



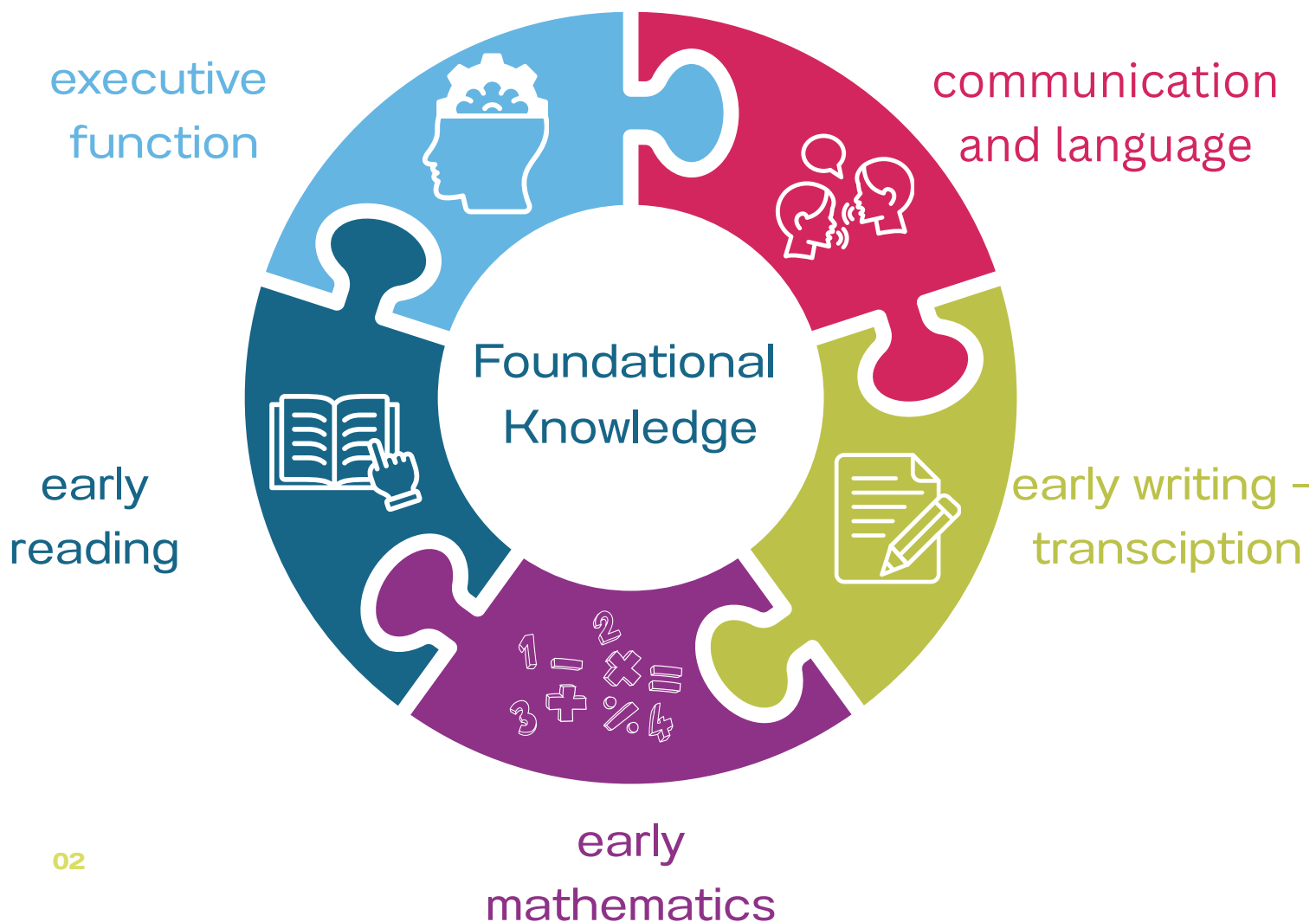
Foundational Knowledge

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The research report '[Strong foundations in the first years of school](#)' published by Ofsted (October 2024) emphasised how children need to secure strong foundational knowledge across Reception and KS1 to give them the best chance of educational success. 'By the end of key stage 1, all children need foundational knowledge: how to communicate, read, write and count.'

This includes the general knowledge that will help them to understand the world around them. Their physical, emotional and social development are also important. Finally, developing executive function is crucial for both learning and well-being.'



What is most important?



Purpose of This Document

The aim of this document is to outline the essential non-negotiables that should be taught to our children, providing them with the foundational knowledge necessary for success. These principles will primarily be implemented in Year 1 to ensure that every child possesses the prerequisites for achieving success across the curriculum. Additionally, they will support the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) as children transition to Year 1 and will be utilised as interventions in Year 2 and Key Stage 2 (KS2) for those who have not yet fully mastered them.

Teaching at Key Stage 1 Will Ensure:

1. New material is introduced in manageable increments.
2. Writing corresponds to the child's reading and phonics level.
3. Language plays a crucial role in comprehension.
4. Attention is directed toward those who need support the most.
5. Acknowledgment that children are at varying stages of the curriculum.

Children with gaps in their foundational knowledge may require more explicit instruction to develop the necessary skills and understanding.

Executive Function



Executive function in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and Key Stage 1 (KS1) refers to a set of cognitive, mental processes—essentially the brain's "conductor"—that allow children to manage attention, emotions, and behaviours to achieve goals. Key components include working memory, cognitive flexibility, and impulse control, which help children follow instructions, plan tasks, and stay focused.

Key Components of Executive Function in Early Years/KS1

- Working Memory: Holding and using information in mind, such as remembering a two-step instruction.
- Inhibitory Control (Impulse Control): Resisting temptations, managing emotions, and thinking before acting.
- Cognitive Flexibility: Adjusting to changes, switching tasks, or approaching problems in new ways.

Importance in EYFS and KS1

- Self-Regulation: Directly supports a child's ability to manage emotions and behaviours.
- Learning: Enables focus in a classroom, listening to teachers, and completing tasks.
- Social Development: Helps children take turns, share, and understand rules.

How it is Developed and Supported

- Scaffolding: Teachers and practitioners model these skills through routines, visual aids, and breaking down complex tasks.
- Play-Based Learning: Games that require rules, waiting, or memory help build these skills.
- Co-regulation: Adults help young children manage their emotions until they can do it themselves.

In summary, these skills act as the foundation for learning, allowing children to plan, focus, and switch attention, which are essential for academic and personal development in early education.



Key Findings from the Strong Foundations Report-

The report identified several issues in some schools, including:

- Introducing complex tasks too early
- Focusing more on activities than on essential learning outcomes
- Insufficiently considering children's starting points
- Overloading children's working memory
- Failing to build effectively on prior learning
- Implementing ineffective play-based learning strategies

Using the report, Rainbow has pinpointed what we consider to be the essential foundational knowledge every child must acquire to successfully progress throughout the entire curriculum during their school life. These non-negotiables have been developed through discussions, research, and various supporting documents, including:

- EEF - Literacy KS1 Guidance Report
- Voice 21 - Student-friendly oracy framework
- Development Matters
- Early Learning Goals
- The National Curriculum
- Ofsted - Strong Foundations Report
- DfE - Mathematics Guidance KS1 and 2
- The National Curriculum

Executive Function

Working Memory	
Remember and follow multi-step instructions involving three or more steps	
Recall and apply the rules of games independently	
Hold in memory the information needed to solve simple puzzles	
Focus on the right topic when contributing to discussions	
Inhibitory Control	
Wait their turn without showing impatience	
Sustain focus on an activity for an extended period	
Reflect and strategise before responding or reacting	
Express feelings without acting out emotions	
Cognitive flexibility	
Think of more than one way to solve a problem or complete a task	
Participate in activities which require listening to others and contributing at the right time (such as singing rounds)	
Adapt to unexpected changes in their daily routine	
Demonstrate the ability to assess their own individual strengths and next steps	



Early Reading



Early reading in Early Years (EYFS) and Key Stage 1 (KS1) is a structured, daily approach to teaching children to read, primarily through systematic synthetic phonics [Read Write Inc.](#) It focuses on decoding words, developing fluency, and fostering a love for reading through matched books, storytelling, and comprehension activities from Nursery to Year 2.

Key Aspects of Early Reading (EYFS/KS1):

- Systematic Synthetic Phonics (SSP): Daily lessons teaching the 44+ sounds (phonemes) in the English language and how to blend them to read words (decoding) and segment them to spell (encoding).
- Decodable Reading Books: Children read books strictly matched to their current phonics knowledge, ensuring they can decode the words independently.
- Reading to Children: Adults read to children daily to foster enjoyment, model fluency, and build vocabulary.
- Assessments: Regular tracking ensures children are in the right group and receive "keep up" support if needed.
- Phonics Screening Check: Year 1 pupils take a national check to assess their decoding skills.
- Vocabulary & Comprehension: Beyond decoding, activities focus on understanding the story, predicting events, and exploring vocabulary.

Progression:

- Nursery/Reception: Pre-phonics, listening skills, letter-sound recognition, and sharing stories.
- Year 1/2: Fast-paced phonics, reading fluency, and moving from "learning to read" to "reading to learn".

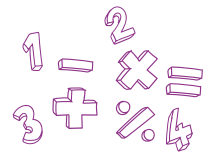
This approach aims to make children confident, fluent readers for life by building a solid foundation in both decoding and comprehension skills.

Early Reading

Word Reading	
Apply phonic knowledge and skills as the route to decode words	
Respond speedily with the correct sound/grapheme for all 40+ phonemes	
Read accurately by blending sounds in unfamiliar words containing GPCs that have been taught	
Read aloud accurately and with increasing fluency books that are consistent with developing phonic knowledge	
Comprehension	
Check the text makes sense to them as they read and correct any errors independently	
Re-tell familiar stories with increasing detail	
Predict what might happen and the basis of what has been read so far	
Make simple inferences about why a character might feel a certain way	
Discuss word meaning and link those meanings to words already known	
Understand that non-fiction texts give factual information	
Adapt to unexpected changes in their daily routine	



Early Mathematics



Early maths in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and Key Stage 1 (KS1) focuses on building a deep, conceptual understanding of number, pattern, and spatial reasoning through play, exploration, and concrete manipulatives. Strong foundations involve mastering cardinality (quantity), comparison, and composition of numbers to 10-20, developing positive attitudes, and applying these skills to everyday contexts to ensure long-term mathematical fluency.

Core Components of Strong Early Math Foundations

- Cardinality and Counting including counting principles: Understanding that numbers represent quantities, moving beyond rote counting to understanding "how many".
- Composition and Comparison: Recognising that numbers are made up of smaller numbers (e.g., 5 is 3 and 2) and comparing quantities (more/less/same).
- Pattern and Shape: Spotting, creating, and extending patterns, as well as understanding spatial awareness and properties of shapes.
- Number Sense to 10 and Beyond: Developing a deep understanding of numbers, including subitising (recognising amounts without counting) and understanding the number system.
- Mathematical Language & Reasoning: Using talk to explain thinking, identify patterns, and solve problems.

Key Pedagogical Approaches (How it is taught)

- Play-Based Learning: Using daily routines, games, songs, and imaginative play to make math engaging.
- Manipulatives and Concrete Resources: Using physical objects like pebbles, Numicon, counters, and tens frames to make abstract concepts tangible.
- Focus on Spatial Reasoning: Integrating shape, space, and measure into all areas of learning.
- Developmental Progression: Building securely on what children already know, ensuring concepts are understood before moving on.
- **Mastering Number (NCETM)** - aims to secure firm foundations in the development of good number sense for all children from Reception through to Year 1 and Year 2. The aim over time is that children will leave KS1 with fluency in calculation and a confidence and flexibility with number.

Progression to KS1

In Key Stage 1, these foundations are solidified, moving towards more formal recording of calculations, learning addition and subtraction facts, and deepening understanding of place value, according to the [GOV.UK](#) report.

Early Mathematics

Place value and the number system	
Count reliably with numbers from 1- 20	
Place numbers 1 -20 in order	
Say which is one more or one less than a given number.	
Operations	
Add and subtract two-single digit numbers counting on or back	
Double numbers from 1-10	
Halve even numbers from 1-10	
Mastering Number Year 1	
Fluency in number bonds; subsisting; understand 'ten and a bit' structure; comparison and composition of numbers in different ways with secure flexibility	
Mastering Number in Year 2	
Fluency within 20 (additive composition); bridging through 10 with flexibility; understanding of common value; comparison and estimation; make connections with odd and even; introduction to multiplicative reasoning (2s, 5s, 10s)	
Language and vocabulary	
Use everyday language to talk about size, weight, capacity, position, distance, time and money to compare objects	
Recognise and describe patterns	
Use mathematical language and sentence stems taught	
Transcription	
Form all numbers correctly	
Set work out using one digit per square when recording	



Early Writing



Here is a breakdown of what constitutes "Strong Foundations" for writing in the Early Years (EYFS) and Key Stage 1 (KS1).

1. Physicality: The Motor Foundation

Ofsted emphasises that children cannot write effectively if they are struggling with the physical act of mark-making. Strong foundations begin with:

- Gross Motor Skills: Developing core strength, shoulder stability, and elbow joints through climbing, crawling, and large-scale movements.
- Fine Motor Skills: Developing the "intrinsic muscles" of the hand through activities like playdough, threading, and using tweezers.
- Tripod Grip: A focus on moving from a palmar supinate grasp (whole hand) to a functional tripod grip to allow for fluid writing.

2. Transcription: Spelling and Handwriting

Transcription is priority. For writing to become "fluent," the mechanics must become automatic. Ofsted highlight that if a child has to think too hard about how to form a letter or spell words, they are less able to think about what they are writing and those who struggle with spelling will often write less and produce lower quality writing:

- Phonics is Key: Writing is the "encoding" side of phonics. Children need a rock-solid grasp of Grapheme-Phoneme Correspondences (GPCs) to spell words accurately. Children hear the spoken word 'dog', say dog- /d/o/g/ and then write the three corresponding graphemes 'd', 'o', 'g' to spell the word 'dog'
- Letter Formation: Schools with strong foundations teach letter formation explicitly and early. This prevents "bad habits" (like starting letters from the bottom) that slow down writing speed later in KS1.
- Dictation: By telling the child exactly what to write, you free up 100% of their working memory to focus purely on transcription. Dictation allows children to practise spelling and punctuation without the added burden of having to compose their own sentences at the same time.

3. Composition: From Talk to Text

A strong foundation in writing is built upon the core principle that robust oral language skills must precede and underpin all successful written composition:

- Oral Rehearsal: Encouraging children to speak their sentences aloud multiple times before putting pen to paper.
- Vocabulary Wealth: Exposure to high-quality stories and non-fiction to build a "bank" of words and phrases.
- Foundational Sentences: In KS1, the focus is on the "simple sentence"- understanding where a capital letter goes and why a full stop is necessary before moving on to more complex sentences.

Early Writing

Transcription	
Hold a pencil correctly using the tripod grip	
Form lower-case letters in the correct direction, starting and finishing in the right place	
Form capital letters correctly	
Segment spoken words into phonemes and represent these by graphemes, spelling some correctly	
Correctly spell most Year 1 common exception words	
Leave a space between words	
Say out loud what they are going to write about	
Compose a sentence orally before writing it	
Read back what they have written	
Accurately write sentences dictated by an adult that include the phonics sounds and common exception words taught so far	
Demarcate some sentences with capital letters and full stops	



Communication and Language



Ofsted's 2024 report, "Strong Foundations in the First Years of School," highlights that a child's success in Reception and Key Stage 1 depends on mastering foundational skills, with communication and language serving as the bedrock for all other learning.

Key findings and recommendations regarding communication and oracy include:

- **Prioritising High-Quality Interactions:** Frequent, meaningful "back-and-forth" exchanges between adults and children are essential. This includes staff echoing back what children say while adding new, sophisticated vocabulary.
- **Explicit Oracy Teaching:** Oracy is now increasingly treated as a foundational skill equivalent to literacy and numeracy. Ofsted notes that "confidence" in speaking often stems from having been explicitly taught the knowledge and vocabulary required to contribute to a topic, rather than just innate personality.
- **Oral Composition as a Prerequisite:** Children must be able to "compose orally"—saying out loud what they want to write—before they can be expected to produce written work fluently.
- **Language-Rich Environment:** Schools should provide daily opportunities for singing songs, nursery rhymes, and storytelling to help children internalise language structures and vocabulary.
- **Assessment and Early Intervention:** Assessment should quickly identify children with speech and language delays, especially those impacted by the pandemic, to provide immediate targeted support rather than waiting for formal SEND diagnoses.
- **Curriculum Clarity:** A successful curriculum should clearly sequence the foundational language skills children need to learn, ensuring they are not overwhelmed by complex tasks before the basics are secure.

At Rainbow we utilise Talk Tactics to support Oracy across school.

Communication and Language



Physical	
Can control the speed and volume of their voice when talking aloud	
Begin to use gestures and expression to help make their point	
Use eye contact and faces the speaker when listening	
Develop a stage presence when speaking to an audience	
Linguistic	
Use sentence stems to link others' ideas	
Use new and appropriate (taught) vocabulary about a topic	
Use talk tactics to think strategically about their contributions to group talk	
Consider the words and phrasing used to express their ideas	
Cognitive	
Organise clearly what they want to say	
Ask relevant questions of others	
Give reasons / justify what or why they are saying something	
Draw upon their knowledge of the world to support their own point of view and explore different perspectives	
Social and emotional	
Take turns to talk and listen	
Listen with intent	
Begin to think about their audience when communicating	
Can retell and repeat a response	

Glossary of Terms

Decode: This refers to converting written words into spoken language.

Decodable books: This refers to books that have been written so that they only present words that include the GPCs that pupils have learned and the common exception words they have been introduced to. As these words are consistent with children's developing phonic knowledge, children know how to decode them and do not need to guess what they say.

Early education: In this report, the term refers to the curriculum for children in Reception and key stage 1.

Executive functioning: This consists of 3 core areas:

- inhibition (focusing attention on what matters and screening out what is not relevant)
- working memory (holding information in mind in order to work on it)
- cognitive flexibility (focusing on a goal and working out when it is necessary to change the approach to achieve it)

Glossary of Terms

Foundational knowledge: This refers to the knowledge that children need to be able to retrieve accurately and automatically in order to carry out complex tasks.

Fundamental movement skills: Fundamental movement skills are a set of basic motor patterns that benefit from good teaching and practice to aid development. They can be subdivided into 3 sets of skills that have common aspects for the range of movement:

- locomotor skills, for example running and jumping
- stability skills, for example twisting and balancing
- manipulation skills, such as throwing and catching

Grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs): The links between letters, or combinations of letters (graphemes) and the speech sounds (phonemes) that they represent. In the English writing system, graphemes may correspond to different phonemes in different words.

Play-based learning: Many schools describe play-based learning as ‘continuous provision’ or ‘free-flow play’ for children in the Reception Year and, occasionally, in Year 1. It includes imaginative play and can be guided by an adult or led by the child.














Other Guidance that supports the Development of Foundational Knowledge

- [Early Years Approach](#)
- [SEND Approach](#)
- [Pedagogy Blueprint including PedTech](#)
- [Oracy Approach](#)



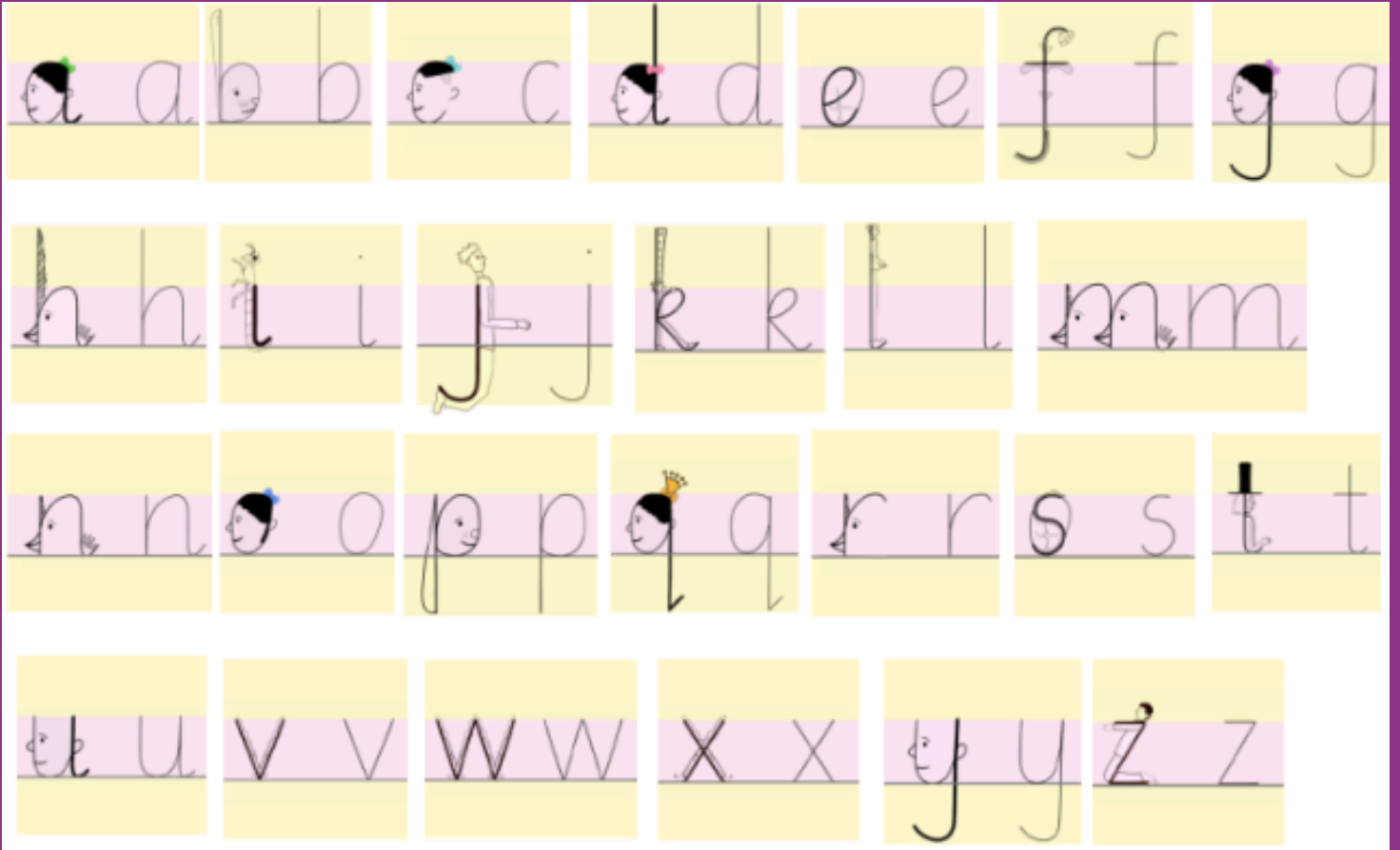
REMAT Handwriting

Stage 1

 <p>Maisie, mountain, mountain</p>	 <p>Round the apple, down the leaf</p>	 <p>Slither down the snake</p>	 <p>Round his bottom, up his tall neck, down to his feet</p>	 <p>Down the tower, across the tower</p>
 <p>Down the body, dot for the head</p>	 <p>Down Nobby, over his net</p>	 <p>Down the plait and over the pirate's face</p>	 <p>Round her face, down her hair and give her a curl</p>	 <p>All around the orange</p>
 <p>Curl around the caterpillar</p>	 <p>Down the kangaroo's body, tail and leg</p>	 <p>Down and under, up to the top and draw the puddle</p>	 <p>Down the laces to the heel, round the toe</p>	 <p>Down the stem, and draw the leaves</p>
 <p>Lift off the top and scoop out the egg</p>	 <p>Down the long leg</p>	 <p>Down the head to the hooves and over his back</p>	 <p>Down his back, then curl over his arm</p>	 <p>Down his body curl and dot</p>
 <p>Down a wing, up a wing</p>	 <p>Down a horn up a horn and under his head</p>	 <p>Down, up, down, up</p>	 <p>Zig - zag - zig</p>	 <p>Round her head, up past her earrings and down her hair</p>
 <p>Down the arm and leg and repeat the other side</p>				

REMAT Handwriting

Stage 2



REMAT Handwriting

Stage 3

Hill to jam letter	Hill to top sponge letter	Hill to 'sister' letter
ai	cl	dg

Bridge to jam letter	Bridge to top sponge letter	Bridge to 'sister' letter
wr	ol	va

Do not join: g j q y z

gap jump quit yak zoo

*Welcome back to Letter Village. At
Stage 3, children learn the 'hill'
and 'bridge' joins.*

REMAT Handwriting

Digits

