

The National Curriculum

[The Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum](#) is the framework for children's learning from birth to five years.

If your child is already attending a state primary school in the Reception Year, or is placed in a pre-school setting that receives funding from the government, he will be following this.

What is the National Curriculum?

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- which subjects should be taught
- the knowledge, skills and understanding your child should achieve in each subject (according to your child's age)
- targets - so teachers can measure how well your child is doing in each subject
- how information on your child's progress should be passed on to you

Teachers in English state schools have to use the National Curriculum as a guide or framework, to make sure that they cover important subjects and that they have covered all the essential areas in their lessons. Independent schools are not obliged to follow this curriculum but many of them do, either completely or in part.

Primary schools

The primary curriculum covers the broad areas of what children must learn at different stages at primary school. Children have to learn core knowledge and skills and explore a wide range of topics, to prepare them to move up to secondary school.

The primary curriculum covers school Years 1-6. This is broken up into two parts: Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. Key Stage 1 covers Years 1 and 2, and ages 4 or 5 to 7. Key Stage 2 covers Years 3-6, or ages 8 to 11.

The Key Stage 1 curriculum

* denotes a non-statutory programme of study

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[Art and Design](#)

[Citizenship](#) *

[Design and Technology](#)

[English](#)

[Geography](#)

[History](#)

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[Mathematics](#)

[Music](#)

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[Personal, Social and Health Education](#) *

[Religious Education](#) **

The Key stage 2 curriculum

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[Art and Design](#)

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Assessments

During Key Stages 1-2, progress in most National Curriculum subjects is assessed against eight levels. At the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 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.

The importance of speaking and listening

This part of the curriculum is likely to concern you the most when your child stammers. It is very important that he has the confidence to take part in oral work, even though he may be stammering.

The English curriculum places great emphasis on speaking and listening but nowadays all other subjects do require the pupils to contribute to discussions and other oral tasks such as reading aloud. In some subjects, such as Modern Languages and Science, there will be specialist vocabulary to learn and pronounce.

How parents can help

In this resource, the sections [Help in the home for your child who stammers](#) and [How to help your child's learning](#) provide information for developing at home your child's confidence in communicating, so that he will be better able to participate in speaking and listening activities at school.

The importance of 'Speaking and Listening'

These skills play a significant role in all subjects as well as being central to the curriculum for English and the specific teaching of literacy. One advantage of this for children who stammer is that there is now considerable guidance and training for teachers on the strategies to use to support pupils working on

oral tasks. There is also more training on the needs of children with speech, language and communication needs so parents should find that staff are very willing to support your child who stammers, once information is provided for them from [BSA:Education-Oral Tasks](#) and or the speech and language therapist.

It is worth mentioning to the teacher that whenever a school report is prepared for you that a comment about your child's speaking and listening would be helpful so that you had information about the effects of school on his stammer. To have this in writing would enable you to see how he was coping in each year and how he was affected by a change of teacher.

Parents can be reassured that such is the emphasis on these speaking and listening skills that schools are advised to arrange classrooms for work at Key Stage 1 and 2 to meet the requirements of the oral curriculum, as this guidance diagram from the Department for Education shows.

The Speaking and Listening environment Year 1 and 2



Speaking: What do children have to do?

In this resource the sections [Help in the home for your child who stammers](#) and [How to help your child's learning](#) provide information for developing at home your child's confidence in communicating, so that he will be better able to participate in speaking and listening activities at school. When he has had the chance to build up these skills he will find primary school oral tasks less stressful and be more likely to have the confidence to contribute and achieve. The standards of attainment in speaking and listening activities are assessing complex skills The demands on your child will be less if he has had some practice in these skills at pre-school and in the home. This may help him to manage his speech.

Speaking and listening activities in the classroom

Lessons must be planned to provide opportunities for pupils to listen and respond to different speakers - including friends, the whole class and a range of adults, as well as to radio and TV broadcasts. When appropriate teachers are expected to make use of non-verbal cues including illustrations, models and actions.

Speaking

In developing their skills in **speaking**, children need to learn to:

- adapt their speaking to different audiences, such as the class, the teacher, other adults; with different levels of formality, such as with friends, to another class, in assembly;
- for different purposes, such as recounting events and telling stories, explaining and describing, justifying views and persuading others.
- put thoughts into words and share them in groups;
- take opportunities to speak at some length to explain ideas in different situations;
- give a talk or presentation using gestures, aids, rhetorical devices.

When they are **speaking** they should:

- make eye contact with listeners
- speak clearly and audibly
- use facial expression and gesture to emphasise points and refer to objects and places
- use precise and persuasive words to convey meaning and hold listeners' attention
- make meaning clear, organising ideas in a helpful order and making links between them
- respond to others' contributions by adding or elaborating on them or by putting across another view

These oral skills are a significant part of the English curriculum but in every subject taught they will be drawn upon and developed, as it is now recognised that talking is the foundation for learning in all subjects.

Information for teachers: [BSA:Education-Oral Tasks](#).

Listening: What do children have to do?

Listening

Listening is also explicitly taught and reinforced throughout the curriculum

When listening, children are:

- hearing models of language in use
- learning about how speakers use gesture, volume, tone
- observing how, in groups, speakers interact, take turns and influence others

In developing their skills in listening, children need to learn to:

- ask questions to clarify what they have heard
- build on what others say
- create new meanings based on what they have heard
- evaluate what has been said
- respond non-verbally, e.g. by nodding or maintaining eye contact

Children show they have listened and understood when they:

- identify the gist of an account

- recall main ideas
- re-present information
- follow instructions correctly
- make relevant comments and responses
- respond to others, maintaining communication
- ask questions to clarify understanding
- notice significant uses of language

KS1 lesson idea

To give you an idea of the sort of interesting task that your child could be working on, this has been taken from the '**Listening - making it work in the classroom**' leaflet prepared by the Department for Education to assist teachers with the primary literary strategy.

'Children were working on traditional tales, and different ways of ending them. The current story was **Cinderella**. Lots of discussion took place about the wedding and the party afterwards. Attention then turned to the ugly sisters and how they felt about the event. Half the children became friends of an ugly sister, and half the children were ugly sisters. They were given time to prepare their ideas and discuss what questions they might ask, or what details they might discuss. The teacher then modelled a telephone conversation with the teaching assistant to show the children the language structures involved in the conversation. The children then engaged in their own conversations. Their conversations became quite heated at times, including their need to buy gas masks to deal with their own dirty socks since Cinderella's departure! The telephone gave them security to try new ideas, and also meant they had to be very specific with their descriptions because body language and gesture could not be used over the telephone. The conversations also acted as initial verbal drafts for future writing.'

Information for teachers: [BSA:Education-Oral Tasks](#).

How parents can help

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Group Work: What do children have to do?

The demands of group work for quite young children can appear very daunting to a parent but teachers are trained to use a range of strategies to develop these skills. As long as the class teacher knows the strategies from [BSA:Education](#) and/ or the speech and language therapist, you should find that your child is receiving the support to learn these skills in an enjoyable way, without being worried by the oral tasks.

Response partners

This is a typically simple technique that is used in any area of the curriculum. Children are given a buddy or partner to work with. A child who stammers can be especially helped by this strategy as in a one to one situation he should be more relaxed about talking, particularly if the partner is a friend.

Children are asked to talk to another child to clarify their understanding, generate ideas, justify opinions, create a joint response, or assess and evaluate work. The length of the talking depends on the purpose of the talk. Sometimes it is seconds, sometimes minutes, but it always has a distinct purpose.

There are many benefits, it helps both children, all children can participate, gives children a voice, allows exploration of different ideas in a safe environment.

It encourages children to:

- Engage in purposeful peer and self evaluation
- Be more involved in their own learning
- Test out ideas and understanding
- Express a point of view
- Spend time thinking about a concept or question before responding.

Group Discussion and Interaction

Working together in **pairs** and **small groups** helps children to learn to:

- develop the language and social skills needed for cooperation and collaboration
- use exploratory language to try out ideas
- extend their ideas as they share these with others
- stretch their language as they talk critically and constructively
- support and build on each other's contributions
- take their turns in discussion

Children need varied experience of groups, including:

- for different purposes, such as investigating, problem solving, sorting, planning, predicting, reporting, evaluating
- with different outcomes, such as carrying out an experiment, constructing an artefact, making a presentation, deciding on actions;
- learning to use talk in different ways, such as discussing, hypothesising, agreeing and disagreeing, questioning, reflecting

Drama

Drama is an important element of speaking and listening and it is taught in its own right. Pupils work on:

- Improvisation and working in role
- Writing and performing scripts
- Responding to and evaluating performance

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Literacy

This is the central skill for learning and state schools are guided by the [Primary Framework for Literacy](#) to provide lessons for teaching this, building on the foundation of what has already been achieved in the Early Years Foundation Curriculum. How to teach literacy skills has been a subject of controversy and debate for many years and presently the Department for Education (DFE) considers that the teaching of reading should be sound based not meaning based for beginner readers You can research the [different approaches to reading](#) should you be wish to know more about this debate.

Synthetic phonics is thought to offer the majority of learners the best route to becoming skilled readers so that core phonic work is to be taught regularly, systematically, in dedicated lessons and at a brisk pace. For most children, it will be appropriate for this to begin by the age of 5. However, it is stressed that phonic teaching should be set within a broad and [rich language curriculum](#). **The development of speaking and listening skills is paramount as the foundations of phonic work and as central to children's intellectual, social and emotional development.** The DFE expects teachers to offer

phonics using meaningful and multisensory strategies that keep the children interested and engaged so that they enjoy their lessons, while learning their sounds. Parents are expected to work with their child at home to support his learning.

When your child stammers

Your child can fully participate in these lessons as long as his speech is supported and he has the confidence to contribute. Teachers need to know how to give this support; advice from a speech and language therapist, who visits the school and works in partnership with the teacher or assistant to demonstrate effective strategies, is immensely valuable, together with information for teachers from [BSA:Education-Oral Tasks](#).

If you have concerns about your child's responses to phonic work then it is best to mention them at an early stage to the class teacher so that any necessary adaptations can be made and you can help with these at home. For example, if your child finds it difficult to respond, as he would like to a request for a specific letter sound then strategies where he can work with a partner may help him. This should allay any anxiety he may be feeling at having to make a quick and paced response.

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Further information on phonics

[Literacy Trust](#)
[Phonics techniques](#)

Assessment

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. These are called Standard Attainment Tests (SATs). You will be sent the test results and his teacher's assessment of his 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.

Tracking achievement

Cognitive Abilities' Tests (CAT)

Schools often use tests of cognitive ability to discover each pupil's potential in verbal, non- verbal and quantitative skills. Scores are given according to the tests which an individual school selects.

The value of these to the parent of a child who stammers

Then attainment should be monitored against the pupil's potential. When a pupil stammers it is possible

that teachers may underestimate ability, as so much initial assessment and general impressions of ability are based on the child's capacity to provide oral responses.

It is important that you take steps to ask all your child's class teacher when you receive a report if your child is attaining at the level expected of his potential. It is helpful if you ask the teacher to explain the tests of cognitive ability that your child has taken and the meaning of the results that he achieved. If you keep a copy of those results, every time you speak to the teacher you can ask whether your child is reaching the attainment level appropriate to his ability in that subject. When your child is not attaining at a standard commensurate with his ability then there must be further discussion and some intervention arranged.

Helping your child to cope with assessments and tests

Teachers receive training in administering tests and assessments and if oral work is involved you are entitled to enquire about the approach that will be followed for your child. If he is quite comfortable with his speaking, even when stammering, then it is just important that everyone involved with him gives support and praises him for his efforts. However, if he gets anxious and finds any kind of change to his school routine disturbing then you do need to talk in advance with the class teacher to alert her to your concerns and see how he can be supported. There are strategies, such as giving extra time, for adapting oral tasks at [BSA:Education-Tests](#) that teachers can follow should it be helpful.

Self-esteem

Do remember that a child should never be made to feel that he is a failure because he has not done well in an assessed task. Tests and assessments are intended to identify your child's level of attainment and any difficulties that he may be encountering, so that planned intervention can be offered. When your child stammers it is essential that you make sure that his self-esteem is not undermined by any inappropriate comments made about his level of attainment by family or friends.

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