



ASPIRATION + DETERMINATION + SUCCESS

Disciplinary Literacy Policy 2023-24

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Non-statutory Policy.

Not based on a model policy, but based on EEF Recommendations & Guidance (Improving Literacy in Secondary Schools; and Fluency in the Classroom).

Next review date: June 2024

1. What is Disciplinary literacy?

Disciplinary literacy – also known as academic or subject-specific literacy – is a crucial consideration when approaching teaching subject-specific Tier 3 vocabulary, critical thinking, subject knowledge and skills within a discipline.

Disciplinary literacy enables learners to read, write, speak about, listen to and think conceptually and critically as experts in a certain subject. In short, teaching disciplinary literacy is asking learners to “think, speak, read and write as a historian, scientist, or mathematician”, as Alex Quigley describes in *Closing the Vocabulary Gap*.

2. Why is reading our priority?

We understand that fundamental to learning is students possessing good reading skills and a passion for reading, it is therefore our school priority to ensure that we do everything we can to install these in all our students. If students are fluent, confident, and engaged readers, then they have the skills needed to become effective life-long learners. This priority also reflects our community as our percentage of disadvantaged students is above the national average and significantly above the average for Brighton and Hove, we know that these students are particularly at risk of not becoming fluent, confident, and engaged readers.

Good reading skills are the foundations for students to grow into strong writers, although some may find this more challenging than others, being a good reader will allow them to access the models and scaffolds that teachers regularly use to support different types of academic writing.

3. What is a good reader?

Below breaks down the exact reading skills and knowledge a good reader utilises as only by explicitly identifying these, can we teach these.

- **Decoding:** the process of translating print into speech by rapidly matching a letter or combination of letters (graphemes) to their sounds (phonemes) and recognizing the patterns that make syllables and words. Decoding also relies on connecting individual sounds to letters. For instance, to read the word *sun*, kids must know that the letter *s* makes the /s/ sound. Grasping the connection between a letter (or group of letters) and the sounds they typically make is an important step toward “sounding out” words. There is an area in the brain that deals with language processing and does this process automatically – some students, at our school, need to be explicitly taught this through phonics instruction;
- **Fluency:** Students instantly recognize words (word recognition) without having to sound them out as sounding out slows down the speed of reading and therefore the meaning of a sentence (comprehension) can be lost. This is also important as some words like ‘the’ or ‘of’ cannot be sounded out and this can cause students to stumble with their reading. When students can read quickly and without making too many errors, they are fluent readers. Fluent readers also group words together to help with meaning, and they use the proper tone (intonation) in their voice when reading aloud;
- **Vocabulary:** having a strong vocabulary is a key component of reading comprehension as for students to understand what they are reading, they need to understand most of the words in the text.

- **Sentence construction and cohesion:** understanding how sentences are built helps students to connect ideas within and between sentences (cohesion). Knowing how ideas link up at the sentence level helps students build meaning and leads to the ability to connect ideas to other ideas in an overall piece of writing (coherence).
- **Reasoning and background knowledge:** **reasoning** is what we do when we take information that we are given, compare it to what we already know, and then come up with a conclusion. **Background knowledge** also links to vocabulary, but goes beyond this, as it includes the students' experience of, or knowledge of, the topic, concepts, situations and problems associated with the words in the text. This knowledge provides students with enough understanding to make meaning and build onto what they currently know including the ability to make **inferences**. **Inferences** are the 'gaps' left by the writer in a text which require the reader to comprehend or 'work out' the implication, instead of being provided with every specific detail.

If students have secured all of the above skills, they are not only able to understand the **explicit meaning** of a text, but they can also **infer** as they can identify what the writer is **implying**. This inference is the largest challenge for our students as it relies heavily on strong **vocabulary, reasoning and background knowledge**.

4. How will we grow good readers in lesson time?

In lessons, the teacher will:

- use a variety of academic texts and model **decoding and fluency** skills when reading aloud, drawing students' attention to ambitious vocabulary and discussing how to sound these out;
- explicitly teach **vocabulary** using the guidelines and training given on vocabulary instruction.
- where there is the opportunity, discuss the **sentence construction** such as the use of discourse markers, punctuation or/and connectives within a sentence and between sentences which creates **cohesion**;
- explicitly model the thought processes or/ and prompt students through questioning to connect ideas to other ideas in a text so students develop **coherence**;
- embed structured peer-talk as "Children's language competences and reasoning abilities develop through their interactions with others" (Mercer, 2019; Mercer & Mannion, 2018). This will be structured and focused with explicit instruction, timings and scaffolds. Explicit instruction includes: **Contextualising** the discussion e.g. 'Our group will be discussing ...'; **Connectives to signal opposing views** e.g. but, conversely, alternatively; **Personal pronouns** e.g. 'First of all we agreed; **Connectives to explain** e.g. because ; **Discourse markers** to indicate a sequence of ideas, e.g. 'firstly, secondly, thirdly, next, then, also'; **Summarising connectives** e.g. 'In conclusion, therefore...'
- explicitly teach students how to annotate texts to gain a secure understanding of of both explicit and implicit meaning;
- explicitly teach key comprehension skills of: scanning, retrieval, summarising and comparing etc.
- model a passion for reading; and
- support other students in reading aloud by use of specific praise of the reading or self-regulation skill and considering students' confidence and SEND;.

5. Vocabulary instruction

The curriculum intent stage identifies which vocabulary needs to be taught and whether the context it is taught links to it being: (a) an **command words** e.g. evaluate; (b) a **subject specific** word e.g.

photosynthesis or (c) an **academic word** e.g. increasing. It is crucial that teachers' subject knowledge and understanding of the curriculum intent allows them to effectively link the vocabulary instruction to the context or contexts (in some cases, a word may cross over more than one context and each context needs to be explained).

In vocabulary instruction it is crucial that teachers do not just give a definition of a word without explaining, clarifying and checking for understanding or ask students to copy the definition. The below strategies, therefore, must be followed by teachers in order for students to fully understand and be able to use the word as well as moving it into their long-term memory.

In **vocabulary instruction**, teachers will undertake the below.

- **Pronounce:** The teacher models how to say the word – break it down into its syllables and ask students to say the word out loud together.
- **Discuss** with students what it means and identify any misconceptions. This can include (a) clarifying meaning and addressing misconceptions (b) asking students to verbally summarise the meaning (relationship with other words).
- **Chunk** by breaking the word down into its different meanings e.g. use mind maps to build up to what the word means.
- **Scaffold** by giving students, for example, three words that will help them explain the word.
- **Check understanding by asking students to explain the word** (a) ask students to write their own definition and (b) place it into a sentence.
- **Revisit:** Interleave & space so moves into long-term memory and deepen understanding of it, this could be undertaken through future memory platforms, for example.
- **Avoid cognitive overload but stretch learners:** Build up the vocabulary at a pace that moves forward all students' learning (teachers will use their professional judgement) therefore provide alternative words for those students who already have a secure understanding of the word or move those individuals on to deeper learning surrounding that word e.g. relationship with other words, links to other topics etc.

6. How will we grow good readers in mentor time?

- For students with reading ages significantly below their age, reading intervention will be given by the Learning Support Faculty.
- For students with reading ages slightly below their age, a confidence and passion for reading will be nurtured by form mentors during reading shared reading time and via our Reading Mentor.

7. How will the school librarians grow good readers?

Good school libraries are powerhouses of reading and learning: National Literacy Trust research shows that they help raise students' reading ages, improve access to knowledge, improve self-esteem and stimulate a love of reading — all of which give children the building blocks they need to succeed at school, in further and higher education and in employment. Our full-time librarian is also a trained reading mentor and undertakes reading intervention with identified weak, reluctant readers with no specific learning or language difficulty.

The school library will continue to be the centre of enrichment activities where visiting writers and poets as well as students and staff, share their reading adventures and share their own writing. The school librarians will liaise closely with the student Reading Leaders to encompass more diverse student voice so that the selection of books captures the interest of our reluctant, weak readers.

The school librarians will also use student voice, to develop the library into being a welcoming and inclusive space that promotes reading for pleasure. The school librarians will also actively seek out reading events and celebration days to embrace within the school culture.

8. How will the student leadership team grow good readers?

“The development of children’s reading skills and comprehension is intertwined with the need to nurture a love of books and reading to create life-long readers.” National Literacy Trust.

We believe that a significant reading barrier for our weak, reluctant, readers who have no specific learning or language difficulty, is peer pressure and lack of cultural capital, this is particularly relevant to disadvantaged students. To combat this peer pressure and lack of cultural capital, reading leaders and reading buddies will raise the profile of reading and the enjoyment it brings through modelling reading, supporting others with reading and running reading events.

9. How will we identify weak and good readers?

Class teachers will have student reading ages shared with them so they are able to adapt their teaching accordingly. It is also about identifying students within the lesson and adjusting the lesson to meet the needs of students who are struggling with reading texts given. The key thing is to identify students early on in Y7 and this may not be just from primary school data, but also what teachers find in lessons. It is therefore, every teacher’s responsibility to raise any concerns about a students’ reading with the Learning Support department. This enables further assessment to take place in order to identify what type of interventions need to take place.

In addition, the English Faculty and the Reading Mentor Lead will continue to assess using the Literacy online testing.

10. How will we train and develop staff in growing good readers?

To add to the training previously delivered, all teaching staff will have regular training on how to implement their role in growing good readers. All members of the Learning Support Faculty are trained in delivering the specific reading interventions they deliver and to encourage good reading habits.