



The John Fisher School
Literacy Policy

Responsible: Governors' SLAW Committee

Review date: November 2022

Rationale

With Christ at the centre of our curriculum, we aim to nurture young catholic gentlemen so that each student can achieve their God-given potential. Literacy is crucial in ensuring this success as it bridges three fundamental strands: reading, writing and speaking and listening. Literacy is of great value for improving attainment at GCSE and A Level as well as building cultural capital for students to flourish in their future lives. It is also important to note our moral imperative: no student should leave school unable to read well after 11 years in compulsory education.

Recent research shows that literacy plays a key role across all subjects in ensuring students can maximise their potential:

- Reading for pleasure is more important for children's cognitive development than their parents' level of education. **(Dr Alice Sullivan and Matt Brown, Institute of Education, 2013)**
- Evidence suggests that there is a positive relationship between reading frequency, reading enjoyment and attainment. **(Clark 2011; Clark and Douglas 2011)**
- Evidence suggests that reading for pleasure is an activity that has emotional and social consequences as it crucially provides them with the vocabulary to verbalise their complex feelings. **(Clark and Rumbold, 2006)**

An effective literacy policy not only maximises students' potential, but also ensures we adhere to the National Curriculum and OFSTED's requirements:

"Teachers should develop pupils' spoken language, reading, writing and vocabulary as integral aspects of the teaching of every subject. English is both a subject in its own right and the medium for teaching; for pupils, understanding the language provides access to the whole curriculum. Fluency in the English language is an essential foundation for success in all subjects."
– National Curriculum 2014

- *"Reading is prioritised to allow pupils to access the full curriculum offer.*
- *A rigorous and sequential approach to the reading curriculum develops pupils' fluency, confidence and enjoyment in reading. At all stages, reading attainment is assessed and gaps are addressed quickly and effectively for all pupils. Reading books connect closely to the phonics knowledge pupils are taught when they are learning to read.*
- *The sharp focus on ensuring that younger children and those at the early stages of reading gain phonics knowledge and language comprehension necessary to read, and the skills to communicate, gives them the foundations for future learning.*
- *Teachers ensure that their own speaking, listening, writing and reading of English support pupils in developing their language and vocabulary well."*
School inspection handbook for September 2021

Policy Aims

- To instil a love of reading to support students in their studies.
- To provide comprehensive, systematic and continuous screening of students' literacy skills throughout their time at The John Fisher School.
- To embed effective, targeted and measurable intervention for students identified with literacy needs to enable them to access the whole curriculum fully.
- To provide a co-ordinated set of literacy strategies for teachers to apply in the classroom to ensure effective literacy teaching practices are embedded in all subjects across the curriculum.

If all criteria are fully embedded across the curriculum, we can strive to meet the following strands outlined in the OFSTED framework for an 'Outstanding' lesson:

- *All students have high levels of literacy appropriate to their age.*
- *Students read widely and often across all subjects.*
- *Students develop and apply a wide range of skills to great effect, in reading, writing and communication.*
- *The teaching of reading, writing and communication is highly effective and cohesively planned and implemented across the curriculum.*

Key individuals and their role

| Staff Title | Role and responsibility |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Senior Leadership Team (SLT) | Shaping school culture signalling literacy as a key priority for staff. Establishing effective day-to-day leadership, to build team morale and to develop a shared sense of ambition amongst staff in delivery of literacy. Ensuring that the curriculum policy clearly states for enabling students to access knowledge in all academic domains. |
| Raising Standards Leader (RSL) | Responsible for overarching strategy for literacy initiatives and raising literacy standards. |
| Literacy Coordinators | Coordinating, leading, monitoring and evaluating the impact of initiatives and interventions. Providing rigorous reading materials for Form Tutors. Working with the Librarian to instil a love of reading across the curriculum offering opportunities for literacy extension outside of the classroom. |
| Subject Leaders | Ensuring that the foundational and pervasive nature of literacy is embedded across all aspects of their curriculum in relevant ways for their subjects. |
| Directors of Learning | Supporting literacy initiatives implemented in form times and as extra-curricular opportunities. |
| Form Tutors | Undertaking regular reading opportunities as provided by the Literacy Coordinators. |
| Classroom Teachers | Planning and teaching lessons that makes good use of opportunities to develop students' literacy as indicated later in this document. |
| SENCO | Following the Code of Practice 2015, co-ordinating the graduated response for those students who are experiencing "significantly greater difficulty" in their literacy learning and who require "additional to and different from" provision. |
| Governing Body | To understand the current scale of literacy provision and requirements in the school and to support the staff body with the embedding of new literacy initiatives. |

Interventions– Monitoring and Evaluation

But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? - 1John 3:17

It is important to have a proactive screening system that surveys all students, identifies specific types of reading problems, and also makes it clear how far behind students are in different domains of reading. This is necessary to ensure that the school has sufficient information to match students to interventions. Interventions will be well co-ordinated and fully complementary. Attention will be given to establishing clear selection and graduation criteria, and teaching students once they have been thoroughly assessed. It will be essential to avoid overlap, duplication and gaps in provision. An important principle is to minimise time spent in interventions in order to maximise inclusion – in other words, if a child attends intervention, the rate of progress needs to be strong enough to justify the impact on their classroom time. Interventions selected should therefore have good evidence of substantial impact. Three months' progress for every month in intervention is the minimum aimed for recommended rate of progress to justify the use of an intervention.

The school will implement interventions with sufficient staff training to ensure fidelity of delivery and strong accountability for student progress. Implementation will also require co-ordinated timetabling and resourcing by school leaders. Students will be withdrawn from a range of subjects to minimise impact on any one curriculum area. Withdrawal from languages, for instance, is reducing struggling readers' exposure to explicit language teaching when it is arguably one of the skill-sets that they most need to develop. Details of specific interventions across Reading, Writing and Speaking and Listening can be found in the next sections.

Reading

Then he took the book of the covenant, and read it in the hearing of the people; and they said, 'All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient. – Exodus 24:7

Rights Respecting Schools Article links: [17](#), [28](#), [29](#), [30](#), [31](#)

On Reading: *“Teachers should develop pupils’ reading... in all subjects to support their acquisition of knowledge. Pupils should be taught to read fluently, understand extended prose (both fiction and non-fiction) and be encouraged to read for pleasure. Schools should do everything to promote wider reading. They should provide library facilities and set ambitious expectations for reading at home.”*
– **The National Curriculum 2014**

Across their lessons, staff are expected to:

- Lead the majority of the reading in class as default. This supports modelling of important vocabulary and prosody for students.
- Establish an environment where students feel safe and confident to engage with reading aloud regardless of their current ability.
- Supplement teacher-led reading with alternate forms of reading: students taking turns reading aloud, reading in small groups, reading in pairs, and occasionally silent independent reading, allowing the teacher to work with one or two students per lesson for some brief input, encouragement and feedback.
- Gauge student understanding of texts they have just read through a minimum of three quick comprehension questions. These can either be written down or verbal. Staff should use ‘cold calling’ to identify students to volunteer answers for these questions.
- Promote reading for pleasure as an enjoyable activity, offering suggestions for suitably challenging texts to read outside the classroom.

In addition, staff should aim to incorporate Best Practice strategies into each of their lessons. This includes the following:

- Use knowledge retrieval tasks to recap previously learnt vocabulary and support knowledge-building.
- Explicit, planned teaching of Tier 2 vocabulary across all subjects should be promoted which highlights words’ phonology, etymology, morphology and usage. For SEND students, the creation of ‘word webs’ can be particularly useful. This should continue until the practice is well-embedded across curriculum areas.
- Embed reading tasks in every lesson, using material which will enable students to access useful curriculum knowledge: Students with age appropriate or advanced reading age should be challenged through being offered opportunities for increased breadth and depth in reading across subjects. Students with below age appropriate reading age should be supported to consolidate their knowledge, understanding and skills, including through additional support and reading practice in each lesson.
- A passage of 800 words can be read in 5 – 7 minutes by most students: over time, five lessons per day at 800 words per lesson results in students reading 800,000 words during class time. This volume of practice will make reading easier for most, if not all, students, and therefore more rewarding. It also emphasises to students that a key purpose of reading is to facilitate learning.
- Incorporate specific, detailed reading comprehension strategies into lessons. These could include:
 - o making predictions of a text’s content based on its purpose, author and context prior to reading;
 - o identifying writings’ purpose, audience and context and draw on this knowledge to support comprehension;
 - o use skimming and scanning when reading;
 - o working with three levels of inference (logical, probable, and speculative) supplying evidence for each example found.

Expected progression

- Students actively engage in reading outside of the classroom, moving from selecting texts proposed by their teachers to choosing rigorous and age appropriate texts independently.
- Students have the confidence to read a text aloud showing proficient fluency in word pronunciation and sentence prosody.

- Students' reading age correlates with their chronological age.

Intervention

On arriving at The John Fisher School, students are screened using standardised tests (CATs, NGRT and NGST). Those who fall in the bottom 35 percentile nationally are followed up with further screening to see whether their results were valid or behaviour driven. It also enables the identification of students with needs in decoding, comprehension or both, so that they can be matched with interventions according to their types of needs, and also by how far behind each student is reading. For those students identified as having Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, a graduated response will be used as per the school's SEND Policy.

To widen the impact of the screening process, results will be shared with classroom teachers providing appropriate caveats about how to interpret the data, and how to manage the information sensitively and confidentially.

Once students' need are identified, the RSL and Literacy Coordinators will work with the SENCO to determine what interventions should be put in place for students. These currently entail:

- SoundsWrite programme with specialist teacher
- Paired Reading
- Thinking Reading
- Reciprocal Reading programme

The Role of the Learning Resource Centre (LRC)

Our aim is for the LRC to become the hub of the school for students: a safe, positive place for them to participate in reading initiatives and extracurricular activities. With a love of reading at the heart, it will be stocked with a wide range of fiction and nonfiction resources, ranging from modern YA fiction, graphic novels to reference and text books. The Library can also be used to facilitate and supplement reading opportunities in the classroom, sourcing texts and resources alongside offering opportunities for students to learn effective strategies for research.

Writing

Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path. – Psalm 119

Rights Respecting Schools Article links: 12, 14, 28, 29, 30, 31

“Pupils should develop the stamina and skills to write at length, with accurate spelling and punctuation. They should be taught the correct use of grammar. They should build on what they have been taught to expand the range of their writing and the variety of the grammar they use. The writing they do should include narratives, explanations, descriptions, comparisons, summaries and evaluations: such writing supports them in rehearsing, understanding and consolidating what they have heard or read.”

– The National Curriculum 2014

Across their lessons, staff are expected to:

- Provide opportunities for students to write accurately, fluently and effectively according to purpose and audience.
- Assess students' accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- Regularly provide opportunities for directed improvement and reflection time (DIRT).
- Provide appropriate scaffolding to students to support their writing. This can include but is not limited to sentence starters, prompt questions and verbal discussion.

In addition, staff should aim to incorporate Best Practice strategies into their lesson. This includes the following:

- Ensure students are planning, proof-reading and editing their writing.
- Regularly remind students of common spelling, punctuation and grammar (SPaG) mistakes through feedback such as Whole Class Feedback or sort peer marking exercises which purely focus on SPaG.
- Use a visualiser or interactive whiteboard, staff regularly model, and whole classes can contribute to, sentence editing.
- Apply ideas found in Hochman's *The Writing Revolution* into their classroom practice:

- Focus on writing quality not quantity, starting with crafting strong sentences before moving on to paragraphs.
- Don't overcomplicate grammatical writing by including all excess terminology. In the first instance, students need to be aware that:
 - A sentence in its most simple form expresses **one complete thought**.
 - A sentence starts with a **capital letter and ends with some sort of punctuation**, but not a comma.
 - A **fragment** is an **incomplete thought** – it does not make sense on its own.
 - A **run-on sentence** contains **too much information** in one sentence without the correct punctuation.
- Provide students with sentence fragments getting them to complete them with knowledge learnt in the lesson.
- Provide students with mixed up sentences that they need to rearrange to make grammatical sense. For weaker students, capitalise the correct first word and put punctuation after the last word of the sentence.
- Provide run-on sentences with students to identify where punctuation should be put in place. The content of the sentence should not need editing.
- Provide students with a variety of sentence structures to elicit extended responses: advert start, because / but / so, appositives, subordinate clauses, ing-verb start.

Expected progression

- Students are able to accurately punctuation their sentences, starting with capital letters and ending with correct punctuation.
- Students are able to adapt their writing to suit purpose, audience and genre.
- Students are able to vary their sentence structure, length without relying solely on scaffolded sentence starters.
- Students are able to write at length without showing signs of fatigue.
- Students view writing as a craft, showing proficiency in each stage of planning, writing and editing their work.

Speaking and Listening

It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.' – Matthew 4:4

Rights Respecting Schools Article links: 12, 13, 14, 28, 29, 30

On Speaking & Listening: *“Pupils should be taught to speak clearly and convey ideas confidently using Standard English. They should learn to justify ideas with reasons; ask questions to check understanding; develop vocabulary and build knowledge; negotiate; evaluate and build on the ideas of others; and select the appropriate register for effective communication. They should be taught to give well-structured descriptions and explanations and develop their understanding through speculating, hypothesising and exploring ideas. This will enable them to clarify their thinking as well as organise their ideas for writing.”*

On Vocabulary: *“Pupils’ acquisition and command of vocabulary are key to their learning and progress across the whole curriculum. Teachers should therefore develop vocabulary actively, building systematically on pupils’ current knowledge. They should increase pupils’ store of words in general; simultaneously, they should also make links between known and new vocabulary and discuss the shades of meaning in similar words. In this way, pupils expand the vocabulary choices that are available to them when they write. In addition, it is vital for pupils’ comprehension that they understand the meanings of words they meet in their reading across all subjects, and older pupils should be taught the meaning of instruction verbs that they may meet in examination questions. It is particularly important to induct pupils into the language which defines each subject in its own right, such as accurate mathematical and scientific language.”*

– The National Curriculum 2014

Across their lessons, staff are expected to:

- Offer opportunities for class discussion, whether that be as a whole class or in smaller groups.
- Ensure a safe and respectable environment is in place so that all students feel confident to express their ideas openly.
- Ensure students listen to each other's opinions and respond appropriately.
- Explicitly teach new vocabulary, aiming to introduce a new term in 30 – 60 seconds. This can be done through methods such as 'call and response'.
- Provide verbal feedback to students on their written and / or verbal responses.

In addition, staff should aim to incorporate Best Practice strategies into each of their lessons. This includes the following:

- Provide regular opportunities for students to present in class or engage in debates.
- *Pose, pause, pounce, bounce* with class discussion enables development of ideas amongst students. This will also ensure a greater number of students are thinking with the question for longer rather than relying on individuals taking the lead.
- Offer follow up questions to student responses: "can you explain that further?" or "what if...?"
- Develop students' oracy skills as referred to in the 4 strands of the Oracy Skills framework (<https://www.educ.cam.ac.uk/research/programmes/oracytoolkit/oracyskillsframework/Oracy%20Skills%20Framework%202020.pdf>)

Expected progression

- Students speak audibly and confidently on the class topic or, if presenting, on a topic of their choosing.
- Students use increasingly sophisticated tier-2 and tier-3 vocabulary regularly in their spoken language.
- Students vary their vocabulary and tone to suit purpose, audience and genre.
- Students move from offering straightforward responses to direct questions to initiating discussion themselves.
- Students respond thoughtfully to others' ideas, asking pertinent questions and considering alternate points of view.
- Students listen to information and ideas and are able to recognise how evidence is used (e.g. to defend a point or being misled by exaggeration).
- Students can collaborate and reach a consensus, agreeing actions in groups.

Intervention

- External Speech and Language therapist (SALT) works with targeted students once per week.

Recommended Literacy Reading

Simplicity Rules – Jo Facer

The Writing Revolution – Judith Hochman et al.

Reading Reconsidered – Doug Lemov

Thinking Reading – James & Dianne Murphy

Closing the Vocabulary Gap - Alex Quigley