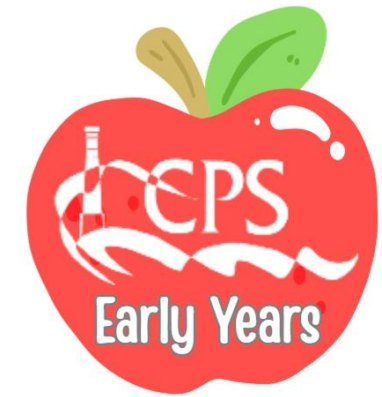




An Daras Trust  
Igniting Curiosity Growing Capabilities



# EYFS Vocabulary Development in Reception at Callington Primary School



## Vocabulary Development Intent

Children's spoken language skills play a vital role across all seven areas of learning and development. From the earliest stages, meaningful back-and-forth exchanges with adults and other children help shape both language and thinking. The frequency and quality of these conversations within a language-rich environment are key to children's progress.

Practitioners can support language growth by talking about what children are interested in, describing what they are doing, and repeating their words while introducing new vocabulary. Regularly sharing books, including stories, non-fiction, rhymes, and poems and giving children many chances to practice and apply new words in different situations helps them flourish.

Through discussion, storytelling, and imaginative play, children are encouraged to express their ideas, supported by teacher modelling and thoughtful questioning that prompts them to expand their responses. Over time, this helps them feel confident using a rich and varied vocabulary alongside more complex language structures.

**At Callington Primary, we teach children new words that are useful and meaningful.**

Early language ability is one of the strongest predictors of later success both academically and socially. Language supports children's thinking, helps them express their feelings, build relationships, and find solutions to problems. In the early years, language development progresses rapidly, much like many other aspects of young children's growth. When children do not gain fundamental speech, language, and communication skills, they are likely to be disadvantaged for life. This is why supporting language development is a central focus of our EYFS curriculum.



## SELECTING WORDS FOR ROBUST INSTRUCTION

The Three-Tiers Framework (Beck, McKeown, & Omanson, 1987)

1

The first tier consists of the most basic words: warm, dog, tired, run, talk, party, swim, look, and so on. These are the words that typically appear in oral conversations, and so children are exposed to them at high frequency from a very early age. This high exposure means that children become familiar with this set of words readily and so these Tier One words rarely require instructional attention to their meanings in school.

2

The second tier words are of high utility for literate language users and are found across a variety of domains. These words are characteristic of written text and are found only infrequently in conversation, which means that children are less likely to learn these words independently, compared with Tier One words. Because of the large role Tier Two words play in a language user's repertoire, rich knowledge of words in the second tier can have a powerful impact on verbal functioning. Thus, planned vocabulary development is directed toward Tier Two words.

3

The third tier of words has a frequency of use that is quite low and often limited to specific topics and domains. Some examples of Tier Three words might be filibuster, pantheon, and epidermis. In general, a rich understanding of these words would not be of high utility for most learners. These words are probably best learned when a specific need arises.



We consider these questions before selecting the vocabulary:

An excellent source for words to help expand young children's vocabularies is books that are designed to be read aloud to children. Books are full of Tier Two words.

A word is considered a good candidate for a Tier Two word if it is likely to be unfamiliar to young children but represents a concept they can understand and use in everyday conversation.

We use the following criteria when choosing tier two words:

How useful is it?

Will they meet it often?

Will they find it in other texts?

Will they use it to describe their own experiences?

How does it relate to other words they know?

Will it add more dimensions to a topic covered?

What does the word contribute to a text or situation?

What role does the word play in communicating?

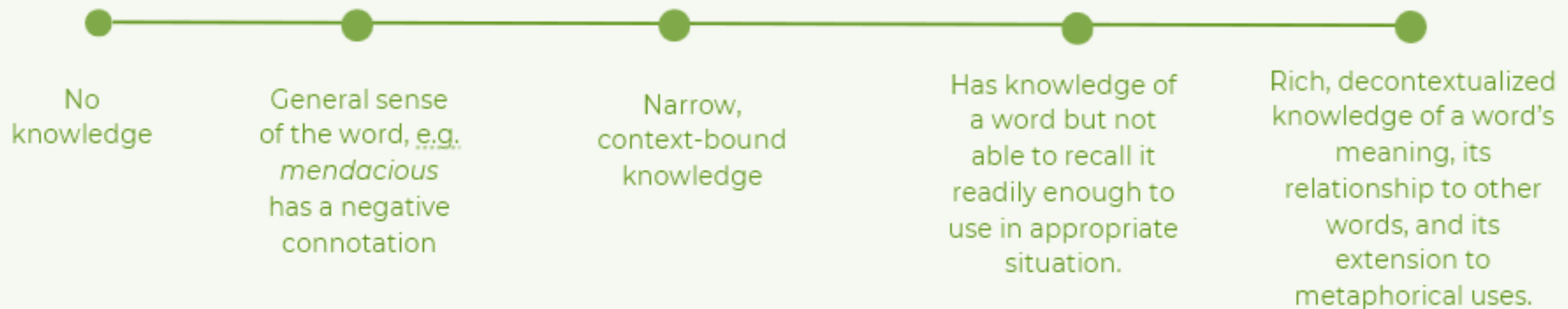


## Vocabulary Development Implementation

At the heart of a robust vocabulary approach is selecting a set of words to introduce and revisit over several days. Research suggests that up to ten words can be successfully taught to children over a one-week cycle, but it does not imply that this should always be the case. Instead, the number of words taught should be determined by the teacher, taking into account time constraints and what else is happening in the classroom.

It is not the case that one either knows or does not know a word. In fact, word knowledge is a rather complex concept.

Word knowledge can be described as falling along a continuum (Beck *et al*, 1987)





## Statutory Educational Programme

The development of children's spoken language underpins all seven areas of learning and development. Children's back-and-forth interactions from an early age form the foundations for language and cognitive development. The number and quality of the conversations they have with adults and peers throughout the day in a language-rich environment is crucial. By commenting on what children are interested in or doing, and echoing back what they say with new vocabulary added, practitioners build children's language effectively.

Reading frequently to children, engaging them actively in stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems, and providing them with extensive opportunities to use and embed new words in a range of contexts gives children the opportunity to thrive. Through conversation, storytelling and role play—where children share their ideas with support and modelling from their teacher, and where sensitive questioning invites them to elaborate—children become comfortable using a rich range of vocabulary and language structures.

EYFS Statutory Framework (2021)



## Process for vocabulary instruction in the EYFS

1

The word is identified as part of a story context (using **Greg Bottill's Drawing Club** for Reception and **Little Wandle Foundations for Reading** for Nursery). This provides a situation that is already familiar to children and a rich example of the words used.

2

The meaning of the word is explained in a child-friendly way e.g. *reluctant means you are not sure you want to do something.*

3

Everyday the children are asked to repeat the words alongside an action because pronouncing a word helps build a memory for the sound and meaning of the word (*say the word with me*).

4

Examples are given in contexts other than the one used in the story e.g. *you might be reluctant to eat a food that you have never had before or ride a roller coaster because it looks scary.*

5

Children interact with examples or provide their own examples e.g. *Tell me about something you would be reluctant to do. Try to use reluctant within your description. You could start by saying something like... 'I would be reluctant to...'*

6

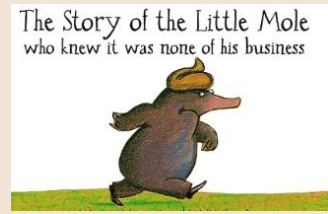
Children say the word again to reinforce its phonological representation and meaning e.g. *what's the word that means you don't want to do it?* This vocabulary is reinforced by adults during high quality interactions during play.  
(Beck, McKeown, Kucan, 2013)

## Autumn 1

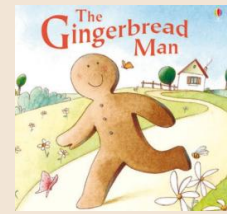
<p><b>Drawing Club Vocabulary</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Welcome to school, settling and getting to know each other period.</b></p>	 <p><b>Not Now Bernard</b>          Monster          Comic          Horns          Scales          Ignore          Disgruntled          Snarled          Puzzled</p>	 <p><b>The Three Little Pigs</b>          Pigsty          Nasty          Build          Materials          Terrified          Destroy          Construct          Happily</p>	 <p><b>Somebody Swallowed Stanley</b></p>	 <p><b>Meet the Weather</b>          Weather          Planet          Weeks          Days          Gargantuan          Ferocious          Murky          Crystal</p>
<p><b>Talk Through Stories Vocabulary</b></p>	 <p><b>Can't You Sleep Little Bear?</b>          settled          groaned          curling up          glow          hooked          twinkly          puzzled          cosy</p>	 <p><b>Owl Babies</b>          hunting          silent          fuss          bounced          swooped          brave          Flapped</p>	 <p><b>The Lion Inside</b>          sparkled          mighty          craggy          meek          whimpered          ignored          impressed          slumbering</p>		

## Autumn 2

### Drawing Club Vocabulary



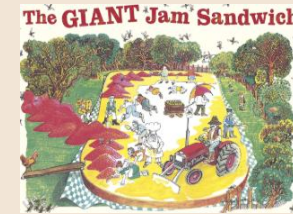
Mole  
Speedy  
Cross  
Beneath  
Surface  
Intrigued  
Investigate  
Revenge



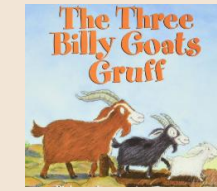
Run  
Chase  
Biscuit  
Shout  
Chomp  
Gobbled  
Escape  
Menace



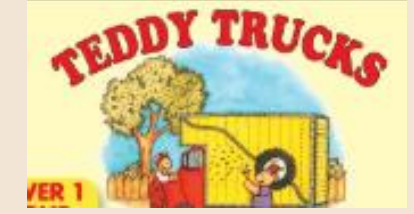
Clever  
Fur  
Chase  
Crafty  
Skinny  
Disgruntled  
Creeping  
Mischievous



Village  
Sticky  
Slice  
Pesky  
Swarm  
Escape  
Capture  
Enormous  
Trapped



Troll  
Bridge  
Stream  
Meadow  
Creature  
Medium  
Bellowed  
Terrified

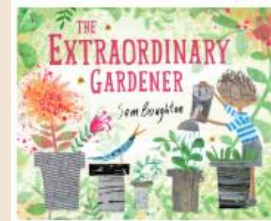


Drive  
Town  
Direction  
Puzzled  
Furniture  
Problem  
Solution  
Removal

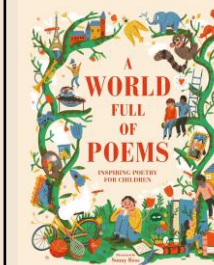
### Talk Through Stories Vocabulary



**Lost and Found**  
ignored  
floated  
disappointment  
discovered  
delighted  
lonely  
searched  
wonderful


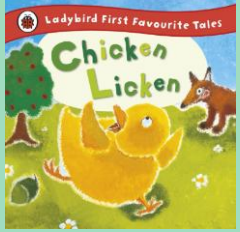
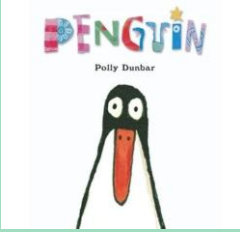
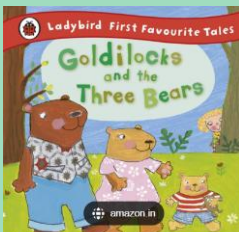
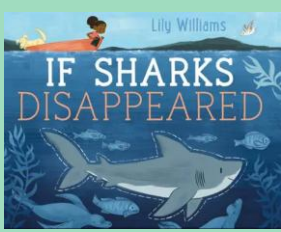





**The Extraordinary Gardener**  
imagination  
wild  
ordinary  
roamed  
soared  
longed  
discovered



**Poetry - The Bedtime March Past**

## Spring 1

<p><b>Drawing Club Vocabulary</b></p>	 <p>Problem Solution Lonely Marine Return Heartfelt Friend</p>	 <p>Disaster Crafty Terrified Cunning Eerie Cavern</p>	 <p>Ordinary Transform Enchanted Adventurous Extraordinary Courageous</p>	 <p>Ecstatic Silent Entertain Imitate Ignore Aggravated Heroic Feathers</p>	 <p>Cautious Shriek Mountainous Revolting Furious Destroyed Startled</p>	 <p>Marine Beneath Famished Solution Possibility Environment</p>
<p><b>Talk Through Stories Vocabulary</b></p>	 <p><b>The Wall and the Wild</b> wild nibble wondrous dull grubby soar mighty creep</p>	 <p><b>The Invisible</b> curled crept memories fading invisible drifted forced vibrant</p>	 <p><b>The Missing Piece</b> adore tattered encountered mystery discovered peering unfortunately Speechless</p>			

## Spring 2

<p><b>Drawing Club Vocabulary</b></p>	 <p><b>A Dark, Dark Tale</b> Ascend Billowing Passageway Dilapidated Antique Curious Mysterious</p>	 <p><b>Hansel &amp; Gretel</b> Naïve Mysterious Famished Sorceress Mouthwatering Gobble Treacherous</p>	 <p><b>Wacky Races</b> Partner Race Crafty Wacky Invention Dastardly Cunning Malevolent</p>	 <p><b>Journey</b> Castle City Mystical Curious Passageway Sneakily Capture Enchanted</p>	 <p><b>The Little Red Hen</b> Dough Wheat Mill Famished Cautious Aggravated Refuse Huff</p>	 <p><b>The Ning Nang Nong Poem</b> Plasticine Instrumental Fantasy Imaginary Landscape Animation Creative</p>
<p><b>Talk Through Stories Vocabulary</b></p>	 <p><b>A Little Bit Brave</b> daring stomped adventure scurrying proud familiar whimpered gobbled</p>	 <p><b>Six Dinner Sid</b> discovered slip out unlike tough damp suspicious believed furious</p>	 <p><b>Poetry – Cake-O-Saurus</b></p>			

## Summer 1

<p><b>Drawing Club Vocabulary</b></p>	 <p><b>What's In the Witches Kitchen?</b> Frown Curious Revolting Combination Cautious Direction Shudder Appetite</p>	 <p><b>Jack &amp; The Beanstalk</b> Magic Beast Creeping Scurry Cautious Happily Ascend Descend</p>	 <p><b>Willow the Whisp</b> Woodland Enchanted Ethereal Phenomenon Ghoul Levitate Mischievous Erratic</p>	 <p><b>The Night Pirates</b> Treasure Island Courageous Stealthy Voyage Navigate Revenge Strategy</p>	 <p><b>If Bees Disappeared</b> Environment Possibility History Hive Vanished Collaborate Nectar</p>	 <p><b>Banana Man/Popeye</b> Spinach Ordinary Extraordinary Metamorphosis Nemesis Transform Duo Mighty</p>
<p><b>Talk Through Stories Vocabulary</b></p>	 <p><b>Sonya's Chickens</b> spruced tending nestled ruckus crept cowering exhausted</p>	 <p><b>Anna Hibiscus' Song</b> amazing pound scattering floats chuckles explode reason</p>	 <p><b>I'm in Charge</b> bellowed startled barged sneaked grinned dreadful stomped refused</p>			

## Summer 2

<p><b>Drawing Club Vocabulary</b></p>	 <p><b>Slug Love</b> Gutter Devouring Shriek Naïve Reunited Disabled Determined Vulnerable</p>	 <p><b>Little Red Riding Hood</b> Cloak Woodland Disguise Shudder Heroic Curious Sinister Deceptive</p>	 <p><b>Wallace &amp; Grommit</b> Friendship Invent Faulty Villainous Malfunction Obsessed Naïve Partner</p>	 <p><b>Martha Maps it Out</b> Map Planet City Direction Navigate Universe Possession Possibility</p>	 <p><b>The Magic Porridge Pot</b> Porridge Wizard Appetite Enchanted Gobble Casting Concerning Vast</p>	 <p><b>Fraggle Rock Puppet</b> Euphoric Beneath Aggravated Wacky Comical Plethora Vibrant</p>
<p><b>Talk Through Stories Vocabulary</b></p>	 <p><b>Burglar Bill</b> comfortable creeps wonders hurry terrible fright pinched</p>	 <p><b>Where the Wild Things Are</b> mischievous roared staring terrible tumbled lonely blinking</p>	 <p><b>Poetry – Oh, Oh, The Story Man</b></p>			

## Energising the Verbal Environment

In addition and complementary to robust vocabulary instruction, we create an “energised verbal environment”, a classroom where words are used in play almost all of the time - noticed, investigated and savoured - and where every opportunity is taken to add words to children's surroundings. (Beck et al, 2013)

- ❖ **Adults play a key role** in creating a language-rich environment, staying alert to opportunities to model sophisticated, interesting and precise vocabulary.
- ❖ **Adults show curiosity about words**, demonstrating a genuine interest in exploring language with children.
- ❖ **‘The Poetry Basket’ is used** to introduce children to engaging and imaginative poems—some ideal for performance, others encouraging children to visualise the images that words create.
- ❖ **New vocabulary is introduced spontaneously** as it arises naturally in play and conversation, with adults using their professional judgement to decide how best to explore each word.
- ❖ **Words are kept visible in the classroom**, for example on word walls or display boards, so adults can continually “sprinkle them in” during interactions.



### Daily Opportunities for a Language Rich Day

- ❖ Daily whole class shared reading
- ❖ Daily songs, rhymes and poems
- ❖ Daily WellComms activities during provision
- ❖ Rich and varied meaningful activities and experiences
- ❖ Informal and formal 1:1 conversations
- ❖ Intentional vocabulary on display

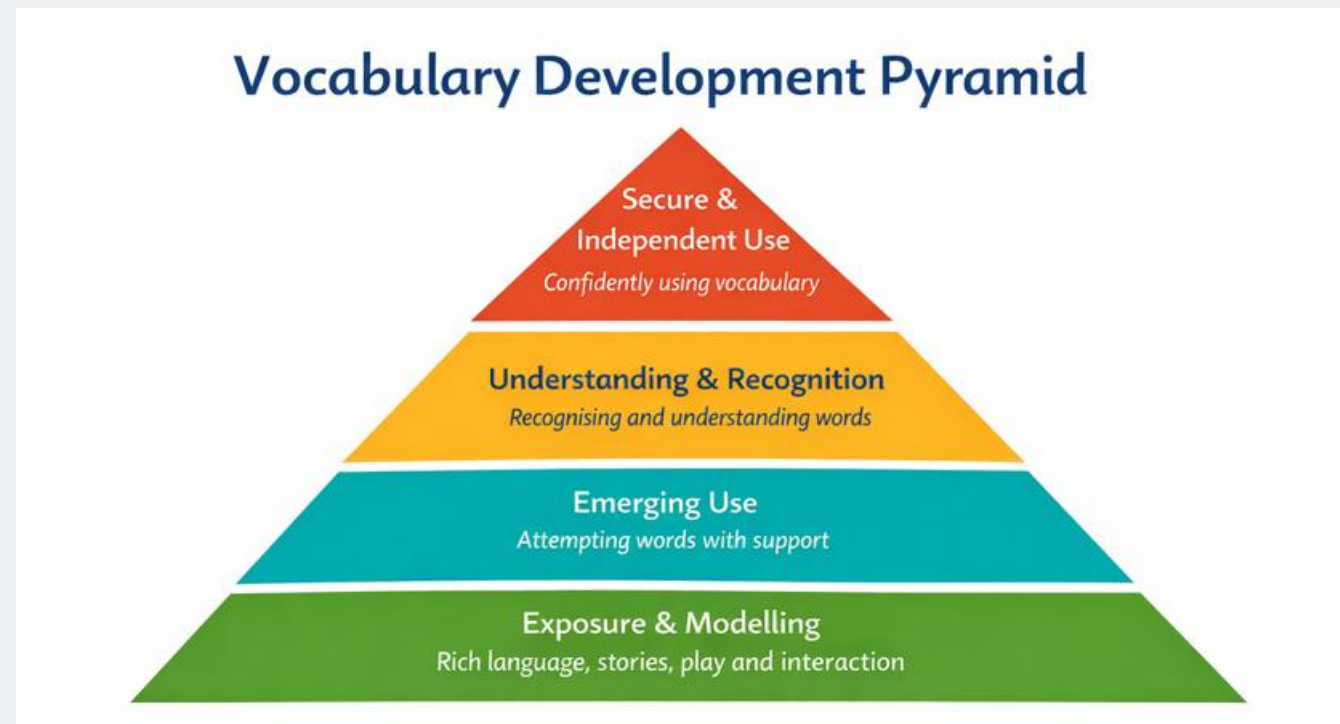
## EYFS Vocabulary: Intent, Progression and Ambition

The following slides set out the foundational vocabulary which will to help prepare children for Year 1.

Progressive vocabulary is carefully planned across the Prime and Specific Areas of Learning to ensure children build understanding, use language purposefully, and are well prepared to access learning in Key Stage 1.

The vocabulary identified is aspirational and ambitious, ensuring all children are exposed to high-quality language, while recognising that progress will vary and not all vocabulary will be securely embedded for every child by the end of Reception.

For children with SEND and/or EAL, vocabulary development will be supported through targeted scaffolding, repetition, visual support and meaningful context, in line with individual needs.



# CLOSING THE WORD GAP

Progressive Vocabulary Across the Prime Areas of Learning as well as Literacy and Maths.

Tier 2	Communication and Language	Personal Social and Emotional Dev	Physical Dev	Literacy	Maths					
<p><b>Baseline/FS1</b></p> <p>All children need to understand this vocabulary before moving onto the vocabulary in Reception. The vocabulary will be revisited throughout</p>	Talk Say Tell Copy Listen Look Who? What? Where? Why? Idea Instruction Understand Turn	Partner Wait Sentence And Speaking Close Inside Outside Notice  Healthy Clean Rules Toilet Flush Soap Dry Shoe Socks	Feelings Happy Worried Sad Angry Excited Share Take turns Wash Healthy Clean Rules Toilet Flush Soap Dry Shoe Socks	Like Dislike Kind Playing Together Choice Wrong Right Explore Wipe Sorry Please Thank You	Walk Climb Ride Run Jump Knife Fork Spoon Pinch and Flick Brush Hop Balance Crawl Zip Kick Throw Catch Roll Pedal Scrunch	Fold Rip Snip Space Hot Cold Heart Beating Warm Up Sweaty Breath Peel Hold Squeeze Roll Press Poke Stretch Pinch	Story Book Page Song Rhyme Draw Turn (The Page) Author Illustrator Character Start End Title Blurb Setting Missing Voice	Body Listen Rhyme Beat Pair Clap Sound Blend First Letter	Number Shape Square Circle Triangle Rectangle Count How Many Big Small Tall Short Long Up Down Round On Under Behind In Front More Less	Same Different 2d Shape Full Empty Half Full Heavy Light Sort Jigsaw Repeating Morning Afternoon Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday Sunday Thick Thin

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Progressive Vocabulary Across the Prime Areas of Learning as well as Literacy and Maths.

Tier 2	Communication and Language	Personal Social and Emotional Dev	Physical Dev	Literacy		Maths	
<b>Reception</b>  Vocabulary which is taught though out the year in teacher led discussions, activities and provision	Explain Describe Question Answer/Respond How When? Speaker Reason Agree And Disagree Discuss Problem Because Opinion Suggestion Example	Emotions Fair Frustrated Confused Upset Try Challenge Germs Exercise Team Determination Respect Calm Confident Safe Permission Apologise You're Welcome	Grip Bounce High/Low Fingers Skip Peddle Holepunch Staple Collage Split Pin Aiming Passing Kicking Batting Body Temperature Muscles Deep Breaths	Fiction Non-Fiction Information Facts Write Word Sentence Question Sounds Digraph Trigraph Tricky Word Grapheme Phoneme Poem Beginning, Middle And End Traditional Tale Once Upon A Time First, Next, After That, Then, Finally	Retell Sequence Vocabulary Repeat Clue Language Front Cover Blending Spell Capital-Letter Finger-Space Full Stop Check Letter Formation	High Low Heavy Light Bigger Smaller 3d Sphere Cube Cuboid Cone Number Sentence Problem Part Whole Equal Composition Doubling Halving	Odd Even Group Numeral Add Take Away Number Bonds Measure In-between Next To Opposite Time Repeating Pattern Months

# CLOSING THE WORD GAP

## Progressive Vocabulary across the Specific Areas of learning Understanding the world/ Expressive Arts and Design.

Tier 2	Historical Vocabulary	Geographical Vocabulary	Scientific Vocabulary	Religious Vocabulary including Celebrations	Musical Vocabulary Including Performance	Artistic Vocabulary including Design	Computing Vocabulary
<p><b>Baseline/FS1</b></p> <p>All children need to understand this vocabulary before moving onto the vocabulary in Reception.</p> <p>The vocabulary will be revisited throughout.</p>	Before After A Long Time Ago Same Different Now Next Then Yesterday Today Tomorrow Mum Dad Grandma Grandad Old New King	Place Visit Travel Rain Sun Weather Map Journey House City England United Kingdom Hot Cold Land Sea Air Street Globe Freezing Chilly Warm Icy Snow Windy Cloudy Puddles	<p><b>Working Scientifically:</b> Look, Watch, Touch, Feel, Smell, Listen, Same, Different, Sort, Guess, Magnifying Glass, Change</p> <p><b>Plants:</b> Plant, Tree, Leaf, Flower, Seed, Fruit, Vegetable, Dig, Water, Grow, Dead, Soil, Sunlight</p> <p><b>Animals:</b> Egg, Chick, Caterpillar, Cocoon, Butterfly, Tadpole, Frog, Sheep, Goat, Cow, Horse, Pig, Baby, Child, Adult, Hand, Arm, Legs, Head, Foot, Shoulders, Knees, Toes, Ankle, Wrist, Elbow, Life Cycle, Feathers, Wings, Beak, Hair</p> <p><b>Seasonal Changes:</b> Wet, Snow, Sunshine, Hot, Rain</p> <p><b>Materials:</b> Wood, Plastic, Paper, Fabric, Cork, Shells, Pebbles, Stones, Hard, Soft, Melt, Frozen, Leaves</p> <p><b>Light:</b> Light, Dark, Torch, Bright</p> <p><b>Forces:</b> Float, Sink, Up, Down, Top, Bottom, Push, Pull, Squash, Roll, Fast, Slow, Spin</p> <p><b>Electricity:</b> Battery, Plug</p>	Celebration Christmas Christianity Family Easter Helper Diwali Birthday Wedding Halloween Bonfire Night Lunar New Year	Music Dance Sing Pretend Loud Quiet Instrument Song Drum Tambourine Triangle Shake Rattle Sound Noise Bang Maraca Bells	Paint Stick Glue Cut Cooking Drawing Painting Collage Print Spreader Rolling Pin Colour Fold Tape Build Made Red Green Yellow Orange Blue Black White Mix Pour Stir	Press Camera Bee Bot Forward Backwards Turn Video Photo Torch On Off

# CLOSING THE WORD GAP

## Progressive Vocabulary across the Specific Areas of learning Understanding the world/ Expressive Arts and Design.

Tier 2	Historical Vocabulary	Geographical Vocabulary	Scientific Vocabulary	Religious Vocabulary including Celebrations	Musical Vocabulary Including Performance	Artistic Vocabulary including Design	Computing Vocabulary
<b>Reception</b>  Vocabulary which is taught though out the year in teacher led discussions, activities and provision.	Past Present History Prehistoric Future First Next After Later Before Change Happen Job Work Artifact Modern Similar Different Same Police Officer Firefighter Postal Worker Doctor Dentist Shop Owner Vicar	Globe Ice Building Planet Earth Space Birdseye View Environment Community Litter Country Continent Capital Thunder Lightening Frosty Rainbow Storm Map Direction Follow Home House Bungalow Street Church Zebra Crossing Under Traffic Lights Tunnel Bridge Roundabout Map	<b>Working Scientifically:</b> Notice, Compare, Record, Group, Dissolve, Experiment, Test, Investigate, Predict, Scientist, <b>Plants:</b> Stem, Branch, Bark, Petal, Berry, Bulb, Shoot, Alive, Compost, Herb <b>Animals, Including Humans:</b> Lamb, Kid, Calf, Foal, Piglet, Duckling Jungle, Desert, Nocturnal, Hibernation, Habitat, Skeleton, Brain, Bones, Claws, Talons Hooves <b>Seasonal Changes:</b> Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter <b>Materials:</b> Shiny, Slippery, Smooth, Bendy, Rough, Card, Metal, Strong, Weak, Waterproof, Soggy, Magnetic, Glass, Wool, See through <b>Light:</b> Shadow, Lamp <b>Forces:</b> Drop, Turn, Magnet, Magnetic, Stretch <b>Electricity:</b> Socket, Electricity, Wire, Switch <b>Earth And Space:</b> Sun, Moon, Star, Sky, Day, Night, Earth, planet.	Festival Special Different Same Culture Religion (Christianity, Islam, Hinduism) Church Nativity Jesus Celebration Belief Tradition Leader Sacred Promise Believe Responsibility Friendship Place Of Worship Celebration Festival Unique Valuable Special Symbol Wonder Beauty	Song Words Clap Stamp Move Dance Instrument Drum Tambourine Bells Maracas Claves Xylophone Shake Tap Bang Pulse Beat Orchestra High Low Pitch Rhythm Tempo Long Short Fast Slow Melody Steps Leaps Imagine Imagination Actor Stage Story Tell Prop Instruction Costume	Print Design Label Twist Bend Link Curl Tear Tape Cut Spread Construct Design Purpose Adapt Evaluate Explore Function Approach Explain Method	App Laptop Film Record Torch Timer Walkie - talkies Instruction Follow Direction Left Right

### **Statutory Guidance**

Department for Education (2021). *Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework*. [Link](#)

Department for Education (2021). *Development Matters (Non-statutory guidance)*. [Link](#)

### **Research & Evidence**

Beck, I. L., McKeown, M. G., & Kucan, L. (2013). *Bringing Words to Life: Robust Vocabulary Instruction* (2nd ed.). New York: Guilford Press.

Whitebread, D., & Bingham, S. (2013). *School Readiness and Play: A Research Review*.

National Literacy Trust & Education Endowment Foundation (various reports on early vocabulary development and oral language interventions).