

Word Roots Literacy Diagnostic

Interpreting Your School's Data

1. Purpose of the Diagnostic

The Word Roots Literacy Diagnostic gives schools a quick, practical snapshot of how confidently pupils can access the language of the curriculum.

It is designed to help schools identify whether pupils are struggling mainly with:

- word reading and decoding;
- prefixes, suffixes and root recognition;
- understanding how word parts shape meaning;
- vocabulary in sentence context;
- sentence meaning and grammar control;
- longer reading comprehension.

This is **not a standardised reading-age test**. It is a curriculum-access diagnostic. Its value lies in showing patterns: where pupils are secure, where they are vulnerable, and what kind of literacy support is likely to be most useful next. **It may be particularly useful where SATs data, reading-age data or transition information is delayed, unavailable or too broad to guide provision on its own.**

The most useful interpretation comes from reading the diagnostic at three levels: total score, section profile and cohort pattern.

Level	What it tells you
Total score	Overall level of literacy access
Section profile	The specific literacy barriers pupils may face

Cohort pattern	Whether the need is individual, group-based or whole-cohort
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2. Overall Score Guide

The diagnostic has **60 scored questions**.

Score	Broad interpretation	What this may suggest
0–20	Significant literacy access concern	The pupil is likely to struggle with word reading, unfamiliar vocabulary, sentence meaning and independent curriculum access. They may need high-support, structured intervention and may also need further assessment.
21–34	Fragile literacy access	The pupil can access some questions but is likely to have gaps in decoding, vocabulary, morphology and/or sentence control. They may cope with familiar material but struggle when texts become more academic.
35–47	Developing curriculum access	The pupil has some useful literacy strategies but may struggle with academic vocabulary, complex sentences, inference or reading stamina. Targeted morphology and sentence-level work is likely to help.
48–54	Mostly secure, with specific gaps	The pupil is broadly accessing the material but may still need support with higher-level vocabulary, disciplinary language, precision and extended reading.
55–60	Secure literacy access on this diagnostic	The pupil shows strong access to the skills tested. Continue to monitor vocabulary depth, extended writing and subject-specific reading demands.

These bands should be used as a guide, not as fixed labels. The most useful information comes from looking at **section patterns**, not just the total score.

3. Section-by-Section Interpretation

Section	Score available	What it checks	If pupils score low, this may indicate...
Part 1: Word Reading & Decoding	10	Syllables, sound patterns, compound words, word reading	Weakness with decoding, syllable awareness, sound-symbol knowledge or reading unfamiliar words accurately.
Part 2: Word Parts	10	Prefix, suffix and root recognition	Pupils may not yet recognise meaningful word parts or may see words as whole units rather than structured patterns.
Part 3: Morpheme Meaning	12	Understanding how prefixes, suffixes and roots affect meaning	Pupils may know some words but lack a strategy for unlocking unfamiliar vocabulary independently.
Part 4: Vocabulary in Sentence Context	10	Using context and morphology to infer meaning	Pupils may struggle to apply vocabulary knowledge when reading real sentences.
Part 5: Sentence Meaning and Grammar Control	8	Cause, contrast, sequencing, reference tracking and complex sentence meaning	Pupils may lose meaning across longer sentences, especially where grammar carries the logic.
Part 6: Reading Comprehension	10	Inference, evidence, interpretation and longer-text understanding	Pupils may struggle with stamina, inference, character understanding or connecting clues across a text.

4. Section Score Thresholds

Section score	Red: significant concern	Amber: developing	Green: broadly secure
Parts 1, 2, 4 and 6 /10	0–4	5–7	8–10
Part 3 /12	0–5	6–9	10–12
Part 5 /8	0–3	4–6	7–8

5. Cohort-Level Analysis for School Leaders

Question to ask	Why it matters
Which section has the lowest average score?	This shows the main literacy barrier across the group.
How many pupils are red, amber and green in each section?	This helps identify whether the need is widespread or concentrated in a smaller group.
Are pupils weaker in word reading, morphology, sentence meaning or comprehension?	Different needs require different intervention responses.
Do pupils perform better on short vocabulary questions than on the longer reading extract?	This may suggest issues with stamina, inference or connecting ideas across a text.
Are stronger readers still weak in morphology or academic vocabulary?	This may indicate a need for higher-level vocabulary teaching, not basic intervention.

6. Common Diagnostic Profiles

Diagnostic pattern	Likely literacy need	Suggested next step
Low Part 1 and low Part 6	The pupil may be struggling with both word-level access and comprehension.	Consider further reading assessment. Use a highly scaffolded literacy pathway with explicit decoding, vocabulary and comprehension support.
Stronger Part 1 but weaker Parts 2 and 3	The pupil can read many words but may not understand how academic vocabulary is built.	Prioritise morphology: prefixes, roots, suffixes, word families and meaning links.
Stronger word-part scores but weaker Part 4	The pupil may know word parts in isolation but struggle to apply them in real reading.	Teach vocabulary in context, using sentence-level examples and repeated application.
Weak Part 5	The pupil may be losing meaning across complex sentences.	Focus on sentence logic: cause, contrast, sequencing, reference and embedded clauses.
Weak Part 6 despite reasonable earlier scores	The pupil may need support with reading stamina, inference and connecting ideas across a longer text.	Use structured comprehension, guided reading and explicit evidence-based discussion.
Mostly secure scores but weaker vocabulary/context questions	The pupil may be ready for higher-level academic literacy work.	Move towards more complex texts, disciplinary vocabulary and exam-facing literacy.

7. Using the Diagnostic to Inform Literacy Provision

The table below offers broad guidance on possible next steps. It is designed to help schools think about the type of literacy support pupils may need. For schools using Word Roots, the final column may also help identify a suitable starting pathway. These should not be used as automatic placement rules.

Diagnostic score	Likely profile	Possible literacy support	If using Word Roots
0–20	Significant literacy access concern. Pupils may struggle with word reading, vocabulary, sentence meaning and longer comprehension.	Further reading assessment may be needed. Consider high-support intervention, including word-reading/decoding support where appropriate, alongside vocabulary and comprehension work.	The Word Odyssey , if suitable, with high support.
21–34	Fragile literacy access. Pupils are likely to need structured support with word meaning, vocabulary, comprehension confidence and sentence control.	Structured literacy intervention with explicit vocabulary, morphology, sentence meaning and guided comprehension.	The Word Odyssey is likely to be the best starting point.

35–44	Developing curriculum access. Pupils may read many everyday words but struggle with academic vocabulary, morphology, sentence meaning and text confidence.	Morphology-led vocabulary teaching, sentence-level work and supported reading of increasingly academic texts.	Time Cypher Bureau is likely to be the best starting point.
45–52	Broadly secure but with gaps in academic vocabulary, complex sentences, inference or disciplinary language.	Academic vocabulary, complex sentence work, inference, nonfiction and disciplinary reading.	Time Cypher Bureau or Hidden Worlds , depending on age, confidence and text maturity.
53–60	Secure on this diagnostic. Pupils may not need intervention, but may benefit from stretch in academic vocabulary, nonfiction, argument and complex reading.	Enrichment in academic vocabulary, nonfiction, argument, disciplinary language and complex reading.	Hidden Worlds may be suitable as an enrichment or higher-pathway literacy programme, rather than catch-up intervention.

8. Recommended School Summary Format

Area	Cohort finding	Implication	Suggested response
Word reading and decoding	___% red / ___% amber / ___% green	Pupils may / may not be secure in reading unfamiliar words accurately.	Consider whether pupils need foundational decoding support or can move straight into morphology.
Morphology and word parts	___% red / ___% amber / ___% green	Pupils may / may not recognise how prefixes, roots and suffixes carry meaning.	Consider explicit morphology teaching as a core intervention route.
Vocabulary in context	___% red / ___% amber / ___% green	Pupils may / may not apply word knowledge when reading sentences.	Build vocabulary teaching into sentence and text-level reading.
Sentence meaning	___% red / ___% amber / ___% green	Pupils may / may not track meaning across complex sentences.	Include explicit work on sentence logic, contrast, cause, sequence and reference.
Reading comprehension	___% red / ___% amber / ___% green	Pupils may / may not sustain understanding across a longer text.	Use structured comprehension routines, guided discussion and evidence-based responses.

9. Final Note

The Word Roots Literacy Diagnostic is designed to help schools move beyond broad labels such as “weak reader” or “low literacy”. By looking carefully at word reading, morphology, vocabulary, sentence meaning and comprehension, schools can identify the specific barriers preventing pupils from accessing the curriculum.

The most powerful use of the diagnostic is not simply to generate a score. It is to identify the right next step: whether pupils need high-support literacy rebuilding, a structured bridge into secondary curriculum language, or a more advanced route into complex vocabulary and academic reading.

This diagnostic should be used alongside teacher knowledge, transition information and any available reading assessment data. It is designed to sharpen provision decisions, not replace professional judgement or specialist assessment.