

Reception Curriculum Overview 2026–27

Warden House Primary School

Our Reception curriculum is ambitious, inclusive and carefully sequenced to give every child secure foundations for future learning. Communication and language sit at its heart. Children build knowledge and vocabulary through explicit teaching, high-quality interactions, purposeful play, carefully selected texts, routines, first-hand experiences and continuous provision. English is text-led, early reading is taught systematically through Little Wandle, mathematics follows White Rose, and Understanding the World is organised through half-termly themes. Assessment is used to identify starting points and gaps, adapt teaching and ensure that all children are well prepared for Year 1.

Curriculum structure across the year

Curriculum area	Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
English core texts	Colour Monster Goes to School We're Going on a Bear Hunt Stick Man The Rainbow Fish Where's My Teddy? (poetry focus)	Room on the Broom The Gingerbread Man Nativity / Christmas story Extra: Diwali	Zoo (school text) Superworm Super Duck Extra: The Giant Jam Sandwich	Wellbeing/SEMH: Tyrannosaurus Drip Somebody Swallowed Stanley Gigantosaurus Extra: Mr Wolf's Pancakes	Farmer Duck What the Ladybird Heard The Three Little Pigs Extra: The Little Red Hen	Snail in Space How to Grow a Dragon Little Sunflower Extra: The Very Hungry Caterpillar
English curriculum emphasis	Settling into school; oral language; listening; story sequence; character and feelings; mark-making and early phonics application.	Retelling familiar stories; repeated language; story structure; vocabulary; oral composition; early word/caption writing.	Using fiction and non-fiction vocabulary; describing characters/settings; asking questions; sequencing; applying phonics in writing.	Prediction, explanation and comparison; richer vocabulary; oral rehearsal; captions and simple sentences; re-reading meaning.	Story language and traditional tales; instructions/explanations; sentence composition; increasingly independent phonics application.	Retelling and innovation; explanation; vocabulary in new contexts; increasingly independent sentence writing and preparation for Year 1.
Little Wandle	Phase 2; daily phonics. Begin matched reading practice when children are ready.	Phase 2 completion/consolidation; daily phonics; 3 reading-practice sessions: decoding, prosody, comprehension.	Phase 3; cumulative review; matched reading practice.	Phase 3 consolidation/application; matched reading practice.	Phase 4; adjacent consonants; increasing accuracy and fluency.	Phase 4 consolidation; secure Reception content; transition information for Year 1.
Writing & handwriting	Gross/fine motor foundations; comfortable pencil grip; name writing; correct formation of taught letters; hear and record initial sounds.	Segment orally; encode taught sounds; write CVC words and meaningful labels; cumulative letter formation.	Apply Phase 2/3 GPCs; write simple words, captions and short phrases; orally rehearse before writing.	Write captions/simple sentences using known GPCs and tricky words; spaces; begin capital letters/full stops; re-read with support.	Write simple sentences with increasing independence; accurate lower-case formation; segment to spell; basic punctuation.	Write short meaningful sentences; increasingly independent capital letters/full stops/spaces; re-read for sense; increasing fluency and efficiency.
White Rose mathematics	Getting to Know You / Match, Sort & Compare / Talk About Measure & Patterns. Focus: counting principles, comparison, pattern and spatial language.	It's Me 1,2,3 / Circles & Triangles / 1,2,3,4,5 / Shapes with 4 Sides. Focus: subitising, composition, comparison and shape.	Alive in 5 / Mass & Capacity / Growing 6,7,8 / Length, Height & Time. Focus: composition, comparison, pairs and measure.	Building 9 & 10 / Explore 3-D Shapes / consolidation. Focus: composition to 10, bonds, pattern and spatial reasoning.	To 20 and Beyond / How Many Now? / Manipulate, Compose & Decompose. Focus: teen numbers, counting patterns and spatial reasoning.	Sharing & Grouping / Visualise, Build & Map / Make Connections. Focus: doubling, grouping, odd/even, relationships and consolidation.
Understanding the World theme	ME, MY FAMILY & MY SCHOOL Identity, family, school community, senses, immediate environment, seasonal change.	CELEBRATIONS & TRADITIONS Different beliefs and celebrations; similarities/differences; autumn to winter; light and dark.	PEOPLE & OUR COMMUNITY People who help us; local services; occupations; health and safety; simple local maps.	PAST & PRESENT Change over time; homes/transport/technology; dinosaurs and fossils as evidence of the distant past.	GROWING & FARMING Plants, life cycles, farm animals, food production, habitats, caring for living things and local land.	EARTH & SPACE Earth, moon, sun, stars and planets; day/night; maps and journeys; comparing familiar and contrasting environments.
Key Understanding the World vocabulary	family, community, belong, same, different, senses, environment, autumn	celebration, tradition, belief, culture, festival, winter, light, dark	community, occupation, service, emergency, hospital, vet, police, map	past, present, long ago, fossil, extinct, evidence, change, compare	seed, root, stem, plant, crop, farm, animal, habitat, life cycle	Earth, moon, sun, star, planet, space, astronaut, rocket, map, journey

Prime areas and wider curriculum progression

Curriculum area	Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
Communication & Language	Listen carefully; understand routines; take conversational turns; talk about self/family; learn and use new vocabulary.	Ask/answer questions; retell familiar events/stories; use social phrases; explain using taught vocabulary.	Ask questions to find out more; speak to less-familiar adults; explain roles/processes in well-formed sentences.	Describe events in detail; connect ideas using because/but/so; use talk to explain how/why and solve problems.	Use talk to plan, negotiate and explain; recount experiences; use new vocabulary independently across contexts.	Express and justify ideas clearly; retell/innovate; explain learning; use increasingly precise vocabulary.
PSED / PSHE Jigsaw	JIGSAW – Being Me in My World: develop a sense of belonging; understand class routines and expectations; recognise feelings; build relationships; manage belongings and self-care with increasing independence.	JIGSAW – Celebrating Difference: recognise similarities and differences; understand that everyone is unique; consider others’ feelings; develop kindness, sharing, turn-taking and respectful relationships.	JIGSAW – Dreams and Goals: identify things they are good at and would like to improve; set simple goals; persevere when learning is difficult; celebrate their own and others’ achievements.	JIGSAW – Healthy Me: understand choices that support physical and emotional health; develop self-regulation; recognise safe/unsafe situations; understand healthy routines and increasingly manage personal needs.	JIGSAW – Relationships: build and maintain positive relationships; show empathy; consider others’ needs and perspectives; negotiate, collaborate and begin to resolve minor conflict with decreasing adult support.	JIGSAW – Changing Me: recognise growth and change; talk about feelings associated with change; develop confidence and independence; prepare emotionally and practically for transition into Year 1.
Physical Development	Core strength, balance, coordination; safe movement; fine-motor strength; grip; scissors/tools; self-care.	Refine running, jumping, climbing and other fundamental movements; increasingly controlled tool use.	Develop throwing, catching, kicking, passing and aiming; refine pencil/tool control.	Combine movements with control; understand physical health; increase precision in fine-motor tasks.	Confident use of apparatus; agility, balance and coordination; sustained handwriting readiness.	Apply movement skills in games/dance/PE; use tools confidently; handwriting increasingly accurate and efficient.
Expressive Arts & Design	Explore colour, line, texture and materials; represent ideas; develop pretend-play storylines; songs/rhymes.	Select/combine materials for a purpose; sing together; perform; respond to music and celebrations.	Represent people/places through drawing, painting, construction and role play; explain creative choices.	Return to and refine work; adapt stories in imaginative play; explore pattern, movement and music.	Observe and represent plants/animals; plan and improve creations; create narratives from familiar tales/experiences.	Plan, create, evaluate and refine; perform stories/music/dance; talk about own and others' creative choices.

Teaching, continuous provision and assessment

High-quality interactions	Adults deliberately model and extend vocabulary, scaffold thinking, explain, question and respond to children's ideas. Staff seek out children who engage less readily and ensure that routines and informal moments are also used well for learning.
Stories, rhymes and reading	Children hear high-quality stories every day. Core texts are revisited so children become familiar with vocabulary, story structures, characters and ideas. Songs, rhymes, poetry and non-fiction are used throughout the curriculum.
Continuous provision	Provision enables children to revisit, practise and apply taught knowledge and skills. Enhancements are purposeful and linked to current or prior learning, while preserving opportunities for child-initiated play, creativity and problem-solving.
Assessment	Adults use what they notice through teaching, interaction and observation to identify what children know, where gaps remain and what to teach next. Assessment informs teaching without creating unnecessary evidence. Little Wandle and agreed school assessments identify children requiring additional teaching or keep-up.
Inclusion	Staff identify barriers early and maintain ambitious expectations for all. Teaching, communication, resources and the environment are adapted for children with SEND, disadvantaged children, children with less-developed language and others facing barriers. Staff work closely with families and relevant professionals.
Readiness for Year 1	By the end of Reception, children should have secure foundations across all seven areas: strong communication, increasingly independent self-regulation, secure Reception phonics, growing reading fluency, meaningful sentence writing, strong number sense, broad knowledge of the world and positive learning behaviours. Remaining gaps and effective adaptations are shared with Year 1.

Curriculum note: The half-termly themes provide a coherent structure for Understanding the World. English texts may enrich these themes where the connection is meaningful, but texts are selected primarily to serve the English curriculum and are not forced to match the theme.

Understanding the World: seasonal and cultural threads

Seasonal thread across the year. Children revisit the school grounds and local environment regularly so that seasonal change is experienced, observed, described and compared over time. This is not treated as a one-off topic: children return to familiar places, photographs, weather observations, plants and trees so they can notice what has changed and use increasingly precise vocabulary.

Thread	Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
Seasonal change	Early autumn: weather, leaves, seeds, fruits; what we notice outdoors.	Late autumn → winter: colder weather, daylight, bare/evergreen trees; compare with Autumn 1.	Winter: frost/ice where experienced, shorter days, how people/animals respond to cold.	Winter → spring: buds, blossom, new growth, changing daylight; compare photographs/observations.	Spring → early summer: growth, flowers, insects, young animals; conditions plants need.	Summer: warmer weather, longer daylight, mature plants/seeds; compare the same environment across the year.
Celebrations & community	Harvest and family/community traditions where relevant to the cohort.	Diwali; Remembrance; Christmas and other significant family/community celebrations. Focus on respectful similarities and differences.	New Year traditions and Lunar New Year where relevant; revisit that families and communities celebrate in different ways.	Easter and other spring celebrations where relevant; distinguish cultural/religious celebration from seasonal change.	Community/family events and traditions relevant to the cohort; connect with farming/growing where meaningful.	Reflect on celebrations experienced across the year; recognise that beliefs, traditions and family practices vary.
First-hand enquiry	Collect/compare natural objects; simple local walk; describe what children see, hear and feel.	Observe light/dark and weather; revisit trees/plants; compare photographs.	Observe winter environment; simple map work linked to people and places in the community.	Look for signs of spring; order seasonal photographs; investigate change over time.	Plant/grow and observe over time; farm/outdoor learning; life-cycle observations.	Revisit mapped/local places; compare environments; connect Earth/space learning to day/night and observation.

Planning note: Festival dates move from year to year. The overview should therefore identify the intended knowledge rather than promise a fixed festival in a fixed week. Teachers can respond to the cultures, beliefs and experiences represented in the cohort while ensuring children encounter a broad and respectful range of communities.

Developmental curriculum checkpoints

These are curriculum checkpoints, not age-band tick lists. They help staff consider whether the taught curriculum is securing the foundations expected across Reception and where additional teaching, practice or adaptation may be needed.

Area	Autumn checkpoint	Spring checkpoint	Summer checkpoint / Year 1 readiness	If not secure...
Communication & language	Listens within familiar routines; joins conversations; speaks about experiences; understands and begins to use taught vocabulary.	Uses well-formed sentences increasingly; asks questions; retells/explains; connects ideas and uses taught vocabulary in different contexts.	Communicates ideas confidently; listens and responds; explains/retells in sequence; uses a broadening vocabulary independently.	Increase targeted adult interaction, modelling, repetition and small-group language opportunities; consider language/SEND needs.
Phonics & reading	Recognises and recalls taught Phase 2 GPCs; begins oral blending and blending to read simple words; reads taught tricky words.	Applies taught Phase 2/3 GPCs increasingly automatically; reads matched words, phrases and sentences; re-reads to build fluency.	Secure Reception phonics content; reads accurately with increasing fluency and understanding from books matched to phonic knowledge.	Use Little Wandle assessment to identify precise gaps and provide immediate keep-up/additional practice.
Writing & spelling	Orally composes ideas; hears sounds in words; records taught graphemes; writes name and meaningful early words/labels.	Segments words using taught GPCs; writes captions/simple sentences after oral rehearsal; begins to use spaces and sentence punctuation.	Writes short meaningful sentences using known sound-letter correspondences; increasing independence with spaces, capital letter/full stop; re-reads for sense.	Reduce composition load where needed; strengthen oral rehearsal, phoneme segmentation and dictated/application practice.
Handwriting	Develops core/shoulder/hand strength, stable posture and a comfortable efficient grip; forms taught letters in the correct direction with modelling.	Forms taught lower-case letters increasingly accurately and independently; grip/posture are functional; formation is becoming consistent through repetition.	Forms lower-case letters correctly with increasing automaticity, accuracy and efficiency; uses capitals appropriately and sustains writing for short purposeful tasks.	Check physical readiness, posture, grip and directionality; explicitly reteach formation and provide frequent short practice rather than allowing inaccurate habits to become embedded.
Mathematics	Uses counting principles; subitises small quantities; compares sets; notices pattern; uses early positional/measure vocabulary.	Develops secure composition of numbers within 5 and increasingly to 10; compares; recalls/uses number relationships; reasons with shape, measure and pattern.	Secure number sense to 10 with strong foundations beyond 10; subitises, compares and composes; recognises relationships/patterns; applies spatial reasoning.	Return to concrete representations and precise mathematical vocabulary; identify the concept rather than simply repeating an activity.
Self-regulation & independence	Settles into routines; manages basic belongings/self-care with support; identifies feelings; begins to follow expectations and seek help appropriately.	Persists for longer; manages small frustrations with decreasing support; makes choices, collaborates and completes familiar routines independently.	Regulates behaviour increasingly independently; manages self-care and belongings; sustains attention; responds to challenge and change; is ready for Year 1 routines.	Teach routines/strategies explicitly; use co-regulation and visual/verbal prompts, gradually reducing adult support.
Physical development	Builds core strength, balance and coordination; uses scissors/tools; develops hand strength and safe movement.	Refines fundamental movement and ball skills; uses tools with increasing precision; posture and fine-motor control support writing.	Moves with increasing control, coordination and confidence; uses apparatus/tools safely; fine-motor control supports efficient handwriting.	Provide targeted gross/fine motor practice and appropriate adaptations; review whether physical/SEND needs require further support.

Professional judgement: Children develop at different rates. These checkpoints should prompt discussion about curriculum, teaching and additional support; they should not be used as a rigid term-by-term test or substitute for the EYFS Profile.