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The National Curriculum for five to 11 year olds

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The National Curriculum for five to 11 year olds



Your child will study a wide range of subjects during their time at primary school. Knowing about the National Curriculum at Key Stages 1 and 2, and the subjects that are taught, can help you to support your child's learning.

National Curriculum subjects

The National Curriculum, taught to all pupils in state or maintained schools, is made up of blocks of years, known as key stages:

- Year 1 and Year 2 of primary school are known as Key Stage 1
- Years 3 to 6 of primary school are known as Key Stage 2

Compulsory National Curriculum subjects are the same for Key Stages 1 and 2:

- English
- Maths
- Science
- Design and technology
- Information and Communication Technology (ICT)
- History
- Geography
- Art and design
- Music
- Physical education

Schools also have to teach religious education, though parents have the right to withdraw children for all or part of the religious education curriculum. In addition, schools are advised to teach personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship, together with at least one modern foreign language.

Your child's school may cover these subjects under different names, and may teach more than one subject together under the same name. This is left up to individual schools, as long as they are covering the National Curriculum.

National Curriculum levels

At Key Stages 1, 2, and 3, the National Curriculum is accompanied by a series of eight levels. These are used to measure your child's progress compared to pupils of the same age across the country.

All schools assess pupils' progress during the school year, though some make more frequent use of the National Curriculum levels than others. You'll receive information about the level your child has reached at parent-teacher evenings and in their school reports.

Your child will be formally assessed at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2. At the end of Key Stage 1, the teacher's assessment of your child's progress will take account of their performance in several tasks and tests in English and maths.

At the end of Key Stage 2, your child will take national tests in English, maths and science. You will be sent their test results and their teacher's assessment of their progress.

By the end of Key Stage 1, most children will have reached level 2, and by the end of Key Stage 2 most will be at level 4.

The Primary Framework for literacy and mathematics

The Primary National Strategy is a set of tools for primary schools, aimed at helping them to raise standards – and to deliver the National Curriculum more effectively.

The Primary Framework for literacy and mathematics is a central part of the strategy. While the focus is on literacy and numeracy, schools can use the approaches it recommends to support teaching, learning and assessment across the whole curriculum.

Developing literacy skills

As well as reading and writing, literacy involves the development speaking and listening skills. The framework encourages teachers to use a variety of approaches to teaching literacy. It recommends regular, dedicated literacy lessons, but recognises that pupils can also develop literacy skills while they learn about other subjects in the curriculum.

The framework encourages teachers to put a greater emphasis on using ‘phonics’ (teaching your child to recognise the sounds of parts of words). It also stresses the part you play as a parent in helping your child to develop their literacy skills.

Developing maths skills

The framework recommends a daily maths lesson, providing guidance for schools on how to develop pupils’ mathematical thinking and number skills.

As with literacy, schools are encouraged to use a variety of approaches. Published in October 2006, the latest version of the framework puts more emphasis on mental maths and recommends that children should start learning their times tables earlier than they had been doing.

The strategy also sets out a suite of catch-up programmes designed to help pupils in Years 3, 4, 5 and 6 who have fallen behind. Parents are encouraged to get involved in developing their child’s numeracy skills as much as possible.

More on the Primary Framework for literacy and mathematics

You can find out more about the latest version of the framework from the [Department for Children, Schools and Families](#) website.

National Curriculum teacher assessments and key stage tests



The National Curriculum teacher assessments and/or tests are designed to give you and your child's school information about how well your child is doing.

Teacher assessments

At the end of each key stage, your child's teacher will formally assess their performance to measure your child's progress.

Of course, your child's teacher will be informally assessing their learning at other times to help them plan future teaching. They may, for example, listen to your child read or look at their maths work. Some schools will also use optional tests to assess children's progress.

National Curriculum levels

During Key Stages 1-3, progress in most National Curriculum subjects is assessed against eight levels. At the end of Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 the school will send you a report telling you what level your child is working at.

At Key Stage 1 the level will be based on the teacher's assessment, taking into account your child's performance in several tasks and tests.

At Key Stage 2 the level will reflect the teacher's assessment and your child's national test results.

At Key Stage 3 the level will be based on the teacher's assessment.

To find out more about National Curriculum levels, see ['Understanding the National Curriculum'](#)

'End of key stage' tests

Your child will take national tests at the end of Key Stage 2. The tests are intended to show if your child is working at, above or below the target level for their age.

This helps the school to make plans for their future learning. It also allows schools to see whether they are teaching effectively by comparing their pupils' performance to national results.

Key Stage 1 teacher assessments, tasks and tests

Teacher assessment for seven year olds covers:

- reading
- writing
- speaking and listening
- maths
- science

These assessments take account of how your child performed in Key Stage 1 tasks and tests for seven year olds. The tasks and tests cover:

- reading
- writing (including handwriting and spelling)
- maths

The tasks and tests can be taken at a time the school chooses. They last for less than three hours altogether. The results are not reported separately but are used to help the teacher assess your child's work. By the age of seven, most children are expected to achieve level 2.

The teacher assessment is moderated by your local authority. This is to make sure teachers make consistent assessments of children's work.

Key Stage 2 tests and teacher assessments

Key Stage 2 tests for 11 year olds cover:

- English - reading, writing (including handwriting) and spelling
- maths - including mental arithmetic
- science

These tests are taken on set days in mid-May, and last less than five-and-a-half hours altogether.

The teacher assessment covers:

- English
- maths
- science

By the age of 11, most children are expected to achieve level 4.

Your child's school report

The results of the tests and the teacher assessment may be different, and it's important to look at both to get an all-round view of your child's progress. For example, a teacher may feel your child is doing better in a subject as a whole than in the parts of the subject covered by a test.

At the end of each key stage, you will get a report from the school telling you:

- the results of your child's tests (for Key Stage 2 only)
- the teacher assessment levels your child has achieved
- the results for all the children in your child's age group in the school
- the national results for the previous year

Developing reading, writing and spelling for five to 11 year olds



Reading with your child and helping them with writing and spelling can help boost their achievement. Certain skills, like reading and counting, are worth really practising at home because they're fundamental to your child's progress later on.

Reading

Teachers say that promoting reading at home is the most important way that parents can help their child. Make sure your child has regular reading practice and check they understand what they read. Here are some more tips on helping your child with reading:

- when you read to your child, make the experience interactive - ask questions about the story, the pictures, and what they think of the characters
- as their reading skills grow, gradually let them turn the tables until they're reading to you
- use dictionaries together for difficult words - a picture dictionary can make exploring language more interesting
- enrol your child at the local library so they can try new books regularly
- keep an eye out for the themes that catch your child's imagination at school - and help follow it up with more reading
- when you come across an unusual or funny-sounding word, help your child find out what it means and write it on the fridge door with magnetic letters

As your child gets older encourage them to pick up other books around the house to boost familiarity with 'grown-up' language. Suggest a reading list, and encourage your child to write down thoughts on the books they have read.

Writing and spelling

It's easier to get into good handwriting habits early on than to correct poor writing later, when the pressure of schoolwork is greater. The same goes for spelling. Help your child to see writing and spelling skills not only as fun, but as something important and to be proud of:

- help younger children by writing words and sentences for them to copy
- emphasise the links between drawing and writing, and make sure your child always signs finished artwork
- encourage your child to be inspired by examples of beautiful handwriting in museums, galleries and books
- older children can develop their writing and social skills together by finding penfriends through school or clubs, or keeping in touch with friends met on holiday

Developing maths skills for five to 11 year olds



Some children develop a better understanding of numbers than others. You can support your child in the classroom by providing opportunities for them to explore number concepts at home.

Developing maths skills in everyday life

Successful learning depends on having problem solving skills and thinking logically as well as the ability to read and write.

Primary school children have a daily maths lesson, but an easy way to boost their skills and motivation is by showing them how useful number skills are in almost everything they do.

Children can have fun:

- measuring their height and working out how much they've grown
- on car journeys - playing number-plate games, adding and subtracting with road signs, thinking about speed by dividing distance by time
- at the shops - weighing fruit and vegetables, budgeting with pocket money, working out the relative value of products by comparing prices and weight
- in the kitchen - with weighing and measuring, and temperature and timings
- making models and origami shapes

Working it out, thinking it through

Make a game out of putting little problems to your child and letting them reason things through, prompting as little as you can. For example, while cooking ask them to work out ingredient amounts if a recipe is doubled. Praise your child for trying, even if they get stuck or get things wrong.

New experiences and discoveries are always stimulating, and they don't have to be expensive or elaborate:

- if you go for a country walk, try collecting leaves of different shapes, looking for insects or signs of wild animals, and thinking about why metal goes rusty or lichen grows on one side of trees
- introduce your child to simple map-reading using a road atlas or map of your area
- on holiday, be aware of all the things that are different to home - buildings, accents and languages, clothes, food, customs, and so on
- find out if there are clubs in your area which will interest your child - try the local library or leisure centre for information