

WHOLE-SCHOOL PRIMARY ENGLISH RESOURCE

Primary Poetry Progression Map

EYFS to Year 6

Reading. Discussing. Writing. Performing.

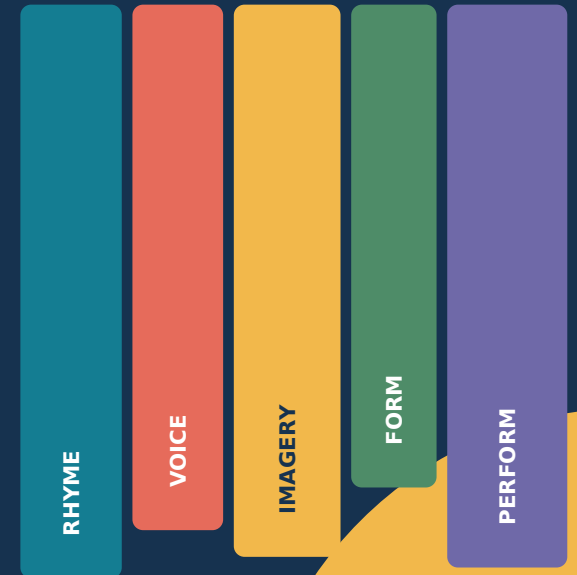
A practical, adaptable curriculum-planning pack for:

- Class teachers and ECTs
- English and literacy subject leaders
- Senior leadership teams
- Primary schools reviewing poetry provision

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How to use this progression map

This is a suggested progression, not a statutory year-by-year scheme.

The National Curriculum sets phase expectations, including two-year blocks in KS2. Schools should adapt this document to their pupils, chosen texts and wider curriculum.

Four connected strands

1. READ & ENJOY

Hear rich poetry regularly. Read for pleasure as well as study.

2. DISCUSS

Notice words, patterns, forms, meanings and personal responses.

3. CREATE

Borrow techniques, generate ideas, draft, improve and publish.

4. PERFORM

Use voice, pace, pause, movement and collaboration for an audience.

Recommended whole-school principles

- Poetry appears regularly across the year - not only on National Poetry Day.
- Children hear poems read aloud by confident adults from EYFS to Year 6.
- The curriculum includes contemporary and classic poetry and a diverse range of voices.
- Poems are sometimes enjoyed without a worksheet or written comprehension task.
- Writing grows from strong model poems, discussion, oral rehearsal and shared writing.
- Performance is treated as part of comprehension and composition, not an optional extra.
- Forms are chosen because they suit the purpose; they are not tick-box activities.
- Assessment notices growing independence and deliberate choices rather than counting devices.

Whole-school progression at a glance

Stage	Reading focus	Composition focus	Performance milestone	Suggested experiences
EYFS	Enjoy songs, rhymes and poems; join refrains; notice sounds and rhythm.	Create orally by substituting words, contributing lines and playing with sound.	Join shared rhymes using actions, sound and call-and-response.	Nursery rhymes; chants; action rhymes; oral list poems.
Year 1	Listen widely; notice predictable language; recite short poems by heart.	Compose orally; create short patterned, list and sensory poems.	Speak clearly in a whole-class performance using simple pace and volume.	Pattern poems; lists; acrostics; two-line rhymes.
Year 2	Express views; notice recurring language; discuss favourite words and phrases.	Collect words, plan aloud, write short poems and make simple improvements.	Recite with appropriate intonation and increasing independence.	Shape poems; calligrams; couplets; question-and-answer poems.
Year 3	Recognise forms; discuss interesting phrases; explore simple imagery.	Use sensory detail, strong verbs, repetition, similes and deliberate line breaks.	Prepare a poem using clear articulation, pace, volume and expression.	Kennings; riddles; free verse; character and performance poems.
Year 4	Compare poems; infer mood; discuss how language and structure contribute.	Plan, draft and edit; use imagery and structure with growing control.	Organise group performance and explain choices about voice and action.	Narrative; cinquain; personification; refrain-based poems.
Year 5	Compare writers and themes; evaluate vocabulary, figurative language and tone.	Develop voice and mood; control line length, stanzas and imagery; edit for impact.	Prepare and refine an independent or group performance for an audience.	Free verse; ballad; ode; monologue; extended imagery.
Year 6	Interpret challenging poems; justify views; compare forms, voices and viewpoints.	Choose form deliberately; sustain voice; redraft and justify creative decisions.	Interpret rather than merely recite; adapt delivery to communicate meaning.	Spoken word; parody; dramatic monologue; hybrid and traditional forms.

Suggested forms are examples, not restrictions. Revisit forms with greater complexity when appropriate.

EYFS: Hear it. Join in. Play with it. Enjoy it.

READING & ENJOYMENT

- Hear traditional and contemporary poems, rhymes, songs and chants.
- Join repeated refrains and anticipate familiar words.
- Notice rhyme, rhythm, sound and repeated language.
- Respond through talk, pictures, play, movement and music.
- Build a shared repertoire of favourite rhymes and poems.

DISCUSSION & VOCABULARY

- Talk about favourite sounds, words, characters and moments.
- Notice words that sound the same at the end.
- Clap syllables and copy simple rhythmic patterns.
- Explore new vocabulary through objects, actions and pictures.
- Value home-language songs, rhymes and oral traditions.

WRITING & COMPOSITION

- Create orally; adult transcription is entirely appropriate.
- Substitute a word in a familiar rhyme or repeated pattern.
- Contribute a sound, action, word or line to a shared poem.
- Generate sensory words from direct experience.
- Invent playful rhymes even when they do not make literal sense.

PERFORMANCE & ORACY

- Perform songs, rhymes and poems with others.
- Use actions, facial expression and whole-body movement.
- Copy changes in volume, pitch and pace.
- Join call-and-response and echo performances.
- Develop attention, turn-taking and enjoyment of an audience.

SUGGESTED EXPERIENCES & FORMS

Nursery rhymes; action rhymes; chants; songs; sound poems; call-and-response; simple oral list poems.

PROGRESSION MILESTONE

Children willingly join familiar language, play with sounds and contribute to a shared oral poem or performance.

Year 1: Joining in and creating patterns

READING & ENJOYMENT

- Listen to a wide range of poems beyond independent reading level.
- Recognise and join predictable phrases and repeated lines.
- Appreciate rhymes and begin reciting short poems by heart.
- Link poems to personal experiences and familiar settings.
- Hear poems frequently for enjoyment as well as study.

DISCUSSION & VOCABULARY

- Talk about words that are funny, surprising or interesting.
- Identify obvious rhyming pairs and repeated sounds.
- Notice simple patterns in lines and refrains.
- Say what they like and give a simple reason.
- Explore new meanings through talk, action and illustration.

WRITING & COMPOSITION

- Compose ideas orally before writing them down.
- Create simple list, patterned and repetitive poems.
- Use familiar sentence starters and shared vocabulary.
- Experiment with two-line rhymes without forcing every line to rhyme.
- Reread a short poem to check that the intended idea is clear.

PERFORMANCE & ORACY

- Join whole-class and small-group recitation.
- Speak clearly enough to be heard.
- Use a simple action, pause or change in volume.
- Keep a shared beat or repeated response.
- Perform a short familiar poem from memory.

SUGGESTED EXPERIENCES & FORMS

Pattern poems; list poems; simple acrostics; sensory poems; action poems; call-and-response; two-line rhymes.

PROGRESSION MILESTONE

Pupils use a familiar pattern to create a short poem and participate confidently in a shared performance.

Year 2: Choosing words and performing with meaning

READING & ENJOYMENT

- Listen to and discuss contemporary and classic poetry.
- Recognise recurring literary language and simple structures.
- Build a repertoire of poems learnt by heart.
- Read accessible poems with growing fluency.
- Express views about poems and listen to different opinions.

DISCUSSION & VOCABULARY

- Discuss favourite words and phrases.
- Notice rhythm, rhyme, repetition and predictable language.
- Explain a simple response: funny, exciting, calm or surprising.
- Clarify word meanings and connect new words to known vocabulary.
- Discuss how intonation can make meaning clearer.

WRITING & COMPOSITION

- Plan or say aloud what the poem will be about.
- Collect key words, including new vocabulary.
- Write poetry for a clear purpose or audience.
- Use simple frames while retaining personal choice.
- Make additions or revisions after reading aloud and discussing.

PERFORMANCE & ORACY

- Recite with appropriate intonation to make meaning clear.
- Use pauses and changes in pace or volume.
- Perform a short section independently or with a partner.
- Coordinate words, actions and repeated responses.
- Comment positively on another performance.

SUGGESTED EXPERIENCES & FORMS

Lists; acrostics; shape poems; simple calligrams; rhyming couplets; question-and-answer; character poems.

PROGRESSION MILESTONE

Pupils collect vocabulary, write a short structured poem and recite with intonation that supports meaning.

Year 3: Exploring form, imagery and performance

READING & ENJOYMENT

- Listen to and read a broad range of poetry.
- Recognise that poems can take different forms.
- Prepare selected poems for reading aloud and performance.
- Use dictionaries to investigate unfamiliar vocabulary.
- Notice how repeated reading improves fluency and understanding.

DISCUSSION & VOCABULARY

- Discuss words and phrases that capture attention or imagination.
- Identify sensory detail, simple similes and repetition.
- Explain the picture created by a word or line.
- Begin inferring a poem's mood or a character's feelings.
- Compare simple features of two poems.

WRITING & COMPOSITION

- Study a model poem before composing.
- Collect sensory vocabulary and choose precise verbs.
- Use repetition and simple imagery deliberately.
- Experiment with line breaks and short stanzas.
- Reread aloud and improve at least one word, line or image.

PERFORMANCE & ORACY

- Use clear articulation, pace, volume and expression.
- Rehearse as an individual, pair or group.
- Use action where it strengthens meaning.
- Respond to simple feedback and rehearse again.
- Explain one performance choice.

SUGGESTED EXPERIENCES & FORMS

Kennings; riddles; lists; acrostics; shape poems; simple free verse; character and repetitive performance poems.

PROGRESSION MILESTONE

Pupils use a model to create imagery and make a deliberate language or structural choice they can explain.

Year 4: Developing control and making improvements

READING & ENJOYMENT

- Read and discuss a widening range of poems and poets.
- Recognise free verse, narrative poetry and other familiar forms.
- Prepare and rehearse poems for presentation.
- Compare poems on a shared theme or subject.
- Identify how structure and presentation contribute to meaning.

DISCUSSION & VOCABULARY

- Explore simile, metaphor, personification, rhythm and rhyme.
- Infer mood, viewpoint or a character's feelings.
- Explain how a word or phrase affects the reader or listener.
- Discuss how performance can strengthen understanding.
- Build constructively on another pupil's interpretation.

WRITING & COMPOSITION

- Plan and record ideas before drafting.
- Choose vocabulary for accuracy, imagery and sound.
- Organise ideas into lines, stanzas or a repeated refrain.
- Use imagery and poetic devices with growing control.
- Evaluate a draft and suggest purposeful improvements.

PERFORMANCE & ORACY

- Organise a group performance with allocated roles.
- Control tone, volume, pace and action.
- Emphasise important words or changes in mood.
- Give specific, supportive feedback.
- Explain how delivery choices help communicate meaning.

SUGGESTED EXPERIENCES & FORMS

Free verse; narrative poems; cinquains; personification poems; refrain-based poems; shape and performance poetry.

PROGRESSION MILESTONE

Pupils draft and edit a poem, using language and structure to create an intended image, mood or effect.

Year 5: Voice, mood and deliberate craft

READING & ENJOYMENT

- Read and discuss an increasingly wide range of poetry.
- Learn a wider range of poetry by heart.
- Compare poems by different writers or from different traditions.
- Recognise themes, conventions, voice and viewpoint.
- Prepare readings that communicate meaning clearly.

DISCUSSION & VOCABULARY

- Evaluate vocabulary and figurative language.
- Discuss how line length, stanza shape and sound affect reading.
- Track changes in mood, tone or viewpoint.
- Support interpretations with evidence from the poem.
- Recommend poems and give reasons for choices.

WRITING & COMPOSITION

- Identify audience and purpose and select a suitable form.
- Develop a consistent poetic voice and mood.
- Experiment with line length, stanzas and extended imagery.
- Choose vocabulary for precision rather than decoration.
- Redraft by cutting, replacing and rearranging for impact.

PERFORMANCE & ORACY

- Prepare a performance with increasing independence.
- Use intonation, tone and volume to make meaning clear.
- Refine pace, pauses and emphasis after feedback.
- Make purposeful choices about movement and group roles.
- Reflect on how the audience responded.

SUGGESTED EXPERIENCES & FORMS

Free verse; narrative; ballad; ode; dramatic monologue; persona poem; performance poetry; extended imagery.

PROGRESSION MILESTONE

Pupils sustain a deliberate voice or mood and improve a poem by making purposeful structural and vocabulary changes.

Year 6: Independence, interpretation and impact

READING & ENJOYMENT

- Read, discuss and enjoy increasingly challenging poetry.
- Compare forms, themes, voices, viewpoints and traditions.
- Learn and perform a suitable range of poetry by heart.
- Respond thoughtfully to unfamiliar poems.
- Recommend poems and poets using reasoned justification.

DISCUSSION & VOCABULARY

- Explore more than one possible interpretation.
- Evaluate how figurative language affects the reader.
- Explain how structure, sound and presentation create meaning.
- Support opinions with precise evidence.
- Discuss creative choices using appropriate terminology.

WRITING & COMPOSITION

- Choose form, voice and viewpoint deliberately.
- Control mood, imagery, sound, lineation and structure.
- Sustain an idea or extended image across a poem.
- Draft, redraft and evaluate whether every word earns its place.
- Justify important creative decisions and publish for an audience.

PERFORMANCE & ORACY

- Interpret rather than merely recite.
- Control tone, pace, pause, volume, gesture and stillness.
- Adapt delivery so meaning is clear to an audience.
- Work effectively as a soloist or ensemble member.
- Evaluate and refine performances using specific feedback.

SUGGESTED EXPERIENCES & FORMS

Free verse; narrative; ballad; spoken word; parody; dramatic monologue; sustained metaphor; hybrid or traditional forms.

PROGRESSION MILESTONE

Pupils make independent, purposeful choices in reading, composing, redrafting and performing poetry for a real audience.

Suggested poetic experiences across the school

Do not lock every form to one year group. Revisit forms when they serve a new purpose, use richer texts or demand more independent choices.

Stage	Sound & pattern	Image & description	Structure & form	Voice & performance
EYFS	Rhymes; refrains; chants; syllable play	Sounds; actions; sensory words	Oral lists; repeated patterns	Songs; echo; call-and-response
Year 1	Rhyming pairs; repeated lines	Simple senses and comparisons	Lists; patterns; simple acrostics	Action and whole-class poems
Year 2	Couplets; rhythm; recurring language	Expanded description; word choice	Shape; calligram; question-and-answer	Partner and small-group recital
Year 3	Repetition; alliteration; onomatopoeia	Sensory detail; similes; strong verbs	kennings; riddles; simple free verse	Character and refrain poems
Year 4	Controlled rhyme and rhythm	Metaphor; personification; mood	Narrative; cinquain; stanzas	Group performance and interpretation
Year 5	Sound pattern for intended effect	Extended imagery; atmosphere	Ballad; ode; monologue; free verse	Persona and independent performance
Year 6	Deliberate sound, silence and pace	Sustained metaphor; symbolism where apt	Spoken word; parody; hybrid forms	Solo/ensemble interpretation

Curriculum test: Can teachers explain why this form, poem or performance belongs here - and what pupils are learning next?

Reading, enjoyment, discussion and vocabulary

Use this table during curriculum review, staff discussion or transition between year groups. The detailed year-group pages provide examples and milestones.

Stage	Reading & enjoyment	Discussion & vocabulary
EYFS	Hear varied poems, rhymes and songs; join refrains; respond through movement and play.	Notice sounds and rhyme; talk about favourite words; learn vocabulary through action and context.
Year 1	Listen widely beyond decoding level; recognise predictable phrases; recite short poems.	Discuss interesting words; identify obvious rhyme and repetition; give a simple preference.
Year 2	Discuss contemporary and classic poetry; build a repertoire by heart.	Clarify vocabulary; discuss favourite phrases, recurring language and how intonation supports meaning.
Year 3	Read varied poetry; recognise different forms; prepare poems for reading aloud.	Explore sensory detail, simple imagery and mood; use dictionaries; compare simple features.
Year 4	Compare poems and recognise how form and presentation contribute.	Discuss figurative language, mood and viewpoint; explain the effect of selected words and phrases.
Year 5	Read increasingly widely; compare writers, traditions and themes; learn poems by heart.	Evaluate vocabulary, figurative language, structure, tone and viewpoint; justify interpretations.
Year 6	Respond to challenging and unfamiliar poetry; compare forms and interpretations.	Use precise evidence; evaluate language and structure; discuss alternative readings and creative decisions.

Progression is shown through increasing range, complexity, independence, control and ability to explain choices.

Writing, composition, performance and oracy

Use this table during curriculum review, staff discussion or transition between year groups. The detailed year-group pages provide examples and milestones.

Stage	Writing & composition	Performance & oracy
EYFS	Create orally through word substitution, shared lines, sensory language and sound play.	Join shared rhymes using voice, actions, movement and call-and-response.
Year 1	Compose orally and create simple list, pattern, sensory and repetitive poems.	Speak clearly in class performance; use simple pace, volume, action and memory.
Year 2	Plan aloud, collect words, write short poems and make simple additions or revisions.	Recite with intonation; coordinate repeated responses; perform with a partner or group.
Year 3	Use models, precise verbs, sensory imagery, similes, repetition and deliberate line breaks.	Rehearse articulation, pace, volume and expression; explain one performance choice.
Year 4	Plan, draft and edit; organise lines and stanzas; use imagery with increasing control.	Organise group performance; control delivery; give specific feedback and explain choices.
Year 5	Select form for audience and purpose; sustain voice and mood; redraft for impact.	Prepare independently; refine tone, pace, pauses and emphasis for a clear audience.
Year 6	Choose form, voice and structure deliberately; sustain ideas; redraft and justify decisions.	Interpret confidently; adapt tone, pace, pause, volume and gesture; evaluate impact.

Progression is shown through increasing range, complexity, independence, control and ability to explain choices.

Poetry provision audit: curriculum and reading

Tick one judgement for each statement. Add brief evidence or a next step. Complete collaboratively where possible.

A. CURRICULUM DESIGN

AUDIT STATEMENT	SECURE	DEVELOPING	PRIORITY	EVIDENCE / NEXT STEP
Poetry is taught and enjoyed regularly across the year in every phase.	☐	☐	☐	
The curriculum shows increasing range, complexity, independence and control.	☐	☐	☐	
Year groups understand what pupils experienced previously and what comes next.	☐	☐	☐	
Poetry reading, discussion, composition and performance are planned as connected strands.	☐	☐	☐	
Suggested forms support learning rather than becoming a repetitive tick-box sequence.	☐	☐	☐	

B. READING, TEXTS AND POETS

AUDIT STATEMENT	SECURE	DEVELOPING	PRIORITY	EVIDENCE / NEXT STEP
Pupils hear poetry read aloud by confident adults from EYFS to Year 6.	☐	☐	☐	
The selection includes contemporary and classic poetry and a diverse range of voices.	☐	☐	☐	
Children sometimes enjoy poems without an attached worksheet or written task.	☐	☐	☐	
Pupils build a repertoire of poems known well or learnt by heart.	☐	☐	☐	
Classrooms and the school library provide inviting access to poetry collections.	☐	☐	☐	

Poetry provision audit: teaching and impact

Tick one judgement for each statement. Add brief evidence or a next step. Complete collaboratively where possible.

C. TEACHING, WRITING AND INCLUSION

AUDIT STATEMENT	SECURE	DEVELOPING	PRIORITY	EVIDENCE / NEXT STEP
Teachers use strong model poems, discussion, oral rehearsal and shared writing.	☐	☐	☐	
Pupils learn how poets make choices rather than merely collecting named features.	☐	☐	☐	
Scaffolds enable access and are reduced as pupils gain confidence and independence.	☐	☐	☐	
Pupils reread, improve and explain important vocabulary or structural choices.	☐	☐	☐	
Assessment informs teaching without reducing poetry to feature counting.	☐	☐	☐	

D. PERFORMANCE, CULTURE AND IMPACT

AUDIT STATEMENT	SECURE	DEVELOPING	PRIORITY	EVIDENCE / NEXT STEP
Every phase rehearses and performs poetry for a genuine audience.	☐	☐	☐	
Performance skills progress in voice, pace, pause, tone, movement and interpretation.	☐	☐	☐	
Poetry is visible through displays, assemblies, recordings, publications or events.	☐	☐	☐	
Staff have sufficient subject knowledge, confidence and practical resources.	☐	☐	☐	
Pupil voice shows growing enjoyment, confidence and knowledge of poems and poets.	☐	☐	☐	

Chosen poems and poets: EYFS and KS1

Add anchor poems and poets, then record the planned reading, performance and writing outcomes. Aim for range without creating a rigid checklist.

Year	Term	Anchor poem(s)	Poet(s)	Reading / performance outcome	Writing opportunity
EYFS	Autumn				
EYFS	Spring				
EYFS	Summer				
Year 1	Autumn				
Year 1	Spring				
Year 1	Summer				
Year 2	Autumn				
Year 2	Spring				
Year 2	Summer				

Chosen poems and poets: KS2

Add anchor poems and poets, then record the planned reading, performance and writing outcomes. Aim for range without creating a rigid checklist.

Year	Term	Anchor poem(s)	Poet(s)	Reading / performance outcome	Writing opportunity
Year 3	Autumn				
Year 3	Spring				
Year 3	Summer				
Year 4	Autumn				
Year 4	Spring				
Year 4	Summer				
Year 5	Autumn				
Year 5	Spring				
Year 5	Summer				
Year 6	Autumn				
Year 6	Spring				
Year 6	Summer				

Whole-school poetry action plan

Choose a small number of high-impact priorities. Name the action, owner, evidence of success and review date.

Priority	Action	Owner	Resources / support	Success evidence	Review date
1					
2					
3					
4					
Suggested first actions					
5	- Protect time for poetry reading and enjoyment in every year group. - Agree a diverse set of anchor poets and poems, checking repetition and gaps. - Plan at least one authentic performance or publication outcome per phase. - Develop staff confidence through shared planning, demonstration or poetry CPD. - Review the impact through pupil voice, planning and examples of independent work.				

Important

This resource translates national expectations into a suggested annual progression. It is not a statutory scheme, an assessment framework or an Ofsted checklist.

Primary reference documents

- **National curriculum in England: English programmes of study**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-english-programmes-of-study/national-curriculum-in-england-english-programmes-of-study>

- **Development Matters: non-statutory curriculum guidance for EYFS**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/development-matters--2/development-matters>

- **Early years foundation stage statutory framework**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2>

- **The reading framework: teaching the foundations of literacy**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-reading-framework-teaching-the-foundations-of-literacy>

Using the document responsibly

- Adapt expectations for pupils' starting points while retaining ambitious access to rich poetry.
- Select age-appropriate poems with a range of forms, themes, traditions, cultures and voices.
- Avoid treating suggested forms as a ladder of difficulty; revisit them with greater depth and independence.
- Use assessment to inform teaching, not to reduce poetry to a feature-counting exercise.
- Review the map when national or local guidance changes.

Bring poetry to life in your school

Poetry Days, online workshops and primary-teacher poetry CPD with Ian Bland.

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