

Literacy Policy

2023/2024

PARTNERSHIPS | OPPORTUNITY | INTEGRITY | EQUITY | EXCELLENCE | PEOPLE-CENTRED

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Washington
Academy

Enriching Lives, Inspiring Ambitions

Contents

- 1. Intent.....3**
- 2. Reading4**
- 3. Vocabulary and Spelling.....5**
- 4. Drafting, Redrafting and Re-reading6**
- 5. Marking for Literacy6**
- 6. Writing: Extended Opportunities7**
- 7. Literacy Intervention Groups7**
- 8. Academic Talk8**
- 9. Roles and Responsibilities.....8**
- 10. Appendix 1: Definitions9**

1. Intent

'Enriching lives, Inspiring Ambitions' is realised in our environment, and within our classrooms, consistently. Teaching and learning lie at the very heart of everything we do, and we have high expectations of all our students, and therefore of the curriculum provision. Literacy skills are the cornerstone of academic achievement and lifelong learning, offering a pathway to understanding, critical thinking, and effective communication. They enable students to grasp complex texts, think critically, and communicate persuasively, transcending subject boundaries.

We believe that every student has the right to a high-quality education, no matter their starting points and/or educational and social needs. A commitment to a love of lifelong learning should be aimed upon for all our students. We believe that a love and effective use of literacy not only leads to a love of lifelong learning and a wealth of cultural experiences but also as students progress through school on their reading journey, their fluency, confidence and enjoyment in reading develops.

Every classroom should be filled with learning, where students can build on their knowledge of topics in each subject area. Opportunities within school life are planned to ensure a rigorous and sequential approach to the reading curriculum as demonstrated in this document.

Our curriculum will focus on students' development by providing exciting and challenging learning and extra-curricular opportunities and experiences. By working together, we aim to develop links between different subjects and to support and develop literacy skills. Our approach encompasses a multifaceted strategy that aims to foster a deep appreciation for reading, writing, and oracy. We strive to create an environment where students not only read to learn but also learn to love reading.

This policy aims to showcase how we at Washington Academy will:

- Improve reading ages of all students, as there is a strong link between reading ability, academic success, and emotional wellbeing.
- Use assessment, not assumption to guide actions.
- Use an evidence-based approach to improve whole school literacy using the seven strands of disciplinary literacy which informs departments how they develop literacy skills within their subject areas.

Through our literacy curriculum students:

- Develop a love of literacy through the provision of structured reading in lessons.
- Are guided in their literacy progress using engaging and age-appropriate reading material to help them consolidate and practice key literacy skills to enable them to progress in their fluency and comprehension.
- Will be able to access each curriculum area at a deeper level through explicit teaching of Tier Two and Tier Three vocabulary.
- Develop the resilience and expertise to practice the written word within our culture of drafting and re-drafting academic work.
- Develop their extended writing skills and work independently in all curriculum areas.

- Develop confidence in oracy and provide the opportunities to improve communication skills giving them the foundations for future learning and life.
- Will experience and have models of good literacy skills in their academic environment to support their development of their own language and vocabulary.

2. Reading

We have embraced a comprehensive school-wide reading initiative to ensure a love of reading is encouraged for all throughout the school with structured and planned reading promoted through Key Stage Three and Key Stage Four. Success in reading unlocks the curriculum and equips our students to lead independent lives, pursue their ambitions and thrive in society. Washington Academy develops students' abilities to read increasingly complex texts and fosters their motivation to read widely for different purposes, including pleasure and happiness.

Students are encouraged to read during break and lunch time through a plethora of resources in our well stocked school library, where students are encouraged to handpick books that resonate with their interests. This thoughtful approach not only fosters a love for reading but also empowers students to become discerning readers, enhancing their literary horizons.

Students complete NGRT tests and STAR Reading tests that provide staff with Reading Ages that are recorded on Class Charts and SIMs. Staff are expected to use this information to make adaptations accordingly to meet student needs and support students where appropriate. Students that have an NGRT/STAR Reading test score that indicates that if they are fluent, highly competent readers, they should be selected to read aloud to model fluency. Students are given a bookmark with their Zone of Proximal Development and a range of reading strategies to further support them. This is monitored via learning walks, student voice and external visits. To support staff, consistent CPD and up to date training is used to utilise the data and allow for more effective teaching and personalisation of resources to ensure all students are provided with the opportunities for challenge. In addition to this, Reading Ages are reported to parents through reports and appropriate additional reading lists so parents can support their children at home with their reading development.

In Key Stage Three, we allocate lesson time to the invaluable practice of reading. Here, students embark on a personal reading journey, selecting texts that reside within their Zone of Proximal Development, as listed on their personalized bookmark. This means that their chosen material is calibrated to be both engaging and appropriately challenging, nurturing their growth as proficient readers. However, ambition is always maintained, and no student is prevented from reading a more challenging text if they should wish.

In Key Stage Four, students engage in Meaningful Reading, delving into appropriately challenging embedded academic extracts carefully selected to ignite a passion for broader subject-specific exploration, for example, this could be a piece of research from the British Medical Journal or an historical interpretation from a historians view of the past. We encourage teachers to embrace and provide students with any opportunity for students to read. Teachers actively seek out opportunities for reading in lessons to develop a rich diet of vocabulary and disciplinary texts across a range of

subjects in the curriculum. This approach not only promotes literacy but also instils a lifelong love for learning within the unique context of each subject, enriching our students' educational journey.

Within the tutor program at Washington Academy, there is a class reader that is read aloud by the class teacher to model excellence in reading. Research shows that when groups of people read together and listen to a text being read aloud, the least fluent are the greatest beneficiaries. Students from more socially advantaged backgrounds are far more likely to experience the pleasure and excitement of these books outside of school but for pupils in more disadvantaged areas, school is the only place where they are likely to have high-quality texts read to them. Whole class reading aloud is not only likely to improve pupils' reading ability and potential for academic success, it will also give them access to a world of ideas they may not otherwise be able to experience.

In addition to the class reader, students also take part in the wider reading of Non-fiction extracts during the tutor program. These specially selected extracts are designed to engage students and to inspire comprehension through challenging, rich texts, experiential learning, project work and the acquisition of core knowledge about the real world. By making connections between current affairs and the curriculum, we encourage students to become more actively engaged in their studies and more inquisitive, enabling them to develop cultural capital, Fundamental British Values and the skills students need to be successful in the modern world and ethical, informed citizens. Students have the chance to investigate what is true, expose misinformation and allows opportunities for discussion, as well as questions which enables students to extend their thoughts around the subject matter, make good choices and fulfil their potential.

To actively support the growth and cultivation of students' personal libraries, we have implemented a special initiative for our Year 7 students. Each Year 7 student will receive a carefully selected book as a gift. The chosen book, 'You Are Awesome' by Matthew Syed, has been deliberately handpicked for its ability to impart the invaluable principles of a growth mindset. It equips our students with the essential tools to conquer self-doubt, fostering resilience and a strong sense of self-belief. This thoughtful endeavor not only encourages a love for reading but also empowers our young learners with the knowledge and mindset to navigate challenges and embrace personal growth.

3. Vocabulary and Spelling

As integral aspects of literacy, vocabulary and spelling will be explicitly focused on across both Key Stages. To enrich our students' vocabulary and language proficiency, teaching staff employ a diverse array of strategies to systematically impart vocabulary knowledge. Among these, one noteworthy technique is the utilisation of Frayer models.

In this method, students actively engage with new vocabulary by recording both the term and its corresponding definition within their exercise books. The overarching aim is to seamlessly integrate these newly acquired words into their lesson activities and subsequent work, thus reinforcing their understanding. We empower our students to not only expand their vocabulary but effectively harness the potency of language in their academic endeavors and in various aspects of their lives.

As part of whole school practice, key words for every lesson are identified at the start and throughout lessons, with definitions, applicable context and application implemented as part of routine practice.

Teachers will make sure words are explicit in all lessons allowing them to be identified, learnt and then applied in learning.

As part of our universal offer, students in Year 7 (and the rest of the academy from January 2023) will be using the Reading Wise vocabulary module, in which teachers provide the context for vocabulary learning in the classroom and the Reading Wise vocabulary module embeds the new words in students' long-term memories. This works by using techniques such as spaced repetition to reinforce words over time, thus interrupting the forgetting process. Descaffolding is also used to support vocabulary learning, as at the first interaction of a word, students have images, definitions, synonyms, antonyms, word type and an example sentence. As they gain confidence, the system 'descaffolds' - so at the second interaction (assuming they got it right first time), they no longer have images, for example, the scaffolding continues to fall away until the student has mastered the word.

Students use Reading Wise for 5-10 minutes a day, at least twice a week in school, to allow for spaced learning and repetition to happen, and Reading Wise can be used both at school and at home. Students also complete simple pre and post quizzes composed of thirty words from the target vocabulary lists to help gauge impact and demonstrate progress quickly and easily.

4. Drafting, Re-drafting and Re-reading

All students across Key Stage Three and Four are provided with regular opportunities to draft, re-read and re-draft written work in lessons.

Drafting is an integral part of the learning process whether this is used to enhance spoken English before taking part in a discussion, or as a planning process for a piece of extended writing. Students re-draft work using green pen, following in class formative assessment, in order to make improvements identified by the teacher and to correct spelling, punctuation and grammar errors.

Re-drafting allows for learners to be reflective and ensures that vocabulary is used precisely and for effect. Best practice is seen when students identify and highlight Tier Two and Tier Three vocabulary themselves, check their spelling and ensure the context is right for their usage.

5. Marking for Literacy

As part of the whole school marking policy, there is a focus for feedback on literacy across Key Stage Three and Key Stage Four, with particular reference to the literacy assessments objectives at Key Stage Four. These assessment strategies will have reference to the use of Tier Two and Tier Three vocabulary used and identification any literacy errors meaning a lack of clarity in the work, and a maximum of five spelling errors.

Marking of extended pieces of writing at Key Stage 4 will use a form of marking token but will reference the use of SPAG, sentence structure, connectives and use of Tier Two and Three vocabulary. These marking tokens will also consider and reference the conventions required for responding academically in that subject.

6. Writing extended opportunities

As per each curriculum area intention, opportunities for extended writing are provided in every area. These develop subject specific skills and knowledge as well as focusing on students' resilience and their accuracy of extended writing leading to more independent writers in each curriculum area.

As part of quality first teaching at Washington Academy, to support this process, these extended writing opportunities are supported with scaffolds, sentence starters and the use of literacy mats. It is the intention that this support is retracted as the student progresses.

7. Literacy Intervention groups

Some students will need extra support to help them develop the key literacy skills they need to be successful in the future, and to help them access the curriculum at Key Stage 4. These students are identified through standardised scores, CAT tests, NGRT Tests, STAR Reader tests and baseline assessments at the start of Key Stage 3.

Students are then put into categories so that a waved intervention support plan can take place:

Category 1 - SAS above 100 Reading age at or above chronological age	Fluent readers
Category 2 - SAS 85-100 Reading age 1-2 years below chronological age	Readers at risk of not Accessing the curriculum
Category 3 - SAS below 85 Reading age 3+ years below chronological age	Early readers
Category 4 Readers new to English/ International new arrivals	Readers new to English

Category Two students will complete the Comprehension Module on the Reading Wise programme during literacy lessons. The Comprehension Module uses three main components to engage students and build their skills and confidence. Students work independently on computers for twenty minutes. They practice literacy skills, known as the mega skills and they learn new strategies as they progress through the adventure narrative. Then the group comes together to discuss the new chapter.

According to the Education Endowment Foundation toolkit: "On average, reading comprehension approaches deliver an additional six months' progress. Successful reading comprehension approaches allow activities to be carefully tailored to pupils' reading capabilities, and involve activities and texts that provide an effective, but not overwhelming, challenge." Additional Category Two interventions include peer reading groups which are small cross-age group sessions where students take turns reading to one another to bolster confidence and resilience in their reading skills. These sessions typically pair struggling readers with more proficient peers, catering to students who not only lack confidence and resilience in reading but also exhibit a reading age deficit relative to their chronological age. There is also a Represent reading program in Key Stage Four that uses engaging texts and an oracy focus which aims to enhance communication skills, resilience, and wellbeing. It employs selected texts and engaging activities, including scaffolded oracy resources, to stimulate discussions about the shared stories. Additionally, scaffolded comprehension activities are integrated to deepen students' understanding of text messages and foster literacy skill development.

Category Three students will complete the Decoding Module on Reading Wise, following a Single Word Reading Test to ensure this is the correct intervention and to ensure personalisation of the Decoding Module. Reading Wise technology assesses the individual's initial reading level and then delivers a sequence of interactive, multi-sensory lessons, each lasting two to three minutes. Students must complete each lesson with 100% accuracy to progress. Due to careful design, this is never frustrating for students and students are always successful, and they own each small success. Once a lesson is complete, they are rewarded with a snippet of something absurd, wonderful or humorous in the form of a GIF, a 3 second video. This makes students light up, preparing them for the next lesson. They continue like this for the duration of the session, employing a variety of multi-sensory techniques as they progress through the lessons. The research shows that, on average, using the Decoding Module increases Reading Age by nine months in twenty hours delivering animated lessons incorporating multi-sensory activities. Additional Category Three interventions include Read, Write Inc and Lexia, for students grappling with the challenge of decoding words and sounds, particularly those who exhibit a pronounced reading age deficit of more than four years compared to their chronological reading age. For students who have successfully completed Read, Write, Inc but may encounter difficulties in achieving fluency and comprehension, especially those who exhibit reading age deficits ranging from three to four years.

Category Four students are students that are new to English/International new arrivals and need to use a phonics programme. The Zip module on Reading Wise is an adaptive learning programme, using a smart algorithm, it understands when a student has mastered a letter-sound correspondence. This means that Zip is personalised, allowing students to learn at their own pace and repeating areas that are not secure. It identifies gaps and reinforces these areas. The Zip programme was part of a DfE-funded study into the effectiveness of the Reading Wise programmes. The study conducted a Randomised Control Trial into the Decoding programme; alongside this was an initial analysis of Zip and its impact on closing the gap between pupils reading ages and their chronological ages. There was significant improvement on closing the gap for students using the Zip Module.

In addition to this, any student not making the required progress will be identified by the literacy co-ordinator and the literacy teacher. Bespoke intervention will then be provided in the literacy lesson by the specialist in order for progress to be made at a more rapid speed.

All data is reviewed on a half-termly basis for all students. Those students in Key Stage 4 who have been identified as vulnerable literacy learners will be reviewed termly whole school.

8. Academic Talk

At any time, during any lesson, a teacher can ask for a meaning or example of the vocabulary in use and this must be given using academic talk. Colloquialisms will be corrected by staff.

9. Roles and Responsibilities

- Students: take increasing responsibility for recognising their own literacy needs and making improvements.
- Teachers across the curriculum: adhere to school and subject policies on literacy, spelling and

marking; contribute to student development of oracy, since speaking, listening, writing and reading are, to varying degrees, integral to all lessons.

- Subject Leaders: ensure that school policies on literacy, spelling and marking are adhered to in their subjects; provide a subject policy on literacy detailing how literacy skills are specifically promoted in their subject; subject development plans include literacy, and this is reviewed annually; relevant displays are used in all classrooms.
- Literacy Co-Ordinator: Co-ordinates, monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of the literacy intervention programs across the school and shares and develops best practice from across all departments.
- Senior Leaders: lead and give a high profile to literacy.
- Parents: encourage their children to value and expand their literacy both within and beyond their work in English and use the range of strategies they have learnt to improve their levels of literacy.

10. Appendix 1: Definitions

Tier 2 words are high-frequency words used by mature content users over a variety of content domains. More simply, they are words that are frequent enough that most native speakers would know what they mean, but usually require explicit instruction (having to look them up in a dictionary, or apply context inferencing, etc.) They lack redundancy in the language but are not so specialised as to be jargon or unique to specific contexts. They are often spelled in ways that don't phonetically follow the simple rules of English grammar and may be challenging for emerging vocabulary learners who know how to say the word but have difficulty trying to read them due to irregular or alternative phonetic grammar rules. Tier 2 words are words such as obvious, complex, reasoned, national, or informed. In contrast, Tier 1 words are extremely common, almost ubiquitous-frequency words that require little or no explicit instruction. They are usually root words themselves and are not typically modified with prefixes and suffixes. They are usually phonetically very easy to read and pronounce from reading. Words like baby, clock, or run are tier 1 words. Tier 3 words are extremely specialised, require explicit instruction, are relatively low frequency, and are usually limited to a content domain, like medical or engineering terminology. They frequently are composed of foreign language roots modified with suffixes and prefixes. These are words such as misappropriated, atrioventricular tachycardia, or antisestablishmentarianism.