

The National Curriculum

A Guide for Parents

This guide is intended to support parents of primary school children. Obviously it would be impossible to set out in detail everything your child would learn during their six years of statutory primary education, but by providing an outline of typical content and some background information about how the curriculum and assessment works, hopefully it will help parents support their children in making the most of their education.

The Core Subjects

English, Maths and Science remain very important and are considered the core subjects in both primary and secondary education. The National Curriculum sets out in some detail what must be taught in each of these subjects, and they will take up a substantial part of your child's learning week. Alongside these are the familiar foundation subjects: Art, Computing, Design & Technology, Foreign Languages (age 7+ only), Geography, History, Music, and Physical Education. For these foundation subjects, the details in the curriculum are significantly briefer: schools have much more flexibility regarding what they cover in these subjects.

More Able

If your child is achieving well, rather than moving on to the following year group's work many schools will encourage more in-depth and investigative work to allow a greater mastery and understanding of concepts and ideas.

The National Curriculum -English in Year 3 and Year 4

In lower Key Stage 2, your child will build on their work from the infants to become more independent in both their reading and their writing. Most children will be confident at decoding most words - or will have extra support to help them to do so - and so now they will be able to use their reading to support their learning about other subjects.

They will begin to meet a wider range of writing contexts, including both fiction and non-fiction styles and genres.

Speaking and Listening

The Spoken Language objectives are set out for the whole of primary school, and teachers will cover many of them every year as children's spoken language skills develop. In Years 3 and 4, some focuses may include:

- Use discussion and conversation to explore and speculate about new ideas
- Begin to recognise the need to use Standard English in some contexts
- Participation in performances, plays and debates
- Explain thinking and feeling in well-structured statements and responses

Reading skills

- Extend skills of decoding to tackle more complex words, including with unusual spelling patterns
- Read a wide range of fiction, non-fiction and literary books
- Recognise some different forms of poetry
- Use dictionaries to find the meanings of words
- Become familiar with a range of traditional and fairy tales, including telling some orally
- Identify words which have been chosen to interest the reader
- Ask questions about what they have read
- Draw simple inferences about events in a story, such as how a character might be feeling
- Make predictions about what might happen next in a story

- Summarise ideas from several paragraphs of writing
- Find and record information from non-fiction texts
- Take part in discussions about reading and books

Children begin to identify how authors choose words for effect, for example by selecting 'wailed' instead of 'cried', or 'enraged' rather than 'cross'. They may begin to make such choices in their own writing, too.

Writing skills

- Write with joined handwriting, making appropriate join choices
- Spell words that include prefixes and suffixes, such as anticlockwise
- Spell some commonly misspelt words correctly, taken from the Y3/4 list
- Use a dictionary to check spellings
- Use possessive apostrophes correctly in regular and irregular plurals, such as children's and boys'
- Use examples of writing to help them to structure their own similar texts
- Plan out sentences orally to select adventurous vocabulary
- Use paragraphs to organise ideas
- Use description and detail to develop characters and settings in story-writing
- Write interesting narratives in stories
- In non-fiction writing, use features such as sub-headings and bullet points
- Review their own work to make improvements, including editing for spelling errors
- Read others' writing and suggest possible improvements
- Read aloud work that they've written to be clearly understood
- Extend sentences using a wider range of conjunctions, including subordinating conjunctions
- Use the present perfect verb tense
- Use nouns and pronouns with care to avoid repetition
- Use conjunctions, adverbs and prepositions to add detail about time or cause
- Use fronted adverbials
- Use direct speech, with correct punctuation

Grammar Help

For many parents, the grammatical terminology used in schools may not be familiar. Here are some useful reminders of some of the terms used:

- Present perfect tense: a tense formed using the verb 'have' and a participle, to indicate that an action has been completed at an unspecified time, e.g. The girl has eaten her ice-cream
- Fronted adverbial: a word or phrase which describes the time, place or manner of an action, which is placed at the start of the sentence, e.g. "Before breakfast,..." or "Carrying a heavy bag,..."
- Direct speech: words quoted directly using inverted commas, as opposed to being reported in a sentence

To add information to a sentence about its location, children might use conjunctions ("Although it was still early..."), adverbs ("Early that morning...") or prepositions ("At about six-thirty that morning..."). Often these techniques allow children to write more complex sentences.

Young children have a tendency to repeat nouns or pronouns, leading to several sentences containing 'He' or 'They'. They can use alternatives to make writing more interesting. For example, alternatives for describing an individual character might include: he, the burglar, Mr Smith, John, the criminal, the villain, etc.

By the end of Year 4, children will be expected to know all of their times tables up to 12×12 by heart. This means not only recalling them in order but also being able to answer any times table question at random, and also knowing the related division facts. For example, in knowing that $6 \times 8 = 48$, children can also know the related facts that $8 \times 6 = 48$ and that $48 \div 6 = 8$ and $48 \div 8 = 6$. This expertise will be particularly useful when solving larger problems and working with fractions

Number and Place Value

- Count in multiples of 6, 7, 9, 25 and 1,000
- Count backwards, including using negative numbers
- Recognise the place value in numbers of four digits (1000s, 100s, 10s and 1s)
- Put larger numbers in order, including those greater than 1,000
- Round any number to the nearest 10, 100 or 1,000
- Read Roman numbers up to 100

Roman Numerals' Basics: I = 1 ; V = 5 ; X = 10 ; L = 50 ; C = 100

Letters can be combined to make larger numbers. If a smaller value appears in front of a larger one then it is subtracted, e.g. IV (5 - 1) means 4. If the larger value appears first then they are added, e.g. VI (5 + 1) means 6.

Calculations

- Use the standard method of column addition and subtraction for values up to four digits
- Solve two-step problems involving addition and subtraction
- Know the multiplication and division facts up to $12 \times 12 = 144$
- Use knowledge of place value, and multiplication and division facts to solve larger calculations
- Use factor pairs to solve mental calculations, e.g. knowing that 9×7 is the same as $3 \times 3 \times 7$
- Use the standard short multiplication method to multiply three-digit numbers by two-digit numbers

Fractions

- Use hundredths, including counting in hundredths
- Add and subtract fractions with the same denominator, e.g. $\frac{4}{7} + \frac{3}{7}$
- Find the decimal value of any number of tenths or hundredths, for example 7100 is 0.07
- Recognise the decimal equivalents of $\frac{1}{4}$, $\frac{1}{2}$ and $\frac{3}{4}$
- Divide one- or two-digit numbers by 10 or 100 to give decimal answers
- Round decimals to the nearest whole number
- Compare the size of numbers with up to two decimal places

Measurements

- Convert between different measures, such as kilometres to metres or hours to minutes
- Calculate the perimeter of shapes made of squares and rectangles
- Find the area of rectangular shapes by counting squares
- Read, write and convert times between analogue and digital clocks, including 24-hour clocks
- Solve problems that involve converting amounts of time, including minutes, hours, days, weeks and months

Geometry-properties of shapes

- Classify groups of shapes according to the properties, such as sides and angles
- Identify acute and obtuse angles
- Complete a simple symmetrical figure by drawing the reflected shape
- Use coordinates to describe the position of something on a standard grid
- Begin to describe movements on a grid by using left/right and up/down measures

Statistics

- Construct and understand simple graphs using discrete and continuous data

Discrete data is data which is made up of separate values, such as eye colour or shoe size. Continuous data is that which appears on a range, such as height or temperature.

The National Curriculum - Science in Year 4

During Year 4, children begin to use more scientific vocabulary to describe objects and processes, such as describing solids, liquids and gases, or erosion. Vocabulary is a key part of any area of study, and particularly in science. Learning new words - and their spellings - can often be fun when they relate to experiments and science investigations.

Scientific Investigation

Investigation work should form part of the broader science curriculum. During Year 4, some of the skills your child might focus on include:

- Carry out fair tests, using control tests where appropriate
- Take accurate measurements using a range of scientific equipment, including thermometers
- Organise and present data to help answer scientific questions
- Record findings using scientific vocabulary, diagrams, charts and tables
- Report on findings using oral and written explanations of results and conclusions

Living Things and their Habitats

- Use classification keys to group, identify and name a variety of living things
- Recognise that environments can change

A common example of classification is the grouping of vertebrates into fish, amphibians, reptiles, mammals and birds.

Animals including Humans

- Describe the basic functions of the parts of the digestive system, such as mouth, oesophagus, stomach and intestines
- Construct a variety of food chains to show producers, predators and prey

States of Matter

- Group materials as solids, liquids and gases
- Observe that some materials change state when heated or cooled
- Know the part of evaporation and condensation in the water cycle

Parent Tip

The water cycle is the process of water being evaporated from the Earth's surface, and then condensing to form clouds and rain before falling back to Earth.

Sound

- Understand that sounds are caused by vibrations reaching the ear
- Find what affects the pitch and volume of a sound

Electricity

- Construct a simple electrical circuit using cells, wires, bulbs and switches
- Understand that a complete circuit is needed to power a lamp or buzzer
- Recognise some common conductors and insulators

Earth and Space

- Describe the movement of the planets, including Earth, around the Sun
- Describe the movement of the Moon around the Earth
- Use these ideas to explain how day and night occur, and why the Sun appears to move across the sky

Since 2006, scientists have defined Pluto as only a dwarf planet. Consequently, children are now taught that there are only eight planets orbiting the Sun (Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune), although many will also explain the history of Pluto's past.

The National Curriculum - The Foundation Subjects

At primary school, English, Maths and Science are the core subjects which make up the bulk of the timetable. That said, the other foundation subjects play a key part in providing a broad and balanced curriculum. All eight of these subjects are a compulsory part of the National Curriculum. In addition, all schools are required to include some Religious Education in their broader curriculum, although the content of this is agreed locally. Here is a very brief outline of what will be covered in the foundation subjects during primary school:

Art

Schools will be largely free to design their own curriculum in Art, while providing a broad experience for their students. Children will explore a range of different techniques such as drawing, painting and sculpture, and will use a variety of materials, from pencil and paint to charcoal and clay, to create their own art pieces. In addition, during Key Stage 2, children will study the works of some great artists, architects and designers from history.

Computing

There are three main strands of the Computing curriculum: information technology, digital literacy and computer science.

Information technology is about the use of computers for functional purposes, such as collecting and presenting information, or using search technology. Digital literacy is about the safe and responsible use of technology, including recognising its advantages for collaboration or communication. Finally, computer science will introduce children of all ages to understanding how computers and networks work. It will also give all children the opportunity to learn basic computer programming, from simple floor robots in Years 1 and 2, right up to creating on-screen computer games and programmes by Year 6. Many schools will use programming software which is freely available online, such as Scratch or Kodu.

All schools will also include regular teaching of e-safety to ensure that children feel confident when using computers and the Internet, and know what to do if they come across something either inappropriate or uncomfortable. We also invite parents to work with us on this aspect of the curriculum.

Design and Technology

This subject includes cooking, which will be taught in all primary schools from 2014, with children finding out about a healthy diet and preparing simple meals. It also includes the more traditional design elements in which children will design, make and evaluate products while learning to use a range of tools and techniques for construction. There may also be some cross-over with Science here as children incorporate levers, pulleys or electrical circuits into their designs for finished products.

Geography

Across primary school, children will find out about different places in the UK, Europe and the Americas through studying small regions in each, and comparing these to other areas, including their own locality.

In Key Stage 2, the children will locate the countries of the world, focussing particularly on Europe and the Americas, as well as naming the counties, regions and major cities of the United Kingdom. They will begin to explore geographical features such as volcanoes and tectonic plates, as well as features of human geography such as trade links and land use. They will also learn to use grid references on Ordnance Survey maps to describe locations.

History

In Key Stage 2, there are nine main areas of study that are required, some of which have optional strands. The first four are units relating to British history and are intended to begin the development of a clear chronological understanding. In many schools these will be taught in chronological order.

1. Britain in the Stone, Bronze and Iron Ages
2. Roman Britain
3. Anglo-Saxons and Scots in Britain
4. Anglo-Saxons and Vikings
5. Local history
6. A study of a period after 1066 of the school's choice
7. Ancient Greece
8. A choice from Ancient Egypt, Ancient Sumer, Ancient Egypt, or the Shang Dynasty of Ancient China
9. A choice from 10th-century early Islamic civilisation, Mayan civilisation or Benin in West Africa

Languages

For the first time, foreign languages will be compulsory in schools for children in Key Stage 2 (Years 3 to 6). Schools can choose any language to study, although they should bear in mind the languages available in partner secondary schools. Over the course of their four years in Key Stage 2, children will be expected to make good progress in the main language chosen which is French, learning to ask and answer questions, present ideas to an audience both in speaking and writing, read a range of words, phrases and sentences, and write simple phrases, sentences and descriptions.

Music

Over the course of primary school, children will listen to and perform a range of music.

In Key Stage 2, children will perform pieces both alone and as part of a group using their own voice and a range of musical instruments, including those with tuning such as glockenspiels or keyboards. They will both improvise and compose pieces using their knowledge of the different dimensions of music such as rhythm and pitch. During the later years they will also begin to use musical notation, and to learn about the history of music.

Physical Education

Physical Education lessons will continue to include a range of individual disciplines such as dance and athletics, with team sports and games. Through these sports, children should learn the skills of both cooperation and competition.

During Key Stage 2, the range of games and sports taught will be broader, and the children will also take part in outdoor and adventurous activities such as orienteering. They will perform dances, take part in athletics and gymnastics, and attempt to achieve personal bests in various activities. In addition, all children should learn to swim at some point during their primary school career, usually in Years 3 & 4 whilst at Wembrook.

Religious Education

At Wembrook we aim to enable pupils to:-

- Express their feelings about significant personal events and relationships;
- Develop a sense of awe and wonder in response to the natural world;
- Develop awareness of the spiritual and moral aspects of life experiences;
- Reflect upon questions and issues related to life experiences and respond to them in a variety of ways;
- Develop an understanding of what it might mean to be committed to a religious tradition;

Reflect on their own experiences, beliefs and values and develop personal responses to ultimate questions in the light of their work;

Have confidence in their views and understand that people have different needs, views, cultures and beliefs, that need to be treated with respect;

The starting point for each topic will usually be from aspect one building upon pupils own experiences of the natural world and human relationships developing to include specific religious content.

Key Stage Two children will build upon their knowledge of Christianity, Islam and Sikhism and will also study Hinduism in depth. They will also encounter Judaism and Buddhism.

These were chosen by the population represented in the local community and in line with guidance given in the Warwickshire Agreed Syllabus. They will be reviewed as necessary. Over each Key Stage children will have opportunities to revisit areas of study.