SS Peter & Paul Catholic Primary School

Science Language Continuum

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

Vocabulary is specified in every unit and falls into two kinds. Substantive vocabulary names scientific objects, materials, processes and concepts. Disciplinary vocabulary names how scientists work. Both are displayed, taught explicitly in the teaching input, revisited cumulatively, and required in spoken and written scientific explanations.

Year	Unit		
Reception	Plants tree, bush, herb, names of plants they see	Living things & habitats plant, tree, bush, flower, vegetable, herb, weed, animal, names of plants and animals they see, name of a contrasting environment (e.g. beach, forest)	Animals, including humans names of animals, live, on land, in water, jungle, desert, North Pole, South Pole, sea, hot, cold, wet, dry, snow, ice, hair (black, brown, dark, light, blonde, ginger, grey, white, long, short, straight, curly), eyes (blue, brown, green, grey), skin (black, brown, white), big/tall, small/short, bigger/smaller, baby, toddler, child, adult, old person, old, young, brother, sister, mother, father, aunt, uncle, grandmother, grandfather, cousin, friend, family, boy, girl, man, woman
Reception	Seasonal changes spring, summer, autumn, winter, seasons, sunny, cloudy, hot, warm, cold, shower, raining, storm, thunder, lightning, hail, sleet, snow, icy, frost, puddles, windy, rainbow, animals, young, plants, flowers	Materials ice, water, frozen, icicle, snow, melt, wet, cold, slippery, smooth, big, bigger, biggest, smaller, smallest, hard, soft, bendy, rigid, wood, plastic, paper, card, metal, strong, weak, hot, apply heat, waterproof, soggy, not waterproof, best, change, change back	Light Sun, sunny, light, shadow, shady, clouds, torch, see-through, not see-through, source, light source
Reception	Forces float, sink, up, down, top, bottom, surface, move, roll, drop, fly, turn, spin, fall, fast, slow, faster, slower, fastest, slowest, further, furthest, wind, air, water, blow, bounce	Sound sound, noise, listen, hear, music, voices, bird song, traffic, sirens, thunder, high, low, loud, quiet, soft, volume, crackle, hum, buzz, roar	Earth & space Sun, Moon, Earth, star, planet, sky, day, night, space, round, bounce, float
Year 1	Plants leaf, flower, blossom, petal, fruit, berry, root, seed, trunk, branch, stem, bark, stalk, bud, names of trees in the local area, names of garden and wild flowering plants in the local area	Animals, including humans head, body, eyes, ears, mouth, teeth, leg, tail, wing, claw, fin, scales, feathers, fur, beak, paws, hooves, names of animals experienced first-hand from each vertebrate group, parts of the human body including those within the school's RSE policy, senses, touch, see, smell, taste, hear, fingers, skin, eyes, nose, ears, tongue	Everyday materials object, material, wood, plastic, glass, metal, water, rock, brick, paper, fabric, elastic, foil, card/cardboard, rubber, wool, clay, hard, soft, stretchy, stiff, bendy, floppy, waterproof, absorbent, breaks/tears, rough, smooth, shiny, dull, see-through, not see-through
Year 1	Seasonal changes weather, sunny, rainy, raining, shower, windy, snowy, cloudy, hot, warm, cold, storm, thunder, lightning, hail, sleet, snow, icy, frost, puddles, rainbow, seasons, winter, summer, spring, autumn, Sun, sunrise, sunset, day length		
Year 2	Living things & habitats living, dead, never been alive, suited, suitable, basic needs, food, food chain, shelter, move, feed, water, air, survive, survival, names of local habitats (e.g. pond, woodland), names of micro-habitats (e.g. under logs, in bushes), conditions, light, dark, shady, sunny, wet, damp, dry, hot, cold, names of living things in the habitats and micro-habitats studied	Plants light, shade, Sun, warm, cool, water, space, grow, healthy, bulb, germinate, shoot, seedling, names of plants in local habitats and micro-habitats	Animals, including humans offspring, reproduction, growth, baby, toddler, child, teenager, adult, old person, names of animals and their babies (e.g. chick/chicken, kitten/cat, caterpillar/butterfly), survive, survival, water, food, air, exercise, heartbeat, breathing, hygiene, germs, disease, food types (e.g. meat, fish, vegetables, bread, rice, pasta, dairy)
Year 2	Uses of everyday materials opaque, transparent, translucent, reflective, non-reflective, flexible, rigid, shape, push/pushing, pull/pulling, twist/twisting, squash/squashing, bend/bending, stretch/stretching		

Year 3	Plants photosynthesis, pollen, insect/wind pollination, male, female, seed formation, seed dispersal (wind dispersal, animal dispersal, water dispersal), air, nutrients, minerals, soil, absorb, transport	Rocks rock, stone, pebble, boulder, grain, crystals, layers, hard, soft, texture, absorbs water, fossil, bone, flesh, minerals, marble, chalk, granite, sandstone, slate, types of soil (e.g. peaty, sandy, chalky, clay)	Animals, including humans nutrition, nutrients, carbohydrates, sugars, protein, vitamins, minerals, fibre, fat, water, skeleton, bones, muscles, joints, support, protect, move, skull, ribs, spine
Year 3	Light light, light source, dark, absence of light, surface, shadow, reflect, mirror, Sun, sunlight, dangerous	Forces & magnets force, push, pull, twist, contact force, non-contact force, magnetic force, magnet, strength, bar magnet, ring magnet, button magnet, horseshoe magnet, attract, repel, magnetic material, metal, iron, steel, poles, north pole, south pole	
Year 4	Living things & habitats classification, classification keys, environment, habitat, human impact, positive, negative, migrate, hibernate	Sound sound, source, vibrate, vibration, travel, pitch (high, low), volume, faint, quiet, loud, insulation	Animals, including humans digestive system, digestion, mouth, teeth, saliva, oesophagus, stomach, small intestine, large intestine, rectum, anus, incisor, canine, molar, premolar, herbivore, carnivore, omnivore, producer, predator, prey
Year 4	States of matter solid, liquid, gas, heating, cooling, state change, melting, freezing, melting point, boiling, boiling point, evaporation, condensation, temperature, water cycle	Electricity electricity, electrical appliance/device, mains, plug, electrical circuit, complete circuit, component, cell, battery, positive, negative, connect/connections, loose connection, short circuit, crocodile clip, bulb, switch, buzzer, motor, conductor, insulator, metal, non-metal, symbol	
Year 5	Living things & habitats life cycle, reproduce, sexual, sperm, fertilises, egg, live young, metamorphosis, asexual, plantlets, runners, cuttings	Plants life cycle, reproduce, sexual, fertilises, asexual, plantlets, runners, tubers, cuttings	Earth & space Sun, Moon, Earth, planets (Mercury, Jupiter, Saturn, Venus, Mars, Uranus, Neptune), spherical, Solar System, rotate, star, orbit
Year 5	Animals, including humans puberty, the vocabulary to describe sexual characteristics in line with the school's RSE policy, life cycle, foetus, baby, child, adolescent, adult, reproduce, sexual, sperm, fertilises, egg, live young	Forces force, gravity, Earth, air resistance, water resistance, friction, mechanisms, simple machines, levers, pulleys, gears	Properties & changes of materials thermal insulator/conductor, change of state, mixture, dissolve, solution, soluble, insoluble, filter, sieve, reversible/non-reversible change, burning, rusting, new material
Year 6	Evolution & inheritance offspring, sexual reproduction, vary, characteristics, adapted, inherited, species, evolve, evolution,	Living things & habitats vertebrates, fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds, mammals, warm-blooded, cold-blooded, invertebrates, insects, spiders, snails, worms, flowering, non-flowering, mosses, ferns, conifers	Animals, including humans heart, pulse, rate, pumps, blood, blood vessels, transported, lungs, oxygen, carbon dioxide, cycle, circulatory system, diet, drugs, lifestyle
Year 6	Light straight lines, light rays, visual spectrum, reflective	Electricity circuit diagram, circuit symbol, voltage	

Disciplinary vocabulary — how scientists talk about their work

Nursery & Reception	Years 1 & 2	Years 3 & 4	Years 5 & 6
look closely, observe, watch, touch, feel, smell, listen, same, different, compare, ask questions, record, sort, group	observe, changes, patterns, grouping, sorting, compare, same, different, identify (name), measure, data, record results, drawing, picture, table, tally chart, present, pictogram, block chart, Venn diagram, ask questions, test, investigate, explore, equipment, resources, magnifying glass, hand lens, ruler, tape measure, metre stick, pipette, syringe, spoon, teaspoon, answer questions, interpret results, scientific enquiry, pattern seeking, comparative testing, observing	practical work, fair testing, relationships, accurate, thermometer, data logger, stopwatch, timer, estimate, data, diagram, identification key, chart, bar chart, prediction, similarity, difference, evidence, information, findings, criteria, values, properties, characteristics, conclusion, explanation, reason, evaluate, improve	variables, independent variable, dependent variable, control variable, evidence, justify, argument (science), causal relationship, accuracy, precision, scatter graphs, bar graphs, line graphs, force meter

	over time, classifying, researching using secondary sources		

Precision of language is a core scientific skill. Where a pupil says "the sound goes through the string", the teacher upgrades it in the moment: a scientist would say the vibrations travel through the solid medium.
