GREAT LEIGHS PARENT GUIDE

Grammar: helping children make purposeful choices

A clear guide to the grammar, punctuation and terminology children meet from Reception to Year 6

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Why grammar matters

Grammar is the system that organises language. Understanding it helps children express ideas clearly, read closely and make deliberate choices about meaning, emphasis, formality and effect. At Great Leighs, grammar is taught explicitly and revisited through purposeful reading, discussion and writing—not as a list of isolated rules.

Our aim

Children should be able to recognise grammatical features, explain their purpose and apply them independently. Correct terminology gives teachers, pupils and families a shared language for discussing how writing works.

How to use this guide

- Begin with your child's current year-group page. Earlier knowledge continues to be practised and secured.
- Use the examples to talk about choices in books and in your child's writing.
- Ask what a feature does for the reader—not only whether it has been included.
- Celebrate spoken language, home languages and dialects. Children also learn when Standard English is expected in formal speech and writing.

The Great Leighs grammar journey

Reception: oral language, sentences and early punctuation.

Years 1–2: secure sentence boundaries, word classes, tense and basic joining.

Years 3–4: expand, organise and link ideas with increasing control.

Years 5–6: shape cohesion, formality, emphasis and precision for purpose and audience.

A useful question for any year group

"What did the writer choose, and what difference does that choice make?"

The year-group statements in this guide summarise the National Curriculum. Teachers may introduce ideas earlier or revisit them later according to pupils' needs and the writing being studied.

GRAMMAR FOUNDATIONS

Reception | Early Years Foundation Stage

Children develop grammar first through talk, stories, play and meaningful early writing.

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By the end of Reception, children are developing the foundations to…

Area	Children learn to…	Example
Talk	listen carefully; respond to ideas; ask and answer questions; express thoughts and feelings using increasingly complete sentences.	*"I think the bear is hiding because he is frightened."*
Vocabulary	learn and use new words from stories, conversations and first-hand experiences.	*enormous, delicate, beneath, eventually*
Sentence building	join ideas and extend sentences through well-modelled talk.	*"We planted the seed and watered it because the soil was dry."*
Story language	retell events in order and use language from stories, explanations and imaginative play.	*First… Next… Suddenly… At the end…*
Early writing	write simple phrases and sentences that can be read by themselves and others.	*The red fox ran up the hill.*
Conventions	notice that sentences begin with a capital letter and are usually marked at the end.	*It is raining. Can we jump in the puddles?*

Key vocabulary

word – a single unit of language • **sentence** – words organised to communicate a complete idea • **capital letter** – a large letter used at the beginning of a sentence and for names • **full stop** – a mark showing the end of a statement

How families can help

- Share stories and invite your child to retell what happened in order.
- Model rich sentences, then extend your child's words naturally: "Dog running" → "Yes, the muddy dog is running quickly."
- Play with words during everyday routines: describe, compare, explain and wonder together.
- Encourage early writing without interrupting every idea to correct grammar or spelling.

Keep it playful

Reception children learn most through responsive conversation. Recasting a sentence correctly is often more helpful than asking a young child to repeat it.

GRAMMAR KNOWLEDGE ORGANISER

Year 1

Building clear sentences and marking their boundaries

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By the end of Year 1, children should increasingly be able to…

Area	Children learn to…	Example
Words	recognise that words combine to make sentences; use regular plural endings -s and -es; add -ing, -ed and -er where the root does not change; use the prefix un-.	*cat/cats; wish/wishes; helping/helped/helper; happy/unhappy*
Sentences	join words and clauses using and.	*The wind blew and the leaves danced.*
Text	sequence sentences to form short narratives and explanations.	*First we mixed the flour. Then we added water.*
Punctuation	use spaces, capital letters, full stops, question marks and exclamation marks; use capitals for names, places, days and I.	*On Monday, Sam went to London. Is it far?*

Key vocabulary

letter – a written symbol • **word** – a unit of meaning • **singular/plural** – one / more than one • **sentence** – words organised into a complete grammatical unit • **punctuation** – marks that organise and clarify writing • **noun** – a word that names a person, place, thing or idea • **verb** – a word expressing an action, event or state

How families can help

- Spot sentence-ending punctuation during shared reading.
- Make oral sentences longer using and, then write a favourite one.
- Hunt for capital letters and explain why each one is needed.

The key is application

Children should use Year 1 grammar to make writing clearer and more effective, explain choices using the correct terminology, and edit their work—not simply identify features in a test.

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Year 2

Choosing sentence forms, joining ideas and controlling tense

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By the end of Year 2, children should increasingly be able to…

Area	Children learn to…	Example
Words	form nouns with suffixes such as -ness and -er; form adjectives using -ful and -less; use -er/-est and -ly.	*kindness; teacher; hopeful; careless; smaller/smallest; slowly*
Sentences	use statements, questions, exclamations and commands; use subordination and co-ordination; expand noun phrases.	*Because it was cold, we stayed inside. the tiny, silver fish*
Text	use present and past tense consistently, including the progressive form.	*She walks / She walked / She is walking / She was walking.*
Punctuation	secure sentence punctuation; use commas in lists; use apostrophes for contractions and singular possession.	*apples, pears and plums; can't; the girl's coat*

Key vocabulary

noun phrase – a group of words built around a noun • **statement** – a sentence that gives information • **question** – a sentence that asks • **command** – a sentence that tells someone to do something • **exclamation** – a sentence showing strong feeling, often beginning What or How • **tense** – how a verb locates an event in time • **apostrophe** – a mark showing missing letters or possession

How families can help

- Sort sentences from a book into statement, question, command or exclamation.
- Collect contractions and say the missing letters: did not → didn't.
- Describe an object using an expanded noun phrase, then remove words and compare the effect.

The key is application

Children should use Year 2 grammar to make writing clearer and more effective, explain choices using the correct terminology, and edit their work—not simply identify features in a test.

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Year 3

Expressing time, place and cause; organising writing into paragraphs

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By the end of Year 3, children should increasingly be able to…

Area	Children learn to…	Example
Words	use prefixes; understand word families; choose a or an according to the next sound.	*disagree, misbehave, preview; solve/solution; a unicorn / an umbrella*
Sentences	express time, place and cause using conjunctions, adverbs and prepositions.	*After the storm ended, we walked through the village.*
Text	use the present perfect; group related ideas into paragraphs; use headings and subheadings.	*She has visited York. Habitat / Diet / Appearance*
Punctuation	introduce and punctuate direct speech with inverted commas.	*Maya whispered, "I heard something."*

Key vocabulary

preposition – a word showing place, time or another relationship • **conjunction** – a word that links words, phrases or clauses • **clause** – a group of words containing a verb • **subordinate clause** – a clause that depends on a main clause • **word family** – related words sharing form and meaning • **direct speech** – the exact words spoken • **inverted commas** – punctuation around direct speech

How families can help

- Collect words from one family and discuss how their meanings connect.
- Move a time or place phrase around a sentence and notice what changes.
- Practise reading dialogue aloud, then check the punctuation around the spoken words.

The key is application

Children should use Year 3 grammar to make writing clearer and more effective, explain choices using the correct terminology, and edit their work—not simply identify features in a test.

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Year 4

Expanding ideas, linking paragraphs and using speech punctuation securely

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By the end of Year 4, children should increasingly be able to…

Area	Children learn to…	Example
Words	understand the grammatical difference between plural -s and possessive -'s; use Standard English verb forms.	*girls / girl's; We were, not We was*
Sentences	expand noun phrases with modifiers and prepositional phrases; use fronted adverbials.	*the strict teacher with curly hair; Later that evening, …*
Text	organise paragraphs around a theme; use nouns and pronouns to create cohesion and avoid repetition.	*Aisha found the key. She placed it in her pocket.*
Punctuation	use commas after fronted adverbials; punctuate direct speech; use apostrophes for plural possession.	*Without warning, the lights failed. the girls' coats*

Key vocabulary

determiner – a word that introduces a noun, such as a, the, this, some • **pronoun** – a word used in place of a noun or noun phrase • **possessive pronoun** – a pronoun showing ownership, such as mine or theirs • **adverbial** – a word or phrase that adds information about time, place, manner or reason • **fronted adverbial** – an adverbial placed before the main clause

How families can help

- Find fronted adverbials and ask what information they add.
- Compare the dogs, the dog's bowl and the dogs' bowls.
- Edit a paragraph to replace unclear or repetitive nouns and pronouns.

The key is application

Children should use Year 4 grammar to make writing clearer and more effective, explain choices using the correct terminology, and edit their work—not simply identify features in a test.

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Year 5

Building cohesion and showing possibility, emphasis and additional information

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By the end of Year 5, children should increasingly be able to…

Area	Children learn to…	Example
Words	convert nouns or adjectives into verbs with suffixes; use verb prefixes.	*beauty → beautify; modern → modernise; disapprove; misunderstand; overreact*
Sentences	use relative clauses; use modal verbs and adverbs to show degrees of possibility.	*The bridge, which was damaged, closed. It might reopen soon. Perhaps it will.*
Text	link ideas across paragraphs using time, place, number, tense and other cohesive devices.	*Later… Nearby… Firstly… This problem…*
Punctuation	use brackets, dashes or commas for parenthesis; use commas to clarify meaning or avoid ambiguity.	*The otter (a skilled swimmer) dived. Let's eat, Grandma!*

Key vocabulary

modal verb – a verb showing possibility, certainty, permission or obligation • **relative pronoun** – a word such as who, which or that introducing a relative clause • **relative clause** – a clause giving information about a noun • **parenthesis** – additional information inserted into a sentence • **cohesion** – the links that make a text flow and fit together • **ambiguity** – more than one possible meaning

How families can help

- Rank modal verbs from least to most certain: might, could, should, will, must.
- Remove parenthesis and check whether the remaining sentence still makes sense.
- Find how a writer links one paragraph to the next.

The key is application

Children should use Year 5 grammar to make writing clearer and more effective, explain choices using the correct terminology, and edit their work—not simply identify features in a test.

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Year 6

Controlling formality, cohesion and punctuation for precise effects

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By the end of Year 6, children should increasingly be able to…

Area	Children learn to…	Example
Words	understand differences between informal and formal vocabulary; explore synonyms and antonyms.	*ask/request; find out/discover; ancient/modern*
Sentences	use active and passive voice; recognise and use subjunctive forms where appropriate in formal language.	*The fox chased the rabbit. / The rabbit was chased by the fox. If I were…*
Text	link ideas across paragraphs using a wider range of cohesive devices; use layout devices to organise information.	*on the other hand; as a consequence; headings, columns, tables*
Punctuation	use semi-colons, colons and dashes between independent clauses; use colons for lists; punctuate bullet points consistently; use hyphens to avoid ambiguity.	*It was late; we went home. She brought three things: a map, water and a torch. man-eating shark*

Key vocabulary

subject – the grammatical focus that usually performs the verb in an active clause • **object** – a noun or phrase affected by the verb • **active/passive** – whether the subject performs or receives the action • **synonym/antonym** – a word with a similar / opposite meaning • **ellipsis** – three dots showing omitted words or a trailing thought • **hyphen** – a mark joining words or parts of words • **semi-colon** – a mark linking closely related independent clauses • **colon** – a mark introducing an explanation, example or list

How families can help

- Rewrite an active sentence in the passive and discuss why a writer might hide or delay the agent.
- Compare an informal message with a formal letter and identify vocabulary choices.
- Use a colon, semi-colon and dash in different sentences, then explain each purpose.

The key is application

Children should use Year 6 grammar to make writing clearer and more effective, explain choices using the correct terminology, and edit their work—not simply identify features in a test.

PARENT REFERENCE

Grammar glossary

Short, accurate explanations of the terms families are most likely to meet

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Term	Meaning
adjective	a word that describes or modifies a noun
adverb	a word that modifies a verb, adjective, another adverb or whole clause
adverbial	a word, phrase or clause functioning like an adverb
apostrophe	a mark used for omitted letters or possession
clause	a group of words organised around a verb
cohesion	the grammatical and lexical links that hold a text together
conjunction	a word that links words, phrases or clauses
determiner	a word introducing a noun and helping specify reference or quantity
direct speech	the exact words a person or character says
formal language	language chosen for an official, academic or less familiar context
fronted adverbial	an adverbial placed before the main clause
modal verb	a verb such as might, should or must that expresses possibility, obligation or certainty
noun	a word naming a person, place, thing, idea or quality
noun phrase	a phrase built around a noun
object	a grammatical element affected by a verb
paragraph	a group of related sentences organised around a topic or purpose
passive	a construction in which the subject receives the action

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Grammar glossary — continued

More useful terms for talking about reading and writing

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Term	Meaning
phrase	a group of words functioning together but not normally containing a finite verb
prefix	letters added to the beginning of a root word
preposition	a word showing a relationship of place, time, direction or another kind
pronoun	a word used in place of a noun or noun phrase
relative clause	a clause that gives information about a noun
sentence	a complete grammatical unit, usually containing at least one main clause
Standard English	the variety used in most formal writing and public communication
subject	the grammatical focus of a clause, usually performing the action in an active clause
subordinate clause	a clause that depends on a main clause
suffix	letters added to the end of a root word
tense	the grammatical way a verb locates an event in time
verb	a word central to a clause, expressing an action, event, process or state

Further information

This guide summarises the National Curriculum in England: English programmes of study and English Appendix 2 (vocabulary, grammar and punctuation). It was also informed by the public grammar knowledge-organiser approach used by Kingston Primary School. Full curriculum planning remains available through Great Leighs' Writing Curriculum and progression documents.