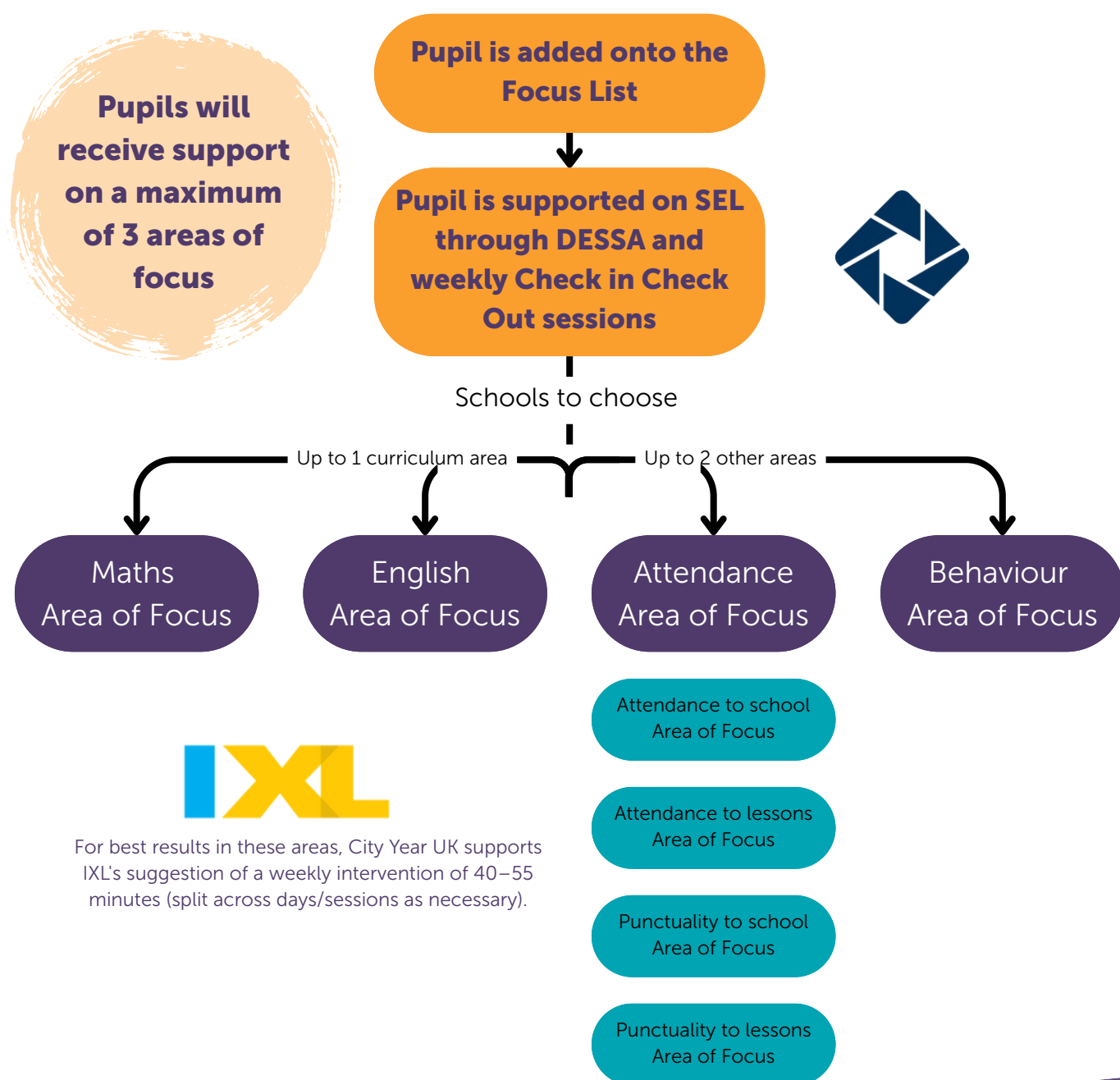
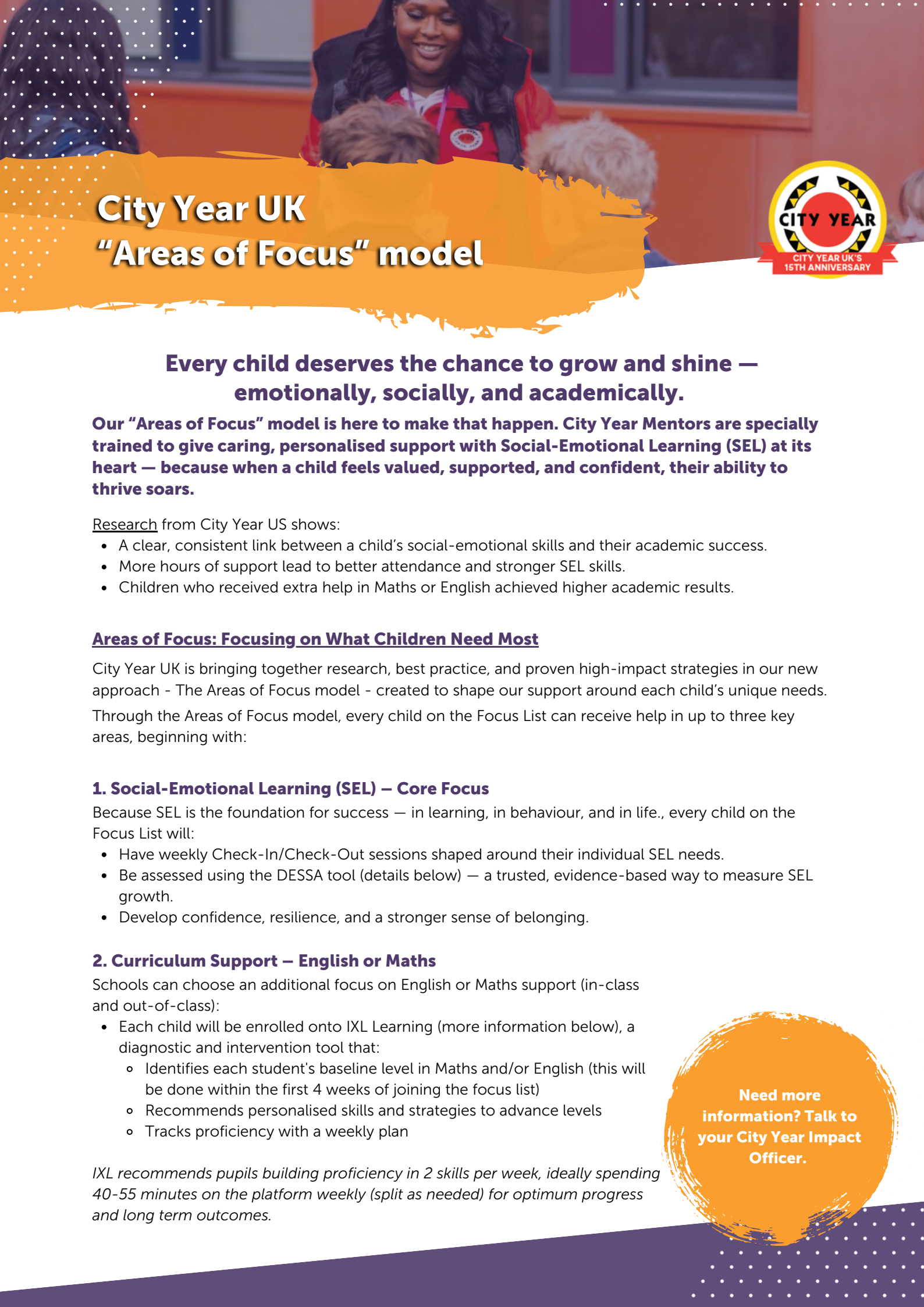


City Year UK is committed to creating a positive, lasting difference for the children we support, helping them build the skills, confidence, and opportunities that last beyond the classroom.

We use our own Areas of Focus model to track progress and respond to the individual and changing needs of children. At its heart is Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), reinforced by targeted improvements in attendance, behaviour, and curriculum – together, these pillars create the conditions for every child to thrive.

Below is an overview of our Areas of Focus model (see page 2 onwards for more detail):





City Year UK

“Areas of Focus” model



Every child deserves the chance to grow and shine — emotionally, socially, and academically.

Our “Areas of Focus” model is here to make that happen. City Year Mentors are specially trained to give caring, personalised support with Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) at its heart — because when a child feels valued, supported, and confident, their ability to thrive soars.

Research from City Year US shows:

- A clear, consistent link between a child’s social-emotional skills and their academic success.
- More hours of support lead to better attendance and stronger SEL skills.
- Children who received extra help in Maths or English achieved higher academic results.

Areas of Focus: Focusing on What Children Need Most

City Year UK is bringing together research, best practice, and proven high-impact strategies in our new approach - The Areas of Focus model - created to shape our support around each child’s unique needs.

Through the Areas of Focus model, every child on the Focus List can receive help in up to three key areas, beginning with:

1. Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) – Core Focus

Because SEL is the foundation for success — in learning, in behaviour, and in life., every child on the Focus List will:

- Have weekly Check-In/Check-Out sessions shaped around their individual SEL needs.
- Be assessed using the DESSA tool (details below) — a trusted, evidence-based way to measure SEL growth.
- Develop confidence, resilience, and a stronger sense of belonging.

2. Curriculum Support – English or Maths

Schools can choose an additional focus on English or Maths support (in-class and out-of-class):

- Each child will be enrolled onto IXL Learning (more information below), a diagnostic and intervention tool that:
 - Identifies each student’s baseline level in Maths and/or English (this will be done within the first 4 weeks of joining the focus list)
 - Recommends personalised skills and strategies to advance levels
 - Tracks proficiency with a weekly plan

IXL recommends pupils building proficiency in 2 skills per week, ideally spending 40-55 minutes on the platform weekly (split as needed) for optimum progress and long term outcomes.



**Need more
information? Talk to
your City Year Impact
Officer.**

3. Additional Support Areas

Schools can also choose one of the following as a third area of focus for each child:

- Attendance or Punctuality (to school or to lessons)
- Behavioural Support

Our interventions in these areas may include (amongst others):

- Morning meet & greets
- Walking to lessons or check-ins
- Phone calls home
- In-lesson support with a focus on ATL

If academic support (Maths/English) is not needed, two of these additional areas can be selected instead.

How Our School Partners Can Support Success

To achieve the best outcomes, we ask you to:

- Assign up to two extra focus areas (beyond SEL) for each new Focus List child.
- Allow flexibility in timetables for Mentors to run Check-Ins, IXL sessions, and interventions.
- Collaborate on scheduling so Mentor timetables align with pupil needs.
- Provide access to IT equipment (laptops, computers, Wi-Fi).
- Use additional capacity for Mentors to support wider school activities, such as clubs and enrichment programmes.



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What is DESSA?

The Devereux Student Strengths Assessment



The DESSA is an empirical, standardised Social and Emotional Competency (SEC) assessment supporting pupils from Year 1 to Year 13. It empowers City Year Mentors to build a measurable and actionable social and emotional programme for the pupils they support. It ensures that our Mentors can reliably assess and measure progress and deliver interventions that are relevant to changing pupil needs.

Grounded in resilience theory and directly aligned to the commonly used CASEL™ framework, the DESSA offers a user-friendly, practical SEC assessment tool that meets the highest professional standards and is able to:

- Accurately identify pupil strengths and behaviours that may inhibit learning.
- Surface the underlying social and emotional skill needs.
- Build critical resilience skills with data-driven instruction.

The assessment

City Year Mentors will use the DESSA to conduct up to four assessments of their Focus List pupils throughout the year, based on observations and interactions. With a minimum of four weeks in between assessment points, the DESSA will enable Mentors to accurately evaluate pupils' growth and progress and measure the impact of the interventions being delivered by them.

The assessment is entirely strength-based; meaning that the focus is on pupils' positive behaviours (e.g., getting along with others) rather than maladaptive ones (e.g., annoying others). For each item, the City Year Mentor is asked to indicate on a five-point scale how often the pupil has engaged in that behaviour over the past four weeks. City Year mentors and Impact Officers will use these scores to inform progress and development of interventions, focusing on areas of need and ensuring that the programme can make a positive impact on these.

Based on results, the DESSA system will also provide data-driven recommendations for Tier 1 and Tier 2 intervention for the City Year Mentors to implement.

**Need more
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Officer.**

Tier 1 interventions focus on promoting universal SECs across the Focus List.

They may include:

- Standalone strategies such as integrating SEL-focused activities into daily routines or group discussions.
- Whole-group delivery of practices like mindfulness exercises, empathy-building games, or problem-solving scenarios.
- Guidance on how to help foster a positive classroom environment that supports all pupils in developing critical SEL skills.

Tier 2 Interventions are for pupils requiring additional, targeted support.

The DESSA system will recommend:

- Individualised strategies tailored to specific areas of need, such as self-regulation, resilience, or relationship-building skills.
- Structured, multi-week intervention programmes designed to address identified gaps. These might involve regular, mentor-led sessions focusing on areas like managing emotions, improving decision-making, or strengthening peer connections.
- Collaboration with teachers and support staff to ensure consistent reinforcement of skills across different contexts.

Additionally, the system will provide practical guidance and tools for mentors, such as step-by-step intervention plans, progress tracking templates, and suggestions for follow-up actions. This ensures that interventions are actionable, measurable, and aligned with each pupil's unique developmental needs. Further guidance [here](#).

8 Skills Measured by the DESSA (Year 9 - 13)



Self-Awareness



Self-Management



Personal Responsibility



Decision Making



Goal-Directed Behaviour



Social Awareness



Relationship Skills



Optimistic Thinking

6 Skills Measured by the DESSA (Up to Year 8)



Optimistic Thinking



Relationship Skills



Self-Management



Responsible
Decision-Making



Social Awareness



Self-Awareness

[The DESSA research further reading](#)



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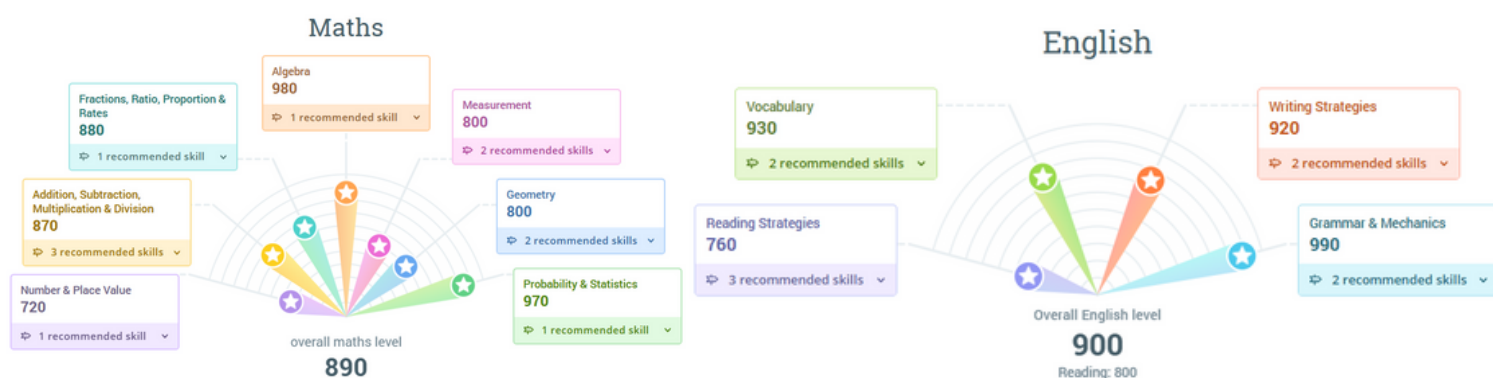
What is IXL Learning?

IXL Learning is a leading educational platform, aligned to the National Curriculum, offering personalised Maths and English practice from Reception to Year 13.

IXL Learning starts with a diagnostic assessment that helps City Year Mentors clearly understand what their Focus List pupils already know and which specific skills they need to develop in order to make progress. Focus List pupils will complete this diagnostic with their City Year Mentors within the first four weeks of support.

IXL assigns each pupil a performance level—ranging from the beginning of Reception (level 0) to the end of Year 13 (level 1400), increasing by 100 levels per year group. For example pupils working at “Year 5” ability would achieve levels in the 500s, with those working to the higher end of year 5 being closer to 600. For those working to “Year 7” ability their levels would be in the 700s.

Pupils’ real-time progress and current level will be displayed on an interactive dashboard, like these:

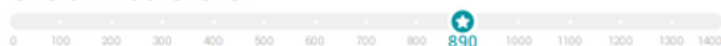


As well as a personalised action plan based on pupil’s individual needs:

The IXL Real-Time Diagnostic shows you what you know and what you’re ready to learn next. Work on your personalised skill recommendations until you reach excellence (90+). Visit the Real-Time Diagnostic often to see how your stats change and to get new recommendations!

Have questions about the Real-Time Diagnostic? Visit uk.ixl.com/diagnostic-help

Overall maths level



Maths strand levels and top recommended skills

Number & Place Value



1 recommended skill

☐ Understanding opposite integers >> 56L

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Officer.**

Pupils can then choose to work on the skills recommended by IXL, or focus with their City Year Mentor on a specific objective from a recent lesson if they need extra support. They also have access to the full range of National Curriculum objectives, giving them the flexibility to explore and strengthen any area of their learning. For Maths, pupils with EAL can practice skills using translation to support their progress.

See below screenshot for an example of some Year 10 (Level K on the IXL platform) reading strategies activities offered on IXL.

Level K English

IXL offers more than 100 Level K English skills to explore and learn! Not sure where to start? Go to your personalised [Recommendations wall](#) to find skills picked just for you, or select a [skill plan](#) that aligns to your textbook, national curriculum, or standardised test.

Reading strategies Writing strategies Vocabulary Grammar and mechanics

Reading strategies

A. Main idea 1 Determine the main idea of a passage	C. Literary devices 1 Identify the narrative point of view 2 Interpret the meaning of an allusion from its source 3 Recall the source of an allusion 4 Interpret figures of speech 5 Classify figures of speech: euphemism, hyperbole, oxymoron, paradox 6 Classify figures of speech: review 7 Analyse the effects of figures of speech on meaning and tone	E. Analysing informational texts 1 Analyse the development of informational passages: set 1 2 Analyse the development of informational passages: set 2 3 Trace an argument: set 1 4 Trace an argument: set 2 5 Analyse rhetorical strategies in historical texts: set 1 6 Analyse rhetorical strategies in historical texts: set 2
B. Audience, purpose and tone 1 Which text is most formal? 2 Identify audience and purpose 3 Compare passages for subjective and objective tone 4 Compare passages for tone	D. Analysing literature 1 Match the quotations with their themes 2 Analyse short stories: set 1 3 Analyse short stories: set 2	

Support in Action

As pupils work through questions within a specific skill, they will earn SmartScores. A skill is considered proficient once a pupil reaches a SmartScore of 80, which typically takes 15–20 minutes. To see measurable progress, IXL recommends that pupils achieve proficiency in at least two skills per week - a target based on research and proven results.

To keep their diagnostic level and personalised skill recommendations accurate, pupils should spend 10–15 minutes per week working on the diagnostic tool.

For optimal progress City Year UK aims to deliver 40–55 minutes of IXL-based support per week for pupils with a Maths or English Area of Focus. This time can be delivered as a single session or split into multiple shorter sessions as needed (including during breaktimes and after school if necessary).

When requested, City Year UK can provide schools with:

- Pupils' action plans being followed by City Year Mentors.
- The option for a designated school staff member to receive weekly intervention updates (including time spent, number of questions answered, and number of skills practised)

Pupil progress will be summarised in the Impact Reports.

GCSE and SATs skills plans

IXL Learning also provides dedicated GCSE and SATs skills plans, which City Year Mentors can use to support their Focus List pupils in preparing for their upcoming exams.



IXL testimonials

If you would like more information about how City Year UK uses DESSA and IXL Learning please contact our Impact and Data Manager Sofia at sbecerra@cityyear.org.uk



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