St. James' C.E. Primary School Whole School Reading Progression Reception – Year 6

A progressive framework for word reading, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension and reading for pleasure

Purpose and principles

This progression maps the development of reading from Reception to the end of Year 6. It combines the reading journey and text choices in the St. James' Whole School English Curriculum Overview with the statutory English National Curriculum programmes of study for Key Stages 1 and 2.

The progression is deliberately cumulative. Pupils secure early phonics and language foundations before moving towards increasingly fluent, independent and critical reading. Across the school, pupils encounter fiction, traditional tales, fantasy, adventure, poetry, non-fiction, biographies, historical texts, literary heritage and texts from other cultures. The statutory National Curriculum identifies two dimensions of reading: word reading and comprehension. Both are developed explicitly and systematically.

Important curriculum note: the National Curriculum statutory reading programme begins at Key Stage 1. Reception content in this document is therefore presented as the school's foundation for statutory reading, using the reading experiences and texts identified in the school overview.

Whole-school reading progression at a glance

Stage	Primary reading priority	Expected progression
Reception	Language, phonological awareness, early decoding and story familiarity	Builds vocabulary and listening comprehension; develops awareness of sounds, rhyme and print; begins systematic decoding; develops enjoyment and confidence through high-quality stories, poems and non-fiction.
Year 1	Secure phonics and establish fluent word reading	Applies taught GPCs to decode unfamiliar words; reads common exception words; rereads decodable books; develops literal understanding, prediction, inference and discussion.
Year 2	Automatic decoding and increasingly independent comprehension	Moves from sounding out towards automatic word recognition; reads whole books and varied text types; retells and sequences; answers and asks questions; discusses vocabulary, themes and author choices.
Year 3	Fluency, breadth and vocabulary	Reads age-appropriate texts with sufficient fluency to focus on meaning; uses morphology and

		etymology to decode and understand unfamiliar words; begins to justify views with evidence.
Year 4	Depth of comprehension and independent reading	Reads increasingly varied and complex texts; identifies themes and conventions; makes inferences and predictions; retrieves and summarises information; justifies responses with growing independence.
Year 5	Interpretation, comparison and critical response	Reads widely and frequently; compares texts, themes and conventions; explains how language and structure affect meaning; develops nuanced vocabulary and evidence-based responses.
Year 6	Fluent, analytical and critical reading	Reads challenging texts independently and fluently; compares across texts; analyses vocabulary, language, structure and authorial choices; synthesises information; evaluates and supports interpretations with precise evidence.

Detailed Reading Progression

The statements below should be used as progression milestones rather than as a checklist for individual lessons. Teachers should revisit prior knowledge and provide additional practice where pupils are not yet secure.

Reception

- Develop attention, listening and understanding through daily story, poem and non-fiction experiences.
- Develop oral vocabulary through repeated exposure to rich language and discussion.
- Develop phonological awareness through rhyme, rhythm, alliteration, oral blending and segmenting.
- Understand that print carries meaning and begin to track and discuss text and illustrations.
- Recognise and use taught sounds and begin to blend sounds to read simple words.
- Develop familiarity with key stories and traditional tales; retell, sequence and join in with repeated phrases.
- Make simple predictions and talk about characters, settings and events.
- Develop positive attitudes to books and reading for pleasure; choose and revisit familiar texts.

Year 1

- Apply phonic knowledge as the main route to decode words.
- Respond speedily to taught grapheme-phoneme correspondences, including alternative sounds.
- Blend accurately in unfamiliar words containing taught GPCs.
- Read common exception words and recognise contractions.
- Read words containing taught GPCs with -s, -es, -ing, -ed, -er and -est endings.

- Read age-appropriate decodable books accurately and reread them to build fluency and confidence.
- Listen to and discuss a wide range of poems, stories and non-fiction beyond independent reading level.
- Retell familiar stories and traditional tales; recognise predictable phrases and recurring language.
- Discuss word meanings, make simple inferences and predictions, and explain understanding.
- Participate in discussion, taking turns and responding to others.

Year 2

- Continue phonics until automatic decoding is embedded and reading is fluent.
- Read unfamiliar words accurately by blending and recognise alternative grapheme sounds.
- Read common exception words automatically and accurately.
- Read increasingly complex words and texts with growing fluency and expression.
- Read and discuss whole books, including contemporary and classic poetry, stories and non-fiction.
- Discuss sequence of events and how information is related.
- Retell a wider range of stories, fairy tales and traditional tales.
- Recognise recurring literary language and discuss favourite words and phrases.
- Clarify word meanings and link new vocabulary to known words.
- Ask and answer questions, make inferences and predictions, and explain understanding.
- Develop a growing repertoire of poems learned by heart and perform with appropriate intonation.

Year 3

- Read age-appropriate books accurately and at a speed sufficient to focus on comprehension.
- Decode unfamiliar words using knowledge of root words, prefixes and suffixes.
- Use growing knowledge of morphology and etymology to understand unfamiliar vocabulary.
- Read silently as well as aloud and develop stamina for longer texts.
- Read widely across fiction, poetry, plays, non-fiction and reference texts.
- Read texts structured in different ways and for a range of purposes.
- Use dictionaries to check word meanings.
- Increase familiarity with fairy stories, myths and legends and identify themes and conventions.
- Prepare poems and play scripts for performance using intonation, tone, volume and action.
- Ask and answer questions, retrieve information and summarise key points.
- Make inferences and predictions and begin to justify views using evidence from the text.

Year 4

- Maintain fluent, accurate reading and increasingly independent reading habits.
- Use prefixes, suffixes, root words, morphology and etymology to decode and understand new words.
- Read a broad range of fiction, poetry, plays, non-fiction and reference material.
- Identify themes and conventions across a range of texts.
- Make increasingly precise inferences from details and examples in the text.
- Predict what might happen and justify predictions using evidence.

- Retrieve and record information from non-fiction and identify how information is organised.
- Summarise ideas from more than one paragraph and distinguish key points from supporting detail.
- Discuss words and phrases that capture interest and imagination.
- Explain how language, structure and presentation contribute to meaning at an age-appropriate level.
- Justify opinions about texts with increasing independence and precision.

Year 5

- Read aloud a wide range of age-appropriate books and poetry accurately, fluently and at a reasonable pace.
- Read most words effortlessly and use morphology and etymology to work out unfamiliar words.
- Read with good understanding and develop stamina for longer and more demanding texts.
- Read widely and frequently for pleasure and information.
- Read myths, legends, traditional stories, modern fiction, literary heritage and texts from other cultures.
- Recommend books and give reasons for choices.
- Identify and discuss themes and conventions within and across texts.
- Make comparisons within and across books.
- Summarise main ideas drawn from more than one paragraph and identify key details.
- Draw inferences from characters' feelings, actions and motives and justify with evidence.
- Explain the meaning of words in context and explore figurative language.
- Prepare and perform poetry and plays with appropriate intonation, tone and volume.
- Discuss how language, structure and presentation contribute to meaning and effect.

Year 6

- Read challenging age-appropriate texts fluently, accurately and independently.
- Use knowledge of root words, prefixes, suffixes, morphology and etymology to decode and interpret unfamiliar vocabulary.
- Read widely across modern fiction, literary heritage, poetry, plays, non-fiction and texts from different cultures and traditions.
- Compare themes, conventions, characters, settings and authorial choices within and across texts.
- Identify and discuss how language, vocabulary, grammar, structure and presentation shape meaning.
- Make precise inferences and support interpretations with relevant, carefully selected evidence.
- Summarise and synthesise information from different parts of a text and, where appropriate, across texts.
- Distinguish between statements supported by evidence and those that are not.
- Evaluate how authors use language and structure for effect and explain the impact on the reader.
- Discuss the purpose, audience and context of texts when this supports interpretation.

- Develop an informed personal response while recognising that alternative interpretations may be valid.
- Read aloud and perform poetry and plays with secure understanding, intonation, tone and volume.
- Read for pleasure, independently selecting challenging and interesting books and recommending them to others.

Progression by Core Reading Strand

Word reading and decoding

Reception: oral blending/segmenting; sound awareness; begin decoding taught correspondences.

Year 1: systematic application of GPC knowledge; accurate blending; common exception words; contractions; suffixes.

Year 2: automatic decoding; alternative grapheme sounds; increasing accuracy and speed; secure common exception words.

Years 3–4: use root words, prefixes, suffixes, morphology and etymology to read unfamiliar words and understand meaning.

Years 5–6: apply morphology and etymology increasingly independently; focus direct word-reading teaching on pupils who need it.

Fluency and expression

Reception: develop familiarity, repeated reading/listening and participation in familiar refrains.

Year 1: accurate reading of matched books; reread to build fluency, confidence and automaticity.

Year 2: read common words automatically; develop pace, accuracy and appropriate expression.

Years 3–4: read age-appropriate texts at sufficient speed to focus on meaning; develop silent reading and performance skills.

Years 5–6: effortless word reading for most pupils; fluent, accurate reading of increasingly challenging texts; expressive performance of poetry and plays.

Vocabulary and language

Reception: rich oral language, repeated vocabulary and discussion around stories and non-fiction.

Years 1–2: discuss and clarify meanings; link new vocabulary to known words; notice interesting words and phrases.

Years 3–4: use dictionaries; develop vocabulary through wide reading; use morphology and etymology to explore meaning.

Years 5–6: infer word meaning from context; explore figurative and precise vocabulary; explain authorial word choice and effect.

Comprehension and response

Reception: retell, sequence, predict and discuss characters, settings and events.

Years 1–2: retrieve, discuss, predict and infer from what is said and done; explain understanding.

Years 3–4: identify themes and conventions; retrieve and summarise; infer and justify views with evidence.

Year 5: compare texts; discuss themes and conventions; summarise; infer character, motive and meaning; explain language and structure.

Year 6: analyse, compare, synthesise and evaluate; support interpretations with evidence; consider purpose, audience and context; recognise alternative responses.

Reading breadth, literature and reading for pleasure

Reception–Y2: build a strong repertoire of familiar stories, fairy tales, traditional tales, poetry and non-fiction.

Years 3–4: widen the range to myths, legends, plays, reference texts and different text structures.

Years 5–6: read widely and frequently across modern fiction, literary heritage, myths, legends, traditional stories, poetry, plays, non-fiction and texts from other cultures and traditions.

Across the school: pupils hear texts beyond their independent reading level, discuss books with others, develop knowledge through reading and make increasingly independent choices for pleasure.

St. James' Reading Text Journey

The school overview provides a planned diet of fiction, non-fiction and poetry. The examples below show how the text journey supports increasing breadth, vocabulary, background knowledge, literary familiarity and comprehension demands. The exact cycle used in Years 3–6 should be retained alongside this progression.

Year	Illustrative texts from the school overview	Reading purpose/progression
Reception	Gruffalo; We're Going on a Bear Hunt; Little Red Riding Hood; Goldilocks; Paddington; Whatever Next!; The Three Little Pigs; Cinderella; Lost and Found; Sharks; Room on the Broom; The Hungry Caterpillar; Handa's Surprise; The Three Billy Goats' Gruff; Monkey Puzzle; Dinosaur Facts	Build vocabulary, listening comprehension, story structure, repetition, sequencing, prediction and enjoyment.
Year 1	The Gruffalo; The Ladybird Heard; The Tiger Who Came to Tea; The Gingerbread Man and other stories; Room on the Broom; Biscuit Bear; Charlie the Firefighter; Toby and the Great Fire of London; Tiger, Tiger, Where Are You?; Do You Love Bugs?; The Wild Weather Book	Secure decoding while broadening experience of fantasy, traditional tales, familiar settings, information texts and poetry.
Year 2	The Jolly Postman; The True Story of the Three Little Pigs; Lila and the Secret of the Rain; Traction Man; The	Develop independent comprehension,

	Magic Finger; The Lighthouse Keeper; Pop It in the Post; All About Autumn; Christopher Columbus; Frogs; Plastic Pollution; How Does a Lighthouse Work?	vocabulary, whole-book reading, information retrieval, inference, prediction and response to literary language.
Year 3	Dear Greenpeace; George's Marvellous Medicine; Hansel and Gretel; Cliffhanger; Playtime; The Hodgeheg; Plastic Sucks; Nutrition; Volcanoes; Jacqueline Wilson biography; A Street Through Time; Wildflowers	Increase reading stamina, text breadth, vocabulary and use of evidence; introduce myths/legends, biographies, reports, plays and more varied structures.
Year 4	Captain Underpants; Wave Me Goodbye; Journey to Jo'burg; Dancing Bear; The Waterhorse; The Midnight Fox; The Trapper; The Great Plague; Rosa Parks biography; Atlantis Hotel; What a Waste; Hunt Ban Fact Files; associated poetry	Develop depth of comprehension, theme, convention, inference, summarising and comparison across increasingly varied texts.
Year 5	Outlaw; Street Child; The Boy in the Tower; Beowulf; Kensuke's Kingdom; Shakespeare Retold; Earth Shattering Events; Long Walk to Freedom; Votes for Women; Greta's Story; Rainforest Rough Guide; Work It Girl – Mae Jemison; poetry	Read increasingly demanding literature and non-fiction; develop critical response, comparison, authorial language awareness and evidence-based interpretation.
Year 6	Skellig; Carrie's War; Holes; Tom's Midnight Garden; The Hobbit; The Hunger Games; Heroes; Growing up in London 1939–1945; Questions about Animals and Plants; Body Science; Ancient Mayan Civilisation; Inspirational Women; selected poetry	Prepare for secondary reading through fluent independent reading, sophisticated vocabulary, comparison, synthesis, evaluation, authorial analysis and critical response.