



Orrets Meadow Reading Steps

The Pre-Curriculum Reading Steps provide a developmental pathway towards the National Curriculum and formal reading skills. They are designed to recognise and value the wide range of early literacy development seen within our pupils, including those working significantly below age-related expectations or not yet ready for formal phonics instruction.

The progression is developmental rather than age-based. Each step reflects the typical sequence through which children develop early reading behaviours, beginning with sensory response and shared attention before moving towards environmental awareness, symbol recognition, sound pattern awareness, early phonics and emerging decoding.

The steps are intended to act as a bridge into the National Curriculum by breaking early reading development into smaller, meaningful stages. This allows staff to identify and celebrate small but significant achievements that may not yet be captured within formal curriculum objectives alone.

The developmental journey headings are included to help clarify the main focus of each stage. While some statements between steps may appear similar, the key progression is often seen through:

- increasing awareness and attention,
- growing intentionality and independence,
- movement from shared experiences towards active participation,
- and increasing understanding of how sounds, symbols and print carry meaning.

The progression should be viewed as fluid rather than strictly linear. Pupils may demonstrate aspects of different steps simultaneously depending on context, communication profile and level of support.

Step	Developmental Driver	Main Focus
Step 1	Sensory Response	Responding to sounds, sights and sensory experiences, showing early interest and engagement.
Step 2	Shared Attention	Engaging with others and sharing attention during songs, books and early reading experiences.
Step 3	Environmental Awareness	Beginning to notice sounds, pictures, print and environmental symbols around them.
Step 4	Symbol Recognition	Recognising that symbols, pictures, letters and print carry meaning.
Step 5	Sound Pattern Awareness	Developing awareness of rhyme, rhythm, syllables and sound patterns in words.
Step 6	Early Phonics	Beginning to connect sounds to letters and use early phonic knowledge to read simple words.
Step 7	Emerging Decoding	Beginning to blend sounds and read simple phrases and short sentences using developing phonic knowledge.

		<u>Sound Discrimination</u>	<u>Phonetic Knowledge/ Word Reading</u>	<u>Comprehension</u>
<u>Step 1</u>	<u>Sensory Response</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reacts to environmental sounds, such as voices, music or sudden noises. - Shows awareness of familiar sounds, such as a familiar voice or routine sound. - Explores sounds through movement, vocalisation or interaction with objects. - Shows preference for familiar sounds, such as songs or repeated noises. - Engages in shared sound experiences with an adult. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shows interest in pictures, symbols and visual stimuli. - Explores books physically, for example touching, turning or holding them. - Looks at pictures of familiar people or objects. - Engages in shared book experiences with an adult. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shows interest in pictures, objects or sensory elements during shared experiences. - Engages in shared book experiences with an adult. - Responds to familiar routines or repeated experiences. - Shows awareness of familiar people, objects or events in pictures.
<u>Step 2</u>	<u>Shared Attention</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Turns towards familiar sounds, such as their name or the voice of a familiar adult. - Recognises familiar sounds, such as everyday noises or voices. - Begins to imitate sounds during play or interaction. - Anticipates familiar sounds within routines, songs or games. - Joins in with sound-making activities with adult support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Notices familiar symbols such as logos, signs or photos. - Recognises familiar people, objects or characters in pictures. - Shows interest in print in the environment, such as signs or labels. - Points to or looks at familiar images in books. - Begins to associate images with meaning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engages with simple books, pictures or visual texts. - Anticipates familiar events or routines. - Shows preferences for certain books, images or stories. - Points to or explores images during shared reading. - Engages in shared attention during book experiences.

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Step 3</u></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Environmental Awareness</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recognises common environmental sounds, such as ambulance, dog or car. - Begins to imitate sounds that they hear during play and interaction. - Enjoys listening to familiar rhymes, songs and sound patterns. - Engages with adults during songs, rhymes and sound play. - Joins in with actions linked to sounds, such as clapping or stamping. - Begins to notice differences between sounds. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Begins to understand that print carries meaning. - Recognises their own name in print. - Begins to recognise some letters. - Engages with alphabet songs and begins to join in. - Shows interest in letters, symbols and environmental print. - Begins to distinguish between letters and other symbols. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enjoys sharing books with an adult. - Listens to simple stories and understands what is happening with picture support. - Shows interest in books, rhymes and repeated patterns. - Joins in with actions and sounds in familiar stories. - Engages with pictures that are the focus of adult attention.
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Step 4</u></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Symbol Recognition</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Joins in with rhymes, songs and rhythmic activities, such as clapping along to a beat. - Begins to recognise words with the same starting sound, such as cat and car (early sound pattern awareness - terminology not required). - Enjoys rhythm and repetition in language, including chants and nursery rhymes. - Begins to notice patterns in sounds and words. - Responds to sound patterns in familiar texts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Notices print in the environment, such as signs, labels or logos. - Recognises the first letter of their name and some familiar letters. - Begins to link some sounds to letters (phoneme-grapheme correspondence - terminology not required). - Recognises some familiar words, such as their name or labels. - Understands that print is read from left to right. - Begins to track print during shared reading. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Has favourite books and seeks them out, to share with an adult, with another child, or to look at alone. - Pays attention to pictures and words during shared reading. - Asks simple questions about books. - Repeats words, phrases or actions from familiar stories. - Makes comments and shares ideas about stories and pictures. - Develops play linked to stories using props or small world resources.

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Step 5</u></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Sound Pattern Awareness</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recognises rhythm in spoken words, songs, poems and rhymes. - Shows awareness of rhyme in words and sound patterns. - Claps or taps beats in words (syllable awareness - terminology not required). - Identifies when words start with the same sound (early alliteration awareness - terminology not required). - Joins in with repeated sound patterns in stories and rhymes. - Distinguishes between different sounds in simple words. - Begins to isolate the first sound in a word. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Names or recognises some letters of the alphabet. - Recognises familiar words and signs, such as their name or labels. - Hears and says the initial sound in words. - Begins to read individual letters by saying the sounds for them (phoneme-grapheme correspondence - terminology not required). - Recognises that print is read from left to right and top to bottom. - Begins to recognise simple letter groups that represent sounds (digraph awareness - terminology not required). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enjoys listening to longer stories and can remember much of what happens. - Talks about events and main characters in stories. Suggests how a story might end (prediction - terminology not required). - Begins to recognise how stories are structured. - Looks at and enjoys books independently. - Handles books carefully and the correct way up. - Begins to talk about familiar texts using simple vocabulary. - Makes links between stories and their own experiences.
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Step 6</u></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Early Phonics</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continues a rhyming string. - Recognises when words start with the same sound in phrases such as big blue ball (early alliteration awareness - terminology not required). - Counts or claps beats in words (syllable awareness - terminology not required). - Identifies the first and last sounds in words (phoneme awareness - terminology not required). - Begins to break simple words into sounds (segmenting - terminology not required). - Blends sounds orally to make simple words (blending - terminology not required). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Links sounds to letters and some common letter groups such as sh, th, ee (digraphs - terminology not required). - Blends sounds to read simple words (blending - terminology not required). - Reads simple words matched to their phonics knowledge. - Reads a few common exception words. - Reads simple phrases and sentences matched to their phonics knowledge. - Uses phonics knowledge to attempt unfamiliar words. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recalls and discusses stories or information that has been read to them or that they have read themselves. - Describes main story settings, events and characters in increasing detail. - Predicts what might happen using clues from the text or illustrations (prediction - terminology not required). - Answers 'why' questions about stories. - Retrieves information from books or simple texts. - Uses vocabulary influenced by their reading experiences.

Step 7

Emerging Decoding

- Identifies beats in words with increasing accuracy (syllable awareness - terminology not required).
- Recognises rhyme and sound patterns independently in familiar texts.
- Begins to break simple words into sounds and put them back together, with support (segmenting and blending - terminology not required).
- Applies sound awareness when attempting to read or spell simple words.

- Recognises and says sounds for an increasing number of letters.
- Recognises some common letter groups such as sh, th, ee (digraph awareness - terminology not required).
- Begins to blend sounds to read simple words, with support (blending - terminology not required).
- Uses developing phonic knowledge to attempt to read words (phoneme-grapheme correspondence - terminology not required).
- Begins to read simple captions or phrases matched to known sounds, with support.
- Recognises some common exception words through repetition and exposure.

- Retells stories using their own words and recently introduced vocabulary, with support.
- Anticipates key events in familiar stories (prediction - terminology not required).
- Begins to explain why things happen in a story, with prompting.
- Uses recently introduced vocabulary when discussing texts.
- Begins to explain preferences about books.
- Begins to make simple inferences based on what they have heard (early inference - terminology not required).