

EYFS Foundational Skills Checklist

At The Leys Primary and Nursery School, we recognise that long-term academic success depends entirely on early developmental milestones becoming completely automatic. This framework targets the four non-negotiable pillars of early readiness: Communication and Language, Executive Function, Physical Development, and Academic Foundations (Phonics and Number). If a child enters formal schooling with "shaky" baselines in these areas, their working memory becomes entirely overwhelmed by the basic mechanics of learning, leading to immediate cognitive overload. Rather than using artificial tests, teachers track these observable, everyday behaviours during daily routines and child-initiated play to instantly spotlight individual gaps. This ongoing diagnostic profile directly shapes targeted early interventions and guarantees a seamless, successful transition into Key Stage 1.

Communication and Language

<u>Listening, Attention and Understanding (Receptive Language)</u>	
Sustained Attention: Can focus attention on a specific, adult-led task or story for a short period (approx. 5-10 minutes) during group times.	
Two-Channelled Attention: Can maintain attention on a task while simultaneously listening to an adult's spoken instructions (without needing to completely stop what they are doing physically).	
Multi-Step Instructions: Can understand and accurately follow a two- or three-step command in sequence (e.g., "Put your book on the shelf, grab your coat, and line up at the door.").	
Understanding 'Why' and 'How': Understands and correctly responds to "why" and "how" questions about a familiar story, a shared experience, or a simple hands-on activity.	
Identifying Gaps: Can identify when they haven't understood an instruction and will look for visual cues or ask an adult for clarification.	
<u>Speaking (Expressive Language)</u>	
Narrative Structure: Can retell a familiar story, talk about a recent event, or invent their own narrative using a clear beginning, middle, and end.	
Sentence Complexity: Consistently connects ideas using coordinating and subordinating conjunctions (e.g., <i>and</i> , <i>but</i> , <i>because</i> , <i>so</i>) to create longer, complex sentences.	
Tense and Grammar: Correctly uses past, present, and future tenses when speaking about events (e.g., accurately shifting from "I am painting" to "Yesterday I went to the park").	
Vocabulary Enrichment: Actively attempts to use newly learned, precise Tier 2 and Tier 3 vocabulary words in their everyday conversation (e.g., using words like <i>enormous</i> instead of <i>big</i> , or <i>hibernate</i> during a science topic).	
Pronunciation: Is easily understood by both familiar adults (teachers) and unfamiliar	

adults, articulating most speech sounds clearly.	
<u>Social and Emotional Interaction (Oracy & Pragmatics)</u>	
Reciprocal Conversation: Can engage in meaningful, back-and-forth collaborative dialogues with both peers and adults, keeping to the topic for multiple exchanges.	
Turn-Taking Basics: Understands and respects the social rules of conversation by waiting for a speaker to finish before replying, without constant interrupting.	
Audience Awareness: Begins to naturally adapt <i>how</i> they speak depending on who they are addressing (e.g., using a different tone or politeness level with an unfamiliar visitor vs. a close playground peer).	
Non-Verbal Literacy: Faces the person who is speaking, maintains natural eye contact, and reads basic facial expressions/body language to judge how the listener is feeling.	
Clarifying & Explaining: Can explain their reasoning or justify a choice to a peer during a game or problem-solving activity (e.g., " <i>We need to put the heavy block at the bottom so it doesn't fall over.</i> ").	

Executive Function

<u>Working Memory (Remembering Rules & Routines)</u>	
Routine Independence: Follows established classroom routines automatically without requiring individual verbal reminders (e.g., hanging up their coat, putting away their water bottle, washing hands before snack).	
Rule Recall: Can state or show understanding of core classroom rules (e.g., "kind hands," "indoor voices") even when an adult is not actively prompting them.	
Holding Instructions: Remembers and carries out a simple 2-step instructional sequence after hearing it once (e.g., " <i>Find your boots and wait by the door</i> ").	
Object Retrieval: Remembers where resources are kept in the room and can tidy them away into the correct, designated spaces independently.	
<u>Managing My Impulses (Inhibitory Control)</u>	
Turn-Taking Patience: Deliberately waits for their turn during simple games, conversations, or when lining up, without pushing or displaying extreme frustration.	
Sustained Focus: Can remain seated and actively engage with a brief, adult-led whole class or group activity (approx. 5-10 minutes) without wandering off.	
Braking Impulse Control: Can stop an action instantly when given a visual or verbal signal (e.g., stopping mid-play during a freeze game or a "hands on heads" transition cue).	
Emotional Pausing: Beginning to use strategies (like taking a breath or using words) to manage immediate reactions when they cannot have an object or attention immediately.	

Physical Development

Gross Motor (Core Strength & Upper Body Stability)	
Postural Control: Can sit comfortably on the carpet or on a chair without slumping, needing to prop themselves up with their hands, or constantly changing positions.	
Shoulder & Arm Stability: Can support their own body weight through their shoulders and arms (e.g., crawling, hanging from climbing equipment, or pushing up from the floor).	
Static Balance: Can stand on one foot for 3-5 seconds and hop confidently, demonstrating controlled stability.	
Bilateral Coordination: Uses both sides of the body together effectively to complete tasks like catching a large ball with two hands or climbing stairs using alternating feet.	
Fine Motor (Finger Strength & Grip Mastery)	
Pincer Grasp Fluency: Easily picks up small objects (such as beads, peas, or pegs) using only their thumb and index finger.	
Two-Handed Independence: Can use their non-dominant hand firmly as a "helper hand" to stabilise a piece of paper or an object while their dominant hand manipulates it (e.g., when cutting or drawing).	
Hand & Finger Strength: Demonstrates adequate resistance and control when squeezing, pulling, or moulding resistive materials like playdough, clay, or spray bottles.	
Tripod Grip Progression: Holds a pencil, crayon, or brush with a developing or secure three-finger tripod grip (rather than using a whole-fist palmar grasp).	

Academic Foundations

Phonics (Recognising, Saying & Blending)	
GPC Recognition: Speedily identifies and states the correct pure sound when shown the visual graphemes for the initial set of taught letter-sound correspondences.	
Oral Blending: Automatically blends spoken sounds together to identify a word when an adult speaks in sound-segments (e.g., hearing "c-a-t" and instantly saying "cat").	
Visual Blending: Uses taught GPCs to blend and decode simple, unfamiliar VC and CVC words independently (e.g., reading <i>at</i> , <i>sat</i> , <i>pin</i>).	
Initial Sound Isolation: Can identify and state the starting sound of a spoken word or a physical object (e.g., identifying that <i>apple</i> starts with /æ/).	
Number (Subitising & Reliable Counting)	
Perceptual Subitising (1 to 3): Instantly states the quantity of a small group of up to 3 objects or dots arranged randomly without needing to point and count them.	
Conceptual Subitising (4 & 5): Instantly recognises groups of 4 and 5 when arranged in familiar patterns (like a die or a 5-frame) without counting individual items.	
Stable Order Counting: Recites numbers in the correct, unchanging sequence forward from 1 up to 10 (and ideally beyond).	
One-to-One Correspondence: Accurately counts a physical row or group of up to 10 objects,	

touching each object exactly once and assigning one number name to it.	
Cardinality Recognition: Understands that the final number spoken when counting a set tells them <i>how many</i> objects are there in total (e.g., when asked " <i>So how many are there?</i> " they don't recount the group).	