SS Peter & Paul Catholic Primary School

Maths Language Continuum

The vocabulary our children are taught, strand by strand · 2026–27

Mathematical language is taught explicitly, modelled precisely and revisited frequently. The vocabulary below highlights age-appropriate terms within key strands; it reflects the White Rose Maths vocabulary progression (2025) and the language used in the supplied schemes of learning. A word's position does not imply that it is only taught in that year.

Tier 2 language supports thinking across different mathematical topics (for example compare, justify, explain and evaluate). Tier 3 language names subject-specific concepts (for example denominator, factor pair and circumference). Children should use both in discussion, representations and written reasoning.

Number and place value

Nursery / Year 3	Reception / Year 4	Year 1 / Year 5	Year 2 / Year 6
Nursery count; number; amount; numeral; more; fewer; same; subitise; forwards; backwards	Reception before; after; zero; represent; number order; one more; one less	Year 1 digit; ones; tens; partition; compare; greatest; least; ordinal; number line	Year 2 exchange; value; multiple; interval; ascending; descending
Year 3 hundreds; 3-digit; partition; estimate; ascending; descending	Year 4 four-digit; thousands; round; Roman numerals; placeholder	Year 5 10,000; 100,000; million; integer; negative number; power of 10	Year 6 10 million; place-value reasoning; precision; powers of 10

Addition and subtraction

Nursery / Year 3	Reception / Year 4	Year 1 / Year 5	Year 2 / Year 6
Nursery join; take away; more; fewer; change; altogether	Reception add; part; whole; 1 more; 1 less; take away; double	Year 1 addition; subtraction; sum; difference; equal to; fact family; total	Year 2 calculate; related facts; method; partition; exchange; inverse
Year 3 column addition; column subtraction; estimate; exchange; complements	Year 4 efficient; inverse; round; written method; decimal money	Year 5 accurate; approximate; strategy; constant difference; check	Year 6 order of operations; negative-number intervals; multi-step

Multiplication and division

Nursery / Year 3	Reception / Year 4	Year 1 / Year 5	Year 2 / Year 6
Nursery group; pair; same; equal; share	Reception equal groups; double; half; share; group	Year 1 array; repeated addition; count in 2s, 5s and 10s	Year 2 multiply; divide; even; odd; twice; times table; equal groups
Year 3 product; multiple; commutative; inverse; remainder; scaling	Year 4 factor; factor pair; efficient; triple; short division	Year 5 prime; square; cube; common factor; common multiple; long multiplication	Year 6 order of operations; common multiple; long division; powers

Fractions, decimals and percentages

Nursery / Year 3	Reception / Year 4	Year 1 / Year 5	Year 2 / Year 6
Nursery	Reception	Year 1	Year 2

part; whole; share equally	half; quarter; whole; equal parts; sharing	half; quarter; equal parts; fractions of shapes	unit fraction; non-unit fraction; numerator; denominator; third; equivalent
Year 3 unitise; compare fractions; denominator; tenths; fraction of an amount	Year 4 decimal point; tenths; hundredths; mixed number; improper fraction	Year 5 percentage; thousandth; common denominator; equivalent fractions	Year 6 simplify; simplest form; recurring decimal; fraction operations

Measure: money

Nursery / Year 3	Reception / Year 4	Year 1 / Year 5	Year 2 / Year 6
Nursery pay; buy; cost; more; less	Reception coin; worth; buy; price	Year 1 pence; pounds; £; p; coin; note	Year 2 change; amount; compare value; difference
Year 3 add amounts; subtract amounts; convert pounds and pence	Year 4 decimal money; estimate; solve money problems	Year 5 calculate using decimals; budgets; convert units	Year 6 complex money problems; efficiency; accuracy

Measure: length, mass, capacity and temperature

Nursery / Year 3	Reception / Year 4	Year 1 / Year 5	Year 2 / Year 6
Nursery big; small; heavy; light; full; empty; long; short	Reception length; height; tall; taller; heavier; lighter; balance	Year 1 centimetre; compare; measure; container; volume; capacity	Year 2 metre; gram; kilogram; litre; millilitre; Celsius; thermometer
Year 3 millimetre; kilometre; perimeter; capacity; measure accurately	Year 4 convert; kilometre; perimeter; area; rectilinear	Year 5 imperial; metric; volume; cubic centimetres; convert	Year 6 formula; tonnes; cubic metres; imperial conversions

Measure: time

Nursery / Year 3	Reception / Year 4	Year 1 / Year 5	Year 2 / Year 6
Nursery now; before; after; day; night; yesterday; today	Reception daily routine; morning; afternoon; first; next; later	Year 1 hour; half past; o'clock; minute; days; months; calendar	Year 2 quarter past; quarter to; five-minute intervals; duration
Year 3 analogue; digital; am; pm; 24-hour; Roman numerals; leap year	Year 4 convert hours and minutes; read times; duration	Year 5 convert time units; timetables; multi-step problems	Year 6 solve time problems; elapsed time; interpret timetables

Shape and geometry

Nursery / Year 3	Reception / Year 4	Year 1 / Year 5	Year 2 / Year 6
Nursery shape; round; straight; corner; edge; turn; build	Reception circle; triangle; square; rectangle; 2-D; 3-D; sides	Year 1 faces; properties; vertex; vertices; position; turn	Year 2 edge; line of symmetry; symmetrical; vertex; vertical
Year 3 acute; obtuse; right angle; parallel; perpendicular; polygon	Year 4 isosceles; scalene; rhombus; trapezium; regular; irregular	Year 5 degrees; reflex; protractor; angles on a straight line	Year 6 radius; diameter; circumference; interior angles; net; vertically opposite

Statistics and data

Nursery / Year 3	Reception / Year 4	Year 1 / Year 5	Year 2 / Year 6
Nursery sort; compare; group; how many	Reception collect; sort; match; show; compare	Year 1 record; interpret; table; tally; compare totals	Year 2 pictogram; tally chart; block diagram; key; table

Year 3 bar chart; axes; scale; two-way table; data	Year 4 line graph; discrete; continuous; interpret; compare	Year 5 line graph; timetable; variable; solve comparison problems	Year 6 pie chart; mean; average; interpret; calculate

Position and direction

Nursery / Year 3	Reception / Year 4	Year 1 / Year 5	Year 2 / Year 6
Nursery behind; beside; under; on; in front; next to	Reception left; right; forwards; backwards; over; through	Year 1 near; far; left; right; half turn; quarter turn	Year 2 clockwise; anticlockwise; rotation; position; direction
Year 3 right angle turn; horizontal; vertical; parallel	Year 4 coordinates; first quadrant; grid; translation; reflection	Year 5 coordinates; translation; reflection; position	Year 6 four quadrants; x-axis; y-axis; coordinate grid

Ratio, proportion and algebra

Nursery / Year 3	Reception / Year 4	Year 1 / Year 5	Year 2 / Year 6
Nursery match; repeat; share; same	Reception more; less; repeat; extend	Year 1 pattern; sequence; missing number; rule	Year 2 increasing; decreasing; number sequence; missing part
Year 3 scaling; equality; missing number; inverse	Year 4 scale; multiplicative relationship; equivalence	Year 5 percentage; scale factors; common factors; pattern	Year 6 ratio; proportion; scale factor; variable; formula; expression; equation

Mathematical thinking and reasoning

Nursery / Year 3	Reception / Year 4	Year 1 / Year 5	Year 2 / Year 6
Nursery same; different; sort; show me; how do you know?	Reception notice; describe; explain; another way; because	Year 1 compare; predict; prove with objects; true or false	Year 2 justify; pattern; representation; explain your choice
Year 3 convince; generalise; efficient; counterexample	Year 4 evaluate; explain the link; equivalent; systematic	Year 5 justify; reason; infer; choose the efficient strategy	Year 6 prove; generalise; challenge; evaluate; construct an argument

Disciplinary language: how mathematicians talk about their work

Stage	Illustrative pupil sentence stems	Development in mathematical talk
Nursery & Reception	I can see … / There are … / These are the same because … / I noticed …	Describe, compare, sort and represent using objects, pictures and everyday language.
Years 1–2	I know … because … / First I …, then I … / The whole is … / This is different because …	Talk through steps, use precise number words and make connections to known facts.
Years 3–4	My method works because … / I disagree because … / A pattern I noticed is …	Justify strategies, identify misconceptions and explain links between representations.
Years 5–6	This is always/sometimes/never true because … / A counterexample is … / The most efficient method is …	Generalise, prove, challenge and evaluate solutions independently.

Teaching expectation across all year groups

Model the correct vocabulary in context; keep familiar terms active through retrieval and discussion; encourage complete spoken explanations; and use concrete or pictorial prompts where needed. Recast imprecise statements helpfully, e.g. “the number gets bigger” becomes “the value of the digit increases tenfold”. Support pupils with language scaffolds without reducing their mathematical ambition.

Compiled from the uploaded White Rose Maths Primary Vocabulary Progression (September 2025) and Nursery–Year 6 teacher schemes; grouped and paraphrased for SS Peter & Paul. This is a working continuum, not a closed vocabulary list. Read alongside the Maths Long-Term Plan and Knowledge and Skills Progression.