

NOVA PARENT GUIDE

04

Primary Learning

A practical guide for parents of children
in Years 2 to 6



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WHO THIS GUIDE IS FOR

This guide is written for parents of children in Years 2 to 6 who want to understand their child's learning in English and Mathematics: what is secure, what is developing, where there may be gaps, and what comes next. It assumes nothing about whether your child is struggling, coasting or thriving. Tuition is not only for children who are behind.

W E L C O M E

Every child learns differently

Some children need to secure the basics. Some need time to consolidate and develop what they already know. Others are ready for greater challenge.

The important thing is knowing where your child is now, and what they need next.

This guide is written to help you work that out. It explains what primary English and Mathematics actually ask of a child, how to read the information school gives you, what good assessment can add, and how to decide whether additional support would help. It does not assume your child is struggling. The most useful support begins with understanding the individual child and responding to what they need, whatever their starting point.

The Nova team

WHERE YOUR CHILD IS

WHAT THEY NEED

WHAT COMES NEXT

What this guide is, and is not

This guide is designed to help you understand your child's learning and make good decisions about how to support it. It covers English and Mathematics across Years 2 to 6.

This guide is not a diagnostic tool and it is not a substitute for your child's teacher or for a structured assessment. It will help you ask better questions. It will not answer them on its own.

How to use this guide

Read it in order or move to the sections that speak to your situation. Each section closes with a single idea worth taking away.

01

Where Is My Child Really Up To?

Understanding your child's learning can be harder than it looks.

One of the most common questions parents ask is: where is my child really up to?

You may see homework, reading, mistakes and moments of frustration, but it can still be difficult to know exactly what your child understands, which skills are secure, where there may be gaps, and what they are ready to learn next.

School reports, tests and conversations with teachers are valuable, but they do not always answer every question a parent has.

- Which skills is my child confident with?
- Which areas are still developing?
- Are there gaps in earlier learning?
- Does my child need more practice, a different explanation, or greater challenge?
- How independent are they becoming?
- What should they work on next?

Progress is not the same for every child. Some need to revisit essential foundations. Others need consolidation and practice. Some are ready to move beyond the expected curriculum and explore ideas in greater depth.

Tuition, therefore, is not simply for children who are struggling. The most useful support starts with understanding the individual child and responding to what they need.

PARENT INSIGHT

“Start where your child is. Understand what they need. Help them take the next step.”

02

What Should My Child Know?

Understanding the expectations of primary school.

The National Curriculum provides a broad framework for what children should learn during primary school. Schools teach and develop these skills over time, and children do not all reach them in exactly the same way or at exactly the same moment.

English includes	Mathematics includes
Reading fluency and comprehension	Number and place value
Vocabulary and language	The four operations
Grammar, punctuation and spelling	Fractions, decimals and percentages
Writing for different purposes and audiences	Measurement
Discussing, explaining, interpreting and justifying ideas	Geometry and statistics
Increasing independence as readers and writers	Reasoning and problem-solving

Knowing a fact is not always the same as being able to use it. A child may know a mathematical method but struggle to choose it in an unfamiliar problem. A child may read fluently but find inference difficult. A child may have good ideas but struggle to organise them clearly in writing.

A MORE USEFUL QUESTION

Rather than asking only whether a child is at the expected level, it can be more useful to ask: what is secure? What is developing? Where are the gaps? What is difficult? What is the next step?

Think of learning as a set of building blocks. Secure the foundations, consolidate what is developing, then extend when the child is ready.

P A R E N T I N S I G H T

*“Curriculum expectations tell you what children are expected to learn.
Understanding your child tells you what they need next.”*

03

Three Different Starting Points

Children do not all need the same kind of support.

Two children can be in the same year group, receive the same school teaching and still need very different kinds of additional learning.

FOUNDATION

Secure the essentials

- Revisit important knowledge and skills
- Close specific gaps
- Improve accuracy and understanding
- Build confidence and independence

"I need to make sure the important building blocks are secure."

CORE

Consolidate and develop

- Strengthen areas that are not yet fluent
- Practise applying knowledge
- Develop reasoning and problem-solving
- Build greater independence

"I understand much of the curriculum, but I need to strengthen and apply my skills."

EXTENSION

Challenge and deepen

- Explore ideas in greater depth
- Tackle complex or unfamiliar problems
- Develop richer reading and writing
- Apply knowledge in unfamiliar situations

"I am ready to explore ideas in greater depth."

These are not labels for children. A child might be working at Foundation level in one area, Core in another and Extension in a third. Their needs can also change over time.

The child does not have to fit the programme. The programme should respond to the child.

PARENT INSIGHT

"A gap is information, not a label."

04

Behind, On Track or Ready for More?

Understanding what your child's progress really means.

Schools may use phrases such as working at expected level, making good progress, needs support, or above age-related expectations. These can be useful, but they do not always tell you what your child needs next.

Learning is a collection of skills rather than a single scale. A child might:

- Be secure with multiplication but still developing fractions
- Read confidently but need support with writing
- Calculate accurately but struggle under time pressure
- Know the method but find it difficult to explain reasoning
- Be secure with the curriculum but ready for greater challenge

If a child is behind expectations, that does not necessarily mean they are behind in everything. The important question is which specific skill is less secure, and why.

If a child is on track, that is positive, but they may still benefit from greater fluency, confidence or independence.

If a child is ready for more, more should not simply mean more questions. It might mean greater depth, unfamiliar problems, sophisticated writing or more challenging texts.

SECURE

DEVELOPING

READY FOR CHALLENGE

PARENT INSIGHT

“On track tells you where your child is compared with an expectation. It does not always tell you what they should learn next.”

05

What Can School Tell You?

And what might you still need to find out?

School reports, parents' evenings, assessments and conversations with teachers are valuable sources of information. But no single item tells you everything about a child's learning.

A report is a snapshot of progress over a particular period. A test score can show how a child performed at a particular time and under particular circumstances, but a score alone does not always explain why a child found something difficult. The reason might be:

- A concept that has not yet been understood
- A gap in earlier learning
- A need for more practice
- Misreading the question
- Difficulty applying knowledge
- A careless error
- Lack of confidence
- Difficulty working within a time limit

USEFUL QUESTIONS TO ASK A TEACHER

- ✓ What are my child's main strengths?
- ✓ Which skills are less secure?
- ✓ Is anything from earlier learning affecting current work?
- ✓ How independently does my child work?
- ✓ What happens when the task is unfamiliar?
- ✓ What would be most useful to practise at home?

Home and school provide different perspectives. Both can be valuable.

PARENT INSIGHT

"A score tells you what happened. Good assessment helps you understand why."

06

What Does Good Assessment Tell You?

More than a mark or a percentage.

Assessment is a normal part of learning. Its value comes from what it helps you understand.

What is secure. What can the child do confidently and consistently?

What is developing. Which skills are present but still need practice, explanation or application?

Where are the gaps. Are there areas of earlier or current learning that need attention?

What comes next. What should the child learn, practise or explore next?

TWO CHILDREN, THE SAME SCORE

Consider two children who both achieve 70 per cent. One may have strong understanding but make occasional careless errors. The other may have learned procedures but struggle when a problem requires reasoning. The percentage is the same. The learning need is entirely different.

Alongside the score, it is worth understanding accuracy, fluency and speed, confidence, independence, performance on unfamiliar tasks, and the nature of the mistakes themselves.

ASSESS

IDENTIFY

RESPOND

REASSESS

PARENT INSIGHT

“The purpose of assessment is not to find out how good a child is. It is to find out what they know, what they understand and what they need to learn next.”

07

Understanding English and Mathematics

What each subject really asks of a child.

English is more than reading and writing

English involves understanding and using language in increasingly sophisticated ways.

Reading includes	Writing includes
Fluency and accuracy	Sentence construction
Understanding literal meaning	Grammar and punctuation
Vocabulary	Spelling
Finding and retrieving information	Vocabulary
Inference and interpretation	Paragraphing and organisation
Explaining ideas using evidence	Clarity and coherence
Understanding language choices	Creativity
Comparing and evaluating texts	Writing for different purposes and audiences

Vocabulary is particularly important because it connects reading and writing. The more language children understand, the more precisely they can interpret texts and express their own ideas.

Confidence matters too. A child may have good ideas but find it difficult to express them independently.

PARENT INSIGHT

“A child who struggles with English does not necessarily struggle with all of English. Understanding the specific skill is the first step.”

Mathematics is more than getting the answer right

Mathematics combines knowledge, fluency and thinking. It covers number and place value, the four operations, fractions, decimals and percentages, measurement, geometry, statistics, and reasoning and problem-solving.

UNDERSTAND

CHOOSE

SOLVE

EXPLAIN

CHECK

Signs that a child may need support

- Relying heavily on counting for basic calculations
- Slow or inconsistent recall of number facts
- Anxiety when faced with unfamiliar problems
- Getting the calculation right but misinterpreting the question
- Difficulty choosing an appropriate method
- Struggling with fractions
- Following a method without understanding why it works
- Giving up quickly when the answer is not immediate

For children who are secure, challenge can involve unfamiliar problems, multiple solutions, explaining why a method works, identifying errors, discovering patterns and applying mathematics in new contexts.

PARENT INSIGHT

“Getting the answer right tells you something. Understanding how and why your child reached the answer tells you much more.”

08

More Than Knowledge

Confidence, independence and learning habits matter too.

Knowledge is important, but successful learning involves more than knowing facts and methods.

Confidence can mean being willing to	Independence includes the ability to
Try a difficult task	Follow instructions
Ask for help	Organise work
Accept mistakes	Select an appropriate method
Try an alternative approach	Ask for help when needed
Explain thinking	Check and correct work
Work on something unfamiliar	Persevere with less prompting

Learning habits include curiosity, persistence, reflection, accuracy, flexibility and self-checking.

Two children with similar knowledge can produce very different outcomes because they approach learning differently. A child who repeatedly thinks they are not good at Mathematics may also begin to avoid difficult tasks.

THE POINT OF SUPPORT

Useful support should build independence, not create dependence. A child who needs a tutor beside them to attempt anything difficult has not yet been helped.

PARENT INSIGHT

“The goal is not to make learning easier. It is to help children become better at managing learning when it becomes difficult.”

09

When Might My Child Need Support?

Knowing when a little extra help could make a difference.

Not every difficulty means a child needs tuition. Sometimes they simply need more time, practice or a different explanation. However, it can be useful to look for patterns.

- A skill does not seem to become secure despite practice
- An earlier gap is affecting new learning
- Your child appears to know more than they can demonstrate
- The same type of difficulty keeps recurring
- Confidence is beginning to fall

Support does not have to wait until there is a serious problem. A child might benefit from additional help with consolidation, confidence, preparation for the next stage, or greater challenge.

The response might be regular reading, number-fact practice, vocabulary development, writing practice, talking through mathematical or reading reasoning, more challenging tasks, a conversation with the class teacher, or additional targeted teaching.

A COMMON MISTAKE

More work is not necessarily better

The intervention should respond to the reason for the difficulty. A child who misreads questions will not improve by doing more questions. A child with a gap in earlier learning will not close it by working harder on current learning. Before arranging tuition, ask what the specific need is, what kind of support is likely to help, and how you will know whether it is working.

IDENTIFY NEED

CHOOSE SUPPORT

MONITOR

ADAPT

PARENT INSIGHT

“Do not start with tuition. Start by understanding the child.”

10

What If My Child Is Already Doing Well?

Good progress does not mean learning should stop.

Children who are secure in the curriculum still need opportunities to develop. But more work is not the same as more challenge.

English depth might involve exploring an author's language choices, discussing themes, making and justifying inferences, evaluating a text, developing a distinctive writing voice, and adapting structure for purpose and audience.

Mathematical depth might involve unfamiliar problems, multiple methods, explaining why a method works, finding and correcting errors, identifying patterns, and applying mathematics in a new context.

Depth. Understand ideas more deeply.

Complexity. Deal with more demanding or unfamiliar situations.

Independence. Make decisions and manage learning with less support.

Extension should not simply mean racing ahead into the next year group. Often the most valuable challenge comes from going deeper into what a child already knows.

PARENT INSIGHT

“Extension is not about racing ahead. It is about going deeper.”

11

Knowing What Your Child Needs

Start with evidence, not assumptions, and turn it into a plan.

Parents often have a good sense of their child's strengths and frustrations. But it can be difficult to see the whole picture from homework, reading and occasional tests. Assessment can provide structured evidence.

An English profile might consider reading, vocabulary, grammar and punctuation, and writing. A Mathematics profile might consider number and calculation, fractions, problem-solving and reasoning.

LOOK FOR THE PATTERN, NOT THE PERCENTAGE

A profile might read: English, reading secure, vocabulary developing, grammar secure, writing developing. Mathematics, number and calculation secure, fractions developing, reasoning developing. That gives a far clearer starting point than a single overall mark, and it should change as the child learns.

What should happen after an assessment

Assessment is not the destination. The important question is what happens next.

Suppose an assessment shows that a child is finding fractions difficult. That could mean difficulty with equivalent fractions, comparing fractions, adding and subtracting fractions, applying fractions in problems, or even an earlier gap in multiplication and division. A useful response therefore needs precision.

Secure it. Consolidate knowledge and skills that are nearly secure.

Revisit it. Return to an earlier concept where a gap is affecting current learning.

Develop it. Move from knowing a skill to applying and explaining it.

Extend it. Introduce greater depth, complexity or unfamiliar application.

The next thing taught in school is not always the next thing an individual child needs to learn. One child strengthens multiplication before developing fractions. Another consolidates fractions but focuses on reasoning and application. A third extends secure mathematical understanding through complex problems.

Learning plans should be reviewed, because needs change. Progress can be seen through fewer recurring errors, greater fluency, stronger comprehension, better writing, more confident reasoning, greater independence, and improved performance on unfamiliar tasks.

ASSESS

PLAN

TEACH

REVIEW

MOVE FORWARD

PARENT INSIGHT

“The next thing taught is not always the next thing your child needs to learn.”

12

How Much Support Does My Child Need?

The right amount of support depends on the child.

There is no universal amount of additional teaching that every child needs. Some children need a short period of targeted practice. Others benefit from regular consolidation. Some need broader development across English and Mathematics. Others may need additional challenge rather than support with gaps.

Targeted support. A specific skill or gap is addressed.

Regular consolidation. Learning is strengthened through repeated practice and application.

Broad development. English or Mathematics is developed across several connected areas.

Extension. Secure learners are challenged through depth, complexity and independence.

Good tuition should feel like a continuation of good teaching

There are many tutors and tuition programmes available. The important question is not simply whether a programme offers more teaching. It is whether the teaching responds to the individual child.

WHAT A GOOD PROGRAMME SHOULD OFFER

- ✓ A clear starting point
- ✓ Targeted learning based on identified needs
- ✓ Appropriate challenge
- ✓ Clear explanation and feedback
- ✓ Regular opportunities to practise
- ✓ Evidence of progress
- ✓ Development of independence

It is also worth asking what happens between lessons. Is the child simply completing another set of activities, or is each task connected to a clear learning objective?

KEEP THE REST OF CHILDHOOD IN VIEW

More tuition is not necessarily better. Children also need school, reading, play, family time, friends, sport, hobbies and rest. If you choose additional tuition, you should be able to answer: what are we working on, why does my child need it, how often is it appropriate, how will progress be measured, and when will we review the plan?

PARENT INSIGHT

“The goal of tuition is not to maximise the amount of teaching a child receives. It is to provide the right teaching for the child at the right time.”

13

A Clearer Picture of Your Child's Learning

What if you could see the whole picture?

This is where structured assessment becomes particularly useful.

The Nova Learning Assessment is designed to give parents a clearer picture of where a child currently stands across key areas of learning. Rather than focusing only on a score, the aim is to identify what is secure, what is developing, where there may be gaps, and where a child may be ready for greater challenge.



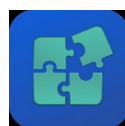
Reading

Fluency, comprehension, inference



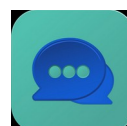
Mathematics

Number, fluency, problem-solving



Reasoning

Logic, patterns, explanation



Writing

Structure, accuracy, expression

The result is a learning profile: a structured picture that can help inform what happens next.

ASSESS

UNDERSTAND

RECOMMEND

LEARN

MONITOR

The underlying principle is simple. Children should not have to fit a predetermined programme. The programme should respond to the child. That is why Nova uses a Foundation, Core and Extension framework, and why a child's level of support can change as their knowledge, skills, confidence and independence develop.

Assessment does not decide what a child is. It helps identify what they need next.

PARENT INSIGHT

"We do not believe children should fit a predetermined programme. The programme should respond to the child."

THE NEXT STEP

Know where your child stands

Every child is different. Some need to secure important foundations. Some need time to consolidate and develop what they already know. Others are ready for greater depth and challenge.

Successful learning is not simply about completing more work. It is about understanding, practising, applying, improving, and becoming increasingly confident and independent.

The first step is understanding where your child is now. Start with a free consultation: a call with a senior Nova tutor to talk through what you are seeing. Where a structured picture would help, we arrange a Nova Learning Assessment from there.

TO BOOK YOUR FREE CONSULTATION

novaeducation.uk/nova-tutorials

Or email contact@novaeducation.uk

Two ways Nova can help

Programme family	For	What it covers
Nova Curriculum Programmes	Primary English and Mathematics, Years 2 to 6	Strengthen, consolidate and extend. Bespoke content built around the child, at Foundation, Core or Extension level
Nova Entrance Preparation	Selective school entrance assessments	7+, 8+, 11+ and ISEB. Structured preparation combining targeted teaching, practice and assessment

Both are built around the same principle.

WHERE YOUR CHILD IS

WHAT THEY NEED

WHAT COMES NEXT



ABOUT NOVA EDUCATION

Who we are

Nova Education is an independent educational publisher and online tutorial centre, serving Years 2 to 6 curriculum support through to selective school entrance preparation. We work with families right across the Greater London area.

Our teaching is delivered by qualified primary teachers and built around original Nova course materials. We offer structured programmes, detailed reporting, and a personalised approach that treats every child as an individual.

Our mission is simple: to help children learn with confidence, develop independence, and make meaningful progress.

Stay in touch

Subscribe to our monthly email for tips, insights and updates on primary learning. Visit novaeducation.uk or follow us on Facebook.

SAFEGUARDING

All Nova tutors hold a current Enhanced DBS check and complete Nova's safeguarding induction before their first session.

This guide was published by Nova Education in September 2026. The information reflects our professional experience and should be adapted to your child's specific needs and circumstances.

If you have feedback on this guide, or if there is a topic you would like us to cover in future, please let us know. We are always listening.

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