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The National Curriculum in England

Language

Key Stage 1 Year 2

Figure 1 – Structure of the national curriculum

	Key stage 1	Key stage 2	Key stage 3	Key stage 4
Age	5-7	7-11	11-14	14-16
Year groups	1-2	3-6	7-9	10-11
Core subjects				
English	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mathematics	✓	✓	✓	✓
Science	✓	✓	✓	✓

A high-quality education in English teaches pupils to speak and write fluently so that they can communicate their ideas and emotions to others. Through reading in particular, pupils have a chance to develop culturally, emotionally, intellectually, socially and spiritually. Literature, especially, plays a key role in such development.

Aims

The overarching aim for English in the national curriculum is to promote high standards of language and literacy by equipping pupils with a strong command of the spoken and written word, and to develop their love of literature through widespread reading for enjoyment.

The national curriculum for English aims to ensure that all pupils:

- read easily, fluently and with good understanding

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- develop the habit of reading widely and often, for both pleasure and information
- acquire a wide vocabulary, an understanding of grammar and knowledge of linguistic conventions for reading, writing and spoken language
- write clearly, accurately and coherently, adapting their language and style in and for a range of contexts, purposes and audiences
- use discussion in order to learn; they should be able to elaborate and explain clearly their understanding and ideas
- are competent in the arts of speaking and listening, making formal presentations, demonstrating to others and participating in debate.
- there is the word caption and should not appear.

Spoken language

The national curriculum for English reflects the importance of spoken language in pupils' development across the whole curriculum - cognitively, socially and linguistically. Spoken language underpins the development of reading and writing. The quality and variety of language that pupils hear and speak are vital for developing their vocabulary and grammar and their understanding for reading and writing. Teachers should therefore ensure the continual development of pupils' confidence and competence in spoken language and listening skills. Pupils should develop a capacity to explain their understanding of books and other reading, and to prepare their ideas before they write. They must be assisted in making their thinking clear to themselves as well as to others and teachers should ensure that pupils build secure foundations by using discussion to probe and remedy their misconceptions. Pupils should also be taught to understand and use the conventions for discussion and debate.

All pupils should be enabled to participate in and gain knowledge, skills and understanding associated with the artistic practice of drama. Pupils should be able to adopt, create and sustain a range of roles, responding appropriately to others in role. They should have opportunities to improvise, devise and script drama for one another and a range of audiences, as well as to rehearse, refine, share and respond thoughtfully to drama and theatre performances.

which underpin all aspects of spoken language across the six years of primary education form part of the national curriculum. These are reflected and contextualised within the reading and writing domains which follow.

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Reading

The programmes of study for reading at key stages 1 and 2 consist of two dimensions:

- word reading
- comprehension (both listening and reading).

It is essential that teaching focuses on developing pupils' competence in both dimensions; different kinds of teaching are needed for each.

Skilled word reading involves both the speedy working out of the pronunciation of unfamiliar printed words (decoding) and the speedy recognition of familiar printed words. Underpinning both is the understanding that the letters on the page represent the sounds in spoken words. This is why phonics should be emphasised in the early teaching of reading to beginners (i.e. unskilled readers) when they start school.

Good comprehension draws from linguistic knowledge (in particular of vocabulary and grammar) and on knowledge of the world. Comprehension skills develop through pupils' experience of high-quality discussion with the teacher, as well as from reading and discussing a range of stories, poems and non-fiction. All pupils must be encouraged to read widely across both fiction and non-fiction to develop their knowledge of themselves and the world in which they live, to establish an appreciation and love of reading, and to gain knowledge across the curriculum. Reading widely and often increases pupils' vocabulary because they encounter words they would rarely hear or use in everyday speech. Reading also feeds pupils' imagination and opens up a treasure-house of wonder and joy for curious young minds.

It is essential that, by the end of their primary education, all pupils are able to read fluently, and with confidence, in any subject in their forthcoming secondary education.

Writing

The programmes of study for writing at key stages 1 and 2 are constructed similarly to those for reading:

- transcription (spelling and handwriting)
- composition (articulating ideas and structuring them in speech and writing).

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It is essential that teaching develops pupils' competence in these two dimensions. In addition, pupils should be taught how to plan, revise and evaluate their writing. These aspects of writing have been incorporated into the programmes of study for composition.

Writing down ideas fluently depends on effective transcription: that is, on spelling quickly and accurately through knowing the relationship between sounds and letters (phonics) and understanding the morphology (word structure) and orthography (spelling structure) of words. Effective composition involves forming, articulating and communicating ideas, and then organising them coherently for a reader. This requires clarity, awareness of the audience, purpose and context, and an increasingly wide knowledge of vocabulary and grammar. Writing also depends on fluent, legible and, eventually, speedy handwriting.

Spelling, vocabulary, grammar, punctuation and glossary

The two statutory [appendices](#) - on spelling and on vocabulary, grammar and punctuation - give an overview of the specific features that should be included in teaching the programmes of study.

Opportunities for teachers to enhance pupils' vocabulary arise naturally from their reading and writing.

As vocabulary increases, teachers should show pupils

- how to understand the relationships between words, how to understand nuances in meaning, and how to develop their understanding of, and ability to use, figurative language
- how to work out and clarify the meanings of unknown words and words with more than one meaning. References to developing pupils' vocabulary are also included within the [appendices](#).
- how to control their speaking and writing consciously and to use Standard English
- how to use the elements of spelling, grammar, punctuation and 'language about language' listed.

This is not intended to constrain or restrict teachers' creativity, but simply to provide the structure on which they can construct exciting lessons. A non-statutory Glossary is provided for teachers.

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Throughout the programmes of study, teachers should teach pupils the vocabulary they need to discuss their reading, writing and spoken language. It is important that pupils learn the correct grammatical terms in English and that these terms are integrated within teaching.

School curriculum

The programmes of study for English are set out year-by-year for key stage 1 and two-yearly for key stage 2. The single year blocks at key stage 1 reflect the rapid pace of development in word reading during these two years. Schools are, however, only required to teach the relevant programme of study by the end of the key stage. Within each key stage, schools therefore have the flexibility to introduce content earlier or later than set out in the programme of study. In addition, schools can introduce key stage content during an earlier key stage if appropriate. All schools are also required to set out their school curriculum for English on a year-by-year basis and make this information available online.

Attainment targets

By the end of each key stage, pupils are expected to know, apply and understand the matters, skills and processes specified in the relevant programme of study.

Spoken language - years 1 to 6

Spoken language

Pupils should be taught to:

- listen and respond appropriately to adults and their peers
- ask relevant questions to extend their understanding and knowledge
- use relevant strategies to build their vocabulary
- articulate and justify answers, arguments and opinions
- give well-structured descriptions, explanations and narratives for different purposes, including for expressing feelings
- maintain attention and participate actively in collaborative conversations, staying on topic and initiating and responding to comments

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- use spoken language to develop understanding through speculating, hypothesising, imagining and exploring ideas
- speak audibly and fluently with an increasing command of Standard English
- participate in discussions, presentations, performances, role play, improvisations and debates
- gain, maintain and monitor the interest of the listener(s)
- consider and evaluate different viewpoints, attending to and building on the contributions of others
- select and use appropriate registers for effective communication.

Key stage 1 - Year 2

6-7 years

By the beginning of year 2, pupils should be able to read all common graphemes. They should be able to read unfamiliar words containing these graphemes, accurately and without undue hesitation, by sounding them out in books that are matched closely to each pupil's level of word reading knowledge. They should also be able to read many common words containing GPCs taught so far [for example, shout, hand, stop, or dream], without needing to blend the sounds out loud first. Pupils' reading of common exception words [for example, you, could, many, or people], should be secure. Pupils will increase their fluency by being able to read these words easily and automatically. Finally, pupils should be able to retell some familiar stories that have been read to and discussed with them or that they have acted out during year 1.

During year 2, teachers should continue to focus on establishing pupils' accurate and speedy word reading skills. They should also make sure that pupils listen to and discuss a wide range of stories, poems, plays and information books; this should include whole books. The sooner that pupils can read well and do so frequently, the sooner they will be able to increase their vocabulary, comprehension and their knowledge across the wider curriculum.

In writing, pupils at the beginning of year 2 should be able to compose individual sentences orally and then write them down. They should be able to spell correctly many of

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the words covered in year 1 (see English Appendix 1). They should also be able to make phonically plausible attempts to spell words they have not yet learnt. Finally, they should be able to form individual letters correctly, so establishing good handwriting habits from the beginning.

It is important to recognise that pupils begin to meet extra challenges in terms of spelling during year 2. Increasingly, they should learn that there is not always an obvious connection between the way a word is said and the way it is spelt. Variations include different ways of spelling the same sound, the use of so-called silent letters and groups of letters in some words and, sometimes, spelling that has become separated from the way that words are now pronounced, such as the 'le' ending in table. Pupils' motor skills also need to be sufficiently advanced for them to write down ideas that they may be able to compose orally. In addition, writing is intrinsically harder than reading: pupils are likely to be able to read and understand more complex writing (in terms of its vocabulary and structure) than they are capable of producing themselves.

For pupils who do not have the phonic knowledge and skills they need for year 2, teachers should use the year 1 programmes of study for word reading and spelling so that pupils' word reading skills catch up. However, teachers should use the year 2 programme of study for comprehension so that these pupils hear and talk about new books, poems, other writing, and vocabulary with the rest of the class.

Reading - word reading

Pupils should be taught to:

- continue to apply phonic knowledge and skills as the route to decode words until automatic decoding has become embedded and reading is fluent
- read accurately by blending the sounds in words that contain the graphemes taught so far, especially recognising alternative sounds for graphemes
- read accurately words of two or more syllables that contain the same graphemes as above
- read words containing common suffixes

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- read further common exception words, noting unusual correspondences between spelling and sound and where these occur in the word
- read most words quickly and accurately, without overt sounding and blending, when they have been frequently encountered
- read aloud books closely matched to their improving phonic knowledge, sounding out unfamiliar words accurately, automatically and without undue hesitation
- reread these books to build up their fluency and confidence in word reading

Reading - comprehension

Pupils should be taught to:

- develop pleasure in reading, motivation to read, vocabulary and understanding by:
- listening to, discussing and expressing views about a wide range of contemporary and classic poetry, stories and non-fiction at a level beyond that at which they can read independently
- discussing the sequence of events in books and how items of information are related
- becoming increasingly familiar with and retelling a wider range of stories, fairy stories and traditional tales
- being introduced to non-fiction books that are structured in different ways
- recognising simple recurring literary language in stories and poetry
- discussing and clarifying the meanings of words, linking new meanings to known vocabulary
- discussing their favourite words and phrases
- continuing to build up a repertoire of poems learnt by heart, appreciating these and reciting some, with appropriate intonation to make the meaning clear
- understand both the books that they can already read accurately and fluently and those that they listen to by:
- drawing on what they already know or on background information and vocabulary provided by the teacher
- checking that the text makes sense to them as they read, and correcting inaccurate reading
- making inferences on the basis of what is being said and done
- answering and asking questions
- predicting what might happen on the basis of what has been read so far
- participate in discussion about books, poems and other works that are read to them and those that they can read for themselves, taking turns and listening to what others say
- explain and discuss their understanding of books, poems and other material, both those that they listen to and those that they read for themselves

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Writing – transcription

Spelling - see [English appendix 1](#)

Pupils should be taught to:

- spell by:
 - ♣ segmenting spoken words into phonemes and representing these by graphemes, spelling many correctly
 - ♣ learning new ways of spelling phonemes for which 1 or more spellings are already known, and learn some words with each spelling, including a few common homophones
 - ♣ learning to spell common exception words
 - ♣ learning to spell more words with contracted forms
- learning the possessive apostrophe (singular) [for example, the girl's book]
- distinguishing between homophones and near-homophones
- add suffixes to spell longer words including –ment, –ness, –ful, –less, –ly
- apply spelling rules and guidance, as listed in [English appendix 1](#)
- write from memory simple sentences dictated by the teacher that include words using the GPCs, common exception words and punctuation taught so far

Handwriting

Pupils should be taught to:

- form lower-case letters of the correct size relative to one another
- start using some of the diagonal and horizontal strokes needed to join letters and understand which letters, when adjacent to one another, are best left unjoined
- write capital letters and digits of the correct size, orientation and relationship to one another and to lower-case letters
- use spacing between words that reflects the size of the letters

Writing - composition

Pupils should be taught to:

- develop positive attitudes towards and stamina for writing by:
- writing narratives about personal experiences and those of others (real and fictional)
- writing about real events
- writing poetry

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- writing for different purposes
- consider what they are going to write before beginning by:
- planning or saying out loud what they are going to write about
- writing down ideas and/or key words, including new vocabulary
- encapsulating what they want to say, sentence by sentence
- make simple additions, revisions and corrections to their own writing by:
- evaluating their writing with the teacher and other pupils
- rereading to check that their writing makes sense and that verbs to indicate time are used correctly and consistently, including verbs in the continuous form
- proofreading to check for errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation (for example, ends of sentences punctuated correctly)
- read aloud what they have written with appropriate intonation to make the meaning clear

Writing - vocabulary, grammar and punctuation

Pupils should be taught to:

- develop their understanding of the concepts set out in [English appendix 2](#) by:
learning how to use both familiar and new punctuation correctly - see [English appendix 2](#), including full stops, capital letters, exclamation marks, question marks, commas for lists and apostrophes for contracted forms and the possessive (singular)
- learning how to use:
 - ♣ sentences with different forms: statement, question, exclamation, command
 - ♣ expanded noun phrases to describe and specify [for example, the blue butterfly]
 - ♣ the present and past tenses correctly and consistently, including the progressive form
 - ♣ subordination (using when, if, that, or because) and co-ordination (using or, and, or but)
 - ♣ the grammar for year 2 in [English appendix 2](#)
 - ♣ some features of written Standard English
- use and understand the grammatical terminology in [English appendix 2](#) in discussing their writing

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