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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
- develop the habit of reading widely and often, for both pleasure and information

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- 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.

Reading

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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).

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

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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.

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-

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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
- 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 2 - Year 3-6

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7-11 years old

Lower Key Stage 2:

- Year 3: 7-8 years old
- Year 4: 8-9 years old

Upper Key Stage 2:

- Year 5: 9-10 years old
- Year 6: 10-11 years old

Lower key stage 2 - years 3 and 4

By the beginning of year 3, pupils should be able:

- to read books written at an age- appropriate interest level.
- to read books accurately and at a speed that is sufficient for them to focus on understanding what they read rather than on decoding individual words.
- to decode most new words outside their spoken vocabulary, making a good approximation to the word's pronunciation.

As their decoding skills become increasingly secure, teaching should be directed more towards

- developing their vocabulary and the breadth and depth of their reading, making sure that they become independent, fluent and enthusiastic readers who read widely and frequently
- developing their understanding and enjoyment of stories, poetry, plays and non-fiction, and learning to read silently.
- developing their knowledge and skills in reading non-fiction about a wide range of subjects.
- learning to justify their views about what they have read: with support at the start of year 3 and increasingly independently by the end of year 4.

Pupils should be able to write down their ideas with a reasonable degree of accuracy and with good sentence punctuation. Teachers should therefore be consolidating pupils' writing skills, their vocabulary, their grasp of sentence structure and their knowledge of linguistic terminology. Teaching them to develop as writers involves teaching them to enhance the effectiveness of what they write as well as increasing their competence. Teachers should make sure that pupils build on what they have learnt, particularly in terms of the range of

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their writing and the more varied grammar, vocabulary and narrative structures from which they can draw to express their ideas. Pupils should be beginning to understand how writing can be different from speech. Joined handwriting should be the norm; pupils should be able to use it fast enough to keep pace with what they want to say.

Pupils' spelling of common words should be correct, including common exception words and other words that they have learnt (see [English Appendix 1](#)). Pupils should spell words as accurately as possible using their phonic knowledge and other knowledge of spelling, such as morphology and etymology.

Most pupils will not need further direct teaching of word reading skills: they are able to decode unfamiliar words accurately, and need very few repeated experiences of this before the word is stored in such a way that they can read it without overt sound-blending. They should demonstrate understanding of figurative language, distinguish shades of meaning among related words and use age-appropriate, academic vocabulary.

As in key stage 1, however, pupils who are still struggling to decode need to be taught to do this urgently through a rigorous and systematic phonics programme so that they catch up rapidly with their peers. If they cannot decode independently and fluently, they will find it increasingly difficult to understand what they read and to write down what they want to say. As far as possible, however, these pupils should follow the year 3 and 4 program of study in terms of listening to new books, hearing and learning new vocabulary and grammatical structures, and discussing these.

Specific requirements for pupils to discuss what they are learning and to develop their wider skills in spoken language form part of this programme of study. In years 3 and 4, pupils should become more familiar with and confident in using language in a greater variety of situations, for a variety of audiences and purposes, including through drama, formal presentations and debate.

Year 3 (7-8 years old) and 4 (8- 9 years old)

Reading - word reading

Pupils should be taught to:

- apply their growing knowledge of root words, prefixes and suffixes (etymology and morphology) as listed in - see [English appendix 1](#) , both to read aloud and to understand the meaning of new words they meet

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- read further exception words, noting the unusual correspondences between spelling and sound, and where these occur in the word

Reading - comprehension

Pupils should be taught to:

- develop positive attitudes to reading, and an understanding of what they read, by:
- listening to and discussing a wide range of fiction, poetry, plays, non-fiction and reference books or textbooks
- reading books that are structured in different ways and reading for a range of purposes
- using dictionaries to check the meaning of words that they have read
- increasing their familiarity with a wide range of books, including fairy stories, myths and legends, and retelling some of these orally
- identifying themes and conventions in a wide range of books
- preparing poems and play scripts to read aloud and to perform, showing understanding through intonation, tone, volume and action
- discussing words and phrases that capture the reader's interest and imagination
- recognising some different forms of poetry [for example, free verse, narrative poetry]
- understand what they read, in books they can read independently, by:
- checking that the text makes sense to them, discussing their understanding, and explaining the meaning of words in context
- asking questions to improve their understanding of a text
- drawing inferences such as inferring characters' feelings, thoughts and motives from their actions, and justifying inferences with evidence
- predicting what might happen from details stated and implied
- identifying main ideas drawn from more than 1 paragraph and summarising these
- identifying how language, structure, and presentation contribute to meaning
- retrieve and record information from non-fiction
- participate in discussion about both books that are read to them and those they can read for themselves, taking turns and listening to what others say

Writing - transcription

Spelling - see [English appendix 1](#)

Pupils should be taught to:

- use further prefixes and suffixes and understand how to add them - see [English appendix 1](#)
- spell further homophones
- spell words that are often misspelt - see [English appendix 1](#)
- place the possessive apostrophe accurately in words with regular plurals [for example, girls', boys'] and in words with irregular plurals [for example, children's]
- use the first 2 or 3 letters of a word to check its spelling in a dictionary

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- write from memory simple sentences, dictated by the teacher, that include words and punctuation taught so far

Handwriting

Pupils should be taught to:

- use the diagonal and horizontal strokes that are needed to join letters and understand which letters, when adjacent to one another, are best left unjoined
- increase the legibility, consistency and quality of their handwriting, [for example, by ensuring that the downstrokes of letters are parallel and equidistant, and that lines of writing are spaced sufficiently so that the ascenders and descenders of letters do not touch]

Writing - composition

Pupils should be taught to:

- plan their writing by:
 - discussing writing similar to that which they are planning to write in order to understand and learn from its structure, vocabulary and grammar
 - discussing and recording ideas
- draft and write by:
 - composing and rehearsing sentences orally (including dialogue), progressively building a varied and rich vocabulary and an increasing range of sentence structures [English appendix 2](#)
 - organising paragraphs around a theme in narratives, creating settings, characters and plot in non-narrative material, using simple organisational devices [for example, headings and sub-headings]
- evaluate and edit by:
 - assessing the effectiveness of their own and others' writing and suggesting improvements
 - proposing changes to grammar and vocabulary to improve consistency, including the accurate use of pronouns in sentences
- proofread for spelling and punctuation errors
- read their own writing aloud to a group or the whole class, using appropriate intonation and controlling the tone and volume so that the meaning is clear

Writing - vocabulary, grammar and punctuation

Pupils should be taught to:

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- develop their understanding of the concepts set out in [English appendix 2](#) by:
- extending the range of sentences with more than one clause by using a wider range of conjunctions, including: when, if, because, although
- using the present perfect form of verbs in contrast to the past tense
- choosing nouns or pronouns appropriately for clarity and cohesion and to avoid repetition
- using conjunctions, adverbs and prepositions to express time and cause
- using fronted adverbials
- learning the grammar for years 3 and 4 in [English appendix 2](#)
- indicate grammatical and other features by:
 - using commas after fronted adverbials
 - indicating possession by using the possessive apostrophe with plural nouns
 - using and punctuating direct speech
- use and understand the grammatical terminology in [English appendix 2](#) accurately and appropriately when discussing their writing and reading

Upper Key Stage 2 -Year 5 (9-10 years old) Year 6 (10- 11 years old)

Reading - word reading

Pupils should be taught to:

- apply their growing knowledge of root words, prefixes and suffixes (morphology and etymology), as listed in [English appendix 1](#), both to read aloud and to understand the meaning of new words that they meet

Reading - comprehension

Pupils should be taught to:

- maintain positive attitudes to reading and an understanding of what they read by: _____

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- continuing to read and discuss an increasingly wide range of fiction, poetry, plays, non-fiction and reference books or textbooks
- reading books that are structured in different ways and reading for a range of purposes
- increasing their familiarity with a wide range of books, including myths, legends and traditional stories, modern fiction, fiction from our literary heritage, and books from other cultures and traditions
- recommending books that they have read to their peers, giving reasons for their choices
- identifying and discussing themes and conventions in and across a wide range of writing
- making comparisons within and across books
- learning a wider range of poetry by heart
- preparing poems and plays to read aloud and to perform, showing understanding through intonation, tone and volume so that the meaning is clear to an audience
- understand what they read by:
 - checking that the book makes sense to them, discussing their understanding and exploring the meaning of words in context
 - asking questions to improve their understanding
 - drawing inferences such as inferring characters' feelings, thoughts and motives from their actions, and justifying inferences with evidence
 - predicting what might happen from details stated and implied
 - summarising the main ideas drawn from more than 1 paragraph, identifying key details that support the main ideas
 - identifying how language, structure and presentation contribute to meaning
 - discuss and evaluate how authors use language, including figurative language, considering the impact on the reader
 - distinguish between statements of fact and opinion
 - retrieve, record and present information from non-fiction
 - participate in discussions about books that are read to them and those they can read for themselves, building on their own and others' ideas and challenging views courteously
 - explain and discuss their understanding of what they have read, including through formal presentations and debates, maintaining a focus on the topic and using notes where necessary
 - provide reasoned justifications for their views

Writing - transcription

Spelling - see [English appendix 1](#)

Pupils should be taught to:

- use further prefixes and suffixes and understand the guidance for adding them _____
- spell some words with 'silent' letters [for example, knight, psalm, solemn] _____

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- continue to distinguish between homophones and other words which are often confused
- use knowledge of morphology and etymology in spelling and understand that the spelling of some words needs to be learnt specifically, as listed in [English appendix 1](#)
- use dictionaries to check the spelling and meaning of words
- use the first 3 or 4 letters of a word to check spelling, meaning or both of these in a dictionary
- use a thesaurus

Handwriting and presentation

Pupils should be taught to:

- write legibly, fluently and with increasing speed by:
- choosing which shape of a letter to use when given choices and deciding whether or not to join specific letters
- choosing the writing implement that is best suited for a task

Writing - composition

Pupils should be taught to:

- plan their writing by:
 - identifying the audience for and purpose of the writing, selecting the appropriate form and using other similar writing as models for their own
 - noting and developing initial ideas, drawing on reading and research where necessary
 - in writing narratives, considering how authors have developed characters and settings in what pupils have read, listened to or seen performed
- draft and write by:
 - selecting appropriate grammar and vocabulary, understanding how such choices can change and enhance meaning
 - in narratives, describing settings, characters and atmosphere and integrating dialogue to convey character and advance the action
 - précising longer passages
 - using a wide range of devices to build cohesion within and across paragraphs
 - using further organisational and presentational devices to structure text and to guide the reader [for example, headings, bullet points, underlining]
- evaluate and edit by:
 - assessing the effectiveness of their own and others' writing
 - proposing changes to vocabulary, grammar and punctuation to enhance effects and clarify meaning
 - ensuring the consistent and correct use of tense throughout a piece of writing

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- ensuring correct subject and verb agreement when using singular and plural, distinguishing between the language of speech and writing and choosing the appropriate register
- proofread for spelling and punctuation errors
- perform their own compositions, using appropriate intonation, volume, and movement so that meaning is clear

Writing - vocabulary, grammar and punctuation

Pupils should be taught to:

- develop their understanding of the concepts set out in [English appendix 2](#) by:
 - recognising vocabulary and structures that are appropriate for formal speech and writing, including subjunctive forms
 - using passive verbs to affect the presentation of information in a sentence
 - using the perfect form of verbs to mark relationships of time and cause
 - using expanded noun phrases to convey complicated information concisely
 - using modal verbs or adverbs to indicate degrees of possibility
 - using relative clauses beginning with who, which, where, when, whose, that or with an implied (ie omitted) relative pronoun
 - learning the grammar for years 5 and 6 in [English appendix 2](#)
- indicate grammatical and other features by:
 - using commas to clarify meaning or avoid ambiguity in writing
 - using hyphens to avoid ambiguity
 - using brackets, dashes or commas to indicate parenthesis
 - using semicolons, colons or dashes to mark boundaries between independent clauses
 - using a colon to introduce a list
 - punctuating bullet points consistently
 - use and understand the grammatical terminology in [English appendix 2](#) accurately and appropriately in discussing their writing and reading

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