EYFS@RMS – Progression of Skills for the Quiet Reading Area

The quiet reading area provides children with opportunities to develop a love of books, early literacy skills, communication, imagination and emotional wellbeing. It should be a calm, welcoming and inclusive space where children can explore books independently, share stories with others and develop the foundations for reading.



1. Explorers – enjoying books

Babies / younger toddlers, as appropriate

- Explore books by looking, touching, holding and turning pages.
- Enjoy sensory books, board books, photographs and familiar pictures.
- Listen to familiar rhymes, songs and short stories with an adult.
- Begin to recognise familiar objects, people and pictures in books.
- Show interest through looking, pointing, vocalising and gestures.
- Develop positive associations with books through warm, shared experiences.



2. Developing book lovers

Typically 2–3 years

- Choose familiar books and begin to show preferences.
- Turn pages and handle books with increasing independence.
- Listen to short stories and join in with repeated words or phrases.
- Point to and name familiar objects, characters and pictures.
- Talk about what they can see using words and short phrases.
- Begin to anticipate familiar events in well-known stories.
- Enjoy sharing books with adults and other children.



3. Purposeful readers

Typically 3–4 years

- Select books independently and spend increasing periods exploring them.
- Listen to and engage with stories, rhymes and information books.
- Retell familiar parts of stories using pictures, actions and language.
- Join in with repeated refrains, rhymes and predictable phrases.
- Talk about characters, settings, events and personal experiences.
- Begin to recognise that print carries meaning and that books have a purpose.
- Handle books carefully and understand basic book conventions, including turning pages in sequence.
- Share books with peers and begin to discuss preferences.



4. Confident readers and storytellers

Typically 4–5 years

- Independently choose books for enjoyment, information or a particular interest.
- Sustain attention during stories and discuss what they have heard.
- Retell familiar stories in sequence, using story language and relevant detail.
- Predict what might happen next and explain ideas using clues from the story.
- Talk about characters' feelings, actions and motivations.
- Recognise familiar words and apply developing phonics knowledge when reading, in line with the school's systematic synthetic phonics programme.
- Begin to discuss similarities, differences and connections between books.
- Use books to inspire imaginative play, drawing, writing and independent learning.

Progression of key skills

Skill	Emerging	Developing	Secure / extending
Book handling	Explores and holds books	Turns pages and handles books with growing care	Independently selects and handles books appropriately
Attention and listening	Shows interest in short shared experiences	Listens to familiar stories with increasing attention	Sustains attention and discusses story content
Comprehension	Responds to pictures and familiar voices	Identifies characters and anticipates events	Retells, predicts and explains events and ideas
Storytelling	Enjoys repeated sounds and phrases	Joins in with refrains and retells simple events	Retells stories in sequence using story language
Vocabulary	Responds to familiar words and pictures	Names objects and describes what is happening	Uses varied vocabulary to explain, predict and discuss
Print awareness	Explores books and pictures	Notices print and understands that books communicate meaning	Understands book conventions and explores print purposefully
Phonics and early reading	Enjoys sounds, rhymes and language	Develops sound awareness and interest in letters	Applies taught phonics skills to reading appropriate words and texts
Independence	Shares books with adult support	Chooses familiar books independently	Selects books for enjoyment, interests and learning

Adult role and provision

- Create a welcoming space: Provide comfortable seating, soft furnishings, accessible book displays and a calm atmosphere.
- Offer a rich range of texts: Include stories, rhymes, traditional tales, non-fiction, poetry, dual-language books and books reflecting diverse families, cultures and experiences.
- Model reading behaviours: Share books regularly, model careful book handling and demonstrate enjoyment of stories.
- Develop language: Introduce new vocabulary, explain unfamiliar words and encourage children to talk about illustrations and events.
- Ask open-ended questions: For example, "What do you notice?", "How do you think the character feels?" and "What might happen next?"
- Encourage independence: Allow children time to browse, revisit favourites, look at books alone or share them with friends.
- Make meaningful links: Use books to support current topics, children's interests, role-play, Drawing Club and other areas of provision.
- Support inclusion: Provide accessible books, visual supports, sensory books, communication aids and texts in children's home languages where possible.
- Observe and respond: Notice children's book preferences, attention, comprehension, vocabulary and emerging reading behaviours to identify next steps.

Links to EYFS areas of learning

- Communication and Language: listening, attention, understanding, conversation and vocabulary.
- Literacy: comprehension, enjoyment of reading, book handling, print awareness and early reading.
- Personal, Social and Emotional Development: confidence, emotional regulation, empathy and enjoyment of quiet time.
- Expressive Arts and Design: imagination, storytelling, drawing and creative responses to books.
- Understanding the World: learning about people, places, nature and different experiences through stories and information books.

Assessment reminder

Age bands are indicative rather than fixed expectations. Children may demonstrate skills across several stages, and progression should be informed by individual development, interests and next steps.

For Reception children, reading instruction should complement the school's systematic synthetic phonics programme, such as Little Wandle where used. The quiet reading area provides valuable opportunities to foster a love of reading and practise taught skills, but it does not replace explicit phonics teaching or supported reading practice.