2025

Reading & Literacy Policy

SOUTHCHURCH HIGH SCHOOL

Review Framework

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1. School Vision

Literacy encompasses the essential skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. These skills underpin students' ability to access and engage with the full curriculum. Consequently, the development of literacy is a whole-school responsibility. All staff, regardless of subject specialism, are expected to promote and strengthen literacy within their teaching. Improving literacy is a shared priority, requiring consistent practice, high expectations, and a coherent approach to addressing the barriers that students may face.

2. Literacy Vision

We aim for all students to develop the literacy skills required to thrive as productive, responsible global citizens in the 21st century. Our priority is to ensure that strategies for embedding vocabulary, reading, and writing are coherent, consistently applied, and securely embedded across the curriculum. In addition, we are strengthening our approach to oracy so that high-quality talk is used deliberately to enhance learning, deepen understanding, and improve students' confidence and communication skills.

3. Aims

We are committed to ensuring that every student has the opportunity to reach their full potential by developing strong literacy skills that are essential for success both in school and beyond. We expect all teachers to contribute proactively to the development of high-quality communication skills and to promote a level of literacy that enables students to:

- Communicate effectively in all curriculum areas so they can achieve or exceed their potential.
- Understand spelling systems and use them to spell and read accurately.
- Have fluent and legible handwriting.
- Develop a curiosity in 'printed words' (vocabulary) and their meanings to become word conscious.
- Have a developing vocabulary that can be used to aid their comprehension and expression, e.g. when trying to understand and discuss their own and others' reading and writing.
- Develop an enjoyment of reading and writing, and to exhibit confidence, fluency, and comprehension.
- Monitor their own reading and correct their mistakes.
- Be able to plan, draft, revise and edit their own writing.
- Be able to write about a range of texts or events exhibiting a sound knowledge and an ability to evaluate and justify their preferences.
- Know about the ways in which texts are structured.
- Know about, and be able to write in, a range of genres and level of formality.

A strong emphasis on literacy is essential because it underpins pupils' ability to access the full curriculum and achieve well. Research indicates that schooling plays a crucial role in developing pupils' vocabulary, with up to 90% of vocabulary encountered through reading rather than everyday speech. Vocabulary is a key factor in text comprehension, and written texts—particularly children's literature—typically contain a far wider and more sophisticated range of vocabulary than spoken language (Snow et al., 1998; Stanovich, 1993). However, fiction alone does not provide sufficient exposure to the academic and subject-specific vocabulary required for success at GCSE, A Level and higher study.

In addition to explicit instruction in vocabulary, there is strong evidence that comprehension improves when teachers model the strategies used by expert readers. These include monitoring understanding, asking questions, predicting, and summarising (Rosenshine, 1997; Oakhill et al., 2014; Davis, 2010; National Reading Panel, 2000; Stuart & Stainthorp, 2015). Furthermore, pupils' background knowledge is a critical component of reading comprehension: the more they know about the subject of a text, the better equipped they are to understand it (Willingham, 2012; Lipson & Cooper, 2002).

This evidence highlights the need for a coherent, whole-school approach to literacy that prioritises vocabulary development, explicit reading instruction, and the building of knowledge across the curriculum.

4. Rationale

At Southchurch High School, we believe that literacy is a foundational skill that enables students to read, write, and communicate effectively as experts within every subject across the curriculum. Strong literacy skills are essential for understanding and engaging with the world, and are closely linked to future success in education, employment, and wider life.

We recognise that improved literacy has a significant positive impact on students' mental health, self-esteem, motivation, behaviour, and academic achievement. Students with strong literacy skills are better equipped to work independently and confidently, which is both empowering and transformative. For this reason, we aim for all students to develop increasing confidence, fluency, and proficiency across all aspects of literacy—including reading, comprehension, writing, speaking, listening, and effective communication within each subject discipline.

Our approach to literacy is grounded in research and informed by evidence-based practice, particularly the recommendations of the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF). The EEF outlines seven key strategies for improving literacy in secondary schools, which guide and shape our whole-school approach:



These seven recommendations underpin all the aims, guidance and best practice summarised in this policy.

Our literacy approach is guided by the following principles:

- **Subject-specific vocabulary is explicitly taught** so students can speak and write with confidence and precision in every subject area
- **Reading is prioritised across the school** to ensure all students can access complex texts and develop the comprehension skills needed for academic success.
- **Reading for pleasure is promoted** through access to high-quality texts, a well-stocked library and regular opportunities to read in and out of lessons.

- **Oracy is valued and developed** through structured discussions, debates, and presentations that strengthen verbal reasoning and communication.
- **Writing is embedded across the curriculum** with a focus on clarity, structure and accuracy to ensure students can express their knowledge effectively.
- **Targeted support is provided for students who need help with literacy**, including interventions, reading programmes and 1:1 support.
- **Promoting literacy in the school's wider community**, offering opportunities for parents/carers to engage with literacy matters.
- **Staff receive training and guidance** to ensure consistent literacy strategies are used in every classroom.

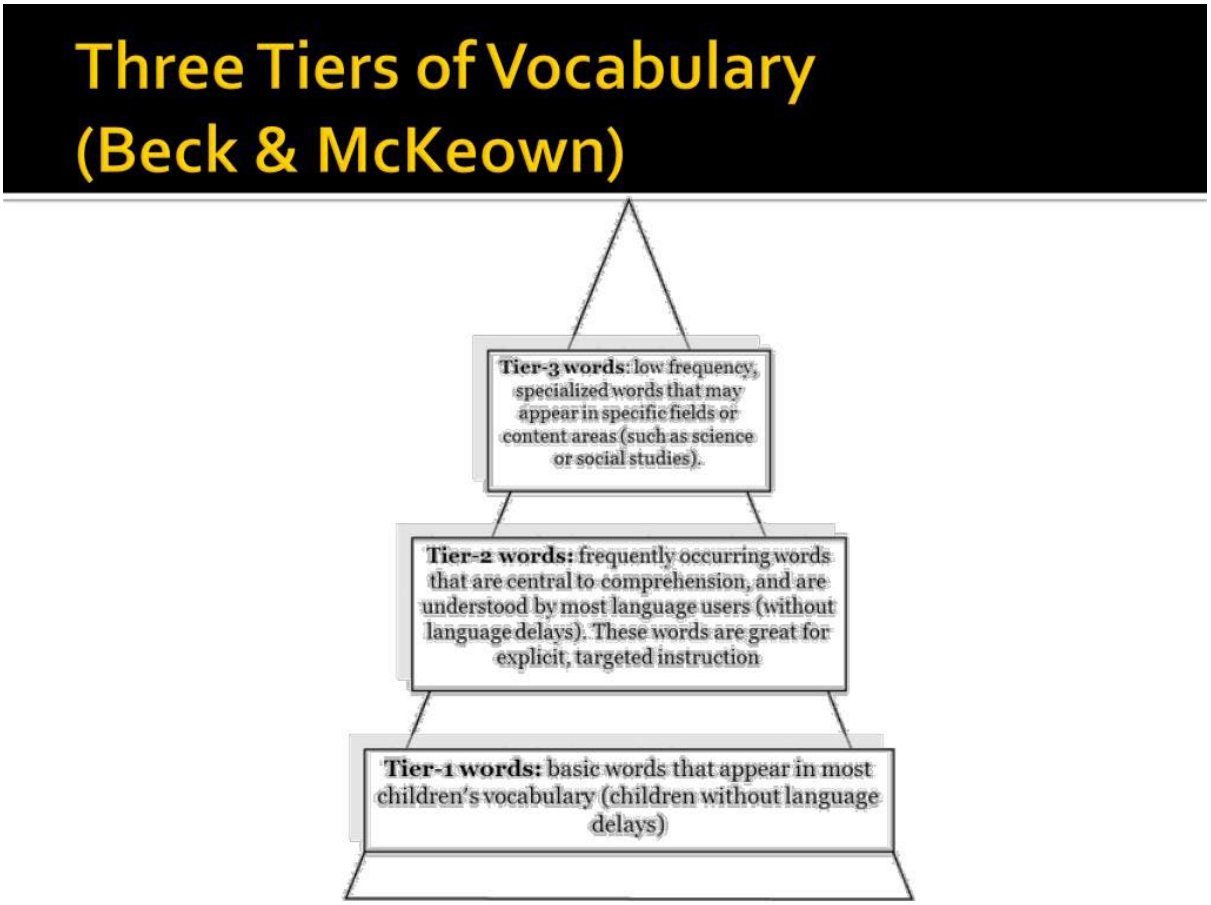
5. Disciplinary Literacy

The teacher standards (2012) require all teachers to "demonstrate an understanding of and take responsibility for promoting high standards of literacy, articulacy and the correct use of standard English, whatever the teacher's specialist subject." Therefore, all teachers are teachers of language and literacy. This will be our focus at Southchurch 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.

6. Targeted Vocabulary Instruction

At Southchurch High School, 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, glossaries, knowledge organisers, displays and activities as appropriate for each department.



7. Reading

As students progress from Year 7 through to their GCSEs and beyond, they encounter increasingly complex academic materials, including digital texts, which require higher-level skills in reading, comprehension, analysis, and application. We are therefore committed to equipping students with the advanced literacy skills necessary to meet these demands confidently and effectively.

To achieve this, we promote the sharing and development of best practice across the school, drawing on evidence-based strategies that enhance students' ability to engage with challenging texts, think critically, and communicate their understanding clearly. These strategies include:

- Modelling the reading process by reading to and with the class, discussing how what is read inspires ideas and questions, as well as linking to prior knowledge.
- Directly teaching students how to decode a variety of texts and forms of text specific to their disciplines.
- Ensuring that there is a range of opportunities in class for paired and collaborative reading; sharing ideas elicited from the reading, building on prior knowledge to question, making predictions and building theories and summarising issues.
- Directly teaching reading strategies to students (e.g. annotation, highlighting), and the skills of inference and deduction required for the subject discipline.
- Monitoring the level of text provided to ensure it provides appropriate challenge.
- Planning and using questioning effectively to develop students' independent reading comprehension.
- Promoting reading for pleasure and learning in form time reading and discussion.

8. Writing

Writing is a complex and essential skill, and all teachers share responsibility for helping students become confident, proficient writers. Effective writing enables students to process, organise, and communicate their

knowledge, ideas, and opinions clearly and purposefully. This development can be supported through a range of evidence-informed strategies, including:

- Live modelling the thought processes and actions involved in drafting, writing, and re-writing various written forms and genres.
- 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.
- Challenging most able writers through extension questions and extended writing opportunities and by removing scaffolds and frames.
- 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.
- Maintaining high expectations of the presentation, spelling, and grammar in written work.

9. Oracy

Research shows that high-quality classroom discussion benefits all students, and can have a particularly positive impact on those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Developing oracy is therefore a key strategy in narrowing attainment gaps and ensuring all students are equipped for future success. Teachers actively support the development of oracy skills through a variety of evidence-informed approaches, 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, modelling good practice and showing them the difference between proper English and slang.
- Using strategies to encourage students to listen to others for a purpose, responding to and building constructively on the ideas of others e.g., using specific roles for specific students and sentence stems, and oral stems for oral activities
- 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).
- Pausing after asking questions, to encourage a more thoughtful response. Give appropriate thinking time (Your 'wait time' after asking a question) before then selecting students at random for responses.

10. Roles and responsibilities

All school staff will support the development of literacy skills by modelling high standards of written and verbal communication, and by promoting a wider love of reading for pleasure and learning.

Senior leaders and managers:

- Lead and give a high priority to the development of literacy in school.
- Keep up to date with developments in pedagogy around literacy, adjusting school policies, training and curriculum plans accordingly.
- Ensure effective monitoring systems are in place to ensure literacy delivery is embedded and effective in school.
- Ensure departmental schemes of learning highlight the opportunities for literacy skill development and the strategies/resources that could be used to promote these skills.

Teachers across the curriculum:

- Contribute to students' development of a wide range of disciplinary and critical literacy skills using the strategies outlined in this policy, and others.

- Keep up to date with developments in pedagogy around literacy and adjust teaching and learning strategies accordingly.
- Seek opportunities to expose students to different literary experiences eg speakers/trips.

Form Tutors:
- Undertake literacy form activities, as per the form activity schedule.
- Provide opportunities for students to develop social literacy skills – the ability to speak and listen to each other with respect, whilst acknowledging and valuing differences in opinion.
- Facilitate the Tutor Reading Programme.

Librarian:
- Contribute to the development of student literacy skills by maintaining a welcoming and up to date library with a wide range of extra-curricular activities promote a love of reading.
- Support and implement the delivery of Thinking Reading and rewarding the most engaged students.
- Oversee the Accelerated Reader programme.
- Keep up-to-date with and supports developments in literacy strategies used around the school.

Support Staff:
- Contribute to students' development of a wide range of literacy skills by encouraging and supporting students to use the literacy skills and strategies they have learned.
- Keep up-to-date with and support developments in literacy strategies used around the school.

Parents/carers:
- Communicate with the school if they feel their children need additional support in developing good literacy skills or are concerned about progress in any way.
- Encourage their children to use the range of opportunities available and strategies learned to improve their literacy.

Students:
- Take increasing responsibility for recognising their own literacy needs and making improvements in their work.
- Take opportunities to extend their critical literacy skills through extra-curricular activities and reading, where possible.

11. Monitoring and Evaluation

To ensure disciplinary and critical literacy is embedded and having impact across the curriculum, it will be monitored throughout the academic year. This includes:

- Lesson observations and learning walks to monitor the quality of literacy in all its forms within lessons.
- Work scrutiny to monitor that teachers are taking opportunities to develop and support disciplinary literacy.
- Scrutinising the impact of any interventions and strategies used to improve literacy for groups or individual students in school through data provided.

What are we already doing? What are we planning to do?

Increasing students' vocabulary by:

• Using Word of the Week, where Tier 2 vocabulary is prioritised with the focus on one key word per week. A list of academic words (a collection of the most frequently occurring words found in academic literature e.g textbooks, exam papers etc) will be used to provide the word each week. This will be delivered through the tutor time programme. Students are awarded ClassChart points for the correct usage of the word within the correct context

• Consistently using, in every subject across the curriculum, a range of teaching strategies that support explicit vocabulary instruction, and challenges students to use 'upgraded' vocabulary so they talk and write like experts. Oracy frames are to be used in structured Think/Pair/Share activities to promote articulation of ideas through specific vocabulary used in discussion stems. Explicit pre-teaching of key Tier 3 vocabulary in the 'I Do' phase of the lesson.

Developing reading skills and opportunities across the curriculum by:

• Consistently upskilling staff to teach reading strategies that help to improve reading comprehension. This has already begun with previous Professional Learning on Tier 2 and Tier 3 vocabulary, as well as adaptive teaching.

• Continual staff training to be delivered on decoding and language comprehension to help support students based upon reading ages shared with all staff and identified on seating plans/context sheets. Whole school strategies introduced, such as segmenting and blending, as well as introducing a structured approach to teaching reading strategies, based on the Reciprocal Reader use of questioning, clarifying, summarising and predicting foci that help to improve reading comprehension.

• Introducing and consistently following the core reading standards in the classroom.

Developing reading for pleasure by:

• Promoting reading for pleasure through the use of Accelerated Reader, where students can be rewarded with ClassChart points and free books from the book vending machine for quizzing on completed books, as well as celebrations of top quizzers in rewards assemblies. Students all have a reading age (shared with the librarians) who then use the ZPD (Zone of Proximal Development) to catalogue books and level of appropriate challenge.

• Form time independent reading at KS3 is rolled out, with Year 7 enjoying a class reader, and Years 8 and 9 engaging with extracts of fiction and non-fiction, upskilling tutors in how to encourage students to read for enjoyment by exposing them to modelled fluent reading aloud, as well as how best to elicit responses in discussion, building upon oracy skills and the ability to formulate a personal response. This will also follow the Reciprocal Reader use of questioning, clarifying, summarising and predicting foci that help to improve reading comprehension, to align with strategies being used in lessons.

• Setting up the Southchurch High School book club, run by the librarians once a week, open to all but targeted at reluctant readers in Years 8 and 9.

• All students have access to a well-stocked library with knowledgeable librarians for support.

Developing oracy across the curriculum by:

• Consistently providing opportunities for high quality talk in the classroom and tutor time that are planned and deliberate, using strategies such as structured Think/Pair/Share frameworks, call and response etc.

• Introducing and consistently following the core oracy standards within the classroom.

Developing writing skills across the curriculum by:

• Consistently providing opportunities for high quality writing and application of knowledge in the classroom that are planned and deliberate, using the You Do phase of the lesson structure, using strategies such as writing frames, sentence starters etc.

• Introducing and consistently following the core writing standards within the classroom.

• Utilising whole school literacy policy with key tasks and APs, with a shared policy of annotations and colours to identify strengths, errors, areas for improvement etc, with carefully planned DIRT work to allow students the opportunity to re-draft and improve upon their work.

Targeting support and interventions by:

• Investing in NGRT reading tests, completed and marked online, with the test altering the questions to individual student responses to gauge as accurately as possible at survey level testing the reading age, and areas for development for each student.

• Investing in the evidence-based literacy programme Thinking Reading to support students in making rapid progress with decoding and language comprehension.

• Ensuring that fine grain assessment takes place to identify accurately those who would benefit from targeted support, such as the Thinking Reading intervention, with staff fully trained up to deliver the programme.

Promoting students' and families' awareness and appreciation of the value of literacy by:

• Offering support and guidance to parents to help them support their children with literacy across the curriculum

• Including our Whole School Literacy Strategy on the school's website

• Sharing recommended reading lists that complement and enrich the curriculum

• Celebrating students' achievements in literacy through the weekly library and parent newsletter

• Sharing the Word of the Week with parents through the weekly newsletters also, to promote engagement with it

• Continuing to offer library events, such as Reading and Refreshments, to encourage families to utilise the library together

CORE STANDARDS

CORE READING STANDARDS	CORE WRITING STANDARDS	CORE ORACY STANDARDS
RS1 Read and understand specific vocabulary	**WS1** Write with accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar	**OS1** Speak using full sentences
RS2 Read and show comprehension of the text	**WS2** Write using specific vocabulary	**OS2** Speak loudly and clearly
RS3 Read and understand the command words in a question	**WS3** Write for a particular audience and/or purpose	**OS3** Speak with an appropriate level of formality
RS4 Read and make inferences from the text or image	**WS4** Write to consider more than one perspective	**OS4** Speak effectively when taking part in a role play of performance
RS5 Read and interpret a graph, image or illustration	**WS5** Write to offer a comparison	**OS5** Speak effectively when taking part in a discussion/debate
RS6 Read and understand the purpose of a text or image	**WS6** Write the appropriate units after a number	**OS6** Speak effectively when delivering a presentation