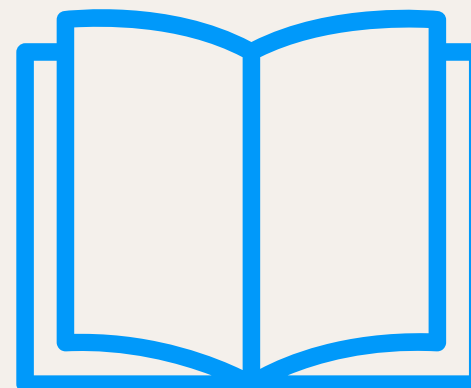
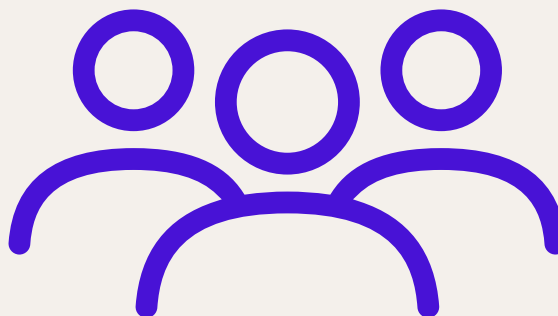


## Red Amber Green (RAG) self-assessment guide

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# Improving literacy in lower primary



This Red Amber Green (RAG) self-assessment guide accompanies Evidence for Learning's Guidance Report, *Improving literacy in lower primary*, which sets out eight evidence-based recommendations on the effective teaching of literacy.

This guide describes what 'ineffective', improving' and 'exemplary' practice can look like in relation to each of the recommendations.

This guide can be used as part of an initial audit process to establish current practice (i.e. point of departure), as well as to monitor progress towards the development of more effective practice (i.e. direction of travel).

This tool was developed by the Education Endowment Foundation. It has been updated for Australian educators by Susannah Schoeffel (Evidence for Learning).

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# Improving literacy in lower primary

## Red Amber Green (RAG) self-assessment guide

Summary of recommendations							
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Develop students' speaking and listening skills and wider understanding of language	Develop students' reading skills and understanding of texts	Develop students' writing skills and understanding of texts	Develop students' punctuation skills and understanding of texts	Develop students' grammar skills and understanding of texts	Develop students' spelling skills and understanding of texts	Develop students' handwriting skills and understanding of texts	Develop students' punctuation skills and understanding of texts

### 1 Develop students' speaking and listening skills and wider understanding of language



#### Ineffective



Students usually begin writing activities without previously articulating their ideas.

Listening activities do not have clear outcomes and do not include the use of different comprehension strategies.

Before lessons, limited planning is done to predict words that may be problematic. During lessons, students often struggle with new words and this goes unnoticed.

Group work is not managed in a way that encourages all students to share their thoughts.

#### Improving



Students sometimes use speaking activities to articulate what they will later say in writing.

Listening activities are used to develop students' use of comprehension strategies, but only limited feedback, modelling and support is provided.

Teachers sometimes predict words that students may be unfamiliar with. They identify that students are struggling with certain words and support them to understand those words. Students are encouraged to ask for help when encountering words that they do not understand.

Group work and pair work are used to practise speaking and listening activities, but only some students actively participate. Students do not always actively listen to each other's ideas.

#### Exemplary



Students regularly use speaking activities to clearly articulate and refine what they will later say in writing.

Listening activities are focused and used to develop students' use of comprehension strategies. This is done with high-quality feedback, modelling and support.

Planning time is used to pre-identify words that students, or groups of students, may not be familiar with and these are then explicitly introduced. Teaching of vocabulary is responsive to students' emerging needs throughout a lesson and students actively seek support with unfamiliar vocabulary.

All students actively participate in speaking and listening activities both as a class and in small groups. Students actively listen to each other's ideas so that they can share their thought processes.

# Improving literacy in lower primary

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### 2 Use an engaging approach to developing reading, which integrates both decoding and comprehension skills



Summary of recommendations

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1.1	2.1	3.1	4.1	5.1	6.1	7.1	8.1
1.2	2.2	3.2	4.2	5.2	6.2	7.2	8.2
1.3	2.3	3.3	4.3	5.3	6.3	7.3	8.3
1.4	2.4	3.4	4.4	5.4	6.4	7.4	8.4
1.5	2.5	3.5	4.5	5.5	6.5	7.5	8.5
1.6	2.6	3.6	4.6	5.6	6.6	7.6	8.6
1.7	2.7	3.7	4.7	5.7	6.7	7.7	8.7
1.8	2.8	3.8	4.8	5.8	6.8	7.8	8.8
1.9	2.9	3.9	4.9	5.9	6.9	7.9	8.9
1.10	2.10	3.10	4.10	5.10	6.10	7.10	8.10

#### Ineffective



Teaching of reading is unbalanced and much greater emphasis is placed on either decoding or comprehension skills.

Students are often unmotivated and disengaged when learning to read. Students demonstrate limited persistence and resilience in their reading.

Students experience a limited range of genres and texts, and the texts selected are ineffective at engaging and motivating students.

#### Improving



Teaching uses an engaging approach to reading, but students are not supported to integrate their decoding and comprehension.

Most students are motivated and engaged when reading. Students demonstrate increasing persistence and resilience.

Students experience a range of texts, but this could be more carefully considered.

#### Exemplary



All students receive an appropriate balance between word recognition and language comprehension and are supported to integrate the two skills.

All students are motivated and engaged during lessons through exposure to a rich variety of experiences. Students increasingly get enjoyment and satisfaction from their reading.

Different genres of text are purposefully chosen to engage students and develop their comprehension skills.

# Improving literacy in lower primary

## Red Amber Green (RAG) self-assessment guide

Summary of recommendations							
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Establish a school-wide literacy strategy	2. Develop a school-wide literacy curriculum	3. Develop a school-wide literacy assessment system	4. Develop a school-wide literacy intervention system	5. Develop a school-wide literacy support system	6. Develop a school-wide literacy monitoring system	7. Develop a school-wide literacy evaluation system	8. Develop a school-wide literacy improvement system

### 3

## Effectively implement a systematic phonics program



### Ineffective



A systematic phonics program is used, but it has been significantly altered from how the developer intended it to be used and this may have affected the 'active ingredients'.

Teachers and teaching assistants (TAs) have received inconsistent training in the teaching of phonics and many staff do not have the necessary pedagogical skills and content knowledge to teach phonics effectively.

Phonics teaching is unresponsive to students' needs. Where catch up support is provided it is ad hoc or there is a long delay from when students are first identified as struggling to when support is put in place.

Students and teachers are often unmotivated during phonics lessons and do not look forward to them.

### Improving



A systematic phonics program is used which does not have robust evidence of impact. However, the program has the characteristics of an effective phonics program. The program is used broadly as the developer intended.

All teachers have received phonics training, but not necessarily focused on the school's specific approach. Some teaching staff may need updated training on the program or may need to develop their pedagogical skills or content knowledge.

Catch up support is put in place for students in need of additional support with their phonics, however, this does not follow all the characteristics of effective interventions ([recommendation 8](#)).

Engagement with phonics teaching is varied between classes and over time. Phonics teaching may sometimes feel 'stale' and teachers or students do not always look forward to the lessons.

### Exemplary



The phonics program used has robust evidence of impact and it is implemented in accordance with the developer's guidelines. Any adaptations from the suggested program are minor and do not affect the 'active ingredients' of the program.

Teachers and TAs are appropriately trained for the phonics program that they deliver; this is kept up-to-date and new staff are always appropriately trained. All teaching staff have sufficient pedagogical skills and content knowledge to teach the program effectively.

Phonics teaching is responsive to students' progress (i.e. it is accelerated for students making rapid progress and additional support is put in place for those making slower progress). Any additional support adheres to the characteristics of effective interventions (e.g. effectively identifying the needs of individual students rather than just providing 'more of the same').

Students and teachers are motivated and engaged during phonics lessons and there is a feeling of 'purpose' during lessons.

# Improving literacy in lower primary

## Red Amber Green (RAG) self-assessment guide

Summary of recommendations							
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Establish a positive reading culture	2. Develop a range of reading experiences	3. Develop reading for pleasure	4. Develop reading for information	5. Develop reading for critical thinking	6. Develop reading for empathy	7. Develop reading for reflection	8. Develop reading for action

### 4 Teach students to use strategies for developing and monitoring reading comprehension



#### Ineffective



Limited emphasis is placed on reading comprehension and there is very limited explicit teaching of reading comprehension strategies.

Students have limited opportunities to practise using the strategies. Any opportunities that they do have are not based on the principles of effective scaffolding (e.g. initial modelling and strategic withdrawal of support).

Students are not taught how to monitor their use of the different strategies or what to do if they are struggling to understand a text.

Feedback on the use and monitoring of the strategies has **one or fewer** of the following characteristics:

- Specific, accurate and clear
- Compares current to previous performance
- Encourages and supports further effort

Limited consideration is given to reading comprehension strategies when selecting texts.

#### Improving



Teachers are aware of the different reading comprehension strategies and sometimes encourage students to use them, but this is done inconsistently.

Students have frequent opportunities to practise using the strategies. Teachers model the strategies effectively, but scaffolding is inconsistent and does not support students to use the strategies with increasing sophistication and independence.

Students can recognise when something does not make sense and will try a different strategy with prompting and support.

Feedback on the use and monitoring of the strategies has **two** of the following characteristics:

- Specific, accurate and clear
- Compares current to previous performance
- Encourages and supports further effort

Texts are sometimes selected on the basis of their suitability to use different reading comprehension strategies.

#### Exemplary



The explicit teaching of strategies forms the core of reading comprehension teaching. A consistent approach is used between year groups that gives greater responsibility to students as they develop.

Students have extensive opportunities to use the strategies. Scaffolding is carefully matched to students' current capabilities and is strategically withdrawn so that students can use the strategies with increasing sophistication and independence.

Students are taught to plan and monitor their use of the different strategies. They know when each strategy might be most effective and are beginning to try alternative strategies if needed.

Feedback on the use and monitoring of the strategies has **all** of the following characteristics:

- Specific, accurate and clear
- Compares current to previous performance
- Encourages and supports further effort

Texts are carefully selected so that they match students' interests and allow them to practise each strategy. Students are supported to use and adapt the strategies across genres and types of text.

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## Red Amber Green (RAG) self-assessment guide

Summary of recommendations							
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.5	1.6	1.7	1.8
2.1	2.2	2.3	2.4	2.5	2.6	2.7	2.8
3.1	3.2	3.3	3.4	3.5	3.6	3.7	3.8
4.1	4.2	4.3	4.4	4.5	4.6	4.7	4.8
5.1	5.2	5.3	5.4	5.5	5.6	5.7	5.8
6.1	6.2	6.3	6.4	6.5	6.6	6.7	6.8
7.1	7.2	7.3	7.4	7.5	7.6	7.7	7.8
8.1	8.2	8.3	8.4	8.5	8.6	8.7	8.8

### 5 Teach students to use strategies for planning and monitoring writing composition



#### Ineffective



Students are rarely taught writing composition strategies and opportunities to practise are infrequent.

Students have limited opportunities to practise using the strategies. Any opportunities that they do have are not based on the principles of effective scaffolding (e.g. initial modelling and strategic withdrawal of support).

Students are not taught how to monitor their use of the different strategies or what to do if their chosen strategy is not working.

Feedback on the use and monitoring of the strategies has **one or fewer** of the following characteristics:

- Specific, accurate and clear
- Compares current to previous performance
- Encourages and supports further effort

#### Improving



Teachers are aware of the different writing composition strategies and sometimes encourage students to use them, but this is done inconsistently.

Students have frequent opportunities to practice using the strategies. Teachers model the strategies effectively, but scaffolding is inconsistent and does not support students to use the strategies with increasing sophistication and independence.

Students are taught how to monitor their use of the different strategies and with prompting will try alternative strategies.

Feedback on the use and monitoring of the strategies has **two** of the following characteristics:

- Specific, accurate and clear
- Compares current to previous performance
- Encourages and supports further effort

#### Exemplary



The explicit teaching of strategies forms the core of writing composition teaching. A consistent approach is used between year groups that gives greater responsibility to students as they develop.

Students have extensive opportunities to use the strategies. Scaffolding is carefully matched to students current capabilities and strategically withdrawn so that students can use the strategies with increasing sophistication and independence.

Students are taught to plan and monitor their use of the different strategies. They know when each strategy might be most effective and are beginning to try alternative strategies if needed.

Feedback on the use and monitoring of the strategies has **all** of the following characteristics:

- Specific, accurate and clear
- Compares current to previous performance
- Encourages and supports further effort

# Improving literacy in lower primary

## Red Amber Green (RAG) self-assessment guide

Summary of recommendations							
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Establish a literacy-rich environment	2. Develop a shared understanding of the purpose of writing	3. Develop a shared understanding of the conventions of writing	4. Develop a shared understanding of the processes of writing	5. Develop a shared understanding of the features of writing	6. Develop a shared understanding of the strategies for writing	7. Develop a shared understanding of the assessment of writing	8. Develop a shared understanding of the progression of writing

# 6

## Promote fluent written transcription skills by encouraging extensive and effective practice and explicitly teaching spelling



### Ineffective



Students receive limited opportunities to practise their handwriting and they rarely make good use of feedback.

Feedback on handwriting has **one or fewer** of the following characteristics:

- Specific, accurate and clear
- Compares current to previous performance
- Uses praise sparingly so it remains meaningful
- Encourages and supports further effort

Teaching of spelling is unrelated to other learning and could be characterised as mainly testing.

Teaching staff have **limited** knowledge about the strategies that effective spellers use:

- Phonic approach
- Analogy
- Identification and learning of 'tricky' parts of words
- Visual approach

### Improving



Students receive frequent opportunities to practise their handwriting and feedback is used effectively.

Feedback on handwriting has **some** of the following characteristics:

- Specific, accurate and clear
- Compares current to previous performance
- Uses praise sparingly so it remains meaningful
- Encourages and supports further effort

Students are sometimes pre-taught the spelling of challenging vocabulary.

Teaching staff have **good** knowledge about the strategies that effective spellers use:

- Phonic approach
- Analogy
- Identification and learning of 'tricky' parts of words
- Visual approach

### Exemplary



Students receive extensive, high-quality opportunities to practise their handwriting and make effective use of feedback.

Feedback on handwriting has **all** of the following characteristics:

- Specific, accurate and clear
- Compares current to previous performance
- Uses praise sparingly so it remains meaningful
- Encourages and supports further effort

Students are regularly and explicitly pre-taught key spellings to aid the fluency of their composition.

Teaching staff have **excellent** knowledge about the strategies that effective spellers use and this informs their teaching.

- Phonic approach
- Analogy
- Identification and learning of 'tricky' parts of words
- Visual approach



# Improving literacy in lower primary

## Red Amber Green (RAG) self-assessment guide

Summary of recommendations							
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Identify struggling students	2. Use diagnostic tools	3. Use diagnostic tools	4. Use diagnostic tools	5. Use diagnostic tools	6. Use diagnostic tools	7. Use diagnostic tools	8. Use diagnostic tools

### 7 Use high-quality information about students' current capabilities to select the best next steps for teaching



#### Ineffective



Identification of struggling students is often slow and action taken to support them is limited.

Diagnostic tools (such as the Simple View of Reading) are **rarely** used to identify the best next step for teaching.

Assessments are often set without careful consideration of their intended purpose.

#### Improving



When a student is identified as struggling with their literacy they are given extra support, but this may not be well matched to their specific needs.

Diagnostic tools (such as the Simple View of Reading) are **sometimes** used to identify the best next step for teaching.

Careful consideration is given to how the results of an assessment will be used before an appropriate assessment is selected.

#### Exemplary



When a student is identified as struggling the first thing a teacher does is to try to identify the specific reason(s) why they are struggling.

Diagnostic tools (such as the Simple View of Reading) are **routinely** used to identify the best next step for teaching.

Careful consideration is given to how the results of an assessment will be used before an appropriate assessment is selected. Teaching staff understand the differences between monitoring and diagnosis and select assessments appropriately.

# Improving literacy in lower primary

## Red Amber Green (RAG) self-assessment guide

# 8

## Use high-quality structured interventions to help students who are struggling with their literacy



Summary of recommendations							
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Establish a literacy-rich environment	2. Use high-quality structured interventions	3. Provide explicit instruction in literacy skills	4. Monitor and assess student progress	5. Provide additional support for students who are struggling	6. Encourage students to read for pleasure	7. Involve parents and carers in their child's literacy learning	8. Review and evaluate the effectiveness of the interventions

### Ineffective



TAs deliver mainly unstructured interventions, for which there is little reliable evidence for effectiveness. TAs may deliver commercial intervention programs, but in an unstructured way (e.g. not as prescribed by the developer).

Intervention sessions are long (>30 minutes), poorly timetabled and irregular. Consequently, students routinely miss significant portions of classroom teaching.

TAs have little formal training in delivering interventions. Limited structured resources mean that sessions often have vague objectives and are slowly paced. As such, they may not be adequately compensating for the time students spend out of class.

Teachers have little or no awareness of the structure and coverage of intervention programs.

Teachers rarely plan or review intervention sessions with TAs and there are few opportunities for meaningful feedback after sessions.

It is left largely to students to make the links between what is covered in interventions and their learning in general classroom teaching.

### Improving



TAs deliver some well-chosen interventions that have the potential to effectively supplement classroom learning, although this is not always occurring (e.g. use of assessments to monitor and inform next stages of development is inconsistent).

Although interventions are structured, they are not always delivered as intended. Timetabling of sessions is reasonable although sessions are sometimes missed.

Some TAs have received training on intervention programs, although this may need updating.

Teachers have limited awareness of the structure and coverage of intervention programs.

Teachers and TAs meet occasionally to review the coverage and impact of interventions. Practice across the school is inconsistent.

Students receive some assistance in applying their learning from interventions to the wider curriculum, although again this is inconsistent.

### Exemplary



TAs deliver one or two evidence-based and structured interventions, chosen to deliberately complement and extend class based teaching and learning.

Intervention sessions are brief (<30 minutes) regular (3-5 times a week) and sustained, with clear objectives and expectations. Sessions are well-placed, well-resourced and carefully timetabled to minimise time spent away from general class teaching.

TAs are extensively trained to deliver interventions faithfully (i.e. as intended by the developer), and over time develop deep expertise in the approach.

Teachers have good awareness of the structure and coverage of intervention programs.

There are regular opportunities for teachers and TAs to plan and review learning taking place in interventions, with regular assessments in place to guide this process.

Teachers and TAs both help students make connections between the learning in interventions and the wider curriculum.