

Reading progression

	Characteristics	Focus	Approaches	Phonics/Reading skills	Assessment links	Language Focus / ICT / Integration	End points
<b>Pre formal</b>	Pupils are at a pre-intentional or anticipatory stage of communication. Learning is primarily sensory and experiential.	Progress from pre-intentional to intentional communication Sensory exploration of books, symbols, and objects of reference Developing shared attention and cause-and-effect awareness	Intensive Interaction- Sensory stories and object-based storytelling- Attention Autism (Stages 1–2)- Curiosity Programme- Engagement Model- Interactive play- Adult models responses and labels actions	Exposure to rhythm, sound, and music Exploration of books through touch, sound, and visuals No formal phonics; focus on anticipation, turn-taking, and enjoyment	Engagement Model EHCP Communication and Interaction outcomes	Key nouns from familiar routines or books- Exposure to sound and rhyme- Use of sensory storytelling apps or switches, linked with communication,	Shows awareness of familiar books or sounds Anticipates and enjoys shared reading Develops joint attention and early symbolic understanding
<b>Informal</b>	Pupils begin to show intentional communication and early symbolic understanding. Most are pre-verbal or emerging verbal.	Developing purposeful communication Building early phonological awareness Introduction to signs, symbols, and functional reading	Makaton, PECS, AAC- Attention Autism (Stage 3)- Story bags, props, and language-rich environments- Simple shared reading- Adults comment, expand language, model symbol use	Pre phonics: environmental sounds, body percussion, and instruments Matching symbols to real objects Repetitive, predictable texts	Engagement Model Solar Steps 1–2 Means, Reasons, and Opportunities	Core vocabulary (e.g. people, actions)- Topic-linked symbol books- Story-based communication boards- Integration with communication and PSHE	Recognises familiar symbols or names Engages with rhyme, repetition, and patterns Responds to reading using AAC or symbols
<b>Semi formal</b>	Pupils are developing early literacy and are ready to engage with Set 1/2 phonics and early blending.	Embedding set 1/2 phonics Developing decoding and environmental print awareness Early sequencing and comprehension skills	Shared/guided reading, sight word cards, symbols Role-play and storytelling, Visual sentence building Adults model decoding and comprehension	RWI set 1/2 phonics Vocabulary building and oral segmenting Early sight word reading (key symbols, names, signs)	Solar Steps 3–4 Pre-Key Stage Standards 1–2 Set 1/2 phonics tracking sheets	Early sentence starters (e.g. I see, It is) Symbol-supported texts and apps Linked to writing, topic, and drama	Identifies story characters and symbols Joins in with repeated story phrases Knows 10+ phonemes and blends simple CVC words
<b>Formal (Early)</b>	Pupils access the National Curriculum at Solar Steps 5–6, developing decoding, fluency, and comprehension.	Systematic synthetic phonics (Phase 2) Guided and shared reading Vocabulary development and basic comprehension strategies	Read Write Inc Decoding CVC words and simple sentences- Story prediction and mapping- Exception word recognition- Adults support fluency, questioning, and expression	Reads VC/CVC words using known graphemes Recognises 20+ phonemes - Begins to read with fluency and expression	Solar steps 5 Pre-Key Stage Standards 3–4	Tier 1 vocabulary (basic nouns, actions)- Story retelling apps and audio books- Integrated with writing, drama, and topic work	Reads CVC words fluently Knows 20+ grapheme sounds Understands and answers simple questions about texts
<b>Formal (Fluent)</b>	Pupils working at or beyond Solar Steps 5–6 within the National Curriculum.	Secure phonics Decoding unfamiliar and polysyllabic words Retrieval and inference skills	Guided/independent reading- Vocabulary instruction- Fluency and comprehension tasks- Adult-led questioning, discussion, and modelling inference	Reads using phonics Blends multi-syllabic and unfamiliar words Applies comprehension strategies (inference, prediction, retrieval)	National Curriculum Year 1 Ongoing phonics screening and formal tracking	Reads fluently with secure phonics- Understands a range of questions- Discusses and interprets text using inference and prediction	Reads fluently with secure phonics Understands a range of question types Uses inference and prediction to discuss and respond to texts