

Literacy Policy

Version 2.1

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LITERACY POLICY

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“Words for life” – The National Literacy Trust

A. Definition

Literacy is defined as the four strands of language – listening, speaking, reading and writing. Therefore, to communicate clearly and effectively in social and academic situations, our students need to demonstrate proficient use of all four literacy skills.

B. Principles

1. We hold the belief that raising standards of literacy is central to improving achievement throughout the curriculum areas.
2. We recognise that all teachers are teachers of literacy as we all have a crucial role to play in supporting students’ literacy development.
3. We will promote a consistent approach in our attention to literacy by all staff in all subject areas.
4. Our vision is to empower all students, from the least to the most able, with a set of thinking, listening, speaking, reading and writing skills so that they have the ability to access, process and express knowledge appropriately in curriculum areas, examinations and life beyond school.
5. As The National Literacy Trust states, we are teaching and supporting our students to develop ‘words for life’.

C. Aims

To:

1. Raise standards of literacy across the curriculum by teaching, modelling and providing all students with the opportunity to develop the skills required for the four strands of language – listening, speaking, reading and writing.
2. Encourage and promote existing literacy initiatives and events, for example, author visits, reading events and competitions, in order to develop and establish a reading culture.

D. Raising Standards of Literacy – Teaching and Learning

Learning through speaking and listening

Talk is our main means of communication in life, and in lessons is the most fundamental tool in developing understanding. It is not simply about asking and answering questions. Lessons should provide opportunities for purposeful speaking and listening to take place so that students can explore, clarify and present their ideas and develop their understanding by actively listening to others.

Requirements

All teachers should use these strategies in lessons, **as appropriate to the individual lesson and subject content**, to develop students' speaking and listening skills.

1. Encourage students to use varied and specialised vocabulary as well as using Standard English where appropriate.
2. Use talk in lessons to question, discuss, analyse, inform and explain etc. (*see Appendix 1 – Purposes of talk and writing*).
3. Model the type of talk students are expected to use within a given environment and/or activity.
4. Give students feedback on the quality of their speaking and listening (*see Appendix 2 - Speaking and Listening attainment ladder*).
5. Provide students with opportunities to actively engage with their learning through discussion.
6. Encourage students to actively listen.

Active listening is making a conscious effort to hear not only the words that another person is saying but, more importantly, trying to understand the complete message being sent. You may wish to refer to the following website for more about active listening:

<http://www.mindtools.com/CommSkill/ActiveListening.htm>

7. Encourage students to comment on others' views and challenge them.
8. Provide students with opportunities to debate and speak formally.
9. Give opportunities for paired, larger group and whole class discussion as well as individual presentations to a variety of audiences.
10. Use presentations as part of the formal assessment process where appropriate.

B. Learning through text/reading

Reading should first and foremost be for enjoyment and all teachers have a role to play in helping to develop and establish a reading culture within the school. However, at a more practical level, students should be able to read confidently and competently so that they are able to access and understand lesson and examination material, as well as everyday media and literature.

Requirements

All teachers should use these strategies in lessons, **as appropriate to the individual lesson and subject content**, to develop students' reading skills.

1. Give students the opportunity to read independently and **actively**. This could include highlighting text, giving students something specific to look for whilst reading or note taking. (*See Appendix 3 – Active Reading Strategies*).
2. Encourage and promote reading for pleasure as well as for learning.
3. Show/teach students how to locate information in texts, for example how to skim and scan, use sub-headings, use an index etc. (*See Appendix 4 - Skimming and Scanning*).
4. Ask students to show understanding of texts through writing (a variety of text types can be explored here, a summary, notes, even diary entries or newspaper articles if appropriate) and/or orally summarising what has been read.
5. Extend students' subject-specific vocabulary by displaying subject-specific words in each classroom.
6. Provide opportunities for students to read texts in a variety of ways, for example, individually, as a whole class or in smaller groups.
7. Develop students' research and study skills, for example by encouraging students to select information from a range of texts and sources.
8. Encourage students to make use of dictionaries/thesauri available in most classrooms and in word processing packages.

C. Learning through writing

Teachers should be mindful that, despite an ever-increasing reliance on technology, writing is an essential communication skill. Students need to be able to communicate in written form in lessons, examinations and life beyond school. They must understand the different purposes for writing and apply the appropriate form and tone confidently to their own.

Requirements

All teachers should use these strategies in lessons, **as appropriate to the individual lesson and subject content**, to develop students' writing skills.

1. Make explicit to students the text type/form, purpose and audience of the writing, for example, a leaflet to inform young children about a new theme park. (See appendix 1 – Purposes of talk and writing).
2. Explain the possible layout and features of the text type that students are asked to produce before they begin writing, for example, what a letter/ leaflet/ newspaper article looks like.
3. Teach students a variety of ways to plan the structure of their writing.
4. Teach students about the writing process; practise a combination of **modelled writing** and **shared writing** in lessons.

***Modelling** is the teacher or student showing how they construct a piece of writing by allowing others to witness their thought process and not just the outcome.*

***Shared writing** is the teacher or student scribing and guiding the writing but with the students' input.*

5. Display/provide useful phrases to encourage students to develop their writing.
6. When marking students' writing, include a comment or target about the quality of the writing (a literacy component such as paragraphing, punctuation, grammar, spelling etc.) if appropriate. (See Appendix 5 – Marking for Literacy)
7. Provide students with the opportunities to plan, draft and evaluate their own and each other's writing.
8. Provide students with opportunities for extended writing.
9. Ensure that the presentation and language of all resources are clear.
10. Encourage students to make their handwriting clear and legible. The following website has very useful suggestions about how to improve handwriting:
<http://matadornetwork.com/life/eight-easy-tips-to-improve-your-handwriting/>

D. Training Staff

The Senior Leadership Team and Literacy Co-ordinator will:

- inform and update staff of key changes and developments in Government legislation and initiatives regarding literacy

- offer and provide staff with regular opportunities for training and sharing good practice.

E. Reviewing the policy

This policy is a working document which will be reviewed and adapted accordingly every two years. A whole-staff literacy survey will be carried out every two years which will enable all staff to further reflect on their own practice in the promoting, teaching and marking of literacy.

The results of this survey will highlight areas of good practice as well as those which require improvement and will feed into the development and use of this document.

F. Appendices and Linked Policies

The following resources are examples of a wide range of materials used in the delivery of literacy across the curriculum.

Other policies to refer to:

- Assessment Recording and Reporting Policy
- Teaching to Facilitate Learning Policy.

Talk and Writing Purposes

ARGUE, PERSUADE, ADVISE = POINT OF VIEW

ARGUE

- Make several, separate, clear key points.
- Examples, facts, opinions, sources to support argument.
- New point=new paragraph=clear first sentence.
- Rhetorical questions, groups of 3, powerful statements.
- Use "we" to involve reader.
- Counter argument.

PERSUADE

- Many similar features as argument (see above).
- Several, persuasive/convincing reasons.
- Try shock and/or humour.
- Use "we", "us", "our" to involve reader.
- Repetition.
- Presentational features such as images and bold/emphasised text.

ADVISE

- Might reassure and/or challenge.
- Imperatives = "ask someone..." "**talk** to..." "**do**..."
- Use modal verbs = can, could, may, might, will, would, shall, must, should.
- Possibly subheadings, bullet points.

INFORM, EXPLAIN, DESCRIBE = GIVE DETAILS

INFORM

- Must clearly give your reader information.
- Address Who? What? Where? When? Why? and How?

- Address the reader directly using "you".
- Use evidence - facts and statistics.
- Graphs, charts, images.
- Headings.

EXPLAIN

- Must clearly show or demonstrate.
- Develop the detail in your explanation.
- Use examples to illustrate your points.
- Careful step by step order.
- Paragraphs, headings, sections must be arranged logically.
- Bullet points, images, graphs and other presentational features.

DESCRIBE

- Try to paint a picture with words.
- Use five senses: Sights? Sounds? Smells? Touch? Taste?
- Invent similes and metaphors.
- Use subject specific terminology.
- Use adjectives and adverbs.

ANALYSE, COMMENT, REVIEW = A CONSIDERED RESPONSE

ANALYSE

- You should be thinking: How? Why? Effect?
- Usually in the present tense.
- Technical vocabulary.
- Headings, images and other presentational features.

COMMENT

- Many similarities to "review" - see below.
- Will include your judgement.
- Might be more personal.
- Might include "I expected...", "I noticed...", "It impressed me ...".

REVIEW

- Show strengths and weaknesses of something.

- Contains analysis/evidence/judgement.
- Connectives - e.g. as a result/however/ consequently/therefore/although.

IMAGINE, EXPLORE, ENTERTAIN = FICTION

For a story, follow this six-stage structure-

- **B**eginning = catch reader's attention.
- **I**ntroduce a problem = trouble of some kind.
- **G**ather pace = tension mounts/complications.
- **C**risis = peak of action and tension.
- **A**adjustment = cool it/hint at ending.
- **R**esolution = put things right or a final twist?

Remember it by **BIG CAR**

- Create a setting.
- Try to create tension, mood and atmosphere.
- Vary your sentence lengths and structure.
- Use interesting vocabulary.

For all tasks, ensure you are consistent with tense (past, present or future) and narrative voice (first, second or third person).

Speaking and Listening Attainment Ladder

Key Stage 5	Speaking and listening
Year 13	You use literary and linguistic meta-language to discuss textual analyses
Year 12	You enjoy discussing different readings of a text, and getting involved in ensuing debates. You are able to factor in contextual issues.
Key Stage 4	Speaking and listening
Year 11	You can initiate speech with an assured use of standard grammar and a wide vocabulary. You can convey difficult ideas and encourage others to participate.
Year 10	You speak fluently, listen closely, participate fully and hold the interest of an audience.
Key Stage 3	Speaking and Listening
Year 9	You match your talk to the demands of different contexts. You use words precisely and organise your talk to communicate clearly. In discussion you make significant contributions, evaluating others' ideas, and you use Standard English in situations that require it.
Year 8	Your talk is more interesting because you are starting to vary how you use your voice and your vocabulary. You ask questions that develop other speakers' ideas and make contributions that take account of others' views.
Year 7	You can talk and listen with confidence, changing your language for purpose and audience, using features of Standard English. You listen carefully to others.

Active Reading Strategies

Definition: A broad number of reading strategies designed to increase a student's involvement with texts that should result in improved comprehension and retention.

Possible Strategies:

1. Annotation

labelling some of the following:

- a. Connections between the text and others read.
- b. Definitions of unfamiliar words.
- c. A system of symbols to mark important passages, such as exclamation marks, question marks and asterisks.
- d. Comments of agreement or disagreement with ideas in the text.
- e. Own ideas inspired by the text.
- f. Other examples of concepts discussed in the text.

2. Highlighting

Learning to be selective and discriminating when highlighting text otherwise the important points won't stand out. Scholars recommend highlighting as little as 10 to 15 percent of a page and as much as 50 percent but certainly no more than that.

3. Mind mapping or other forms of note taking.

4. Free writing

The idea behind free writing is to just sit down and write for 15 minutes straight. The first step is closely akin to mind mapping. Write down as many thoughts about the reading as you can, but instead of putting them down in a list format, write them roughly in the form of sentences and paragraphs. Pay no attention to writing correctly, and don't go back to make revisions. Simply endeavour to get as many words down about the reading as possible within a period of about 15 minutes (or any other given time frame), trying not to pause.

5. Visualising

Describing the images you see as the writer describes them. Using the details from the text to create the “movie in your mind”.

6. Clarifying

Stopping and paying attention. Summarising/explaining what has been read so far. This is a great tool to check understanding of text. Reading on (and sometimes even rereading) and your understanding may change and develop. When finding the answers to any questions you had making a note of them.

7. Questioning

Asking questions about the text during reading.

8. Predicting

Trying to figure out what will happen next and how the text might end. Then reading on to see how accurate guesses are.

9. Connecting

Connecting personally with the text being read. Thinking of similarities between the text and what has been personally experienced, seen, and heard or read about. Also, connection to anything you may have already read or seen in media (movies, news broadcasts, newspapers, magazines, Internet).

10. Evaluating

Forming opinions about what has been read, both while you’re reading and after you’ve finished.

There is also a wealth of information on DARTS (Directed Activities Related to Texts) online which may be of some use when reading with classes.

Skimming and Scanning

Skimming and scanning are often spoken about in the same breath. They are two techniques that are often used together to save time identifying, locating and using sources of information.

Skimming

What is skimming?

Skimming is **quickly** casting your eyes over a piece of text to get the gist of it – and to discover if it is of interest or relevance to you.

There are often **clues** in the text to help you – for example:

Headings

words in bold

“Pull quotes in shaded boxes”

Pictures or diagrams

- bullet points.

You skim a text to find out the sort of things it does and does not tell you.

Sometimes you may retrieve a lot of information – for example, a pile of books or a long list of websites from a search engine. It helps if you are able to decide quickly whether the information is likely to be of any use to you. In situations such as this, **skimming** comes in handy. It is a useful skill to practise because it can save you a lot of time. Skimming is done at a speed three to four times faster than normal reading.

There are many strategies that can be used when skimming. Some people read the first and last paragraphs; you might read the title, subtitles, subheading, and illustrations. Consider reading the first sentence of each paragraph.

Scanning

Once you have identified sources of information that are likely to be of use to you by skimming, you will probably need to look at them more closely in order to get all the information that you need. Instead of reading through the whole text, you can **scan** the text to see if you can spot keywords or headings to locate **specific** information. In most cases, you know what you're looking for, so you're concentrating on finding a particular answer.

Marking for Literacy

For marking to be effective, it is important that we are consistent in our approach. This document does not aim to be a prescriptive policy as we have a whole school marking policy, as well as department/faculty policies; instead, it aims to assist you and provide some suggestions on how to mark for literacy in your subject area **where possible**.

This shouldn't create extra work for staff; it should simply be a way of getting the message across to students that literacy elements are important and relevant in **all** subject areas. We should not be correcting errors for the students; instead we should highlight/underline/bring to attention the errors made. Students should then be given time, either during a lesson or as part of homework, to reflect upon marking and make their own corrections.

Literacy elements to mark in pupils' work	Suggested symbol
Three to five spellings per piece of work	sp
Missing or incorrect use of punctuation*	p
Paragraphing	// or NP
A capital letter should/should not be used	C
Unclear expression/meaning	Underline the word and write: ? rephrase

*refer to attached punctuation document which is also displayed in every teaching room.

If you wish, you could also photocopy the above grid for students to stick into their exercise books or ask them to copy it into their books.

It is important to remember that we shouldn't be marking EVERY error; if there are many errors in a student's work, then it is worth only focusing on the most vital, for example when marking spelling, if there are many words spelt incorrectly, we should only pick three key words or subject specific words for the student to focus on.

If a child's literacy/writing is very weak, i.e. below level 4 in English, then there is no point highlighting errors from all five areas; instead we should focus on one area at a time, beginning possibly with written expression or capital letters.