

# Early Years Curriculum Summary



**FRAYS**  
Academy Trust

## Where we start

Our schools serve very different communities, and many of our children arrive having had a wide range of experiences.

For some, this includes significant gaps in language, independence and early development.

We start from the child in front of us. We take time to understand what they know, what they can do and what they need, and from there we build the knowledge, confidence and independence that will carry them forward.

## How children learn here

Children learn through relationships. For many of our children, feeling safe, understood and settled is the starting point for everything else.

Adults pay close attention, noticing what children are doing and responding in a way that helps them move forward.

Learning is not rushed. Key ideas are returned to over time so that children begin to make sense of them and use them with increasing independence.

## How we teach

Teaching happens throughout the day, not just in set times.

Talk, routines and shared experiences are used deliberately to support children's thinking.

We use a balance of whole-class teaching, small groups, one-to-one support and time for children to lead their own play.

Each has a clear purpose and helps children learn something new, practise it and begin to use it for themselves.

## How we support children

Our curriculum is designed to work for every child, including those who need more time.

We adjust how we teach, not what children experience.

Routines are strengthened, interaction is increased and language is modelled more explicitly, while children remain fully included.

We work closely with families and other professionals to ensure support is consistent and effective.

## How learning is shaped

Adults use observation and professional judgement to understand what each child needs next. This shapes how the curriculum is experienced day to day.

Support sits within everyday teaching. Children are not taken away from learning to catch up. Instead, teaching is adapted so they can take part, build confidence and make secure progress.

We are ambitious for every child to leave the Early Years as a confident, capable learner, ready for what comes next.

## Foundational Knowledge in our Curriculum

**What sits underneath learning** - We focus on the knowledge and skills children need in order to take part in learning. This includes communication, self-regulation, physical control, attention and early understanding. These are the foundations that allow children not just to join in, but to stay with learning and make sense of it.

**Why this matters** - When these foundations are not secure, children can appear busy or involved but find it difficult to sustain attention, follow ideas or apply what they know. Being clear about this helps us focus on what will make the biggest difference.

**What this means in practice** - Children are given the time they need to secure these foundations. We do not rush learning or move on too quickly. Instead, we make careful decisions about when children are ready, so that progress is secure. This allows us to keep the curriculum broad and ambitious, while making sure every child can succeed within it.

## Conceptual Progression across the Early Years

### Pre- Nursery

#### The world is safe, predictable and meaningful

Children are learning that:

- they belong and are cared for
- routines help them feel safe
- communication, movement, sounds, marks and actions have an effect
- the world responds when they act

Learning is based in security, repetition and cause and effect, supported through relationships, routines and sensory exploration.

### Nursery

#### I can make sense of what I notice and do

Children are learning to:

- manage themselves and relate to others more independently
- use language to think, plan and connect ideas
- notice patterns, quantities, similarities and differences
- describe experiences and compare what they see

Learning focuses on making sense through talk, play, movement and comparison, with adults supporting children to explain and reflect with help.

### Reception

#### I can use what I know to explain, reason and act independently

Children are learning to:

- manage feelings, behaviour and responsibility
- use language to explain, reason and reflect
- apply reading, writing and maths to communicate meaning
- connect ideas about people, places, change and the wider world

Learning focusses on application, reasoning and independence, preparing children for the expectations of Year 1 without rushing or formalising too early.

# How Learning Takes Shape Across the Early Years

Built through interaction, language and carefully sequenced experiences over time



## PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

### What we do

- Build security and belonging first
- Establish routines that children can rely on and grow into
- Support children to understand feelings and manage themselves
- Teach relationships, boundaries and getting help

### What this looks like in practice

- Adults stay close and responsive: "You didn't like that —shall we tell them?"
- Children move through daily routines with increasing independence over time
- Conflicts are worked through alongside children, not rushed or solved for them
- All communication is recognised and responded to

### Why this matters

- Children settle, engage and learn when they feel secure
- Self-regulation grows through co-regulation first
- Children become increasingly independent and able to take part in school life



## COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE

### What we do

- Make talk central to every part of the day
- Introduce and revisit key vocabulary in meaningful contexts
- Use interaction to extend thinking, not just check understanding
- Provide more for children who need more

### What this looks like in practice

- Adults join play and build on what children are already doing
- Vocabulary is used consistently across provision, not just in sessions
- Stories, songs and rhymes are revisited so language sticks
- Some children receive more time, more talk and more repetition

### Why this matters

- Language develops through use, not exposure alone
- Talk supports thinking, understanding and learning across the curriculum
- Children become able to express ideas and follow thinking in others



## PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

### What we do

- Prioritise movement, strength and coordination every day
- Develop whole-body control alongside fine motor precision
- Build independence in self-care and use of tools
- Adjust support so everyone can take part

### What this looks like in practice

- Children climb, balance and move in ways that build strength over time
- Fine motor opportunities are part of continuous provision, not an add-on
- Adults notice and support posture, stability and control as children work
- Children are expected to have a go at managing their own needs

### Why this matters

- Physical development supports attention, stamina and learning
- Strong foundations make writing and tool use more efficient
- Children are ready for the physical demands of the school day



## LITERACY

### What we do

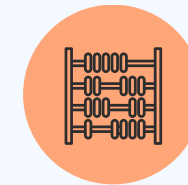
- Prioritise stories, rhymes, songs and rich talk
- Help children understand that sounds, marks and print carry meaning
- Use reading and writing in real, purposeful contexts
- Secure foundations before moving into more formal learning

### What this looks like in practice

- Stories are shared, discussed and revisited, not just read once
- Children use mark-making to represent ideas in their play
- Adults model writing throughout the day for real purposes
- Early phonics is taught alongside language-rich experiences

### Why this matters

- Literacy grows from meaning and communication
- Children are more motivated when it is purposeful and connected to experience
- Children begin to see themselves as readers and writers



## MATHEMATICS

### What we do

- Focus on number, pattern, space and relationships
- Encourage children to notice, compare and talk about what they see
- Use practical experiences to build understanding
- Revisit key ideas so they become secure

### What this looks like in practice

- Everyday moments are used - Who has more? How can we check?
- Children sort, match and explore patterns in play
- Adults encourage children to explain their thinking
- Mathematical language is used consistently and in context

### Why this matters

- Children develop understanding, not just counting skills
- Talking about maths supports reasoning
- Children are prepared for more formal maths learning later on



## UNDERSTANDING THE WORLD

### What we do

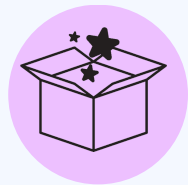
- Help children make sense of people, places and the environment
- Build learning around big ideas like change, care and cause and effect
- Value and reflect children's own experiences and backgrounds
- Use talk to notice, compare and explain

### What this looks like in practice

- Children talk about family, past events and everyday experiences
- They observe changes in seasons, plants and living things
- They explore materials and notice what happens and why
- Stories and discussion help children make connections and comparisons

### Why this matters

- Children begin to understand their place in the world
- Knowledge is built through experience and talk
- Children develop curiosity and early explanation skills



## EXPRESSIVE ARTS AND DESIGN

### What we do

- Provide opportunities for art, music, movement and role play
- Encourage children to explore, make choices and develop ideas
- Teach skills and knowledge of materials over time
- Expose children to a range of creative experiences

### What this looks like in practice

- Children choose how to represent their ideas using different materials
- Role play develops stories, language and shared ideas
- Music and movement are part of daily experience
- Adults support children to refine and develop what they create

### Why this matters

- Creativity supports expression, communication and thinking
- Children develop confidence in sharing ideas
- They learn to work both independently and with others

## Why Our Curriculum Works

- Built on strong relationships and responsive interaction through the EEF's 'ShREC approach'
- Driven by talk, vocabulary and shared experiences
- Learning is sequenced and revisited so it sticks
- Children are supported to build understanding over time
- Leads to children who are confident, independent and ready for Year 1

# Concept Vocabulary Progression

Vocabulary is deliberately selected, sequenced and revisited to support children to build secure understanding over time. Children move from experiencing and naming, to describing and explaining, and ultimately to justifying, reasoning and reflecting. Vocabulary is therefore a tool for thinking, communication and learning, not an isolated list of words. Words are introduced in meaningful contexts and linked to children's experiences to develop deep conceptual understanding across all areas of the curriculum. Adults model and extend language through high-quality interactions, supporting children to use vocabulary independently to explain their ideas and thinking.

This approach, informed by evidence from the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), ensures that vocabulary development is explicitly planned, coherently sequenced and embedded across all areas of learning.

The following tables show how vocabulary develops across each phase and term, supporting children to build increasingly precise language and understanding over time.

Pre- Nursery						
Area	Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
<b>PSED</b>	help, wash, safe, now, next, wait, stop	me, mine, do it, again, try, careful	happy, sad, calm, cuddle, safe	friend, together, my turn, wait, safe	go, stop, tidy, here, there, careful	I did it, proud, again, smile
<b>Communication &amp; Language</b>	more, help, go, stop, look, join, what	more, again, my, want, look, where	big, small, same, different, look	in, on, under, put, get, what	my turn, your turn, again, same, different	I want..., I like..., same, different
<b>Physical Development</b>	run, jump, climb, stop, fast, slow, hold, carry	start, stop, turn, balance, steady, hold, carry	over, under, up, down, hold, carry	try again, steady, careful, control, turn	move and..., keep going, finish	stronger, balanced, steady hands
<b>Literacy</b>	sound, mark, book, page	same, again, rhyme	sound, different, mark	idea, mark, show, tell	pattern, repeat, mark	word, story, meaning
<b>Mathematics</b>	one, two, more, same, big, small, in, on, full, empty, more than	more, lots, little, same, different, under, next to, full, empty	one, two, group, match, same, different, in, out, big, small	count, how many, more, same, different, over, though, full, empty	group, match, same, different, more, fewer, around, between, big, small	count, how many, group, same, different, more, fewer, move, turn, full, emotv
<b>Understanding the World</b>	me, family, help, day, night, same, change, now	home, safe, same, different	push, pull, wet, dry, happen, notice, change	plant, grow, water, change	care, living, need, change	tool, help, different
<b>Expressive Arts and Design</b>	touch, move, sound, loud, quiet, different	repeat, same, again	fast, slow, change	together, mix, move, different	choose, like, make	together, copy, share
Nursery						
Area	Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
<b>PSED</b>	wash, toilet, clean, ready, safe, wait	choose, use, tidy, help, try again	happy, sad, angry, calm, stop, listen	no, stop, my turn, fair, my body	share, wait, help, take turns, try again	proud, keep going, finished, I did it
<b>Communication &amp; Language</b>	listen, look, join, understand	sentence, word, say, tell, join	describe, explain, because, think	talk, listen, turn, share, explain	first, then, next, because, explain, plan	explain, because, remember, plan, organise
<b>Physical Development</b>	control, space, near, far, around, steady	balance, stable, hold, steady, careful	both sides, across, middle, smooth, turn	shape, line, straight, curved, circle, control	posture, upright, longer, careful, control	grip, hold, control, size, direction
<b>Literacy</b>	sound, mark, story, book, page	rhyme, same sound, start sound, mark	sound, syllable, blend, mark, idea	sound order, letter, name, word	sound, letter, write, name, word	word, sound, letter, message, meaning
<b>Mathematics</b>	subitise, more, fewer, same, different, group, compare, notice, in, under, big, small	count, number, how many, last, altogether, shape, turn, fit, check, next to, on top, full, empty	how many, total, still the same, change, notice, look carefully, move, around, big, small	one, two, three, four, five, group, same number, next to, through, between, heavy, light	part, whole, split, share, make, altogether, change, build, combine, full, empty	number, group, more, fewer, same, different, explain, check, turn, fit, long, short
<b>Understanding the World</b>	grow, change, family, before, now, same, different	job, rule, helper, safe, because	living, non-living, grow, need, change, notice	plant, grow, water, before, after, change	environment, animal, home, need, help, because	tool, machine, use, change, if, explain
<b>Expressive Arts and Design</b>	mark, line, tool, soft, hard	pattern, repeat, same, beat	fast, slow, loud, quiet, change, notice	join, build, make, together	represent, shape, picture, idea	practice, again, improve, remember
Reception						
Area	Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
<b>PSED</b>	independent, ready, my things, organise	healthy, choice, responsibility, look after	calm, try again, keep going, tricky	fair, respect, stop, ask first	help others, together, responsibility	proud, reflect, achieve, next goal
<b>Communication &amp; Language</b>	listen, explain, why, what, how	describe, compare, because, notice	explain, because, think, how, why	explain, because, sequence, tell	explain, because, justify, reason, plan	explain, justify, reason, reflect, organise
<b>Physical Development</b>	posture, grip, control, safe, steady	pressure, accurate, position, control	stamina, effort, smooth, consistent	precise, align, orientation, space	fluent, efficient, adapt, adjust	automatic, consistent, accurate, maintain
<b>Literacy</b>	sound, letter, word, write, read	word, sound, blend, segment, check	sentence, word, space, meaning, check	sentence, capital, full stop, check	write, sentence, message, edit, improve	sentence, text, meaning, check, improve
<b>Mathematics</b>	number, group, same, different, more, fewer, total, altogether, how many, in, under	part, whole, combine, equal, same as, one more, one less, check, fit, turn	total, still the same, change, explain, prove, show me, double, group, build, move	add, subtract, difference, compare, equal, justify, share, same as, rotate, slide	part, whole, reason, explain, justify, pattern, rule, group, between, around	explain, justify, check, problem, solution, choose, share, count on, count back, route, direction
<b>Understanding the World</b>	past, present, change, compare, before, now	community, purpose, because, explain	cause, effect, predict, because, explain	condition, change, because, explain	environment, depend, affect, because, reason	problem, solve, change, because, explain
<b>Expressive Arts and Design</b>	tool, control, shape, effect, choose	pattern, rhythm, repeat, structure	change, effect, choose, plan	refine, improve, change, explain	represent, detail, plan, improve	choice, style, express, refine, evaluate, why