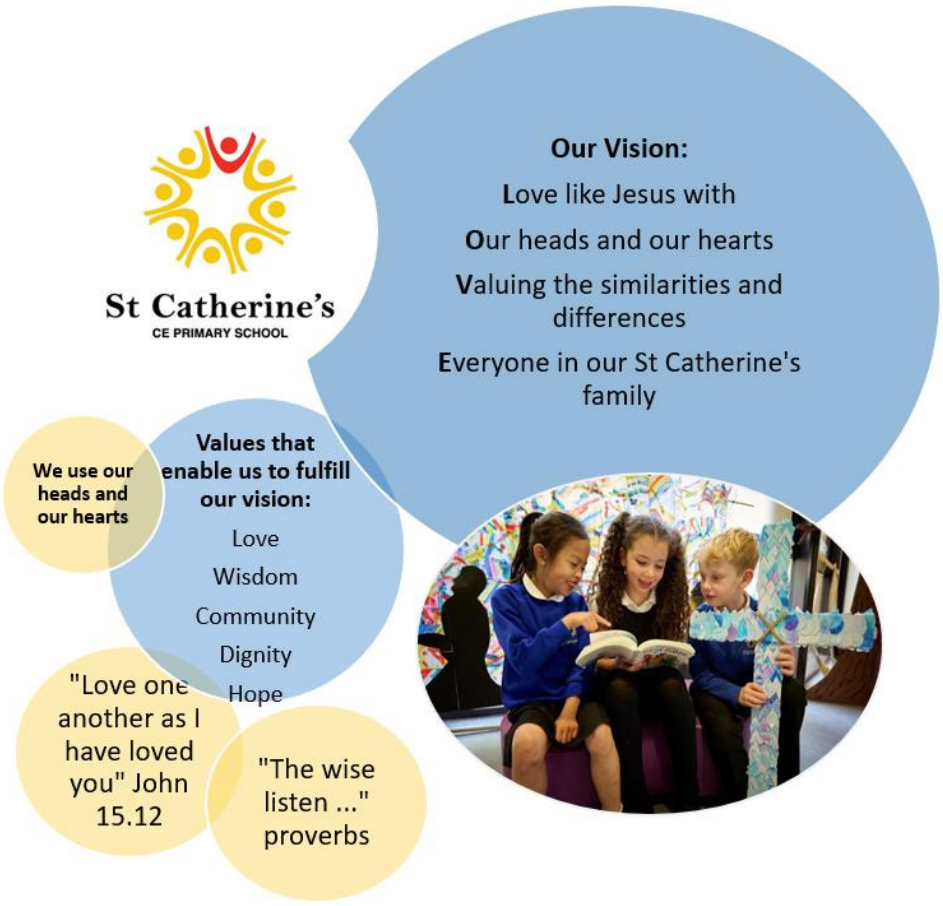
Learning in Reception – EYFS



Our Intention is to ensure that the children at our school:

- Enjoy it
- Believe they can do it
- See the purpose in it
- Do it confidently
- Can do it now, tomorrow and forever

Every subject, every cross- curricular theme, every aspect of our work is an 'it'!
Every child has at least one 'it' – we need to find it!

St Catherine's
CE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Learning in Reception

In Reception, children are introduced to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum, which provides a rich, comprehensive framework for their early education. The EYFS curriculum is meticulously designed to address the full spectrum of a child's development, not just their academic achievements. Here's an overview of our approach:

- Holistic Development Focus: Our curriculum emphasises the importance of nurturing each child's overall development. This includes social skills, emotional well-being, physical development, and cognitive abilities. We believe that a balanced approach supports children in becoming confident, independent, and enthusiastic learners.
- Value of Mistakes: We recognise that mistakes are a natural and essential part of the learning journey. Whether these involve academic challenges, social interactions, or behavioural adjustments, we view them as valuable opportunities for growth. Our approach encourages resilience and a growth mindset, helping children to learn from their experiences and continuously improve.
- Support for Learning at Home: The learning process extends beyond the classroom. We encourage parents and caregivers to engage in a variety of enriching activities that support their child's development. This can include:
    - Meaningful Conversations: Engaging your child in discussions about their experiences, interests, and thoughts helps to develop their language skills and emotional intelligence.
    - Exploring the World: Activities such as nature walks, visits to museums, or local excursions stimulate curiosity and provide practical learning experiences.
    - Shared Reading: Reading together not only enhances literacy skills but also fosters a love for books and storytelling, contributing to both cognitive and emotional development.
    - Play-Based Learning: Encourage imaginative play and hands-on activities that promote problem-solving, creativity, and social interaction.
- Accessible Support and Communication: Our teachers and support staff are always available to address any questions or concerns you may have regarding your child's education and development. We are committed to providing timely and helpful information, and we encourage you to reach out if you need assistance or additional resources.

If you require further information or guidance on how to best support your child's learning journey, please do not hesitate to contact us. We are here to collaborate with you in ensuring that your child thrives and achieves their fullest potential.

The Early Years Foundation Stage

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Framework provides a comprehensive outline of the skills, knowledge, and understanding that children will acquire during their reception year. This framework encompasses seven distinct areas of learning and development, each of which plays a crucial role in fostering a child's overall growth. These areas are interconnected and equally important for a well-rounded educational experience.

Prime Areas

The three prime areas are fundamental in laying the groundwork for children's development, sparking curiosity, and fostering a love for learning. They are:

- **Communication and Language**: This area focuses on developing children's ability to communicate effectively, understand and use language, and engage in conversations.
- **Physical Development**: This involves enhancing children's physical skills, including fine and gross motor skills, and promoting overall health and well-being.
- **Personal, Social, and Emotional Development**: This area supports children in forming positive relationships, understanding their emotions, and developing a sense of self.

Specific Areas

In addition to the prime areas, children are supported through four specific areas that build on and apply the skills developed in the prime areas:

- **Literacy**: Encourages reading and writing skills through a range of activities designed to develop early literacy.
- **Mathematics**: Focuses on developing numerical skills and an understanding of mathematical concepts through practical experiences.
- **Understanding the World**: Supports children in exploring and making sense of their environment, including people, places, and technology.
- **Expressive Arts and Design**: Provides opportunities for creativity and self-expression through art, music, dance, and imaginative play.

Teaching Approach

Learning in our reception classes integrates both structured instruction and child-initiated activities. Instruction is delivered through group and whole-class teaching, while child-initiated learning occurs through play-based activities. Exploration, questioning, and interaction with adults are central to this approach, enabling children to engage deeply with their learning.

Educational Programmes and Progress

The curriculum offers a variety of learning opportunities to help children develop essential skills and knowledge, preparing them for future academic and life experiences. Progress is measured against the Early Learning Goals, which outline expected achievements in each of the seven areas of learning.

Communication and Support

Termly curriculum newsletters will provide detailed information about the topics being covered and offer suggestions for supporting your child's learning at home. If you have any questions or require further clarification about the curriculum, please do not hesitate to speak with your child's class teacher. We are here to assist and ensure that you have the information you need to support your child's educational journey effectively.

The Educational Programmes

Communication and Language

The development of spoken language is fundamental to all areas of learning and development in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The interactions that children engage in from a young age form the bedrock for their language and cognitive growth. A language-rich environment, where children experience frequent and meaningful conversations with adults and peers, is crucial for their development.

Key Aspects of Language Development:

- Quality Interactions: Regular back-and-forth interactions between children and adults lay the groundwork for effective language and cognitive development. These interactions should be rich in content and variety, ensuring that children are exposed to a wide range of vocabulary and language structures.
- Direct Teaching: New words and concepts are introduced through direct teaching. By commenting on children's interests and activities, and incorporating new vocabulary into these comments, we enhance their understanding and use of language. Echoing children's statements with additional vocabulary also helps in expanding their language skills.
- Engaging with Texts: Children will be read to frequently and actively engaged with a variety of texts, including stories, non-fiction, rhymes, and poems. This exposure not only supports vocabulary development but also fosters a love for reading and literature.
- Opportunities for Application: Children will have ample opportunities to use and embed new words in diverse contexts. Activities such as conversation, storytelling, and role play will provide practical experiences for applying newly learned vocabulary.
- Supportive Interaction: Through conversation and role play, children will be encouraged to share their ideas and thoughts. Teachers will model rich vocabulary and language structures, and use sensitive questioning techniques to invite children to elaborate and expand on their ideas. This approach helps children become comfortable and proficient in using a broad range of language.

By focusing on these aspects, we aim to build a strong foundation in communication and language that supports children's overall learning and development across all areas of the EYFS curriculum.

Personal, Social, and Emotional Development

Personal, Social, and Emotional Development (PSED) is essential for children to lead healthy, fulfilling lives and plays a foundational role in their cognitive development. At St. Catherine's, we prioritize creating a nurturing environment where strong, warm, and supportive relationships form the cornerstone of our approach. These positive attachments are critical in shaping children's social experiences and emotional well-being.

Key Components of PSED:

- **Building Emotional Understanding**: Through consistent, supportive interactions with adults, children learn to understand and manage their own emotions, as well as recognize and empathize with the feelings of others. This foundational skill is crucial for developing a positive sense of self and healthy interpersonal relationships.
- **Developing Self-Esteem and Resilience**: Children are encouraged to set achievable goals, build confidence in their abilities, and practice persistence. They are guided in directing their attention, waiting for desired outcomes, and understanding the value of patience. These experiences help foster a resilient and self-assured individual.
- **Promoting Independence and Healthy Living**: Adult modelling and guidance support children in learning how to take care of their bodies, including making healthy eating choices and managing personal needs independently. This aspect of PSED is crucial for fostering lifelong habits of self-care and well-being.
- **Fostering Social Skills**: Through guided interactions with peers, children develop essential social skills such as forming friendships, cooperating, and resolving conflicts amicably. These skills are cultivated through supportive and structured activities that encourage positive social engagement.
- **Creating a Secure Foundation**: By providing a stable and supportive environment, we aim to establish a secure platform from which children can thrive academically and personally. The skills and attributes developed through PSED not only support children's success in school but also lay the groundwork for their future achievements and well-being.

At St. Catherine's, our commitment to fostering strong, supportive relationships and providing guided learning experiences ensures that children's personal, social, and emotional development is well-supported, creating a solid foundation for their overall growth and success.

Physical Development

Physical development plays a vital role in children's overall growth, enabling them to lead happy, healthy, and active lives. At St. Catherine's, we recognise the importance of physical activity in fostering both physical and emotional well-being, and we provide a wide range of opportunities for children to engage in play and structured activities, both indoors and outdoors.

Key Aspects of Physical Development:

- Building Core Strength and Coordination: Through games and physical activities, children develop essential skills such as core strength, stability, balance, spatial awareness, coordination, and agility. These gross motor skills, which involve whole-body movements, form the foundation for healthy physical development and contribute to overall well-being.
- Gross Motor Skills: Activities that encourage large movements, such as running, jumping, climbing, and balancing, help to strengthen children's bodies and promote their social and emotional development. By mastering these fundamental physical skills, children gain confidence in their abilities and develop a sense of independence.
- Fine Motor Control and Early Literacy: In addition to gross motor development, we focus on fine motor skills, which involve precise hand movements and hand-eye coordination. Activities such as using scissors, handling small tools, and manipulating pens and pencils provide children with the practice they need to develop the control required for writing and other tasks that support early literacy.
- Exploration and Repetition: We offer repeated and varied opportunities for children to engage with small world activities, puzzles, arts and crafts, and practical tasks that encourage fine motor development. These activities allow children to explore and refine their skills in a creative and stimulating environment.
- Guided Practice and Feedback: Throughout these activities, adults provide supportive feedback and guidance to help children develop proficiency, control, and confidence. This encouragement helps children to feel successful in their physical abilities and promotes a positive attitude toward physical activity.

By fostering both gross and fine motor skills, we help children develop the physical capabilities they need to thrive in school and beyond. Through physical activity, children not only build strong, healthy bodies but also enhance their cognitive and social development, laying the groundwork for future success.

Literacy

At St. Catherine's, we believe it is essential to instill a lifelong love of reading in children, as literacy plays a foundational role in their overall development. Reading is comprised of two key dimensions: **language comprehension** and **word reading**. Both are critical for developing strong readers and writers, and we emphasise their growth through intentional activities and teaching methods.

Key Aspects of Literacy Development:

- **Language Comprehension**: Language comprehension, the ability to understand spoken and written language, begins from birth. It is cultivated when adults engage children in meaningful conversations about the world around them, read both stories and non-fiction books, and share rhymes, poems, and songs. At St. Catherine's, we nurture language comprehension through our robust **Communication and Language** activities, which serve as the foundation for literacy.
- **Word Reading (Decoding and Recognition)**: Skilled word reading involves two components:
    - **Decoding**: This refers to the ability to quickly determine the pronunciation of unfamiliar words by applying phonics rules.
    - **Recognition**: This involves the instant recognition of familiar words by sight.

  At St. Catherine's, we use the **Jolly Phonics** programme to teach phonics through direct, systematic instruction. Phonics lessons, alongside group and individual reading sessions, help children build the skills needed to decode new words and recognise familiar ones. The reading materials we provide are carefully matched to each child's current phonics knowledge and include a range of decodable and non-decodable words to ensure steady progress.

- **Writing**: Writing is an integral part of literacy and is divided into two key elements:
    - **Transcription**: This involves the physical aspects of writing, including **spelling** and **handwriting**. Children are taught transcription skills through phonics and handwriting practice, helping them to accurately spell words and form letters.
    - **Composition**: This refers to the ability to articulate ideas and structure them into coherent speech and writing. Children are encouraged to express their ideas verbally before transferring them to paper, ensuring that they can organize their thoughts effectively.

  We promote writing development from an early stage by encouraging **'mark making'** during child-initiated activities. This gives children the freedom to explore writing in a creative and informal way, which gradually leads to the application of more formal transcription skills. Direct teaching, modeling, and guided practice help children transition from early mark making to more structured writing.

Embedding Literacy Through Communication: Writing composition is closely linked to our **Communication and Language** educational programmes, where children develop the ability to articulate their thoughts and expand their vocabulary. Through storytelling, discussions, and structured play, children build the language skills that are essential for both writing and reading comprehension.

At St. Catherine's, our approach to literacy is designed to support children in becoming confident, proficient readers and writers, while also fostering a deep and lasting appreciation for the written word.

Mathematics

A strong foundation in mathematics is essential for all children, as it provides the building blocks needed for future mathematical success. At St. Catherine's, we aim to develop children's confidence with numbers, ensuring they can count reliably and understand key numerical concepts. Our approach emphasises both direct teaching and opportunities for exploration, allowing children to apply their learning in meaningful ways.

Key Components of Mathematical Development:

- **Building Number Sense**: Developing a deep understanding of numbers is central to our approach. Children are taught to count confidently to 20 and beyond, but we place particular emphasis on understanding the numbers up to 10. This includes exploring the relationships between these numbers, identifying patterns, and developing a strong conceptual foundation that supports mathematical thinking.
- **Teaching Approach**: Mathematics in Reception is taught through a blend of **direct instruction** and **child-led exploration**. We incorporate structured lessons where children learn key concepts, and we also provide opportunities for them to apply their knowledge through play-based activities. This balance allows children to both grasp mathematical ideas and see how they are used in real-world contexts.
- **Programmes and Tools**: We use the **White Rose** and **Power Maths** programmes, which align with the rest of the school's approach to maths, to support structured teaching in Reception. Additionally, we provide hands-on tools such as **manipulatives** (small objects, counters, and tens frames) to help children develop their understanding of number concepts. These resources allow children to visualise and physically engage with numbers, helping to solidify their learning.
- **Spatial Reasoning**: Alongside number skills, we offer rich opportunities for children to develop their **spatial reasoning** abilities. This includes exploring concepts related to shape, space, and measures. Children engage with activities that allow them to visualise and manipulate objects, supporting their understanding of how things fit together, move, and relate to one another in a physical space.
- **Fostering Positive Attitudes**: Cultivating a positive attitude towards mathematics is equally important. We encourage children to develop a sense of curiosity and interest in maths by looking for **patterns** and **relationships**, making connections, and taking risks. Our classroom is a safe space for experimentation, where children are encouraged to "have a go," share their observations with adults and peers, and not fear making mistakes. This growth mindset supports long-term mathematical success.

By providing frequent and varied opportunities to explore mathematics in engaging ways, we help children build a secure foundation in number and mathematical thinking. Our goal is to ensure that children develop the confidence, vocabulary, and conceptual understanding needed to master mathematics as they progress through their education.

Understanding the World

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, **Understanding the World** is about helping children make sense of the physical world around them and their place within their community. At St. Catherine's, we provide rich and varied opportunities, both indoors and outdoors, to nurture children's curiosity and deepen their understanding of the world they live in.

Key Elements of Understanding the World:

- **Exploring the Physical World**: Through continuous provision, we create engaging environments that encourage children to explore and interact with their surroundings. Both indoor and outdoor activities are designed to help children observe, question, and make connections about the physical world, fostering a sense of wonder and discovery.
- **Connecting with the Community**: We offer experiences that extend beyond the classroom to strengthen children's understanding of their local and broader community. Regular trips and visits from community members or experts linked to our topics provide first-hand experiences, enhancing children's engagement and understanding of different roles, traditions, and cultures.
- **Fostering Cultural, Social, and Ecological Awareness**: We expose children to a broad range of stories, non-fiction texts, rhymes, and poems that reflect the cultural, social, technological, and ecological diversity of the world. These literary experiences not only build important knowledge about different ways of life, but they also expand children's understanding of global issues and diversity, promoting respect and empathy for others.
- **Building Vocabulary and Knowledge**: In addition to enriching children's understanding of the world, these experiences serve to broaden their vocabulary. Listening to and discussing stories, factual texts, and rhymes introduces children to new words and concepts, enhancing their language skills across all areas of learning. This, in turn, supports later **reading comprehension** as children develop a wider understanding of language and the world around them.

Through a balance of hands-on exploration, storytelling, and community interaction, we aim to build a solid foundation for children to understand their place in the world. These enriching experiences equip them with the knowledge and vocabulary they need for future learning while nurturing a sense of curiosity and appreciation for the diversity and complexity of the world.

Expressive Arts and Design

At St. Catherine's, we believe that fostering children's artistic and cultural awareness is key to nurturing their imagination and creativity. **Expressive Arts and Design** is an integral part of the Early Years Foundation Stage, allowing children to explore and express themselves through a variety of artistic experiences.

Key Elements of Expressive Arts and Design:

- **Creative Exploration**: Children are regularly provided with opportunities to engage with the arts, both through our continuous provision and directed activities such as school plays, performances, and themed projects. These activities encourage children to explore and experiment with a wide range of media and materials, enabling them to express their thoughts, ideas, and emotions in creative and meaningful ways.
- **Artistic and Cultural Exposure**: The quality and variety of what children see, hear, and experience play a crucial role in their artistic development. We carefully curate a rich and stimulating environment where children are exposed to diverse forms of art, music, and performance. This exposure not only enhances their appreciation of the arts but also broadens their understanding of different cultures, styles, and creative expressions.
- **Self-Expression and Communication**: Engaging in the arts supports the development of children's **self-expression**, vocabulary, and communication skills. By encouraging children to create, respond, and reflect on what they observe and hear, we help them articulate their ideas and emotions through artistic mediums. This process allows them to build confidence in expressing themselves in new and imaginative ways.
- **Repetition and Depth of Experience**: The frequency, repetition, and depth of creative experiences are essential for children's progress in understanding and interpreting the world around them. By providing ongoing opportunities to revisit and refine their artistic expressions, we enable children to develop a deeper appreciation and more sophisticated understanding of the arts. Through practice and exploration, they learn to recognise patterns, symbols, and meaning in what they create, see, and hear.

Our approach to **Expressive Arts and Design** aims to cultivate each child's creativity, imagination, and artistic awareness. By offering a wide variety of artistic experiences, we support children in developing not only their artistic skills but also their ability to communicate, reflect, and engage with the world in creative ways.

Assessment

As of September 2021, all children starting Reception participate in the **national Baseline Assessment**, which is designed to provide an age-appropriate evaluation of their early skills in **mathematics**, **literacy**, and **communication and language**. At St. Catherine's, we will be conducting these assessments during the first half of the autumn term.

Key Features of the Baseline Assessment:

- **Age-Appropriate and Practical**: The assessment is structured to be suitable for young children, utilising **practical tasks** with **physical resources** that engage children in a way that is both interactive and enjoyable. The focus is on observing how children approach tasks related to early mathematical understanding, literacy development, and communication skills.
- **Teacher-Led and Interactive**: As children participate in the activities, teachers will use an **online scoring system** to record observations and track engagement. This allows teachers to carry out the assessment seamlessly, without interrupting the natural flow of learning or play.
- **Purpose and Use of the Assessment**: The Baseline Assessment is a government initiative designed to generate **school-level progress measures**. These measures will track the progress children make from

the time they enter Reception until the end of their primary education. It is important to note that this assessment is not intended to provide individual scores for children, nor does it label children based on their early performance.

The Baseline Assessment provides an opportunity to understand the starting points of each child, helping schools to monitor progress and support children in their learning journey throughout their primary years. Should you have any questions or require further information about the process, please feel free to speak with your child's class teacher.

Teacher Assessment

To ensure that teaching and learning are tailored to meet the needs of each child, we conduct ongoing assessments of children's progress and attainment throughout the year. These assessments are based on careful **observations** of children in their natural learning environments. Additionally, we highly value parental insight and will seek your **feedback** regularly to gain a holistic view of your child's development and achievements within the EYFS curriculum.

The updated Early Years Framework emphasises that adult time in Reception should be dedicated to **high-quality interactions** with children, focusing on teaching, relationship-building, and meaningful engagement, rather than administrative tasks or excessive paperwork. Through our ongoing interactions and observations, we develop a deep understanding of each child's **strengths** and **areas for development**, allowing us to support their individual learning journey effectively.

Importantly, children in Reception will not sit formal tests. Instead, their progress is continually assessed through informal, play-based learning activities. At the end of the Reception year, children are assessed against the **Early Learning Goals**, and this assessment will help guide the next steps in their educational journey as they transition into Year 1.

Early Learning Goals

There are 17 'Early Learning Goals' in the 7 areas of learning, which describe the expectations for the end of the reception year. Where children are not developmentally ready to achieve these goals, this learning continues into year 1.

Communication and Language

ELG: Listening, Attention and Understanding
Listen attentively and respond to what they hear with relevant questions, comments and actions when being read to and during whole class discussions and small group interactions; Make comments about what they have heard and ask questions to clarify their understanding; Hold conversation when engaged in back-and-forth exchanges with their teacher and peers.
ELG: Speaking: Participate in small group, class and one-to-one discussions, offering their own ideas, using recently introduced vocabulary; Offer explanations for why things might happen, making use of recently introduced vocabulary from stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems when appropriate; Express ideas and feelings about experiences using full sentences, including use of past, present and future tense and making use of conjunctions, with modelling and support from the teacher.

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

ELG: Self-Regulation: Show an understanding of their own feelings and those of others, and begin to regulate their behaviour accordingly; Set and work towards simple goals, being able to wait for what they want and control their immediate impulses when appropriate; Give focused attention to what the teacher says, responding appropriately even when engaged in activity, and show an ability to follow instructions involving several ideas or actions.
ELG: Managing Self: Be confident to try new activities and show independence, resilience and perseverance in the face of challenge; Explain the reasons for rules, know right from wrong and try to behave accordingly; Manage their own basic hygiene and personal needs, including dressing, going to the toilet and understanding the importance of healthy food choices.
ELG: Building Relationships: Work and play cooperatively and take turns with others; Form positive attachments to adults and friendships with peers; Show sensitivity to their own and others' needs.

Physical Development

ELG: Gross Motor Skills: Negotiate space and obstacles safely, with consideration for themselves and others; Demonstrate strength, balance and coordination when playing; Move energetically, such as running, jumping, dancing, hopping, skipping and climbing.
ELG: Fine Motor Skills: Hold a pencil effectively in preparation for fluent writing – using the tripod grip in almost all cases; Use a range of small tools, including scissors, paint brushes and cutlery; Begin to show accuracy and care when drawing.

Literacy

ELG: Comprehension: Demonstrate understanding of what has been read to them by retelling stories and narratives using their own words and recently introduced vocabulary; Anticipate – where appropriate – key events in stories; Use and understand recently introduced vocabulary during discussions about stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems and during role-play.
ELG: Word Reading: Say a sound for each letter in the alphabet and at least 10 digraphs; Read words consistent with their phonic knowledge by sound-blending; Read aloud simple sentences and books that are consistent with their phonic knowledge, including some common exception words.
ELG: Writing: Write recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed; Spell words by identifying sounds in them and representing the sounds with a letter or letters; Write simple phrases and sentences that can be read by others.

Mathematics

ELG: Number: Have a deep understanding of number to 10, including the composition of each number; Subitise (recognise quantities without counting) up to 5; Automatically recall (without reference to rhymes, counting or other aids) number bonds up to 5 (including subtraction facts) and some number bonds to 10, including double facts.
ELG: Numerical Patterns: Verbally count beyond 20, recognising the pattern of the counting system; Compare quantities up to 10 in different contexts, recognising when one quantity is greater than, less than or the same as the other quantity; Explore and represent patterns within numbers up to 10, including evens and odds, double facts and how quantities can be distributed equally.

Understanding the World

ELG: Past and Present: Talk about the lives of the people around them and their roles in society; Know some similarities and differences between things in the past and now, drawing on their experiences and what has been read in class; Understand the past through settings, characters and events encountered in books read in class and storytelling.
ELG: People, Culture and Communities: Describe their immediate environment using knowledge from observation, discussion, stories, non-fiction texts and maps; Know some similarities and differences between different religious and cultural communities in this country, drawing on their experiences and what has been read in class; Explain some similarities and differences between life in this country and life in other countries, drawing on knowledge from stories, non-fiction texts and – when appropriate – maps.
ELG: The Natural World: Explore the natural world around them, making observations and drawing pictures of animals and plants; Know some similarities and differences between the natural world around them and contrasting environments, drawing on their experiences and what has been read in class; Understand some important processes and changes in the natural world around them, including the seasons and changing states of matter.

Expressive Arts and Design

ELG: Creating with Materials: Safely use and explore a variety of materials, tools and techniques, experimenting with colour, design, texture, form and function; Share their creations, explaining the process they have used; Make use of props and materials when role playing characters in narratives and stories.
ELG: Being Imaginative and Expressive: Invent, adapt and recount narratives and stories with peers and their teacher;
Sing a range of well-known nursery rhymes and songs; Perform songs, rhymes, poems and stories with others, and – when appropriate – try to move in time with music.