

ENGLISH · ADULT REFERENCE

Whole-School Reading Progression

Pre-K to Grade 6 / Y6

How to use this progression

Pre-K & Reception (Pre-K and Kindergarten)

Skill area	Focus	What 'on track' looks like
Phonological awareness	Phase 1 — listening, rhythm, rhyme	Identifies rhyming words; claps syllables; hears initial sounds
Letter recognition	Phase 2 phonics introduced	Recognises 19+ phonemes; matches letters to sounds
Concept of print	Books open left-to-right; words go top-to-bottom	Holds a book the right way; points to text being read
Vocabulary	Talk-rich environment; rich read-aloud	Speaks in full sentences; understands new vocabulary in context



Skill area	Focus	What 'on track' looks like
Reading for pleasure	Adult-led story sharing	Asks for favourite stories repeatedly; engages in talk about books

Year 1 & 2 (Grades 1-2)

Skill area	Focus	What 'on track' looks like
Phonics	Phases 3-5 (Y1); Phase 5/6 secure (Y2)	Y1: passes Phonics Screening Check; Y2: applying phonics to unfamiliar words
Fluency	Reading aloud with growing accuracy and prosody	Y1: word-by-word reading; Y2: phrasing sentences with expression
Comprehension — retrieval	Finding answers in the text	Can find specific information when asked
Comprehension — inference	Beginning to read between the lines	Y2: can infer character feelings from action
Vocabulary	Tier 2 vocabulary introduced through reading	Can use new words from books in own talk
Reading for pleasure	Choosing own books from a shared library	Has favourite authors; asks for specific books

Year 3 & 4 (Grades 3-4)

Skill area	Focus	What 'on track' looks like
Phonics	Spelling-phonics integration; less reading focus	Most children no longer need decoding instruction
Fluency	Confident, prosodic reading aloud	Reads aloud with expression; reads silently fluently
Comprehension — retrieval	Across longer texts; specific evidence	Can find evidence and quote it
Comprehension — inference	Character motivations, themes	Can infer with textual evidence
Comprehension — vocabulary	Word meaning from context	Uses morphology to decode new words



Skill area	Focus	What 'on track' looks like
Comprehension — structure	Beginning to discuss authorial choice	Y4: can explain why an author chose a word
Reading for pleasure	Wider range of genres	Reading independently; chapter books

Year 5 & 6 (Grades 5-6)

Skill area	Focus	What 'on track' looks like
Fluency	Expressive, audience-aware reading	Reads aloud well; comfortable with longer texts
Comprehension — retrieval	Multi-paragraph evidence-finding	Quotes precisely from text
Comprehension — inference	Multi-layer inference; character development	Distinguishes between explicit and implicit meaning
Comprehension — vocabulary	Tier 2 and Tier 3 vocabulary	Uses morphology, etymology, context
Comprehension — structure	Authorial choice analysis	Can explain the effect of structural choices
Critical reading	Comparing texts; perspective; bias	Y6: notices voice; compares two texts on the same topic
Reading for pleasure	Adult-level reading developing	Reading widely; some children reading 'older' books

The common misconceptions

English Lead's reading audit — annual



- Are children passing the Phonics Screening Check at the expected rate?
- Are end-of-KS1 reading assessments showing expected progress?
- Are KS2 SATs reading scores in line with similar schools?
- Is reading-for-pleasure visible in every classroom (book corners, daily read-aloud)?
- Is the school's reading scheme (if any) being used consistently?
- Are intervention groups appropriately matched to need?
- Are SEND children getting the specific reading interventions they need?
- Are EAL children getting vocabulary support alongside reading?
- Is the library/book stock current and inviting?
- Are class teachers confident teaching reading?

