



English Skills Progression from Nursery to Year 2

Purpose: This document describes how spoken language, reading and writing build from play and first-hand experience in Nursery to increasingly fluent and independent application by the end of Year 2. It is used alongside the EYFS framework, the Year 1 and Year 2 English programmes of study, Cecil Gowing's whole-school curriculum and provision map, and detailed class plans.

Our English curriculum in practice

Language first. High-quality conversation, stories, rhymes, songs, drama and precise vocabulary run through every phase and every subject. Adults model, extend and revisit language; children rehearse ideas aloud before writing.

Systematic phonics. Twinkl Phonics gives the teaching sequence: Level 1 sound awareness in Nursery; Levels 2–4 in Reception; Level 5 in Year 1; and Level 6 in Year 2, with review and catch-up matched to pupils' assessed knowledge. Decodable books are matched to the correspondences taught.

Writing through texts. Pathways to Write provides high-quality texts, explicit mastery keys, oral rehearsal, modelled and shared writing, short-burst practice and meaningful outcomes. Teachers select the relevant unit sequence and teach transcription explicitly alongside composition.

Application through provision. Nursery and Reception offer planned indoor and outdoor continuous provision; Year 1 links provision to taught skills, with increasing independence. Year 2 offers purposeful independent, cross-curricular application. Provision extends explicit teaching; it does not replace it.

The progression at a glance

Skill	Nursery	Reception	Year 1	Year 2
Spoken language	Listen, name, converse and retell through stories and play.	Use fuller sentences, new vocabulary and oral storytelling.	Explain, ask and answer questions; rehearse ideas aloud.	Sustain discussion, present and justify ideas for a listener.
Reading	Enjoy books, rhyme and sound play; notice meaningful print.	Learn Levels 2–4 phonics, read matched books and talk about stories.	Apply Level 5 phonics, read more fluently and discuss meaning.	Consolidate Level 6, read with expression and explain understanding.
Writing	Make purposeful marks, draw and develop motor control.	Form letters, segment words and write readable phrases or sentences.	Compose and sequence sentences; apply taught spelling and punctuation.	Plan, write, revise and proofread increasingly sustained texts.

How to read the tables. Each row shows the intended progression of a skill. Children may need to revisit earlier steps while continuing to take part in age-appropriate stories, talk and writing purposes. Staff adapt access and provide timely additional teaching without narrowing the curriculum.

Spoken language and reading

Skill	Nursery	Reception	Year 1	Year 2
Listening and turn-taking	Attend to a short story, song or exchange; respond to an adult and begin to wait and take turns.	Listen in a group, follow linked instructions and respond to what someone has said.	Listen to peers and adults, stay on topic, ask relevant questions and take turns in discussion.	Sustain discussion, build on another idea, ask clarifying questions and respond with reasons.
Vocabulary and expression	Name objects, actions and feelings; use new words during play with adult modelling.	Use new vocabulary from stories and experiences; speak in increasingly complete sentences.	Choose precise words to describe, recount and explain; rehearse sentences aloud.	Use subject and literary vocabulary appropriately; adapt explanation for an audience.
Storytelling and presentation	Join refrains, use props and sequence familiar events with support.	Retell familiar narratives using story language; explain an idea in a small group.	Retell, describe, perform and present short narratives or explanations clearly.	Present coherent accounts, express a view and justify choices through talk, drama or performance.
Sound awareness and phonics	Twinkl Level 1: hear and distinguish sounds, rhyme, rhythm and alliteration; begin oral blending and segmenting.	Twinkl Levels 2–4: learn taught letter-sound correspondences; blend to read and segment to spell.	Twinkl Level 5: revise earlier learning; learn alternative spellings and pronunciations; decode longer words and common endings.	Twinkl Level 6: consolidate the code, read longer words and apply spelling patterns; continue earlier-level teaching when assessment shows a gap.
Word reading and fluency	Enjoy books, turn pages, notice meaningful print and recognise familiar names, images or signs.	Blend to read words and simple sentences; read closely matched books and reread for accuracy and confidence.	Decode unfamiliar words accurately; read common exception words, suffixes and matched texts with growing speed and expression.	Read most familiar words automatically; decode longer words and read aloud with accuracy, pace and expression.

Reading comprehension and pleasure

Skill	Nursery	Reception	Year 1	Year 2
Engagement with texts	Choose books; listen to repeated stories, rhymes and information texts; talk about pictures and events.	Share a wide range of books beyond independent reading level; join in and talk about favourite parts.	Enjoy stories, poems and non-fiction beyond independent level; retell and link reading to experience.	Express preferences across wider texts; discuss story structure, non-fiction organisation and memorable language.
Understanding and inference	Recall familiar characters or events and say what might happen next with support.	Retell, predict and explain simple events; use recently introduced vocabulary in talk and play.	Sequence and discuss events, explain word meanings, predict and infer from what is said or done.	Explain relationships and events; ask and answer questions, infer with evidence and monitor meaning while reading.
Independent reading habits	Handle books with care and choose a story to share.	Reread a decodable book matched to secure phonics; enjoy a daily adult-read story.	Reread for fluency, self-correct and discuss meaning; make supported book choices.	Read increasingly independently and widely; reread, self-correct and discuss ideas with a partner.

Writing composition and transcription

Skill	Nursery	Reception	Year 1	Year 2
Purpose and audience	Use drawing, marks and pretend writing in play, such as a list, sign, card or message.	Write labels, captions, messages and short sentences for familiar real or imagined purposes.	Write short narratives and non-fiction for a clear purpose; explain who will read them.	Write narratives, real-event accounts, poetry and other texts for different purposes and readers.
Ideas and oral rehearsal	Talk about a drawing or experience; use role play and story props to shape an idea.	Say a sentence before writing; use a familiar story pattern and vocabulary from shared texts.	Use 'Pathways to Write' text models; collect vocabulary, say sentences aloud and sequence ideas.	Plan orally or jot ideas and key words; select vocabulary, organise ideas and hold a coherent sequence.
Sentence composition	Dictate words or a message to an adult; some may begin to record part of an idea independently.	Write simple phrases and sentences that others can read, supported by modelling and oral rehearsal.	Write sequenced sentences; reread each for sense and share writing aloud.	Link and vary sentences appropriately; maintain meaning and tense across a developing text.
Improvement and editing	Return to a picture or mark to add detail after adult conversation.	Read back writing with support and add a missing word, sound or detail.	Discuss writing, check that a sentence makes sense and improve a taught mastery skill.	Reread, revise vocabulary or detail, proofread taught spellings and punctuation, and share a polished piece.
Pathways to Write	Build a rich story and vocabulary base through quality texts, dramatic play, drawing and oral storytelling.	Explore 'Pathways to Write' texts through talk, drama and shared writing; apply taught words and sentences in provision.	Practise selected 'mastery keys' through modelled, shared and independent short writing before a purposeful outcome.	Revisit and extend 'mastery keys'; use text models, independent drafting and editing to shape a sustained outcome.
Spelling and encoding	Notice initial sounds and practise oral segmenting; make marks and letters with meaning.	Hear phonemes in words and represent them with taught graphemes; spell simple words and some common exception words.	Spell taught sounds and common exception words; apply simple prefixes/suffixes and write taught dictated sentences.	Use alternative spellings, common exception words, contractions, homophones and taught suffixes; proofread.
Handwriting	Build shoulder, hand and finger strength; develop comfortable grip, direction and controlled marks.	Form recognisable letters, most correctly; develop grip, posture and consistent starting points.	Form lower-case and capital letters in the correct direction, position and size; leave spaces.	Form letters at appropriate relative sizes; use consistent spacing and begin taught joining strokes when secure.

Grammar and punctuation

Skill	Nursery	Reception	Year 1	Year 2
Sentence knowledge	Hear sentence patterns in songs, conversation and stories; extend a spoken idea.	Speak and write simple sentences; notice words, spaces and sentence endings in models.	Use spaces; join words and clauses with “and”; use capitals and full stops, with questions and exclamations introduced.	Use statement, question, command and exclamation forms; expand noun phrases and use coordination/subordination.
Word choices and conventions	Use descriptive words and talk about who did what in a story.	Choose story words and simple describing language in talk and writing.	Use capitals for names, places, days and “I”; begin to discuss words and sentences.	Use past and present tense consistently, including progressive forms; use commas in lists and taught apostrophes.

How children practise and show their learning

Skill	Nursery	Reception	Year 1	Year 2
Indoor and outdoor provision	Story baskets; puppets; songs; small world; large-scale mark making; name cards; menus and signs in role play.	Text-rich role play, story maps, phonics games, labels, shared reading and independent writing for real purposes.	Curriculum-linked provision: instructions for construction, notes from investigation, book talk and writing stations.	Independent reading, research, notes, drafting, editing and purposeful writing across subjects and outdoor enquiry.
Adult interaction	Comment, pause, repeat and extend speech; model vocabulary; join play without taking over.	Teach explicitly, then prompt children to recall and apply new words, sounds and sentence forms in play.	Model a 'mastery key' and the thinking behind it; check understanding and withdraw prompts as skills become secure.	Confer about audience and word choice; prompt pupils to justify, revise and check their own work.
Assessment evidence	Observe talk, story play, sound awareness and marks; use this to plan the next interaction.	Check phonics, decodable reading, book talk, letter formation and independent application; use EYFS goals at year end.	Use phonics checks, reading aloud, discussion, dictation, independent writing and 'Pathways to Write' outcomes.	Check fluency, comprehension talk, spelling, independent composition and revision across more than one context.

Our values in English

Kindness. Listen without interrupting, value different voices, share stories respectfully and give helpful feedback to another writer.

Resilience. Keep trying to blend an unfamiliar word, rehearse a sentence, reread for sense and improve a draft after feedback.

Creativity. Imagine characters and possibilities, enjoy word play, choose vocabulary deliberately and express ideas for different audiences.

Planning and inclusion checks

- Match decodable books and additional phonics teaching to the precise correspondences pupils have secured; keep access to rich age-appropriate texts and discussion.
- Make key vocabulary, oral rehearsal, visual prompts, accessible tools and purposeful adult support available; use the class inclusion file and assess whether scaffolds can be faded.
- Link 'Pathways to Write' mastery keys to the current year-group programme of study and school text plan. Teach handwriting and spelling directly; provide repeated chances to apply both in independent writing.
- Review progression through observation, phonics assessment, reading discussion, work scrutiny and moderated independent writing. Avoid using a single finished piece as the only evidence.

Source framework and scheme references

Department for Education, EYFS statutory framework for group and school-based providers, effective September 2026: [gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2)

Department for Education, National curriculum in England: English programmes of study, Years 1 and 2: [gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-english-programmes-of-study](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-english-programmes-of-study)

Twinkl Phonics, programme levels and family guidance: [twinkl.co.uk/phonics/families](https://www.twinkl.co.uk/phonics/families)

The Literacy Company, Pathways to Write programme overview: theliteracycompany.co.uk/pathways-literacy/pathways-to-write/

Cecil Gowing, Whole School Curriculum and Provision Map, Nursery to Year 2 (school document).