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Rayner Stephens High School
Whole School Literacy Policy

January 2025

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Rationale

At Rayner Stephens 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 communicate with, and make sense of, the world around us. As such, the better we are at these skills the more successful we can expect to be in life. We recognise that improving literacy can positively impact on students' mental health, self-esteem, motivation, behaviour, and attainment.

Aim of the Literacy Policy

Having good literacy means students can become more independent in their learning, which is empowering. We therefore want students to become increasingly confident, fluent, and effective in all elements of literacy, including reading, comprehending, writing, speaking, and listening, and above all in communicating across the curriculum. Our approach to literacy is evidence based and informed by research, particularly the findings of the Education Endowment Foundation. They have seven recommendations for improving literacy in secondary schools, as shown below:

1. Prioritising disciplinary literacy across the curriculum.
2. Providing targeted vocabulary instruction.
3. Developing student's ability to read complex texts.
4. Breaking down complex writing tasks.
5. Combining writing instruction with reading in every subject.
6. Providing opportunities for structured talk.
7. Providing high quality literacy interventions.

1. Disciplinary Literacy

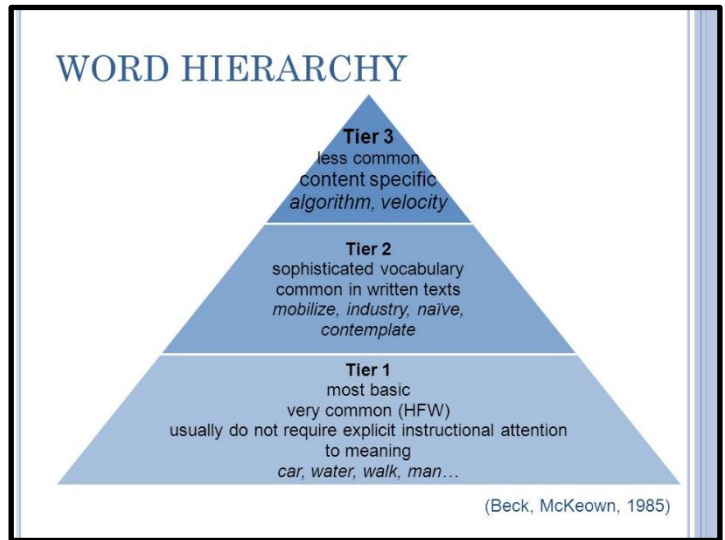
All teachers are teachers of language and literacy. This will be our focus at Rayner Stephens High School. Disciplinary literacy recognises that literacy skills are both general and subject specific. Every teacher communicates their subject knowledge through specific academic language and each subject uses specific forms of oral and written communication. Therefore, students must develop secure knowledge of the specialised vocabulary and technical skills needed in each subject across the curriculum. To ensure students develop their literacy, staff will model high expectations of spoken and written language and deploy a variety of strategies to develop key skills based on the EEF recommendations and evidence-based best practice. Disciplinary literacy will be split into four areas; targeted vocabulary instruction, reading, writing and oracy as outlined below.

2. Targeted Vocabulary Instruction

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










For students to be able to read, write and speak with accuracy, understanding and confidence they need to understand the meaning and use of many technical terms, some of which have different meanings in different disciplines. It is therefore essential to nurture and support the development of academic language using strategies such as these:

- Teachers working together within subject areas to identify, select and embed their key Tier 2 and 3 words (which students are less likely to come across in everyday speech), in curriculum planning, teaching and assessment.
- Considering which words have the ‘highest leverage’.
- Explicitly sharing and modelling the use of Tier 2 and 3 specialist vocabulary with students via direct instruction, knowledge organisers, and activities as appropriate for each department.
- Explicitly teaching spelling strategies, for example by using etymology (the study of the origin of words) and morphology (the study of the structure and parts of words).
- Exploring common word roots e.g., in Science ‘photo’ (light) then generating other words e.g. phototropic, photosynthesis, and exploring word building activities.
- Using graphic organisers to break down complex words visually e.g., the Frayer model.
- Employing regular low stakes retrieval quizzes providing multiple exposures to Tier 2/3 vocab so it will be part of student’s long-term memory.



3. Reading

As students make progress from Year 7 towards their GCSEs and beyond, they will have to cope with an increasing level of complexity in the academic materials they must read (including from screens), comprehend, analyse, and use. We therefore aim to support students to develop high level skills enabling them to cope effectively with these increased demands. We will share and build on good practice, using the strategies outlined below:

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| <p>1) Pre-teaching</p>  <p>Ensure reading links directly with the content/ concept of the lesson.</p> <p>Identify any words/ phrases/ concepts that might be unfamiliar to the students. Plan for how to teach this content before reading.</p> | <p>2) Prior Knowledge</p>  <p>Before reading, ask the students to make predictions about what they might know about the content based on titles/ images/ layout etc.</p> <p>Identify how this may link to previous topics ideas they've studied.</p> | <p>3) Modelled Reading</p>  <p>Read the text to the pupils. Here you can model the way an expert would read this text, focus on pronouncing new/ unfamiliar words and adding emphasis to important words that you want to draw their attention to.</p> |
| <p>4) Active Reading</p>  <p>After you have read the text to the students, get the students to read the text independently themselves.</p> <p>Prompt them to identify any words/ phrases they don't understand/ what the main points of the text are/ what the text is about/ asking them to do.</p> | <p>5) Clarifying</p>  <p>Clarify any words/ phrases/ concepts that the learners have identified they don't understand in their own independent reading.</p> | <p>6) Discussion</p>  <p>Allow the students time to discuss the text that has been read. Give them a success criteria for them to lead their discussion.</p> |
| <p>7) Questioning</p>  <p>Teacher to pose questions on the text that has been read, these could be comprehension or inference based. Students can generate their own questions on the text to pose to the teacher or each other.</p> | <p>8) Summarising</p>  <p>Students need to be able to summarise what they have read identifying the main points or ideas. This will need to be modelled to the students, if they are unable to summarise the main ideas you will need to re-read the text.</p> | <p>9) Respond</p>  <p>Once students have understood the text they need to do something with it. This might be answering the bigger question, reproducing the information in another format, analysing it etc.</p> |

4. Writing

Writing is a complex process, and all teachers have a responsibility to help students become confident, skilled writers who can use writing to process, organise and communicate their knowledge, ideas, and opinions effectively. This can be supported by strategies including:

- Live modelling the thought processes and actions involved in drafting, writing, and re-writing various written forms and genres. Visualisers could support this.
- Live-marking pupils' work for Spelling Punctuation and Grammar and ensure pupils take responsibility for their mistakes whilst we explicitly teach misconceptions.
- Sharing models and student exemplars of high-quality work, as well as discussing how other examples could be improved.
- Supporting weaker writers where appropriate with scaffolding, sentence starters, paragraph and writing frames, key words, and teacher modelling.
- Using pre-writing activities like re-capping key ideas before beginning to write or providing sentence stems.
- Giving students opportunities to write clearly in a variety of forms and for different audiences, with clear shared expectations of outcomes.
- Breaking down complex writing tasks e.g., by providing students with writing frames and structure strips to assist them in structuring their work, allowing for the growth of independence over time.
- Maintaining high expectations of the presentation, spelling, and grammar in written work.

5. Oracy

Evidence suggests that high quality classroom discussions benefit all students, but especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Developing oracy is therefore an important part of narrowing attainment gaps which could otherwise affect the future success of students. Teachers will support the development of oracy skills through a variety of means including:

- Providing a range of opportunities for structured and accountable talk among students, for example to investigate, debate and discuss contentious questions, ideas, and opinions.
- Explicitly teaching and modelling conventions for talk and listening in the classroom. Model good practice and show them the difference between proper English and slang.
- Picking up on unnecessary fillers (um, err) and repetition (like, well).
- Using strategies to encourage students to listen to others for a purpose, respond to and build constructively on the ideas of others e.g., using specific roles for specific students and sentence stems, and oral stems for oral activities.
- Ensuring talk is exploratory (collaborative with a shared purpose), rather than just dispositional (characterised by frequent disagreements unsupported by reasoning).
- Actively planning the sequence of questions to be asked and discussed in a lesson or in sequences of lessons, but also encouraging students to frame their own questions.
- Ensuring questions are used to probe, extend, and challenge thinking: not allowing students to say to give "I don't know" as an answer.
- Only accepting answers in full sentences (the way we pose the question).
- Picking up on grammatical errors (e.g., would have not would of).
- Upgrading student response by asking them to "say it better."
- Pausing after asking questions, to encourage a more thoughtful response. Give appropriate thinking time (Your 'wait time' after asking a question).

6. Intervention

Targeted literacy interventions take place to support students. Students with lower NGRT (National Group Reading Test) and SATS literacy scores are enrolled in literacy interventions. The interventions usually target KS3 students but bespoke programmes are delivered to KS4 students. The interventions include:

- Abigail Steel Phonics- Twice a week for 30 minutes a session, students identified as having large gaps within their knowledge of letter and sound correspondence come out of their PD groups and work on their knowledge and understanding of the phonics code.
- Bespoke Literacy Programme- Twice weekly for 30 minutes a session, students identified as having literacy barriers around vocabulary deficit and fluency come out of their PD groups and work on their knowledge of tier 2 vocabulary and fluency of reading complex texts.
- Handwriting intervention runs through the HIVE where learners who struggle with their handwriting are able to access support.