

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.

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 5 and Year 6

In upper Key Stage 2, your child will increasingly meet a wider range of texts and types of writing, and will be encouraged to use their skills in a broader range of contexts. Their knowledge of grammar will also increase as they prepare for the National Curriculum Tests to be taken in the summer term of Year 6.

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 5 and 6, some focuses may include:

- Speak clearly in a range of contexts, using Standard English where appropriate
- Monitor the reactions of listeners and react accordingly
- Consider different viewpoints, listening to others and responding with relevant views
- Use appropriate language, tone and vocabulary for different purposes

Reading Skills

- Read a wide range of fiction, non-fiction, poetry, plays and reference books
- Learn a range of poetry by heart
- Perform plays and poems using tone, volume and intonation to convey meaning
- Use knowledge of spelling patterns and related words to read aloud and understand new words
- Make comparisons between different books, or parts of the same book
- Read a range of modern fiction, classic fiction and books from other cultures and traditions
- Identify and discuss themes and conventions across a wide range of writing
- Discuss understanding of texts, including exploring the meaning of words in context
- Ask questions to improve understanding of texts
- Summarise ideas drawn from more than one paragraph, identifying key details
- Predict future events from details either written in a text or by 'reading between the lines'
- Identify how language, structure and presentation contribute to meaning
- Discuss how authors use language, including figurative language, to affect the reader
- Make book recommendations, giving reasons for choices
- Participate in discussions about books, building on and challenging ideas
- Explain and discuss understanding of reading
- Participate in formal presentations and debates about reading
- Provide reasoned justifications for views

Figurative language includes metaphorical phrases such as 'raining cats and dogs' or 'an iron fist', as well as using language to convey meaning, for example by describing the Sun as 'gazing down' upon a scene.

Themes & Conventions

As children's experience of a range of texts broadens, they may begin to notice conventions, such as the use of first person for diary-writing, or themes such as heroism or quests.

Writing Skills

- Write with increasing speed, maintaining legibility and style
- Spell some words with silent letters, such as knight and solemn
- Recognise and use spellings for homophones and other often-confused words from the Y5/6 list
- Use a dictionary to check spelling and meaning
- Identify the audience and purpose before writing, and adapt accordingly
- Select appropriate grammar and vocabulary to change or enhance meaning
- Develop setting, atmosphere and character, including through dialogue
- Write a summary of longer passages of writing
- Use a range of cohesive devices
- Use advanced organisational and presentational devices, such as bullet points
- Use the correct tense consistently throughout a piece of writing
- Ensure correct subject and verb agreement
- Perform compositions using appropriate intonation, volume and movement
- Use a thesaurus
- Use expanded noun phrases to convey complicated information concisely
- Use modal verbs or adverbs to indicate degrees of possibility
- Use relative clauses
- Recognise vocabulary and structures that are appropriate for formal use
- Use passive verbs to affect the presentation of information
- Use the perfect form of verbs to mark relationships of time and cause
- Recognise the difference in informal and formal language
- Use grammatical connections and adverbials for cohesion
- Use ellipses, commas, brackets and dashes in writing
- Use hyphens to avoid ambiguity
- Use semi-colons, colons and dashes between independent clauses
- Use a colon to introduce a list
- Punctuate bullet points consistently

Cohesive devices are words or phrases used to link different parts of writing together. These may be pronouns such as 'he' or 'it' to avoid repeating a name, or phrases such as 'After that...' or 'Meanwhile' to guide the reader through the text.

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

- Noun phrase: a group of words which takes the place of a single noun. Example: The big brown dog with the fluffy ears.
- Modal verb: a verb that indicates possibility. These are often used alongside other verbs. Example: will, may, should, can.

- Relative clause: a clause which adds extra information or detail. Example: The boy who was holding the golden ticket won the prize.
- Passive verb: a form of verb that implies an action being done to, rather than by, the subject. Example: The boy was bitten by the dog.
- Perfect form: a form of verb that implies that an action is completed. Example: The boy has walked home.

The National Curriculum-Mathematics in Year 6

By the end of Year 6, children are expected to be confident with the use of all four standard methods for written calculations, and to have secured their knowledge of the key number facts for the four operations. Their work will focus more on fractions, ratio, proportion and the introduction of algebra.

Number and Place Value

- Work with numbers up to ten million (10,000,000) including negative numbers
- Round any number to any required number of digits or magnitude

Calculations

- Use the standard method of long multiplication for calculations of four-digit numbers by two-digit numbers
- Use the standard method of long division for calculations of four digit numbers by two-digit numbers
- Identify common factors, common multiples and prime numbers
- Carry out complex calculations according to the mathematical order of operations
- Solve complex problems using all four operations

The mathematical order of operations requires that where calculations are written out in long statements, first calculations in brackets are completed, then any multiplication or division calculations, and finally any addition or subtraction. So, for example, the calculation $4 + 3 \times (6 + 1)$ has a solution of 25, not 43 or 49.

Fractions and Decimals

- Use common factors to simplify fractions, or to add fractions with different denominators
- Place any group of fractions into size order
- Multiply pairs of fractions together
- Divide fractions by whole numbers, for example $\frac{1}{3} \div 2 = \frac{1}{6}$
- Use division to calculate the decimal equivalent of a fraction
- Know and use common equivalences between fractions, decimals and percentages, such as $\frac{1}{2} = 0.5 = 50\%$

Ratio and Proportion

- Find percentages of quantities, such as 15% of £360
- Use ratio to explain relationships and solve problems
- Use simple scale factors for drawings, shapes or diagrams

Ratio is represented using the colon symbol. For example, if £100 is shared in a ratio of 1:3 between two people, then the first person receives £25 (one part), with the other receiving £75 (three parts).

- Use simple formulae
- Describe sequences of numbers where the increase between values is the same each time
- Solve missing number problems using algebra
- Find possible solutions to problems with two variables, such as, $a + b = 10$

Measurements

- Convert between any metric units and smaller or larger units of the same measure
- Convert between miles and kilometres
- Use a given formula to find the area of a triangle or parallelogram

Shape and Position

- Draw 2-d shapes using given sizes and angles
- Use knowledge of 2-d shapes to find missing angles in triangles, quadrilaterals and other regular shapes
- Name and label the radius, diameter and circumference of a circle
- Find missing angles in problems where lines meet at a point or on a straight line
- Use a standard grid of coordinates including negative values

Graphs and Data

- Construct and understand pie charts and line graphs
- Calculate the mean average of a set of data

Mean average is calculated by adding up all the values and dividing by the number of items. For example, the mean average of 3, 5, 8, 9 and 10 is 7 ($3 + 5 + 8 + 9 + 10 = 35$, then $35 \div 5 = 7$)

Parent Tip Playing traditional games, such as battleships or even draughts and chess, is great for exploring coordinates and movements across the coordinate grid.

The National Curriculum – Science in Year 6

Again in Year 6, many of the scientific concepts that children meet are more abstract, such as the study of evolution, or the behaviour of light. There are still plenty of opportunities for investigation, and also to find out about the work of some great scientists of today and the past.

Scientific Investigation

Investigation work should form part of the broader science curriculum. During Year 6, some of the skills your child might focus on include:

- Plan a range of scientific investigations and managing the variables effectively
- Take precise measurements, and repeat tests where appropriate to improve the validity of the results
- Present results using tables, scatter graphs, line graphs and other diagrams
- Explain the conclusions drawn from results, including their limitations

Living Things and their Habitats

- Describe how living things are classified into groups, including micro-organisms
- Give reasons for the classification of plants and of animals according to their characteristics

At this age, invertebrate animals can be grouped into categories such as insects, spiders, snails and worms

- Know the functions of the main parts of the circulatory system such as the heart, lungs, blood vessels and blood
- Describe how nutrients and water are transported within animals
- Recognise the impact of diet, exercise, drugs and lifestyle on the way bodies function

Evolution and Inheritance

- Recognise that fossils provide information about life on Earth millions of years ago
- Understand that offspring are not normally identical to their parents
- Identify that plants and animals are adapted to their environments, and that this adaptation leads to evolution over long periods of time

Evolution is not a planned process of adaptation, but rather the unintended result of more random changes which led to animals being better-suited to the environments in which they lived.

Properties and Changes of Materials

- Compare the various properties of materials such as hardness, solubility and conductivity
- Use knowledge of solids, liquids and gases to separate mixtures and solutions through filtering or evaporation

Light

- Recognise that light appears to travel in straight lines
- Understand that we see things because light is reflected off objects and into the eye
- Explain how shadows are formed

Electricity

- Compare the variation in performance of bulbs and buzzers by changing the number of cells in a circuit
- Use the recognised scientific symbols to draw a simple circuit diagram

Parent Tip

Conversations about evolution and inheritance often lead to interesting discussions at home. Some traits which are inherited are not always passed on, such as hair or eye colour. Interestingly, you can also compare whether members of your family have attached or detached earlobes, or whether they can roll their tongues.

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.