

Strong foundations in the first years of school

— ..



Welcome



Sue Morris-King HMI

Deputy Director,
Schools and Early
Education



Tim Jenner HMI

Senior HMI,
Schools and Early
Education



Kirsty Godfrey HMI

Senior HMI,
Schools and Early
Education



Aims of the session

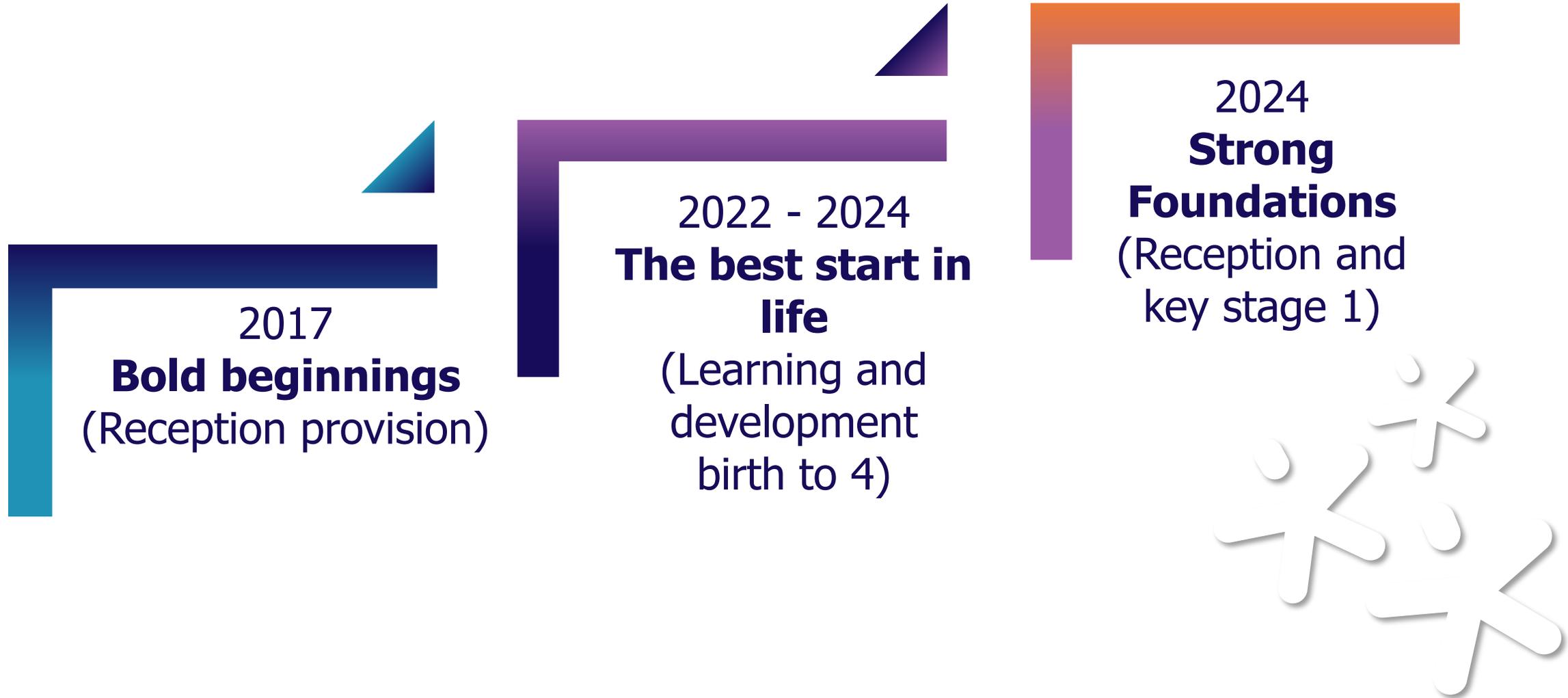
- What research says about giving children the best chance of educational success.
- What our research and inspection findings suggest might be particularly important for schools to focus on.
- Examples of effective ways that schools enable all children to learn what they need by the end of key stage 1.



What research says about giving children the best chance of educational success

Ofsted's Early Education research

5



What a range of research says...

High-quality early education ...



Establishes the foundations

for later success, including academic achievement, good health and well-being



Benefits all children

but it is especially beneficial for those whose early learning has been limited.

Background and context

- Schools continue to face significant challenges in dealing with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- By the end of key stage 1, all children need to have secured important foundational knowledge.
- Not all children learn what they need to be able to access a broad curriculum from key stage 2 and beyond.
- Children not only begin school with different starting points but are likely to progress at different rates. Therefore, they may need different amounts of teaching and practice to succeed.
- Children who need the most help to secure firm learning foundations do not always get the teaching and practice they need.





Aims and main findings



What children learn when they are young has a profound and lasting impact.

How can schools help all children to learn what they need?

“If we get it right for the most vulnerable pupils, we get it right for everyone.”

Sir Martyn Oliver
His Majesty's Chief Inspector



The report identifies what might be particularly helpful for schools to focus on

To address

- Common weaknesses
- Misunderstandings about national curriculum expectations

To encourage

- High expectations for the lowest attaining pupils
- Spending time on what makes the biggest difference and avoiding less helpful practice.
- Learning from the success of the rigour in many schools' curriculums for phonics and mathematics.



Finding



Some schools are not making sure that all children learn the foundational knowledge that they will need later.

This makes it harder for children to learn at key stage 2.

Strongest examples

Schools shared a determination that **all** children would gain the knowledge that they needed and made that possible by identifying what children needed to know.

Important knowledge

Some schools were not as explicit in identifying the important knowledge that all pupils needed.

Overload of activities

Some curriculums were overloaded with activities that didn't help children to build fluency in foundational knowledge and skills.

Curriculum not clear

When the Reception curriculum is not clear enough about what all children need to learn, it can become merely a list of activities.

Finding



Children who begin school with the lowest starting points and those who start to fall behind are the most affected by weakness in curriculum, teaching and assessment.

Vulnerable minority

of children are more likely to suffer when opportunities to learn are not equitable.

Less interaction

Adults tend not to interact with them as much as they do with other children. This hinders important language development.

More teaching and practice

These children are likely to need more teaching and practice opportunities than their peers.

Finding

— ..

Schools' curriculums for English – and literacy in the early years – beyond the teaching of phonics are often weak.

High-quality training

Staff have received high-quality training, and children get plenty of chances to rehearse and embed what they are learning.

Complex tasks

Schools sometimes introduce complex reading and writing tasks too early.

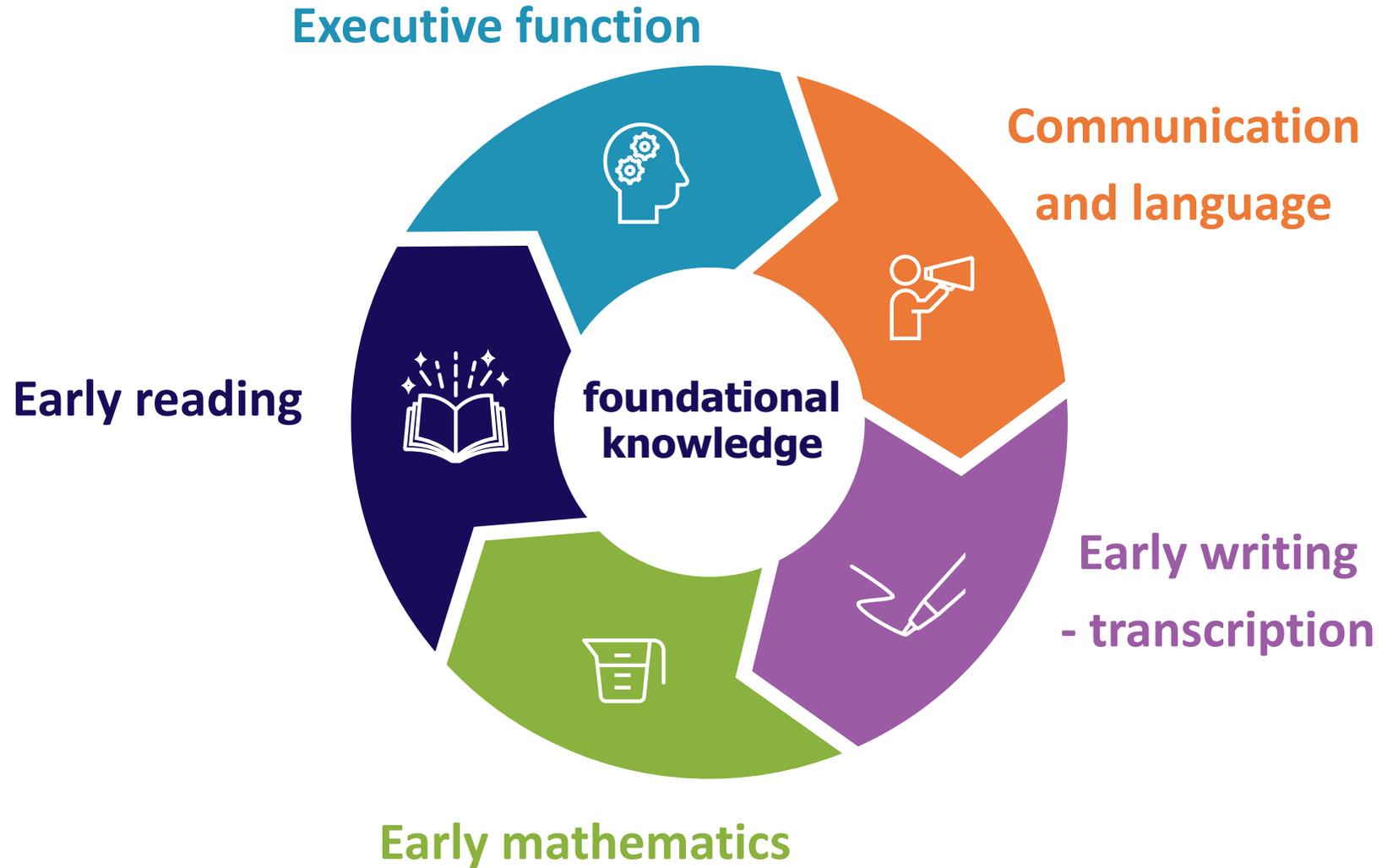
Overload of activities

Some curriculums were overloaded with activities that didn't help children to build fluency in foundational knowledge and skills.



Foundational knowledge

What is foundational knowledge?



”

In key stage 1, pupils should be able to read, write and use mathematical knowledge, ideas and operations so that they are able to access a broad and balanced curriculum at key stage 2.

Paragraph 234, school inspection handbook



Let's think of Jo's education...



Nursery

KS1

KS2

KS3

KS4

**What could have worked better
for Jo at each point of her education?**





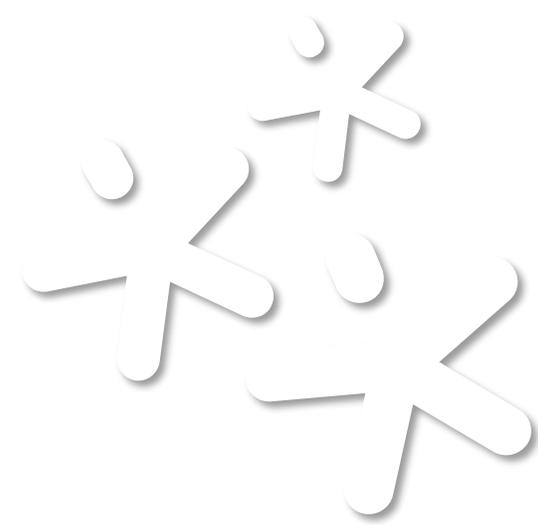
You may have considered...

- More opportunities to talk with adults in the early years.
- Checking her phonics knowledge.
- Making sure that she is building important knowledge, rather than just completing an activity.
- Direct teaching of the foundational knowledge that she has missed or not secured.
- Careful questions about her attendance patterns at KS3.

All of Jo's experiences could have been avoided if the school had been effective in getting her early education right.



Communication and language



Developing children's spoken language

- The rate at which children develop their language depends on the **quality and quantity of interactions** with adults.
- Some children will understand and know more words than others when they first join an early years setting.
- Children with less well-developed understanding of language will need considerable support to develop their spoken language.



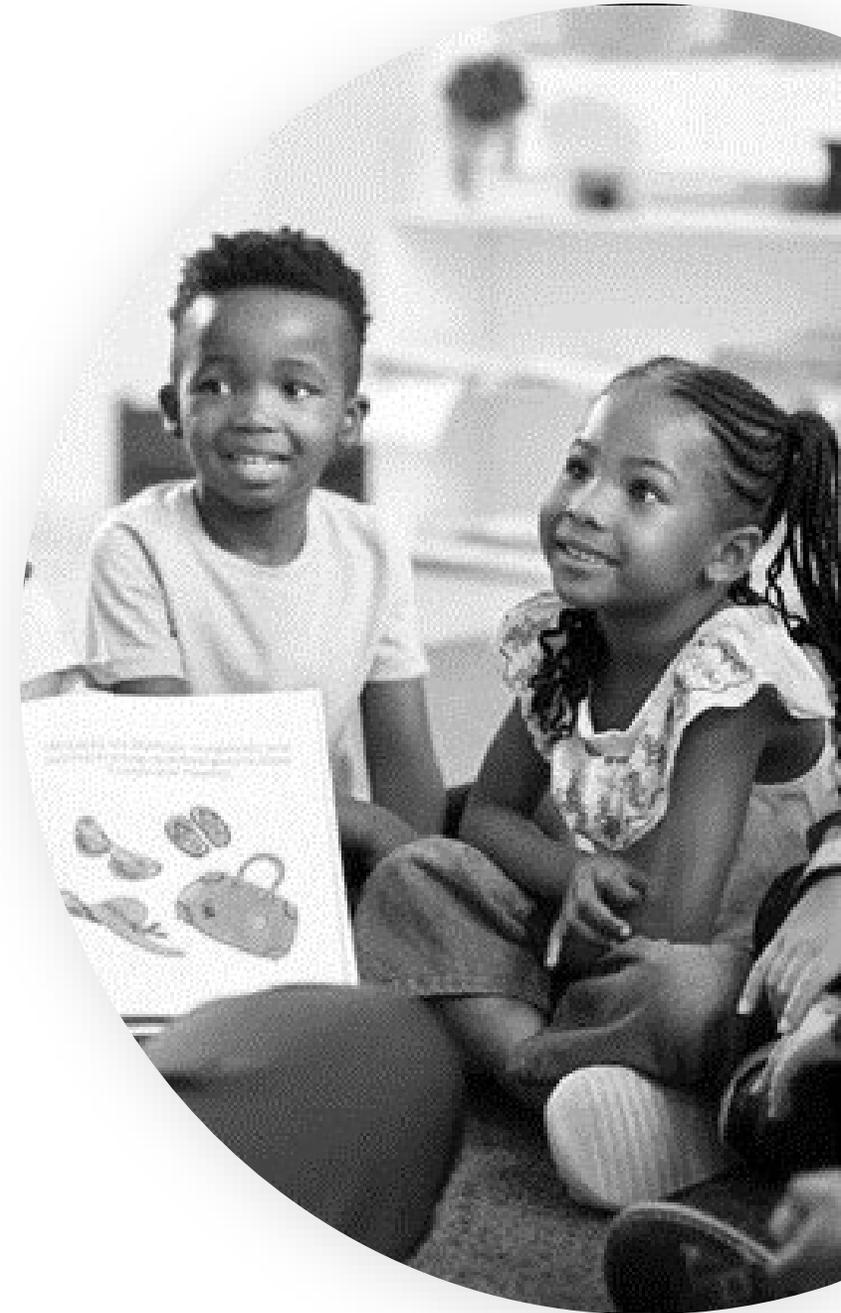


High-quality interactions are fundamental

- Adults notice what children know and can do and respond accordingly.
- Adults know the curriculum in advance.
- All children experience enough planned and incidental interactions with adults to learn what they need.

Stories, rhymes and songs

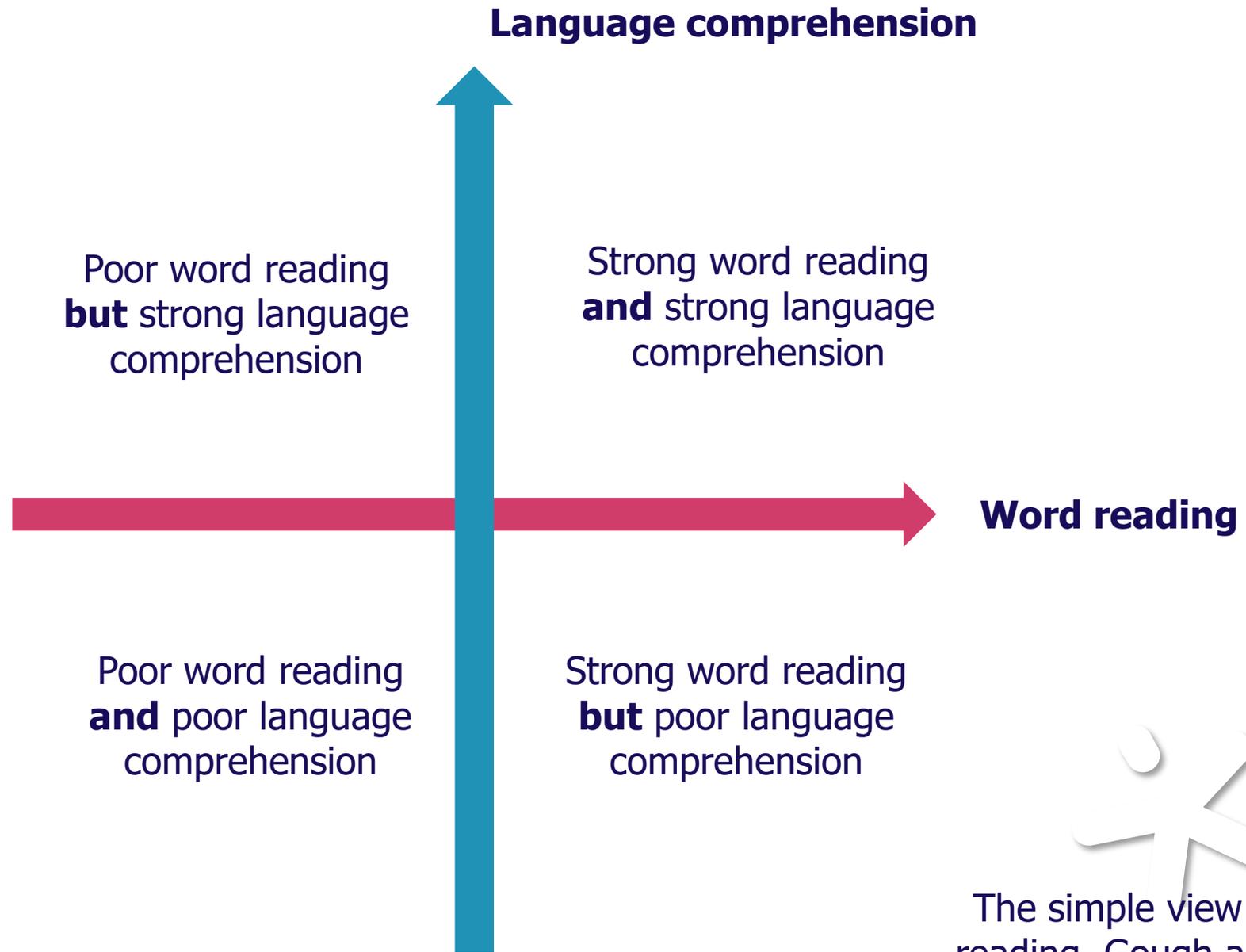
- The language in books is broader and richer than is heard in everyday conversation.
- Repeatedly reading the same stories is particularly effective in promoting word learning.
- For children with lower levels of language, shared reading in a small group appears to be especially beneficial.





Early reading





The simple view of reading, Gough and Tunmer

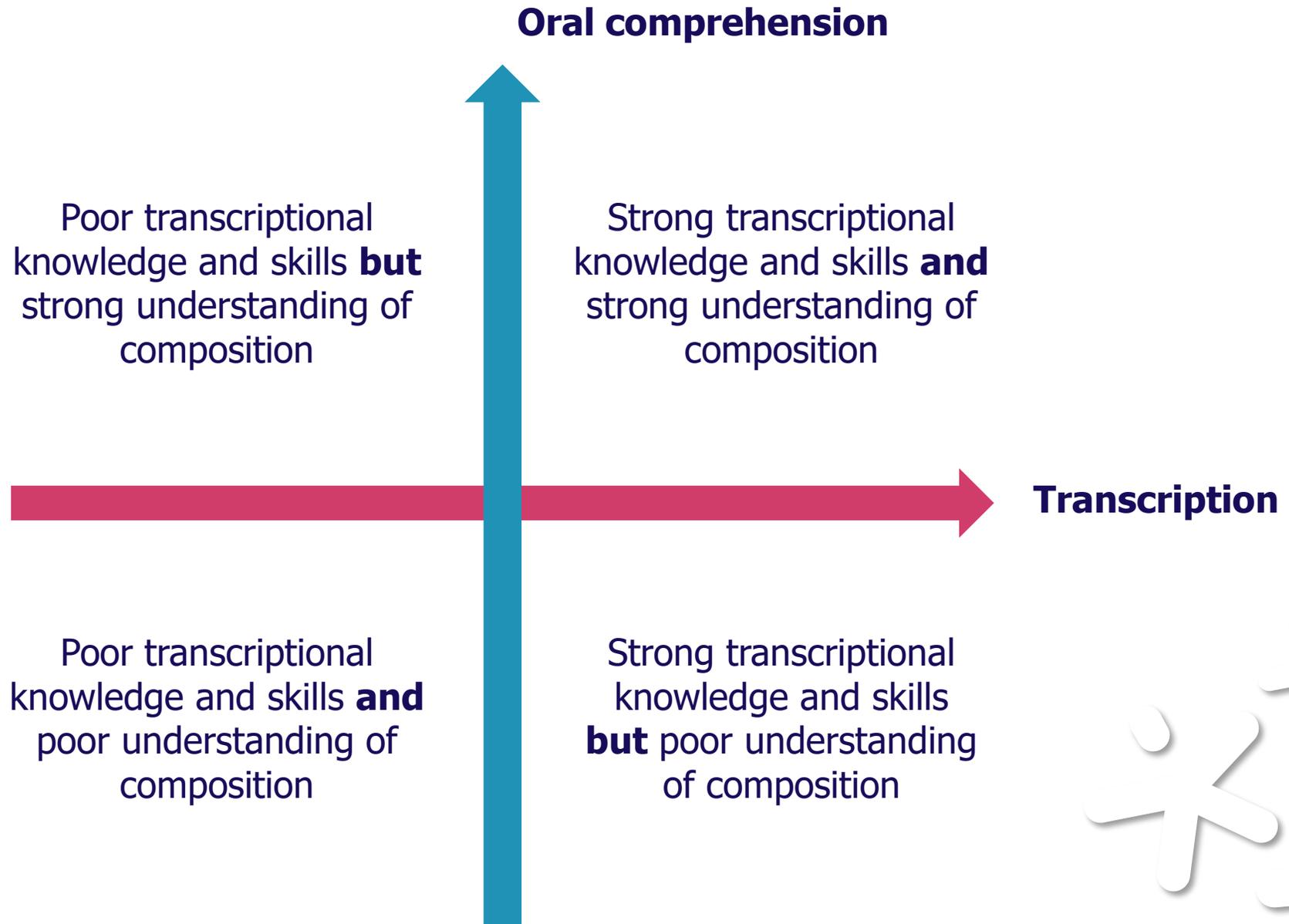


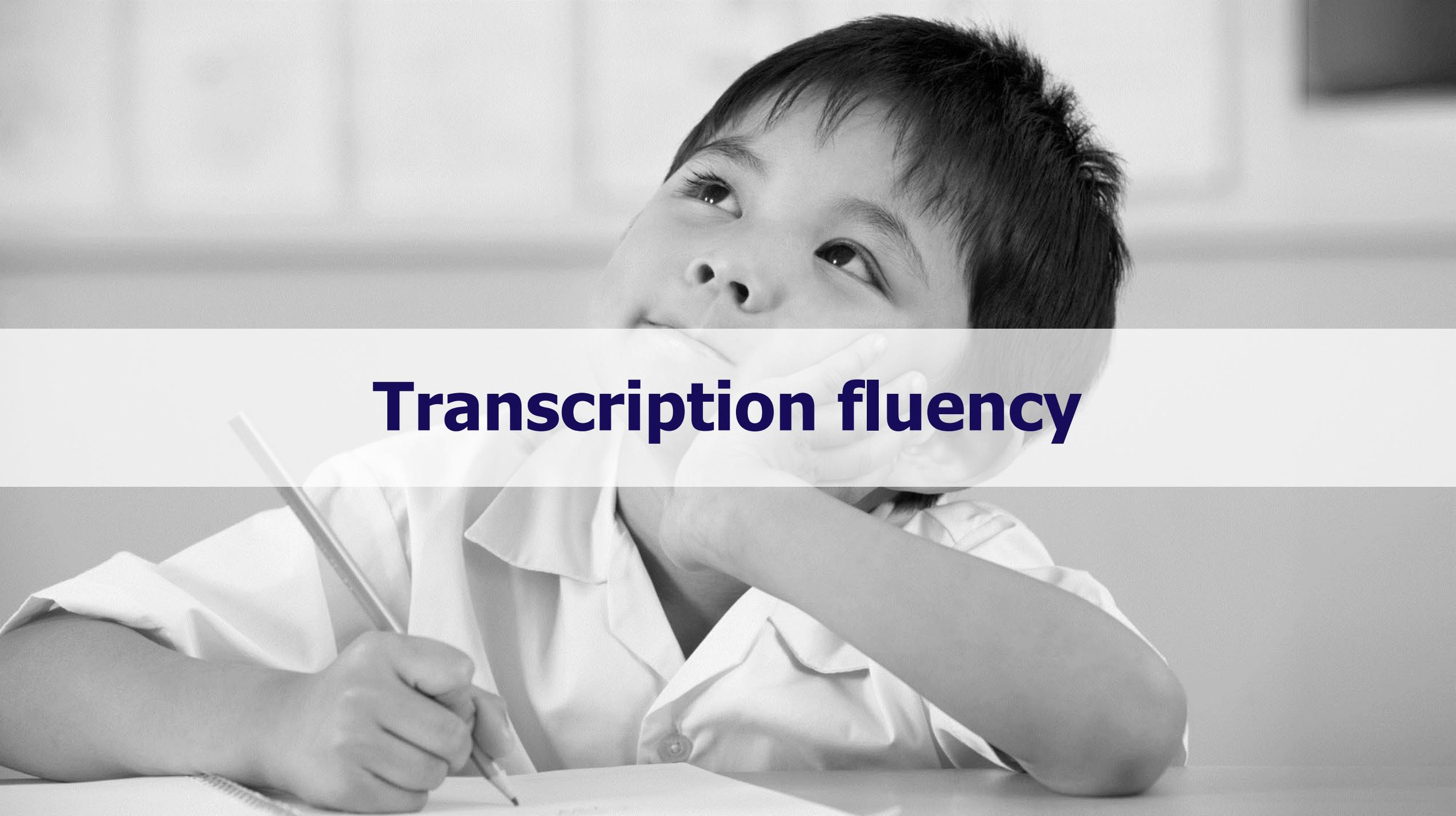


Reading comprehension

Early writing - transcription







Transcription fluency

Y1 and Y2 'write from memory simple sentences dictated by the teacher that include words using the GPCs and common exception words taught so far.'

Y3/4 'write from memory simple sentences, dictated by the teacher, that include words and punctuation taught so far.'

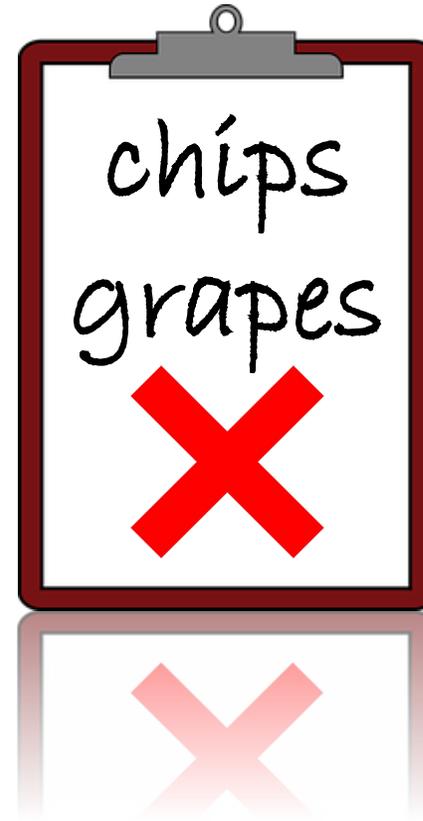
National curriculum for English, 2013

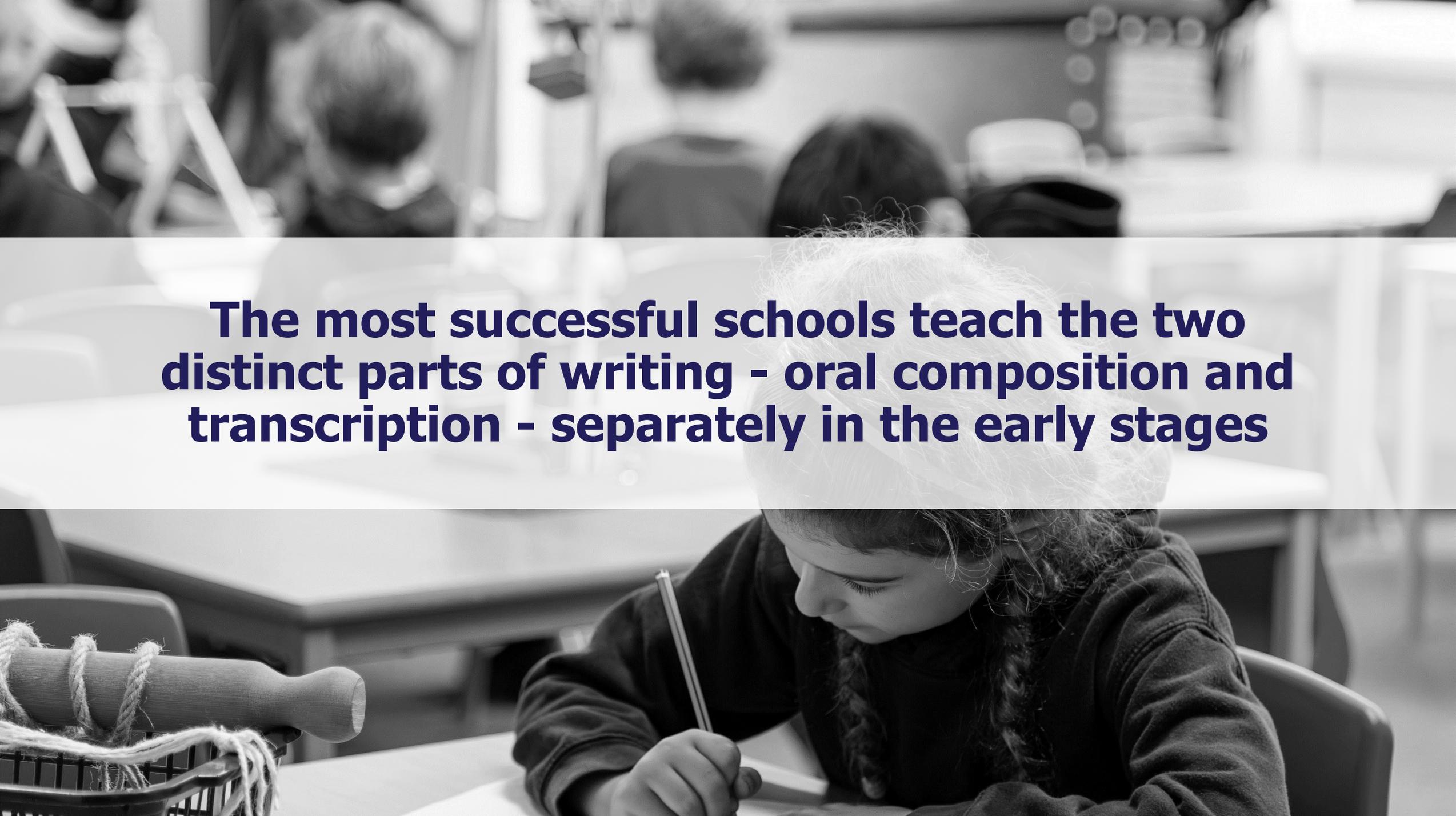


*Dictation is the
writing equivalent
of decodable books*



Dictation – an example





The most successful schools teach the two distinct parts of writing - oral composition and transcription - separately in the early stages



Key principles

4 key principles to help all children learn what they need by the end of key stage 1

1 Small steps, with enough teaching and practice

2 Language is key

3 Focus on those who need it the most

4 Some children are at different stages of the curriculum



1 Small steps, with enough teaching and practice

An effective curriculum:

- Clearly identifies important knowledge to be learned by all children by key points. This helps teachers know what to emphasise in their teaching and assessment.
- Provides sufficient teaching and practice for all children to become fluent, recognising that some children will need more teaching and practice than others.
- Sets children up for success, avoiding complex tasks too soon.



2 Language is key

- **Again! Again!** - the value of sharing stories, rhymes and songs
- **It's good to talk** – providing lots of opportunities, for all children, to develop their spoken language
- Not everything needs to be recorded in books.



3 Focus on those who need it the most

Consider:

- The children who need the most support might opt-out or be missed
- **As fast as possible, as slow as necessary**



4

Some children are at different stages of the same curriculum

The importance of stage and age



Considerations for leaders

- Curriculum
- Pedagogy
- Assessment
- Personal development, behaviour and attitudes



Key messages

- Foundational knowledge:
 - has a significant impact on a child's later success and life chances, especially for the most vulnerable children
 - needs to be taught as children will not necessarily 'discover' it.
- Lower attaining children may need more explicit teaching/practice.
- Children should secure foundational knowledge before they undertake more complex tasks.
- Securing foundational knowledge should be a priority, at whatever age.





Questions?

Thank you

— ...

