

Reading Curriculum Rationale: Core Texts (Years 2–6)

Purpose: To outline the intent behind selected texts in our reading curriculum and demonstrate how each supports progression, diversity, vocabulary development, and cultural capital.

Year 2 Core Texts

Rabbit and Bear — Julian Gough & Jim Field

A humorous, character-driven text that supports early chapter-book reading. The stories introduce themes of empathy, conflict resolution, and emotional literacy, helping pupils recognise and discuss feelings while developing confidence with extended narrative structures.

After the Fall — Dan Santat

This award-winning picturebook offers rich opportunities for inference through its visual storytelling and exploration of resilience and overcoming fear. It supports the development of emotional intelligence and provides a meaningful stimulus for discussion and reflective writing.

Lost Species — Jess French

Celebrating biodiversity, this text exposes pupils to global environmental issues and fosters compassion for threatened species. Its rich vocabulary and engaging layout strengthen pupils' ability to work with non-fiction, supporting cross-curricular learning and responsible citizenship.

The Magic Finger — Roald Dahl

This short fantasy narrative supports understanding of consequence, fairness, and empathy. Dahl's distinctive style and playful language enhance enjoyment of reading while providing accessible opportunities for developing comprehension and discussion around moral choices.

The Spider and the Fly — Mary Howitt & Tony DiTerlizzi

This cautionary tale in verse introduces pupils to classic poetry, rhyme, and moral messaging. The atmospheric illustrations and formal language support inference and analytical discussion, while teaching pupils to identify persuasive techniques and recognise unsafe situations.

Year 3 Core Texts

Cakes in Space — Philip Reeve & Sarah McIntyre

This imaginative sci-fi adventure broadens pupils' exposure to genre and develops creative thinking. The accessible language and vibrant illustrations support fluency and engagement, while themes of teamwork, curiosity, and problem-solving deepen pupils' comprehension and personal development.

Earth-Shattering Events — Robin Jacobs

A high-quality non-fiction text that strengthens scientific and geographical understanding. Diagrams, clear explanations, and varied text features help children practise reading for information, while encouraging curiosity about the natural world and environmental responsibility.

The Lost Spells — Robert Macfarlane & Jackie Morris

A lyrical, poetic celebration of nature that enriches vocabulary and encourages children to slow down and observe the world closely. The poetic forms and rich imagery provide strong models for descriptive writing and build cultural appreciation for nature-based literature.

The BFG — Roald Dahl

A modern classic offering complex invented vocabulary, humour, and descriptive richness. Themes of bravery, friendship, and justice support spiritual, moral, social, and cultural (SMSC) development, while the extended narrative builds stamina and deepens comprehension skills.

Adventure Mice: Otter Chaos — Philip Reeve & Sarah McIntyre

A lively, accessible adventure story that supports emerging reading stamina. Themes of bravery, fairness, and teamwork encourage positive social values, while the clear structure and humour engage a wide range of learners.

Year 4/5 Core Texts

Norse Myths — retold by Kevin Crossley-Holland

These influential traditional tales build cultural capital by introducing pupils to archetypes, symbolism, and narrative complexity. The rich language supports vocabulary development while enabling comparisons across mythological and historical traditions.

The Pied Piper of Hamelin — Robert Browning

A classic narrative poem that provides opportunities for exploring morality, persuasion, and consequence. Its rhythmic language and symbolic themes support deep discussion and enhance pupils' understanding of traditional tales and narrative form.

Africa, Amazing Africa — Atinuke

A vibrant non-fiction text that challenges stereotypes and builds global awareness. Atinuke's accessible voice provides insights into the diversity of African cultures, strengthening pupils' understanding of geography, identity, and inclusivity. The book also develops reading-for-information skills.

A Necklace of Raindrops — Joan Aiken

This collection of magical short stories helps pupils explore varied narrative structures and themes such as kindness, trickery, and perseverance. The lyrical prose and imaginative settings support vocabulary growth and enhance creative thinking.

Tamarind and the Star of Ishta — Jasbinder Bilan

A contemporary novel exploring identity, family, and cultural heritage. Set partly in India, it enriches cultural diversity within the curriculum and supports pupils' inference and empathy skills. The layered narrative encourages deeper engagement and emotional reflection.

The Wonderling — Mira Bartók

A sophisticated fantasy novel with themes of belonging, courage, and kindness. Its rich descriptive language and complex world-building extend pupils' higher-level reading comprehension while promoting thoughtful discussion around compassion and resilience.

Year 5/6 Core Texts

The Secret of Haven Point — Lisette Auton

Featuring disabled protagonists, this inclusive adventure broadens representation and challenges stereotypes. Themes of identity, community, and bravery foster empathy, while the descriptive narrative supports advanced comprehension and vocabulary development.

The Explorer — Katherine Rundell

A gripping survival adventure set in the Amazon, offering opportunities to explore environmental themes, moral choices, and personal resilience. Rundell's rich description and multi-layered characters deepen comprehension and support cross-curricular links with geography and science.

Black and British: A Short Essential History — David Olusoga

An essential, accessible text that strengthens pupils' historical understanding of identity and diversity in Britain. The clear structure supports disciplinary reading in history, while the themes encourage critical thinking about fairness, equality, and social justice.

On the Move: Poems About Migration — Michael Rosen

This poetry collection explores migration, belonging, and hope through accessible yet profound verse. The range of forms supports poetry appreciation and performance, while the themes help pupils understand global issues with empathy and sensitivity.

Beetle Boy — M.G. Leonard

Combining science, mystery, and humour, this novel encourages curiosity about the natural world and introduces STEM-related themes. The engaging plot and rich vocabulary help build sustained reading stamina and promote environmental awareness.

The Final Year — Matt Goodfellow

A verse novel that captures themes of friendship, change, and emotional wellbeing. Its accessible poetic structure supports reluctant readers while encouraging reflection, resilience, and discussion—particularly valuable as pupils prepare for transition to secondary school.

Overall Curriculum Impact Statement

Across Years 2–6, these carefully selected texts ensure progression in:

- **Reading stamina** through engagement with increasingly complex narrative structures, while also broadening experience with a rich range of poetic forms and high-quality non-fiction texts.
- **Vocabulary development** via rich language, poetry, and diverse genres that support exploration of tier 2 words.

- **Comprehension and inference** through layered themes and challenging ideas.
- **Cultural capital** by exposing pupils to global stories, classic texts, environmental themes, and under-represented voices.
- **SMSC development** through stories that promote empathy, fairness, resilience, and responsible citizenship.
- **Cross-curricular knowledge** supporting geography, history, science, and PSHE.

Together, these texts form a coherent, ambitious reading curriculum that supports all pupils in becoming confident, critical, and enthusiastic readers.