



Spoken Language in EYFS: What English Subject Leaders Need to Know

The EYFS framework is structured very differently to the national curriculum as it is organised across seven Areas of Learning rather than subject areas. This document aims to help subject leaders understand how the skills and knowledge developed across EYFS form the foundations of the national curriculum subjects.

It shows which statements from the non-statutory guidance, Development Matters, are prerequisites for spoken language within the national curriculum. EYFS settings may choose to use other guidance instead of Development Matters and may decide on different statements as the prerequisites. The table below outlines the most relevant statements taken from the Early Learning Goals in the EYFS statutory framework and from the Development Matters age ranges for three and four-year-olds and reception to match the programme of study for spoken language.

The most relevant statements for spoken language are taken from the following Areas of Learning:

- Communication and Language
- Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- Understanding the World
- Expressive Arts and Design

Spoken Language		
Listening Skills		
Three and Four-Year-Olds	Communication and Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoy listening to longer stories and can remember much of what happens. • Pay attention to more than one thing at a time, which can be difficult. • Start a conversation with an adult or a friend and continue it for many turns.
	Expressive Arts and Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen with increased attention to sounds.
Reception	Communication and Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand how to listen carefully and why listening is important. • Listen to and talk about stories to build familiarity and understanding. • Listen carefully to rhymes and songs, paying attention to how they sound. • Listen to and talk about selected non-fiction to develop a deep familiarity with new knowledge and vocabulary.
	Expressive Arts and Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen attentively, move to and talk about music, expressing their feelings and response.

ELG	Communication and Language	Listening, Attention and Understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listen attentively and respond to what they hear with relevant questions, comments and actions when being read to and during whole class discussions and small group interactions. Make comments about what they have heard and ask questions to clarify their understanding. Hold conversation when engaged in back-and-forth exchanges with their teacher and peers.
	Personal, Social and Emotional Development	Self-Regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Give focused attention to what the teacher says, responding appropriately even when engaged in activity, and show an ability to follow instructions involving several ideas or actions.
Following Instructions			
Three and Four-Year-Olds	Communication and Language		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand a question or instruction that has two parts, such as "Get your coat and wait at the door."
	Personal, Social and Emotional Development		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remember rules without needing an adult to remind them.
ELG	Personal, Social and Emotional Development	Self-Regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Give focused attention to what the teacher says, responding appropriately even when engaged in activity, and show an ability to follow instructions involving several ideas or actions.
		Managing Self	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain the reasons for rules, know right from wrong and try to behave accordingly.
Asking and Answering Questions			
Three and Four-Year-Olds	Communication and Language		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand a question or instruction that has two parts, such as "Get your coat and wait at the door." Understand 'why' questions, like: "Why do you think the caterpillar got so fat?"
Reception	Communication and Language		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask questions to find out more and check they understand what has been said to them.
ELG	Communication and Language	Listening, Attention and Understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listen attentively and respond to what they hear with relevant questions, comments and actions when being read to and during whole class discussions and small group interactions. Make comments about what they have heard and ask questions to clarify their understanding.
		Speaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer explanations for why things happen, making use of recently introduced vocabulary from stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems when appropriate.
Drama, Performance and Confidence			
Three and Four-Year-Olds	Communication and Language		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be able to express a point of view and debate when they disagree with an adult or friend, using words as well as actions.
	Personal, Social and Emotional Development		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Show more confidence in new social situations. Develop appropriate ways of being assertive.
	Expressive Arts and Design		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create their own songs, or improvise a song around one they know.
Reception	Communication and Language		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retell the story, once they have developed a deep familiarity with the text, some as exact repetition and some in their own words. Learn rhymes, poems and songs.
	Expressive Arts and Design		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Watch and talk about dance and performance art, expressing their feelings and responses. Sing in a group or on their own, increasing matching the pitch and following the melody. Explore and engage in music making and dance, performing solo or in groups.
ELG	Personal, Social and Emotional Development	Managing Self	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be confident to try new activities and show independence, resilience and perseverance in the face of a challenge.

	Expressive Arts and Design	Being Imaginative and Expressive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sings a range of well-known nursery rhymes and songs. Performs songs, rhymes, poems and stories with others, and (when appropriate) try to move in time to music.
Vocabulary Building and Standard English			
Three and Four-Year-Olds	Communication and Language		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use a wider range of vocabulary. Develop their communication, but may continue to have problems with irregular tenses and plurals, such as 'runned' for 'ran' and 'swimmed' for 'swam'. Use longer sentences of four to six words.
	Literacy		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage in extended conversations about stories, learning new vocabulary.
	Understanding the World		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talk about what they see, using a wide vocabulary.
Reception	Communication and Language		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn new vocabulary. Use new vocabulary throughout the day. Articulate their ideas and thoughts in well-formed sentences. Develop social phrases. Use new vocabulary in different contexts.
ELG	Communication and Language	Speaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in small group, class and one-to-one discussions, offering their own ideas, using recently introduced vocabulary. Express their ideas and feelings about their experiences using full sentences, including use of past, present and future tenses and making use of conjunctions, with modelling and support from their teacher.
	Literacy	Comprehension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate understanding of what has been read to them by retelling stories and narratives using their own words and recently introduced vocabulary. Use and understand recently introduced vocabulary during discussions about stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems and during role play.
Speaking for a Range of Purposes			
Three and Four-Year-Olds	Communication and Language		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be able to express a point of view and debate when they disagree with an adult or friend, using words as well as actions. Start a conversation with an adult or a friend, and continue it for many turns. Use talk to organise themselves and their play: "Let's go on a bus... you sit there... I'll be the driver."
	Personal, Social and Emotional Development		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Play with one or more other children, extending and elaborating play ideas. Develop appropriate ways of being assertive. Talk with others to solve conflicts. Talk about their feelings using words like 'happy', 'sad', 'angry' or 'worried'.
	Literacy		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage in extended conversations about stories, learning new vocabulary.
	Understanding the World		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talk about what they see, using a wide range of vocabulary. Explore and talk about different forces they can feel. Talk about the differences between materials and changes they notice. Know that there are different countries in the world and talk about the differences they have experienced or seen in photos.
	Expressive Arts and Design		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take part in simple pretend play, using an object to represent something else even though they are not similar.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin to develop complex stories using small world equipment, such as animal sets, dolls and dolls houses, etc.
Reception	Communication and Language		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask questions to find out more and to check they understand what has been said to them. • Describe events in some detail. • Use talk to help work out problems and organise thinking and activities, and to explain how things work and why they might happen. • Develop social phrases. • Listen to and talk about stories to build familiarity and understanding. • Retell the story, once they have developed a deep familiarity with the text, some as exact repetition and some in their own words. • Use new vocabulary in different contexts. • Listen to and talk about selected non-fiction to develop a deep familiarity with new knowledge and vocabulary.
	Personal, Social and Emotional Development		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Express their feelings and consider the feelings of others.
	Understanding the World		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk about their immediate family and community. • Name and describe people who are familiar to them. • Comment on images of familiar situations in the past. • Compare and contrast characters from stories, including figures from the past. • Describe what they see, hear and feel whilst outside.
	Expressive Arts and Design		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch and talk about dance and performance art, expressing their feelings and responses.
ELG	Communication and Language	Listening, Attention and Understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make comments about what they have heard and ask questions to clarify their meanings. • Hold conversation when engaged in back-and-forth exchanges with their teacher and peers.
		Speaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in small group, class and one-to-one discussions, offering their own ideas, using recently introduced vocabulary. • Offer explanations for why things might happen, making use of recently introduced vocabulary from stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems where appropriate. • Express their ideas and feelings about their experiences using full sentences, including use of past, present and future tenses and making use of conjunctions, with modelling and support from their teacher.
	Personal, Social and Emotional Development	Managing Self	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain the reasons for rules, know right from wrong and try to behave accordingly.
	Literacy	Comprehension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate understanding of what has been read to them by retelling stories and narratives using their own words and recently introduced vocabulary. • Use and understand recently introduced vocabulary during discussions about stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems and during role play.
		Word Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read aloud simple sentences and books that are consistent with their phonic knowledge, including some common exception words.
	Understanding the World	Past and Present	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk about the lives of the people around them and their roles in society.
		People, Culture and Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe their immediate environment using knowledge from observation, discussion, stories, non-fiction texts and maps.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain some similarities and differences between life in this country and life in other countries, drawing on knowledge from stories, non-fiction texts and (when appropriate) maps.
ELG	Expressive Arts and Design	Creating with Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share their creations, explaining the processes they have used.
		Being Imaginative and Expressive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invent, adapt and recount narratives and stories with peers and their teacher. Perform songs, rhymes, poems and stories with others, and (when appropriate) try to move in time to music.
Participating in Discussion			
Three and Four-Year-Olds	Communication and Language		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be able to express a point of view and debate when they disagree with an adult or friend, using words as well as actions.
	Literacy		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage in extended conversations about stories, learning new vocabulary.
Reception	Communication and Language		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Articulate their ideas and thoughts in well-formed sentences.
ELG	Communication and Language	Listening, Attention and Understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listen attentively and respond to what they hear with relevant questions, comments and actions, when being read to and during whole class discussions and small group interactions. Hold conversation when engaged in back-and-forth exchanges with their teachers and peers.
		Speaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in small group, class and one-to-one discussions, offering their own ideas, using recently introduced vocabulary.
	Literacy	Comprehension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use and understand recently introduced vocabulary during discussions about stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems and during role play.