



HEADLANDS SCHOOL
SINCE 1965

Literacy Policy

Updated by	Assistant Head Literacy and Alternative Pathways
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Headlands School Literacy Policy

“Reading is the master skill of school. Skilled reading, writing and talking is crucial for our students to succeed.” - Alex Quigley

Policy Aims

- To ensure a consistent, high-quality approach to reading, writing, and oracy across the curriculum.
- To enable all students to access complex texts, develop academic vocabulary, and articulate ideas with precision.
- To embed disciplinary literacy so that every subject contributes explicitly to literacy development.
- To ensure high-quality intervention for those who experience barriers to reading.
- To cultivate a lifelong love of reading through regular opportunities to read for pleasure.

1. Rationale

At Headlands School, we believe that reading is the foundation of all learning. Literacy is more than a set of skills; it is the means by which our students access, interpret, and contribute to the world. The ability to read, write, and speak with precision and confidence opens doors to academic success, personal growth, and active citizenship. For many of our students, reading presents the greatest barrier to achievement. This policy reflects our determination to remove that barrier by embedding a whole-school culture of reading and literacy excellence.

Through our Reading Strategy, we prioritise:

- Pride - nurturing confident, independent readers who take ownership of their learning.
- Aspiration - using reading to broaden horizons, ignite curiosity, and inspire ambition.
- Respect - fostering empathy, compassion, and understanding through engagement with diverse voices and experiences.

1.1. What is Literacy?

The **Education Endowment Foundation (EEF)** defines literacy as *the ability to read, write, and communicate effectively – enabling pupils to access, interpret, and express ideas, knowledge, and emotions across the curriculum.*

However, the EEF’s **Improving Literacy in Secondary Schools (2021)** guidance stresses that literacy in secondary education must be understood **disciplinarily** rather than generically. That is, literacy isn’t a single skill but a constellation of subject-specific practices: “Every teacher in every subject is responsible for supporting students to read, write and communicate effectively within their discipline.”

Core Components:

1. Reading

- Reading is not only decoding but also *comprehending complex, subject-specific texts*.
- Effective readers activate prior knowledge, infer meaning, evaluate evidence, and interpret tone and purpose.
- Teachers should make reading processes explicit through strategies such as modelling, questioning, and summarising.

2. Vocabulary

- The EEF identifies *explicit vocabulary instruction* as central to literacy.
- Pupils must master both **Tier 2** (academic) and **Tier 3** (subject-specific) words to access disciplinary content.

- Beck, McKeown & Kucan's *Bringing Words to Life* (2002) and Quigley's *Closing the Vocabulary Gap* (2018) emphasise “robust vocabulary instruction” and “word consciousness” to improve understanding and expression.
- 3. Writing**
 - Literacy includes the ability to write for varied audiences and purposes.
 - Writing draws on reading and thinking: *students learn to write by reading well*.
 - The EEF highlights *structured writing instruction* (e.g., modelling, planning, drafting, revising) as an essential component of improving literacy.
- 4. Oracy**
 - Spoken language underpins all literacy.
 - Research from Voice 21 (APPG, *Speak for Change*, 2021) and Mercer (2019) shows that structured talk enhances reasoning, vocabulary acquisition, and comprehension.
 - The EEF supports deliberate teaching of oracy as a means to deepen understanding and improve writing.
- 5. Disciplinary Literacy**
 - As Shanahan & Shanahan (2012) argue, “disciplinary literacy” involves *teaching the specialised ways of reading, writing, and thinking* unique to each subject.
 - For instance, historians analyse sources for bias and provenance; scientists interpret data; English students infer subtext and authorial intent.
 - This approach positions literacy as the shared responsibility of *every teacher in every subject*.
- 6. Intervention and Equity**
 - The EEF emphasises *early and ongoing identification* of students who struggle with reading and targeted intervention (e.g., phonics, comprehension, fluency).
 - High-quality intervention ensures equitable access to the curriculum and prevents the widening of attainment gaps.

(EEF, 2021; Quigley, 2020; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2012)

2. Roles and Responsibilities

2.1 Senior Leadership Team

- Champion reading and literacy as a whole-school priority.
- Monitor impact through QA, data analysis, and staff feedback.
- Provide training, resources, and time to implement reading and literacy strategies effectively.
- Model high standards of spoken and written English.

2.2 Assistant Principal: Literacy & Alternative Pathways

- Lead and evaluate the whole-school Reading and Literacy Strategy.
- Oversee Forensic Reading, Rapid Reads, Sparx Reader, and Tutor Time Oracy.
- Coordinate the assessment, triage, and intervention process for students with reading needs.
- Provide CPD and coaching to develop disciplinary literacy across all departments; develop staff expertise through modelling and CPD on effective reading and spelling instruction.
- Report regularly to SLT and Governors on progress and impact.
- Oversee the screening of struggling readers; the implementation of intervention; the creation of IRP documentation; the monitoring and evaluation of the intervention offer.
- Support parental engagement in literacy through guidance on home reading and spelling practice.

2.3 TLR Holder

- Identify and assess students requiring reading or spelling support through YARC, Fresh Start, and spelling diagnostics.
- Design and deliver high-quality, evidence-based interventions to improve decoding, fluency, comprehension, and spelling.

- Monitor progress and evaluate impact using reading age, fluency, accuracy, and engagement data; report trends to Assistant Principal: Literacy & Alternative Pathways.
- Collaborate with SEND, ARC, and subject teams to ensure joined-up intervention provision across each setting.
- Maintain intervention records and update Individual Reading Plans (IRPs) to inform Quality First Teaching.

2.4 Subject Leaders

- Embed disciplinary literacy within their subject curriculum, supported by the Reading Like a... documentation.
- Ensure key Tier 2 and Tier 3 vocabulary is identified, explicitly taught, and revisited.
- Integrate Rapid Reads and extended reading opportunities into curriculum planning.
- Support staff to model and assess reading, writing, and oracy within their subject.
- Monitor literacy provision through book reviews, lesson visits, and student voice.

2.5 Classroom Teachers

- Model high standards of reading, writing, and spoken communication.
- Explicitly teach subject-specific vocabulary and reading skills.
- Participate in Rapid Reads, using scaffolds such as glossaries and metacognitive modelling ('I do, we do, you do').
- Reinforce correct spelling, punctuation, and grammar in written and oral work.
- Contribute to creating a culture of reading through classroom displays, discussion, and visible literacy.
- Review and implement strategies to support struggling readers as outlined in IRP documentation.

3. Core Strands of Implementation

3.1 Forensic Reading: Deep Texts, Rich Talk, Broadened Horizons

- Delivered weekly across KS3, Forensic Reading develops the three pillars of literacy – oracy, vocabulary, and cultural capital.
- Each thematic strand introduces students to complex, challenging texts to build the ability to read with understanding and confidence.

3.2 Rapid Reads: Disciplinary Literacy in Every Subject

- Every subject area delivers one Rapid Read per half term – a short, subject-specific text designed to develop reading confidence and disciplinary literacy.
- Focus on key reading cornerstones: understand, retrieve, analyse, infer, evaluate.

3.3 Sparx Reader: Building Habits, Confidence, and Understanding

- All KS3 students engage with Sparx Reader for a minimum of 30 minutes per week, fostering independence and reading for pleasure.
- Adaptive platform matches students with accessible, high-quality texts and supports comprehension and vocabulary.

3.4 Tutor Time Oracy: Exploring Modern British Values

- Each week, students explore the Fundamental British Values through structured oracy activities.
- Sentence stems, talk structures, and tiered vocabulary used in every session to build articulate, reflective communicators.

3.5 Writing Across the Curriculum

Writing instruction is integrated with reading in every subject. Teachers will model, scaffold, and assess writing using metacognitive strategies as well as strategies outlined by whole-school T&L policy.

- Use the Writing Sequence to break down extended tasks.
- Model planning, drafting, and editing.
- Teach key grammar and sentence-level structures explicitly.
- Provide real and purposeful writing opportunities.
- Mark for literacy in line with the whole-school marking policy.

3.6 Literacy Intervention and Support

Students who score below 95 in KS2 reading, or are referred by staff, are assessed using YARC and Fresh Start Phonics.

- Diagnostic assessment and Individual Reading Plan (IRP) completed.
- Stage-appropriate interventions delivered (phonics/decoding, comprehension, fluency).
- Monitored termly through reassessment and staff feedback.
- Collaboration between Literacy, SEND, and subject teams to ensure joined-up support.

3.7 Monitoring and Evaluation

- Departmental QA (lesson visits, work sampling, student voice).
- Reading data (Sparx Reader, YARC, KS3/KS4 outcomes).
- Analysis of progress for key groups (SEND, disadvantaged, EAL).
- Staff CPD feedback and implementation review.
- Governor reports led by the Assistant Principal: Literacy & Alternative Pathways.