a means of aiding consistent high-quality interventions.

Better structured interventions can be easier for less skilled staff: structure can scaffold staff development. Staff readiness can also be supported by well-resourced interventions, including adequate time allocated for planning and preparation. The importance of this cannot be underestimated: even the best interventions will lack impact if staff are not organised and prepared to deliver them. Well-resourced interventions might include session plans, structured resources, materials (including tests) and exercises, but staff delivering them will still need time to adapt to pupils' specific needs if they are to truly optimise their impact.

A. What is the theory behind the intervention?

Understanding how – specifically – an intervention's activities lead to the intended outcomes provides the foundation for being an expert in your interventions. Researchers often discuss the tension between fidelity to the core ideas and the flexibility to tailor it to a school's context, or the needs of individual pupils. By understanding the theory behind the intervention, it is possible to make good decisions about which adaptations are sensible and which will compromise it.

Without a good understanding of the theory behind an intervention, there is always a risk that the intervention drifts over time away from the key ideas. Drifts are particularly likely to happen after staff changes. A popular way of describing these issues is 'lethal mutations'. According to the EEF, a 'lethal mutation' occurs 'when evidence-informed practice is modified beyond recognition from the original practice' (TES Explains, 2023). Lethal mutations are often done with good intentions, often to tailor the intervention to a school's particular context. They are also driven by a desire to be (or at least appear to be) following 'what the research says' (TES Explains, 2023). Lethal mutations can occur when schools have not closely studied the core ingredients that underpin the intervention, drifting away from its key purpose and focus, and often leading schools to 'unwittingly develop counterproductive strategies' (TES Explains, 2023). Understanding the theory behind an intervention can ensure that our interventions do not drift over time.

How does more learning happen?

Whatever the intervention and its specific theory is, we want pupils to learn more. More learning is essential when it comes to targeted interventions. However, education debates often overlook how – specifically – more learning can happen. Here, we aim to identify the key mechanisms for making learning happen, so we stand a better chance of our interventions having impact.

Crucially, the way that more learning happens involves pupils doing things differently in their intervention. Awareness of the different ways that more learning happens can focus our discussions and provide a good test for any intervention we deploy. Unless it is clear how a proposed intervention will make at least one of these mechanisms happen, more learning is unlikely.

• **Working longer.**

Pupils can simply spend more time learning in their intervention: ideally, the intervention should constitute additional learning time. Evidence Based Education's 'Great Teaching Toolkit' describes the importance of maximising the opportunity to learn by minimising wasted lesson time through inefficient transitions and disruptive behaviour. The same is true for interventions: the intensity and pace of each session is key. We want to maximise the time for every session, so it is used to the best effect. In terms of intervention, pupils might also work longer through an extended school day, homework or initiatives like summer schools. However, it is important to remember that there are likely diminishing returns to working longer. Further, taken too far, working longer can limit pupils' opportunities to do other things.

• **Working harder.**

Pupils can work harder during the time that they are learning. Pupils can work harder if they understand how learning happens, including the need to think hard about things and develop a high level of fluency in key capabilities. Pupils can even enter a state of flow – a form of intense concentration – where they become fully immersed in their learning. Just like we need to maximise time in any intervention session, we also need to maximise what pupils are doing: working hard and practising the specific skill/s that they need to improve in a systematic way.

• **Working more effectively or efficiently.**

Better teaching enables pupils to work more effectively or efficiently. Pupils can also be supported to engage in more effective or efficient learning outside of the classroom by using better revision strategies. Pupils can also be supported to take increasing responsibility for their learning. For instance, if pupils can effectively monitor their own learning it has some of the same benefits as assessment for learning.

Understanding the theory of how more learning happens will support staff understanding of any intervention we deploy. However, it is imperative that we also understand the theory that underpins the intervention itself: it is only by doing so that we can implement it with fidelity.

B. What does it look like when it is implemented brilliantly?

Typically, interventions in primary schools are overseen by a senior leader or the SENDCo. However, they are often not the people who deliver it: primary interventions typically tend to be delivered by a class teacher or a TA. It is crucial, therefore, that there is a shared understanding by all staff involved in the intervention of what quality really looks like. Clearly defining - and exemplifying - quality at every phase of delivery is key here, for all of those involved. Professional development, as well as quality assurance, is integral to ensuring that all involved retain a shared understanding of quality and that they deliver the intervention with fidelity.

No staff should be involved in any intervention without having undergone intensive training in it. It is only by engaging in such professional development that they will have a deep understanding of its core ingredients, as well as the theory that underpins it. Without that understanding, the intervention will never be administered with fidelity. As a minimum, staff involved should understand how the interventions they deliver are intended to work. However, they should also engage in ongoing professional development, so they become fluent in any pedagogies required. Structured, high-quality resources can also support staff to become confident in interventions, as can adequate planning time to prepare for sessions.

Light-touch quality assurance also plays a crucial role in delivering interventions brilliantly. Those responsible for interventions should have a clear idea of their 'indicators of quality', and they should also make sure these are disseminated to all staff involved. For example, a TA-led small group reading fluency intervention might have indicators of quality linked to the following, for every phase of its delivery:

- What a quality environment looks like - how should it be set out?
- What does a quality session look like? I.e., pupils purposefully engaged and reading out loud
- What does a quality interaction look like between pupils and TA?
- What does quality feedback for support and challenge look like?

Quite simply, quality implementation is as important as the quality of the actual interventions we offer. Even the best interventions will fail or lack impact because of poor implementation. Professional development, informed by ongoing quality assurance, is pivotal when communicating and exemplifying to staff what any intervention looks like when implemented brilliantly.

C. What are the pitfalls to avoid when using the intervention?

When we purchase interventions from external providers, it can often be difficult to get this vital information from them. Therefore, for any intervention we purchase, we should consider:

- Its efficacy and the evidence-base that underpins it. This can be difficult, so it is often best to ask an independent expert.
- Its mechanisms to support its intended outcomes.
- Any commitments that it requires, particularly in terms of time, frequency and staffing.
- Its active ingredients, so it can be delivered it with fidelity.
- Its overall cost-effectiveness, based on several contributing factors.

Let's take a 'Phonics Catch-up' reading intervention administered to KS2 pupils so we can explore this idea in more detail. In this scenario, a group of pupils have been identified as 'struggling readers' requiring additional support in their reading through intervention.

Pitfalls to avoid in this situation:

- **Inaccurate identification of needs** – Is phonics really the main barrier to learning here? Have other possibilities been considered such as fluency, comprehension, or even vision?

- **Is the intervention age-appropriate?** Are the resources suitable for the pupils who will receive the intervention? A common error with phonics interventions occurs when the same approach and resources are used with older pupils, when they were actually intended for younger pupils, thus resulting in disengagement and a lack of progress.

- **Timing of the intervention** – Numerous timings need to be considered, particularly when in the day will the intervention take place. For example, if teachers are already struggling to fit everything into busy timetables, when will the intervention happen? The curriculum also needs consideration here: interventions should be focused on inclusivity wherever possible. If pupils are withdrawn from lessons, then it is worth considering what they will miss and how often they will miss it. As a rule, if pupils are withdrawn, the intervention should be 'better than what they are missing' i.e., higher quality and more beneficial to the individual pupil. We will explore this idea in greater detail in section 6. Alternatively, if interventions are planned before or after school, it is worth considering the attendance and punctuality of those selected for it. As you will see, there are trade-offs to every decision but, whatever the intervention, they can be detrimentally impacted by poor attendance and punctuality.

- **Effective delivery** – Whoever delivers the intervention should have a deep understanding of its purpose and intention. As a rough rule, the most capable staff should work with the most vulnerable pupils, and this should be a key consideration in the preparation phase. Often in primary schools, the delivery of interventions is often the responsibility of TA. As we have already explored, there has been considerable research in the deployment of TAs, their role and impact on school and interventions. The evidence is clear here: professional development matters, as does access to quality resources. Part of delivery includes regular and purposeful communication information between TA and teacher.

D. Which pupils are likely to benefit from the intervention?

Some interventions will be suitable for a range of needs, while other interventions will have a very narrow focus. Assessment, particularly detailed diagnostic assessment, can really support schools to ensure that pupils receive the intervention that they are most likely to benefit from. Section six explores matching pupil needs to the right intervention but, to do this well, you need to understand the potential benefits of each intervention used.

Some interventions have a very narrow focus, so it is especially important to match pupils to the right interventions. In contrast, other interventions might have a broader focus. Here, the matching will be less vital as the intervention tailors to pupils' specific needs.

An example of one-to-one reading versus a fluency intervention versus a phonics intervention

| Early language | Early Reading | Fluency | Comprehension |
|--|---|--|--|
| <p>Designed to improve communication, language and preliteracy development in the Early Years (from birth to 5).</p> <p>Designed to increase the quality of oral language children received from the adults around them.</p> <p>Designed to improve language acquisition and the development of oral language skills, to enable effective communication.</p> | <p>Designed to improve pupils' knowledge and understanding of the relationship between written symbols and sounds, or phonemes, to read written language.</p> <p>Focuses on improving letter knowledge, knowledge of sounds and early phonics, using a structured and explicit approach to support the teaching of reading through phonics.</p> | <p>Designed to improve accuracy and automaticity in pupils' reading by increasing their accurate words per minute count: accuracy and automaticity focus.</p> <p>Designed to develop background knowledge and prosody through repeated reading out loud of non-fiction texts, focusing on stress, intonation and expression.</p> | <p>Designed to develop background knowledge through reading non-fiction texts linked to the wider curriculum.</p> <p>Focuses on key reciprocal reading strategies of summarising, clarifying and questioning.</p> <p>Designed to develop pupils' breadth and depth of tier 2 and 3 vocabulary that is mapped across texts.</p> |

E. How will you know how well the intervention is working?

Done well, targeted interventions can have a real impact on pupil learning. However, the reality is that, despite good intentions, some interventions have been found to have unintended negative effects. Ultimately, schools need their interventions to work, especially because they often involve their most vulnerable pupils. This involves quality evaluation so the impact of interventions can be measured. It also requires effective quality-assurance processes. This way, schools know their interventions are being ran with fidelity along the way. When it comes to effective quality-assurance of interventions, schools need clearly defined indicators of their success and failure.

These indicators are seldom generic or broad – they require leaders to have a clear theory about how the intervention works, as well as any unintended consequences. Clearly defined indicators of success and failure also require a real understanding of the intervention's sequence of activities. This allows leaders to identify appropriate evaluative milestones. Understand the interventions' sequence of activities can support leaders of interventions to identify where they might see evidence of promise later in the chain.

For example, when measuring the impact of a TA-led small group reading fluency intervention, indicators of success and failure might include:

Indicators of success

1. Improved reading scores: An 8 mark increase in pupils' scaled scores on standardised reading tests.
2. Increased reading speed: Pupils increase their accurate words per minute count and demonstrate greater accuracy when they read out loud.
3. Enhanced comprehension: Pupils build background knowledge by repeated reading of a wide selection of texts. This means that they demonstrate a better understanding of texts they read, as evidenced by their ability to answer comprehension questions accurately.
4. Positive feedback: Pupils, parents, and teachers report satisfaction with the intervention and observe noticeable improvements in reading abilities and confidence.

Indicators of failure

1. No improvement or decreased reading scores: Pupils' scores on standardised reading tests do not improve, or they even decrease.
2. Unchanged or slower reading speed: Pupils do not show any improvement in their reading speed.
3. Poor comprehension: Pupils continue to struggle with understanding the texts they have read.
4. Negative feedback: Pupils, parents, or teachers report dissatisfaction with the intervention, or do not observe any noticeable improvements in reading abilities.

When evaluating the impact of an intervention, it's important to consider multiple indicators and to interpret them in context. Thinking about the above example, a pupil might improve their reading speed, but their comprehension could decrease. This would suggest that while one aspect of reading has improved, the intervention may not be successful overall. Similarly, feedback from pupils and parents can provide valuable insights into how the intervention is perceived and whether it is having a positive impact beyond what can be measured through tests alone.

Evaluating the impact of interventions – counterfactuals

We should consider counterfactuals when we evaluate the impact of our interventions. Sounds really hard, but a counterfactual is just a hypothetical scenario that explores what would have happened under different conditions through a comparison. It's a "what if?" analysis that helps to test cause-and-effect relationships. This kind of comparison can provide schools with valuable insights into the effectiveness or impact of the intervention measured.

Let's take the intervention above. As previously described, the school has implemented a new TA-led reading intervention for a group of struggling Year 5 readers. The intervention involves additional small-group tutoring, use of new, non-fiction reading materials, and a structured teaching approach. After a term, the school wants to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention: they need to consider the actual and the counterfactual outcomes as part of their analysis.

- The **actual** outcome is the reading level of the pupils after the intervention. This can be measured using standardised reading tests.
- The **counterfactual** outcome, however, is what the reading level of the pupils would have been at the end of the term if the new reading intervention hadn't been implemented. Often in schools, this is the tricky part: they can't observe this outcome directly since they have already implemented the intervention and can't go back in time to remove it.

However, it's worth noting that schools can overcome this situation by planning and implementing their interventions well. Part of this planning should include an estimate of the counterfactual: schools can use a similar group of pupils who didn't get the new intervention (a control group). Groups should be balanced, with various forms of data informing them. This is because balance between the groups is key for fairness. Then, if the pupils with the new intervention read better than those without, schools might conclude that the intervention works. However, they must also consider other factors or variables that could affect pupils' reading levels as part of their analysis.

Sometimes, people question the fairness of this kind of approach. Sometimes, schools have the best intention and want to help as many pupils as possible. However, using balanced control and intervention groups is actually the fairest approach, especially when interventions are new. Important ethical reasons include fairness, risk minimisation and avoiding false positives. Remember that, in some cases, interventions can have unintended negative effects. By robustly evaluating the impact of interventions using a control and intervention groups, schools can ensure that not all pupils are exposed to any undue risk. However, if the intervention is found to achieve its intended outcomes, schools can begin to think of implementing it at greater scale.

Final thoughts

To make the most of any intervention, all staff involved need to have deep knowledge about it. As this section has explored, there are multi-faceted strands to this knowledge, including

- understanding the theory behind the intervention
- understanding what the intervention looks like when implemented brilliantly – as well as how to exemplify it
- knowing the pitfalls to avoid when using the intervention
- knowing pupils are likely to benefit from the intervention
- knowing how to spot when the intervention is – or isn't – working well.

There is much to consider and know when it comes to our interventions; this underscores the point of taking time to prepare for and implement change.

Discussion and reflection prompts

1. What is the theory that underpins your intervention?
2. What does it look like when implemented brilliantly?
3. What are the pitfalls to avoid in the intervention?
4. Which pupils are likely to benefit from the intervention?
5. How do you know when it is – or isn't- working?

Find out more

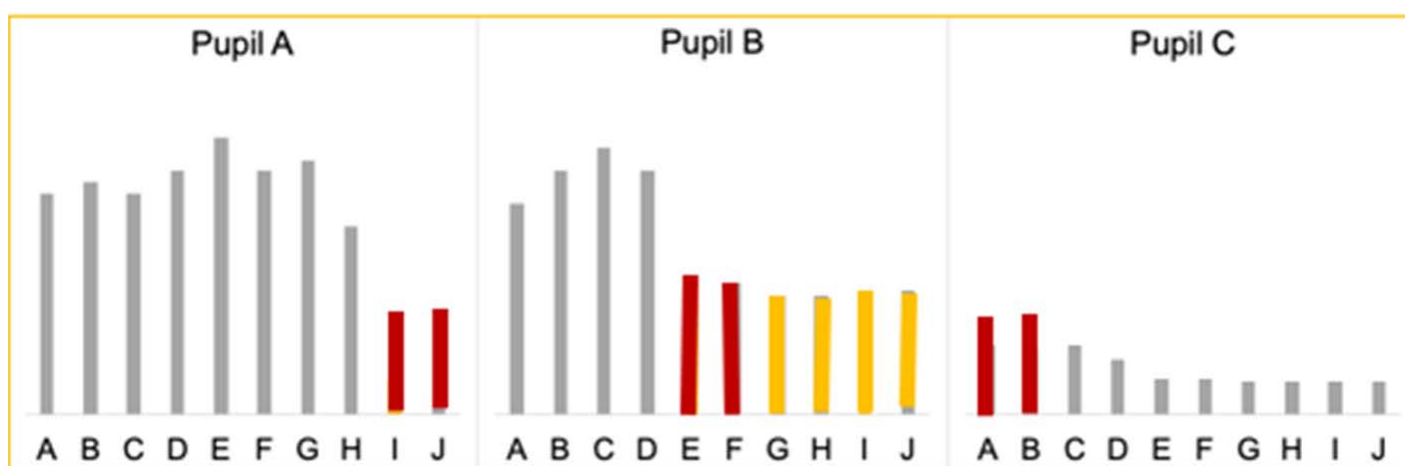
- [What are lethal mutations? | Tes](#)
- [Great Teaching Toolkit: Evidence Review - Evidence Based Education](#)
- [What is an effect size? | Tes Magazine](#)
- [Does it matter who sponsors research? | Tes Magazine](#)
- [What is statistical significance? | Tes](#)
- [What is a randomised controlled trial? | Tes Magazine](#)
- [What is a systematic review? | Tes Magazine](#)
- [How do researchers analyse data? | Tes Magazine](#)
- [Teaching and Learning Toolkit | EEF \(\[educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk\]\(http://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk\)\)](#)
- [Projects | EEF \(\[educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk\]\(http://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk\)\)](#)
- [Implementation | EEF \(\[educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk\]\(http://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk\)\)](#)



5. Carefully match pupils with interventions

Why does this matter?

Following your screening processes, you will have identified a group of pupils causing concern. It is especially important to become more expert in these pupils to ensure prioritisation and optimisation of interventions. Suppose we have undertaken some more detailed diagnostic assessments to explore the reading capabilities and needs of the three pupils shown in the diagram below. For each pupil, we have information about ten reading capabilities labelled A to J. The higher the bar, the more capable a pupil is in each reading component.



The better you understand your pupils, the better you can support them. The American Abraham Maslow popularised the law of the hammer in 1966, stating that: 'if the only tool you have is a hammer, it is tempting to treat everything as if it were nail'. The risk in schools is that, especially when it comes to interventions, we over rely on what we already know, and we do what we have always done. This is known as cognitive bias, which is where we can over rely on ideas that we already know. This reveals a key insight that, to become an expert in our pupils, we also need to have a deep understanding of the typical difficulties and misconceptions that they have.

Thinking about this in the context of the example above, pupils A, B and C have different reading capabilities so need different interventions.

There are three major traps schools can fall into with the interventions that they use:

1. Not providing for pupils who need help.
2. Misdirecting intervention support at those who don't really need it.
3. Matching pupils to the wrong intervention.

A reading-based example

Reading is made up of many and varied component skills and sub-skills: a lack of accuracy or fluency in any one can cause difficulties for pupils. As previous sections of this guide have explored, effective diagnostic assessment needs to be designed so that weaknesses in any of these sub-skills can be rapidly identified and addressed. Often, one assessment alone is sufficient to do this, and we might be better advised to administer a battery of assessments. For example, we can check a pupil's fluency in terms of words per minute by having them read prose aloud. At the same time, we can assess more granular components of fluency such as accurate words per minute, smoothness, intonation, expression, volume etc. If they do not meet the minimum criterion, we can not only provide further systematic fluency practice to develop fluency more widely, but tailor aspects of instruction and feedback to support development of specific sub-skills.

Now, let's return to the three pupils who have different reading capabilities. From further diagnostic assessment, we find that:

- Pupil A is a fluent reader on the whole but could do with some structured support in developing their prosody and expression whilst reading; this is indicated by the red bars. They will likely benefit from developing their wider background knowledge, as this will likely aid prosody. This is because prosody is an indicator of comprehension; a reader indicates what they comprehend by the words they emphasise and their use of intonation. Thus, comprehension and prosody develop symbiotically.
- Pupil B would also benefit from a reading fluency intervention, but this time, based around developing automaticity and accuracy with polysyllabic words. This is indicated by the red bars. They would also likely benefit from some intervention with components of prosody, but not until a later date. This is indicated by the yellow bars on the diagram. Part of effective diagnostic includes being able to precisely identify which skills to target, and in what order. Right now, it would benefit Pupil B to focus on automaticity and accuracy with polysyllabic words, as these will assist prosody later.
- Pupil C would benefit from fluency instruction based around developing both their speed and accuracy in reading both high-frequency and disyllabic words, as indicated by the red bars. Currently, these areas are hampering other aspects of reading, so these components need targeted first.

All pupils would benefit from a reading fluency intervention. However, the focus of these interventions should be different. Any broader reading fluency intervention would require thoughtful and intelligent adaptation. It is only then that all three pupils will get precisely what they need.

All pupils need different things but that was only ascertained due to diagnostic assessment of their reading capabilities. Part of the art of improving the reading of pupils with varied difficulties is ensuring that the right pupils receive the right intervention. Effective diagnostic assessments can support schools to carefully match their pupils to the right interventions. This is because they start with the problem, rather than with a pre-prescribed list of interventions that they've 'always done'. Sounds perfectly sensible, doesn't it? However, the

reality is some schools allocate pupils to interventions that they 'already do', without truly understanding what their real needs are.

Another factor to be aware of is using interventions that are matched to staff expertise, as opposed to pupils' needs. In all honesty, it wouldn't matter how good the staff are if the pupils don't need the intervention because their difficulties lie in other areas.

Strategic provision and intervention mapping can support schools to match pupils well to an intervention. A provision map is a broader tool: it is a leader's overview of the range of different types of interventions, support and any additional staffing allocated to those pupils who need extra support. An intervention map, however, is a sub-component of a school's wider provision map.

Not only do leaders need to allocate the right pupils to an intervention, but they also need to allocate the right staff to it. This means allocating the right adults with the right strengths to the right pupils. Remember, leaders should aim to allocate the best staff to the most vulnerable pupils. By doing so, they can play to staff strengths and are more likely to achieve the intervention's intended outcomes. Finally, schools should have built-in or integrated structures and time to review data as part of their overall system of interventions.

Intervention maps can also be useful when

- Looking at an intervention in its totality, including how staff are deployed.
- Judging the impact of an intervention, including its sustainability and feasibility.
- Determining the overall cost-effectiveness of an intervention.

What's worth tracking?

Though not provided as an extensive model, **see Appendix 1** for an example of how a school may begin to map their interventions.

As well as mapping out interventions themselves, it is also useful to have an idea of resources, particularly staff, that can be deployed for interventions.

See overleaf for an example of how a school may map staffing out.

It is important that you become expert in your pupils who need further support so you can prioritise and optimise your interventions. The better you understand our pupils, the better you can support them by matching them to the right intervention. Not only do you need to allocate the right pupils to the right intervention, but you also need to allocate the right staff. This means you are more likely to achieve your intervention's intended outcomes.

Example of how a school may map out staffing

| Staff | Role | Total time | Time spent in class | Other duties | Time for intervention | Specialist areas | Other considerations |
|-------|------|------------|---------------------|--------------|-----------------------|--|---|
| 1 | HLTA | 1800 | 120 | 180 | 1500 | Maths specialist with a focus on mathematics fluency. Also trained to lead one-to-one reading. | Often provides additional support to help pupils in upper KS2 who struggle to regular their behaviour. This is unpredictable, but often needed after PE on a Tuesday afternoon. |
| 2 | HLTA | 1800 | 200 | 100 | 1500 | Reading specialist with a focus on early language, phonics and reading fluency. | Sometimes deployed as cover in teacher absence or PPA. |
| 3 | TA | 1500 | 400 | 100 | 1000 | Trained in phonics and one to one reading. | Lunch duties and supports Pupil A. |

Discussion and reflection prompts

1. Do you know your interventions really well? If not, what do you need to find out more about?
2. Do your current interventions fit the needs of your pupils?
3. How do you allocate pupils to interventions in your school?
4. Do you match pupils with the greatest needs to most skilled staff?
5. What might an intervention map for one your school's interventions look like?

Find out more

- [How we use diagnostic assessments to... | Shotton Hall Research School](#)
- [How we designed a peer tutoring... | Shotton Hall Research School](#)
- [Context is key - detailed diagnosis for... | Research Schools Network](#)
- [Great Teaching Toolkit Evidence Review.pdf \(hubspotusercontent-na1.net\)](#)
- [Official DIBELS Home Page | DIBELS® \(uoregon.edu\)](#)

6. Deliver your interventions excellently

Why does this matter?

If the first five recommendations from this handbook are in place, then the foundations are there for learning to happen through an excellent intervention. The right pupils are going to receive an appropriate intervention from a skilled professional. However, too often, great ideas are wasted due to poor implementation, which can include overlooking some of the basics. At every stage, remember the golden rule that interventions should undoubtedly be much better than what pupils are missing.

Stage 1: Preparation

- **Staff preparation** – If staff are not sufficiently prepared for interventions, then the golden rule is unlikely to be true. Ensuring teaching assistants have the time to prepare before interventions and follow up afterwards will maximise impact. Some interventions take more preparation than others. One benefit of structured programmes is they can dramatically speed up the preparation time needed: staff readiness and organisation ensure that not a moment is wasted.
- **Pupil preparation** – Pupils need to be ready to learn, which is easier said than done. Reflection and attention to detail can help. It is worth carefully considering what can be done to ensure pupils are ready to learn. This includes making sure pupils know what to expect, where to go, when to go and who to go to. Do they understand the purpose of the intervention? Where appropriate, parents and carers should be prepared and informed. This way, they will understand the purpose of the intervention their child is receiving, as well as any practical requirements, such as start times.
- **The environment** – The ideal environment is free from distractions, close to pupils' classroom to minimise transition time and with all the necessary equipment. As simple as this sounds, the environment really matters because it can make or break an intervention. Taking the time to prepare the environment before pupils arrive. If necessary, think carefully about how to minimise time lost logging into any online programmes.

Stage 2: Quality activities

- **Great teaching** – It is beyond the scope of this guide to consider aspects of pedagogy in detail, but principles of great teaching apply equally to the delivery of effective interventions. Like any other form of teaching, effective interventions require explicit instruction carefully matched to pupils' varying needs and capabilities. Inevitably, this will involve the gradual building of knowledge, active modelling, scaffolding, checking for understanding. It will also involve giving adequate time so pupils achieve a high level of proficiency in skills.
- **Pupil responsibility** – Pupils need support to apply new learning during their lessons. Communication between those leading interventions and teaching staff is crucial so that pupils can be prompted and supported appropriately.
- **Fidelity and flexibility** – Planning is important, but the plan should not be too rigid. One of the key advantages of small group learning is that teachers can be responsive and build from pupils' current capabilities. It is also important to get the balance right between fidelity to the core principles of a given intervention and adapting to local context. A good guiding principle with new interventions is to focus first on achieving a high level of fidelity and to then change.

Stage 3: Follow up

- **Planning** – what we learn about pupils from intervention should feed back into planning so it can inform the next best steps in their learning. Staff involved need to be given the time and space to do this well. It is only by doing so that they can adapt future instruction to best meet pupils' reading needs. This includes considerations of how to best provide support and challenge.

- **Communicating with colleagues** – Done well, interventions can glean some great sources of data and it's essential that this information is shared with colleagues. This ensures we can feed this knowledge, ultimately, back into pupil learning activities

Maximising the impact of an intervention – one-to-one reading

Experienced practitioners understand the power of hearing pupils read regularly one-to-one. Christopher Such has written a brilliant blog called '12 Tips to Maximise the Impact of One-to-One Reading'. Read below for a summary of his 12 tips.

1. Pupils will recognise some words automatically, but support might be needed for unfamiliar words. Decode unfamiliar words by paying attention to all the letters and sounds represented. Model decoding and ask pupils to repeat.
2. Keep an eye out for pupils who take a guess at the whole word after decoding the first sound or two that is represented within it. Support these pupils to use decoding through the entire word as their go-to strategy for recognising unfamiliar words.
3. If a pupil decodes a word using GPCs that they know but then comes unstuck, ask them if they know a word that sounds similar. If not, tell them what the word is, what it means and point out the GPCs in this word. In this way, you are priming the pupil to learn new GPCs by applying the ones they already know.
4. Where a pupil struggles to decode polysyllabic words, model breaking the words into syllables and decoding these piece by piece. Get the pupil to practise this immediately after modelling.
5. Blending is difficult for nascent readers. This is often due to the load on working memory. Scaffolds can help. Consider progressively blending challenging words by elongating sounds.
6. For decoding practice, use a decodable text with a pupil until they are routinely paying attention to all the GPCs in an unfamiliar word.
7. Encourage disfluent pupils to re-read sentences, aiming for a little more flow the second or third time around. Model fluent reading, where needed.
8. If motivation or attention is an issue for some pupils, take turns reading with them. This can be on a sentence-by-sentence or page-by-page basis. Model a pace that is fluent but steady. Pointing at words as you read them can help because it models how to decode tricky words.

9. For pupils who are dysfluent and/or decoding is still laborious, don't expect them to make much sense of a text independently as they read: their working memory is tied up with getting the words off the page. Support comprehension by discussing and summarising what the text has said. Repeated re-reading of a chunk of text can support disfluent readers to understand what they read.

10. If a reader is relatively fluent, then other pupils are likely to benefit more from one-to-one reading time than they are. One-to-one reading is a precious and (usually) scarce resource: target the pupils who are struggling most with foundational aspects of reading, in the first instance.

11. Where it becomes clear from one-to-one reading that a pupil struggles with a particular aspect of decoding, allow this to inform the interventions that you might use beyond one-to-one reading. Decoding interventions work far better when they target the aspect(s) of decoding a pupil is struggling with.

12. Make clear to every pupil exactly what a pleasure it is to witness their improvement and tell them how worthwhile their efforts are.

We strongly encourage you to read the whole blog at Professional development – [Primary Colour \(home.blog\)](#) – it's a fantastic example of how to maximise the quality of interactions between staff and pupil when reading one to one.

Discussion and reflection prompts

1. How well prepared are staff, pupils and the environment to make the most of the intervention?
2. How good is explicit teaching and modelling?
3. How good is the scaffolding and guided practice?
4. Is there sufficient fidelity and flexibility to the core ideas of the plan?
5. How effectively and consistently does the follow up happen?

Find out more

- Effective Professional Development | [EEF \(educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk\)](https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk)
- Implementation | [EEF \(educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk\)](https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk)
- Making Best Use of Teaching Assistants | [EEF \(educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk\)](https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk)
- Great Teaching Toolkit Evidence Review.pdf (hubspotusercontent-na1.net)

7. Make time to plan and prepare for change

Why does this matter?

Even the best interventions will fail if they are not implemented well. Part of the art of great implementation involves detailed planning and preparation for change.

What are the key things to think about?

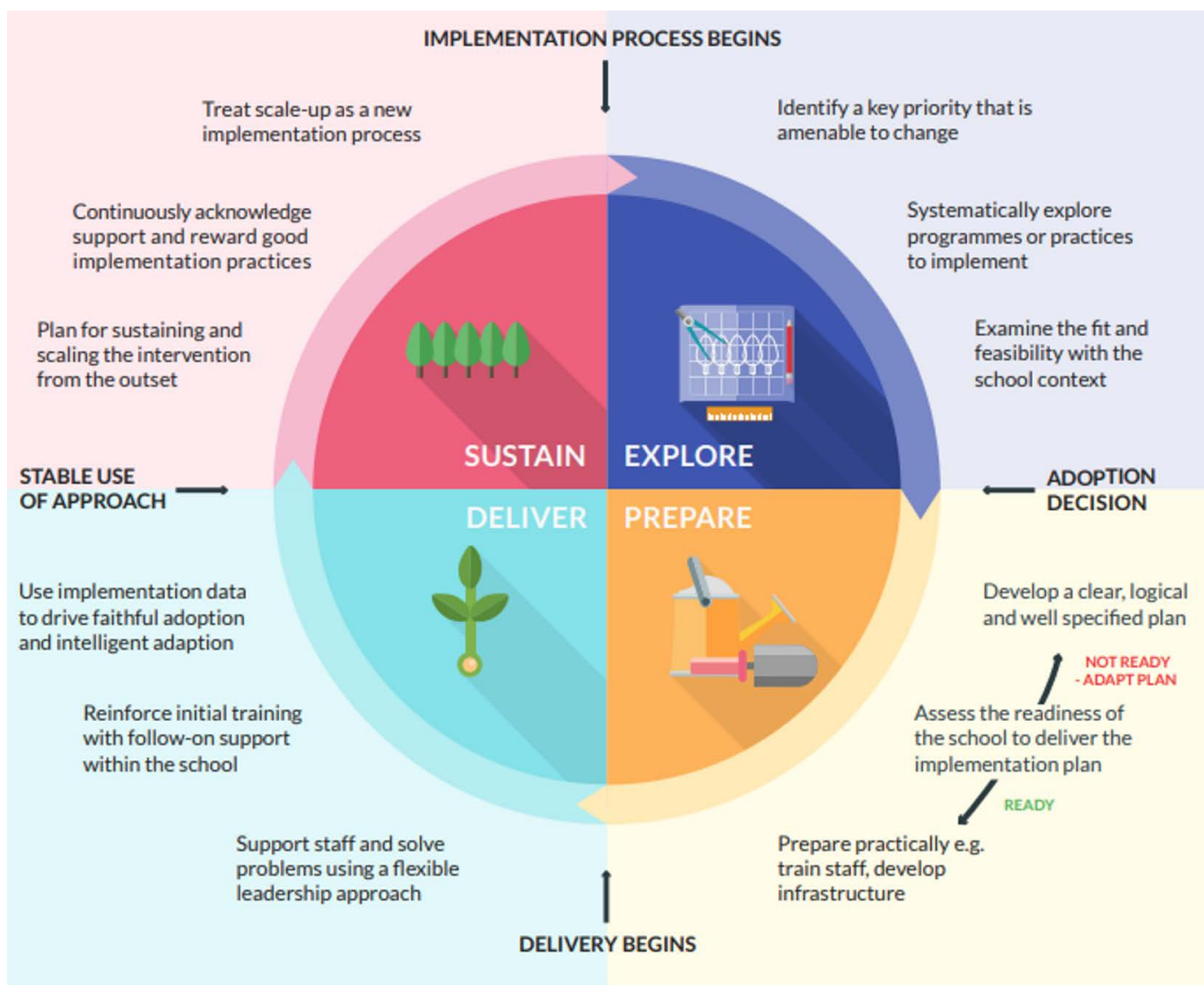
- Fewer things, done better. This advice can be hard to follow, but it is a recurring insight. For instance, McKinsey and Company advise that organisations should avoid a ‘peanut butter strategy’ of spreading their resources thinly across many priorities and instead focus on those that will bring the most value.
- Going upstream. ‘We need to stop just pulling people out of the river. We need to go upstream and find out why they are falling in.’ This story from Desmond Tutu reminds us that we need to manage the symptoms of issues, while also trying to intervene earlier as this is usually more effective and cheaper. In deciding what to do, we should make sure that we do sufficient preventative work, so we are not overwhelmed with demands for reactive activities.
- Outcome focused, not activity focused - It is easy to fall into the trap of doing something because others are doing it or because the goals are worthy. However, we need to always ensure that there is a clear theory of change, including credible mechanisms by which the proposed activities will lead to the intended outcomes.

Great implementation

It is beyond the scope of this handbook to consider implementation, and the professional development that needs to underpin it, in detail. However, the evidence is clear when it comes to great implementation: schools need to take time to prepare for change before any form of delivery begins.

The EEF’s Implementation Guidance Report states that ‘One of the characteristics that distinguishes effective and less-effective schools, in addition to what they implement, is how they put those new approaches into practice. Often, individuals and schools that implement well tend to do so by instinct, or what might be called common sense. Unfortunately, good implementation occupies a rarefied space of ‘uncommon common sense’, with too few explicit discussions of the characteristics and qualities that make it effective.’ (EEF, 2019, p3.). The report then goes on to highlight that implementation is an area of school practice that rarely receives sufficient attention, because ‘In our collective haste to do better for pupils, new ideas are often introduced with too little consideration for how the changes will be managed and what steps are needed to maximise the chances of success.’ (EEF, 2019, p3.). It can be the best intervention in the world, but it will fail if implemented poorly and change is not managed well.

Diagram from 'Putting Evidence to Work: A School's Guide to Implementation'. EEF, 2019



In summary, we cannot underestimate the importance of good implementation and it is important we dedicate considerable planning time in schools when preparing for change.

Discussion and reflection prompts

1. How well prepared are the staff to lead the intervention?
2. How ready to learn are pupils attending the intervention?
3. How suitable is the environment for learning?
4. How confident are you that the intervention is much better than what pupils are missing?
5. Are the pupils with the greatest needs matched to the most capable staff?

Find out more

- Putting Evidence to Work - [A School's Guide to Implementation | EEF](#)
- Professional Development | [EEF \(educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk\)](#)
- Effective Professional Development | [EEF \(educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk\)](#)
- Pupil-Premium-2023.pdf ([d2tic4wvo1iusb.cloudfront.net](#))

A final message

Remember that the evidence is clear: done well, targeted interventions can have a real impact on pupils' learning. We hope you find this handbook useful, as well as the resources we have signposted within it, in making you consider the crucial components of targeted interventions.

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APPENDIX 1 - MAPPING INTERVENTIONS

| Intervention | Broad focus | Specific focus | Short description | Key info & rationale | How are pupils selected for the intervention? | Int. delivery: when? | Int. delivery: where? | Int. delivery: who? | Int. delivery: how long? | Int. delivery: total time per week (mins) | Int. delivery: total programme time based on typical delivery (mins) | Int. delivery: group size? | Int. delivery: how? (what do the sessions look like?) | M&E: assessments used (what is assessed using which tools? How regularly are assessments completed? Is there a defined endpoint?) | M&E: QA |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------|---|--|---|--|----------------------------------|---|---|--|---|--|--|---|--|---|
| SSP Programme | Reading | Early reading | Develops early reading of pupils who have not securely mastered phonics. | DfE validated SSP programme. There is strong evidence that secure phonic knowledge is needed to progress in reading. | Pupils who do not pass the phonics screening check as well as insights from x assessments. Where there is doubt, we use the one-to-one diagnostic assessments provided by SSP programme, as well as the phonological awareness screens provided by DIBELS. | Daily - outside of core subjects | Classroom 1A on Monday to Wednesday and 1B Thursday to Friday | Teachers or TAs. TAs 1 and 3 and teacher 3 are trained. | Daily for 25 minutes. Programme length varies: some will complete in a few weeks others may need two or three terms. One term is common. | 125 | 1500 | Small group (typically less than 4) | Video and detailed guidance from the provider - link here | Unclear | Sessions monitored by the phonics lead once per week - this matrix is used to judge pupil engagement and teaching focus. Regular discussions of planning. |
| Nuffield Early Language Intervention | Speech & language | Early language development. May also support pupils' behaviour. | Develops language for pupils in reception. | NELI has performed well in multiple evaluations. | All pupils are assessed using the Language Screen App (10-15 minutes) and pupils are then prioritised for assessment. Information from parents also supports this judgement. | Daily - outside of core subjects | Small room at the back of the library | Teachers or TAs. 1, 2, 3 and 4 are trained | The programme lasts 20 weeks. The three weekly small group sessions last 30 minutes, while the two weekly one-to-one sessions last 15 minutes. | 120 | 2400 | Each week pupils receive three small group sessions (3-6 pupils) and two one-to-one sessions | Video and detailed guidance from the provider - link here | Language Screen App. The programme is delivered for 20 weeks without a pre-specified end point. | Sessions observed by phase lead fortnightly and this checklist is used (add link). Regular discussions of planning. |
| One-to-one reading | Reading | Varies by pupil based on needs. Application of phonic knowledge and fluency are common goals. | An adult reads one-to-one with a child using the principles described by Chris Such. | There is extensive evidence for the impact of one-to-one reading support. Quality matters so we use key principles from Chris Such. | Pupils are prioritised based on their overall reading attainment as well as pupils who we know do not regularly read at home. We map this using CLPEs reading matrix. | Daily - outside of core subjects | Library | All staff trained though mainly led by the phase lead. | Typically, around 15 minutes though this can be varied based on pupils' engagement. Typically delivered for a term and then reviewed. | 75 | 900 | One-to-one | See internal guidance on excellent one-to-one reading - link here | Pupils use Microsoft Progress Reader once per week to monitor progress. If there are specific areas (like fluency or application of specific phonics knowledge) then these may be more closely monitored as an indicator of improvement. | Phase lead team-teaches once a fortnight for each member of staff and provides coaching after the session. |



**Shotton Hall
Research School**