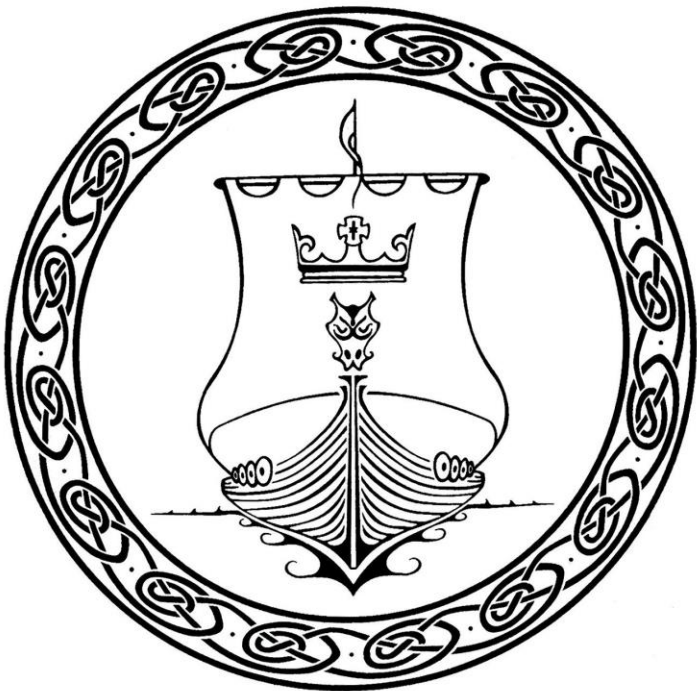




# Queen Elizabeth II High School

## Whole School Literacy Policy



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***Literacy is, along with education in general, a basic human right.'***

Kofi Annan



## Policy Statement

At Queen Elizabeth II High School, we firmly believe that literacy is an essential skill to enable students to read and write as experts in every subject across the curriculum. These skills are vital to make sense of the world around them. We also recognise that improving literacy can have an impact on students' self-esteem, motivation, behaviour and attainment.

### Policy

#### 1. Rationale

We know that some students arrive in Year 7 with gaps in their basic literacy skills and lack writing resilience. To be academically successful, students need to have strong decoding, comprehension, reading fluency and writing skills. Evidence from the EEF, shows that one of the biggest barriers facing students from disadvantaged backgrounds is literacy; their reading, writing, vocabulary acquisition, oracy, and their cultural capital.

We also believe that reading, and particularly reading for pleasure, has a direct impact on cognitive and social communicative development. It has been shown to improve health and wellbeing, as well as improving compassion and empathy for others. Our long term aim is to develop each student's potential to the point where they are reading at, or above, their chronological age.

#### 2. Aims

- Celebrate reading for enjoyment
- Explicitly teach vocabulary appropriate to each subject area
- Use effective strategies to support comprehension and vocabulary acquisition
- Promote classroom talk to enable quality written work
- Provide intervention where needed

#### 3. Responsibilities

- SLT will lead and give a high profile to the school's vision for literacy, prioritising 'disciplinary literacy'.
- Teachers across the curriculum will take every opportunity to provide students with the knowledge, skills and attitude to develop the ability to read, write, speak and listen effectively.
- Teachers will provide feedback to help students improve their literacy, where possible using the agreed codes for correcting written work.
- Learning support staff will provide support for students with specific needs.
- A Designated SLT member will support departments in the implementation of strategies and encourage departments to share good practice.



- Parents/Carers should support their children to develop their literacy skills by encouraging reading for pleasure at home.
- Students will take increasing responsibility for recognising their own literacy needs and making improvements.
- Teachers in all subjects will take every opportunity to support the Whole School Reading strategy.

#### **4. Monitoring and Evaluation**

Student progress in literacy will be monitored through the calendared cycle of work scrutiny and reading age tests in Year 7, 8 and the end of Year 9. Literacy will also be monitored in conjunction with Heads of Subject, Leaders of Key Stages, Support for Learning staff, the ASDAN Coordinator, the Specialist Provision Centre and individual teachers. Staff and parental feedback will also be sought.



## Guidance and Useful Strategies

Recent evidence from The Sutton Trust, Alex Quigley, David Didau and Doug Lemov points to four key approaches that have the most impact on closing the literacy gap:

- The explicit teaching of vocabulary, including a focus on disciplinary vocabulary;
- The teaching of disciplinary literacy, with a focus on subject specific reading and writing skills;
- The teaching of reading, including fluency, decoding and comprehension;
- Creating a wider knowledge base (cultural capital) for students so that they can access this knowledge to use when meeting new knowledge or ideas.

**In addition**, the EEF (see Appendix 1) published their **“Improving Literacy in Secondary Schools”** guidance in September 2021, and drew out the following guidance points:

1. Prioritising ‘disciplinary literacy’ rather than the exact same whole school literacy strategy;
2. Provide targeted vocabulary instruction in every subject;
3. Develop students' ability to read complex academic texts;
4. Break down complex writing tasks;
5. Combine writing instruction with reading in every subject
6. Provide opportunities for structured ‘accountable’ talk;
7. Provide high quality literacy interventions for struggling students.

### 1. READING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM:

*“Reading is the gateway skill that makes all other learning possible”*

**Barack Obama, 44<sup>th</sup> President of United States of America.**

#### Staff should:

- Create an environment and atmosphere where reading is promoted;
- Support the Bedrock Vocabulary Programme in Years 7 and 8, incorporating key vocabulary into lessons;
- Support reading and comprehension through a range of varied and appropriately differentiated reading resources;
- Encourage Shared Reading. Provide opportunities for reading as a class, in groups and as an individual. Encourage reading aloud if appropriate to task and individual;
- Encourage students to think critically about the texts they read;
- Encourage further reading around the subject. Make sure you have additional reading material in your subject.
- Incorporate non-fiction texts as part of class work and/or homework focused on books/newspapers/online articles etc. Ask students to get information from different sources. This will broaden students’ understanding of the world around them and introduce them to key vocabulary needed to become fluent readers.
- Participate and promote whole school Initiatives such as World Book Day.



## 2. VOCABULARY ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

We are committed to empowering students by widening their vocabulary. We are ambitious and aspirational with regard to vocabulary acquisition. We understand the impact that vocabulary has on quality of work, progress, and the ability to express ideas and concepts.

Staff should:

- Front load new vocabulary into lessons;
- Consider a subject vocabulary list and encourage students to write **and** speak as experts;
- Test vocabulary regularly through low stake quizzes;
- Encourage students to experience reading key words in context, use new vocabulary in their written work, and develop confidence with new vocabulary in speaking tasks.

## 3. WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

We understand that clear, academic writing helps students to sustain and order thought.

All staff should:

- Follow the literacy marking policy when marking/assessing students' work;
- Ensure writing resilience from Year 7 with planned extended writing tasks;
- Provide students with a range of challenging writing tasks;
- Support writing with frames or scaffolds where appropriate, and use modelling, within subjects;
- Insist on high standards of presentation (model if necessary) (All work to be presented with date and title);
- Promote punctuation, spelling and grammar within any writing task;
- Insist on the use of full sentences within writing tasks;
- Take opportunities for peer literacy marking;
- Use Dedicated Improvement and Reflection Time (DIRT) and Success Criteria;
- Encourage students to make peer corrections with purple pen and using the agreed codes;
- Evaluate performances using written word;
- Use quotations and model use of acknowledging sources.

## 4. ORACY ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

We understand the link between confident, fluent reading and confident, articulate speaking. At QE2 opportunities for talk in the classroom are planned and deliberate. Students learn language across the curriculum to support their oral contribution., they also learn what it means to be an active and effective listener.

Staff should:

- Lead by example, ensuring Standard English is used at all times and is expected in response;



- Challenge students when slang or inappropriate colloquialisms are used;
- Create opportunities for talk in a range of contexts and forms: whole class discussion, small group discussion, structured discussion, paired discussion, individual contribution, role play etc.;
- Give students coaching roles;
- Ask students to make effective presentations and encourage constructive peer feedback;
- Promote the whole school initiatives such as debating club, poetry by heart competition and Science Week;
- Encourage students to actively listen to each other and respond appropriately;
- Take opportunities to use audio-visual resources to support listening;
- Take opportunities to encourage students to let others do the talking;
- Model good listening behaviour;
- Challenge student listening skills by using unpredictable questioning strategies;
- Set listening tasks for homework. Use of audio (visual) stimuli.

### **Key Focus**

2023 - 2024: Reading and Vocabulary across the curriculum

2024 - 2025 : Interdisciplinary Literacy

2025 - 2026 : Oracy across the curriculum

### **APPENDIX 1:**



## IMPROVING LITERACY IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

### Summary of recommendations

**1** Prioritize disciplinary literacy across the curriculum



- Literacy is key to learning across all subjects in secondary school and a strong predictor of outcomes in later life.
- Disciplinary literacy is an approach to improving literacy across the curriculum that emphasises the importance of subject specific support.
- All teachers should be supported to understand how to teach students to read, write and communicate effectively in their subjects.
- School leaders can help teachers by ensuring training related to literacy prioritises subject specificity over general approaches.

**2** Provide targeted vocabulary instruction in every subject



- Teachers in every subject should provide explicit vocabulary instruction to help students access and use academic language.
- Effective approaches, including those related to etymology and morphology, will help students remember new words and make connections between words.
- Teachers should prioritise teaching Tier 2 and 3 vocabulary, which students are unlikely to encounter in everyday speech.
- Teachers and subject leaders should consider which words and phrases to teach as part of curriculum planning.

**3** Develop students' ability to read complex academic texts



- Training focused on teaching reading is likely to help secondary school teachers teach their subject more effectively.
- To comprehend complex texts, students need to actively engage with what they are reading and use their existing subject knowledge.
- Reading strategies, such as activating prior knowledge, prediction and questioning can improve students' comprehension.
- Strategies can be introduced through modelling and group work, before support is gradually removed to promote independence.

**4** Break down complex writing tasks



- Writing is challenging and students in every subject will benefit from explicit instruction in how to improve.
- Teachers can break writing down into planning, monitoring and evaluation, and can support students by modelling each step.
- Targeted support should be provided to students who struggle to write fluently, as this may affect writing quality.
- Teachers can use a variety of approaches, including collaborative and paired writing, to motivate students to write.

**5** Combine writing instruction with reading in every subject



- Combining reading activities and writing instruction is likely to improve students' skills in both, compared to a less balanced approach.
- Reading helps students gain knowledge, which leads to better writing, whilst writing can deepen students' understanding of texts.
- Students should be taught to recognise features, aims and conventions of good writing within each subject.
- Teaching spelling, grammar and punctuation explicitly can improve students' writing, particularly when focused on meaning.

**6** Provide opportunities for structured talk



- Talk matters: both in its own right and because of its impact on other aspects of learning.
- High quality talk is typically well-structured and guided by teachers.
- Accountable talk is a useful framework to ensure talk is high quality, and establishes how talk can be subject specific.
- Teachers can support students by modelling high quality talk, for example including key vocabulary and metacognitive reflection.

**7** Provide high quality literacy interventions for struggling students



- Schools should expect and proactively plan to support students with the weakest levels of literacy, particularly in Year 7.
- Developing a model of 'lowed support, which increases in intensity in line with need is a promising approach.
- Assessment should be used to match students to appropriate types of intervention, and to monitor the impact of interventions.
- Creating a co-ordinated system of support is a significant challenge requiring both specialist input and whole school leadership.





### References and useful websites

- National Literacy Strategy
- National Literacy Trust
- David Didau , <https://evidenceintopractice.wordpress.com/oracy-and-literacy/>
- Andrew Wilkinson, 'Oracy in English Teaching,' in *English*  
National Council of Teachers of English
- Education Endowment Foundation
- <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/>
- <http://www.readwritethink.org/>
- <https://www.edutopia.org/blog/oracy-literacy-of-spoken-word-oli-de-botton>
- <https://evidenceintopractice.wordpress.com/oracy-and-literacy/>
- <https://learningspy.co.uk/blog/>