

Literacy Policy

January 2015



'To be literate is to gain a voice and to participate meaningfully and assertively in decisions that affect one's life. To be literate is to gain self-confidence. Literacy enables people to read their own world and to write their own history. Literacy provides access to written knowledge - and knowledge is power. In a nutshell, literacy empowers.'

Kassam (1994)

Rationale

Literacy is considered to be a basic skill and a fundamental human right by most countries in the world. Literacy is one of the most important skills a person can have; it is absolutely central to learning. The Ofsted framework for school inspection places literacy high on the agenda for raising standards in education, and rightly so. In order to judge a school's overall effectiveness to be outstanding, the framework stipulates there must be 'excellent practice which ensures that all pupils have high levels of literacy appropriate to their age'.

It is therefore essential that all staff, students and parents are aware of the Literacy Policy and promote its aims at every opportunity to enable students to access the curriculum as fully as possible.

Purpose

All members of the school community are expected to support and promote the drive to raise the standards of literacy within the school by employing consistent approaches and expectations across the school. All teachers are teachers of literacy. As such, the staff of Jo Richardson Community School are committed to developing literacy skills in all of our students, in the belief that it will support their learning and raise standards across the curriculum, because:

- students need vocabulary, expression and organisational control to cope with the cognitive demands of subjects;
- reading helps us to learn from sources beyond our immediate experience;
- writing helps us to sustain and order thought;
- language helps us to reflect, revise and evaluate the things we do, and on the things others have said, written or done;
- responding to higher order questions encourages the development of thinking skills and enquiry;
- improving literacy and learning can have an impact on students' self-esteem, on motivation and behaviour. It allows them to learn independently. It is empowering.

Policy Aims

- To consolidate a whole-school approach to literacy across the curriculum.
- To enable all students to attain at least minimum expected standards by age 16 in the key literacy skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening.
- To support the development of literacy skills throughout the curriculum.
- To raise staff awareness of key literacy strategies through training and support.
- To encourage staff to take responsibility for the development of literacy in their subject areas through the inclusion of appropriate schemes of work and lesson planning.
- To support the development of literacy through the deployment of a range of resources in the school, eg, Library, ICT suites etc.
- To identify specific roles and responsibilities within the school with regard to the development of literacy work.
- To establish procedures for the development of literacy across the curriculum.

- To prepare our students for upcoming changes to all examined subjects, which will assess literacy skills more rigorously, particularly extended writing.

Speaking and Listening

Across the whole curriculum we will teach students:

- to be aware of the range of purposes for spoken language;
- to understand the forms and functions of spoken Standard English;
- to use language precisely and coherently;
- to listen and to have respect for what others have to say;
- to listen to others and build on their ideas and views constructively;
- to speak in order to be understood by others;
- to speak for specific purposes with an awareness of audience to include:
 - expression of personal views;
 - giving information;
 - presenting an argument;
 - developing and clarifying ideas;
 - discussion and evaluation;
 - performance;
- to work collaboratively in small/large groups on an increasingly complex range of issues.

Reading

Across the whole curriculum we will teach students:

- to read for pleasure;
- to read independently and with understanding following a process or argument;
- to synthesise and adapt what students learn from reading;
- to read in different genres;
- to read from different periods;
- to read a range of information and media texts with critical awareness;
- to read aloud with an awareness of audience;
- to develop study skills;
- to be able to locate and use information using skimming and scanning and other reading strategies;
- to have an understanding of how language conveys meaning.

Reading - Information Retrieval

Information retrieval is a particularly important study skill and combines organisation and note taking strategies as well as actual reading of texts.

We will teach students to:

- activate their prior knowledge in relation to the purpose;
- recognise which questions it is useful to ask relating to texts;
- understand the main features and functions of page layout and organisation;
- scan for specific information;
- skim for overall patterns, main points and key ideas;
- read images as well as print;
- interpret more complex texts;
- cope with different types of ambiguity;
- select relevant information and reject the irrelevant;
- summarise and generalise;
- make notes as the basis for communicating response;

- have a repertoire of strategies for reading and responding to non-fiction.

Teachers will provide reading material of high quality, which is up to date, relevant and balanced in its presentation of ethnicity, culture and gender and appropriate for the age and ability of the students.

Writing

Confidence in writing is critical for success in life. Supporting our students to become confident writers supports them in becoming independent.

A favourable context for writing:

- establishes both the purpose and the audience of the writing;
- ensures that writers have something to say;
- gives writers opportunities to develop, sharpen and revise ideas;
- encourages collaboration during planning, drafting and proof-reading;
- gives students access to references materials to support writing, eg, word banks, dictionaries, thesauruses, etc;
- provides feedback both during and after writing of writing strengths and of ways to improve weaknesses.

We will teach students to

- write for a range of purposes and audiences;
- structure and organise writing according to purpose and audience;
- plan, draft, discuss and reflect on their writing, using ICT, where appropriate;
- be able to write in a variety of forms including descriptive, narrative, information, recount, explanation, instruction, persuasion, discursive writing, analysis, evaluation, formal essay;
- write with increasing complexity and accuracy using appropriate grammatical structures and vocabulary;
- sustain their writing skills through extended pieces of writing across all subject areas.

Teachers will set writing tasks that have clear purposes and are objective driven, which are appropriate for the age and ability of the students concerned and which challenge students.

Teachers will model for students how to structure their writing using a variety of sentence structures, paragraphs and a wide range of punctuation, including higher order punctuation, eg, semi- colons, colons and brackets and writing with increased complexity.

Where students are asked to write in a particular genre, eg, a newspaper report, teachers will ensure that students are familiar with the appropriate style and conventions.

We will:

- provide good models of particular kinds of writing;
- provide frameworks and differentiation where appropriate as a means of working towards the goal of independence;
- display key words and their meanings in the classroom;
- teach subject specific vocabulary and spelling;
- encourage high standards of presentation.

Teachers will correct errors in grammar, punctuation and spelling in line with the school's marking policy and demand neat and well-organised work at all times.

Literacy Marking Code

The following codes will be used to highlight literacy errors:

Code	Error	Action
Sp	Spelling mistake	Underline part of the word that is incorrect and put Sp in the margin. Maximum of three per piece of work
P	Punctuation mark missing or incorrectly used	Circle place where punctuation should or shouldn't be and write P in margin
CL	Capital letter required	Circle the letter and write CL in margin
Voc	Incorrect use of vocabulary (either technical or subject-specific vocabulary, or vocabulary used in the wrong sentence context)	Circle the word that has been incorrectly used and write voc in margin
^	Word missed out of sentence	Put ^ at point where word or phrase is missing
~	unclear meaning or incorrect grammar within a sentence	Put wiggly line under the poor expression or where it doesn't make sense
//	New paragraph needed	Put // where change is required (change of time, place, argument moves on, etc)

Purple Pen Activities

Purple pen should be used:

- when students identify or correct literacy mistakes in their work;
- when students are finding literacy mistakes in the work of other students during literacy peer assessment activities;
- when students use a key word. Students should underline where they have used key words in a piece of writing (either whole-school key words as set by the Literacy Co-ordinator, or subject specific key words set by the classroom teacher)

Spelling and Learning Subject Specific Vocabulary

Spelling is important because:

- poor spelling creates a bad impression;
- it's the first thing a reader notices;
- examiners, teachers and prospective employers often place undue weight on spelling;
- anxiety about spelling inhibits a student's writing, especially their choice of words;
- even in these days of word processing, there are still times when we need to write.

There are a variety of reasons why students find difficulty in spelling. For example:

- issues with sight or hearing;
- local dialect or inaccurate speech;
- missed schooling;
- lack of confidence/poor self-image;
- poor visual memory or sequencing difficulties;
- emotional difficulties;
- inability to use a dictionary correctly.

The English Department is responsible for the teaching of spelling in the wider sense (teaching patterns, rules, etc). Spelling rules and strategies are reinforced in whole-school tutor activities.

Teachers across the curriculum need to monitor the spelling of high frequency words and teach subject specific words as the need arises; they should expect students to spell these words correctly once taught.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Senior Leaders should:

- lead and give a high profile to literacy;
- accept overall responsibility for the delivery of the school's Literacy Policy;
- provide opportunities for staff training on literacy;
- monitor departments' implementation of the Literacy Policy;
- monitor exam and assessment outcomes to ensure that no group is disadvantaged with respect to economic context, race, ethnicity or gender;
- make use of available data to assess the standards of students' literacy and share this with staff.

The Deputy Head co-ordinating literacy should:

- line manage the Literacy Coordinator to ensure the implementation of the Literacy Policy and whole-school action plan;
- support departments in the implementation of the school's Literacy Policy;
- support departments in the implementation of literacy strategies;
- meet with the Literacy Governor on whole-school literacy;
- help to monitor the impact of the Literacy Policy on standards of literacy;
- provide literacy INSET for staff;
- work with the Extended Writing Co-ordinator to support the implementation of Right to Write.

The Whole-School Literacy Coordinator should:

- support departments in the implementation of the school's Literacy Policy;
- support departments in the implementation of literacy strategies;
- support opportunities for staff training on literacy;
- liaise with the Librarian to develop whole-school literacy;
- devise a whole-school literacy audit;
- encourage departments to learn from each other's practice by sharing ideas;
- write a whole-school Literacy Development Plan and ensure actions on the plan are carried out;
- provide strategies in order to support staff with the planning and teaching of reading, writing, speaking and listening;
- provide information for parents enabling them to support their child's developing literacy;
- develop opportunities to raise the profile of literacy with staff, students and parents;
- support others in running whole-school literacy events to further develop the school ethos and culture, such as, celebrating World Book Day, National Poetry Day, the JRCS Spelling Bee, inviting in special guests for reading, writing, poetry; writing and poetry competitions; debates;
- liaise with the SENCO about students attaining below Level 3;
- liaise with the Assistant HT i/c higher attainers;
- support on logistics and data analysis/intervention arising from Lexia;
- line manage other members of the literacy team to ensure literacy-specific projects such as Right to Write and Literacy Leaders are successfully implemented and sustained.

The School Librarian should:

- provide appropriate resources to support the curriculum;
- provide appropriate resources to support homework and other curriculum tasks;
- support staff in teaching students how to research independently from a range of sources;
- promote reading for pleasure and provide reading material appropriate to this;
- provide a safe and supportive environment to encourage reading for pleasure;
- promote literacy and the pleasure in the written word by arranging author visits and trips and events such as World Book Day (see list above).

Heads of Department should:

- ensure that subject specific literacy is clearly identified in schemes of work, and that there is obvious progression through the Key Stages;
- ensure that the bottom line for literacy is upheld in lessons within their subject area;
- monitor the work of the department with regard to the inclusion of subject specific literacy strategies in lesson planning;
- encourage good practice, eg, modelling and close collaboration between colleagues in order to promote literacy developments;
- use available assessment data to identify appropriate literacy strategies;
- establish displays within their curriculum area that contain standard English and support whole-school literacy;
- ensure the requirements of the Right to Write extended writing project are met within their subject area.

All staff should:

- ensure that they are familiar with the specific literacy demands of their subject and ensure sufficient coverage of these skills in their lesson planning;
- use the agreed strategies provided by Literacy Co-ordinator in order to teach Writing, Speaking, Listening and Reading skills as outlined in The National Curriculum;
- be able to identify a student's literacy strengths and weaknesses and know how to build upon these in order to promote student progress;
- ensure that students take increasing responsibility for recognising their own literacy needs and making improvements;
- have a literacy focus in the majority of lessons, such as key words, spellings, grammar and planned opportunities for students to practice technical terms and engage in purple pen activities;
- have literacy displays in their classroom, such as word walls, guidelines to support literacy across the curriculum and literacy for their specific subject, such as key words.

The Head of Student Development should:

- carry out baseline assessments of all Year 7 students' reading abilities on entry to the school;
- provide ongoing alternative testing arrangements for students below NC level 2;
- communicate with all subject staff about those students who have literacy difficulties and give advice on what staff can do to help these students in their subject;
- monitor students with literacy difficulties through IEPs and review meetings;
- provide Specialist Teacher assessment to screen for SPLD and SLI, eg, dyslexia;
- provide Specialist Teacher assessment to secure appropriate access arrangements in public examinations;

- deliver English nurture programmes for students working below NC level 3;
- liaise with Speech and Language Therapy Services.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Whole-school literacy work should be monitored and evaluated by:

- book checks;
- checks on departmental schemes of work and lesson plans;
- departmental literacy displays;
- lesson observations;
- learning walks;
- meetings;
- student voice;
- scrutiny of development plans;
- encouraging departments to share good practice by exhibiting or exemplifying students' work.