

St. Bede's Catholic School & Byron Sixth Form College



Bishop Chadwick
Catholic Education Trust



Policy Name	Literacy: Spelling, Oracy and Reading (SOAR) Policy	Policy Period
Approved by	Headteacher	Jan 5, 2026 to Sep 1, 2027

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- **SOAR (Spelling, Oracy and Reading) at St. Bede's Catholic School & Byron Sixth Form is our whole-school initiative to embed communication and literacy skills across the curriculum from Year 7 to Year 13.**
- We recognise that strong communication skills are essential for success in education, employment, and life. In an increasingly digital and fast-paced world, young people must be able to express themselves clearly, accurately, and confidently.
- Yet, reading enjoyment among young people is at its lowest ever recorded – only 47.8% in 2020 – contributing to significant personal and economic barriers. Through SOAR, we aim not only to improve reading, writing, and speaking, but to foster a genuine love of language and curiosity in learning.

INTENT

- SOAR aims to expose all learners to the richness of English language so that pupils can access the pleasure of reading, the excitement of writing, the satisfaction of good speech to unlock the potential to learn and grow as individuals that are able to set the world ablaze with their God-given gifts and talents.
 - Spelling and writing
 - To improve students' accurate retrieval of Tier 2 and Tier 3 vocabulary
 - To develop students' ability to include complex vocabulary in pieces of extended writing and verbal articulation
 - To embed accurate word formation and develop students' ability to write in a subject specific, precise and well applied manner

- To ensure that writing is a skill embedded throughout the curriculum offer, through mandatory formative / summative extended writing assessments in every cycle
- Reading
 - To develop a love of reading, including independent reading
 - To drive subject progress, through the inclusion of Scholarly Reading texts, explicitly linked by expert subject teachers
 - To close the 'reading gap' through targeted intervention of students with low reading ages
- Oracy
 - To provide a 'linking vehicle' for students to apply their improved reading and writing ability in a verbal context
 - To develop students' confidence, critical reasoning, non-verbal articulation and persuasion skills
- SOAR Programme Intent Mapping – The Simple View of Reading at St. Bedes:
 - Targeted Classes (low KS3): sounds-write phonics staff
 - Key Stage 3: accelerated reading
 - Targeted Students: SEND intervention, reading groups, paired reading, Reading Plus intervention, The Bell Foundation EAL assessment framework
 - All Year Groups: Reading Canon
 - Extra-curricular (open to all): book clubs, scholarly reading

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

- Spelling and Writing:
 - ***“Of course words are magic. That’s why they call it spelling.” Brian Holguin.***
 - **Morning Meeting:**
 - Each morning, students will undertake a spelling test as one of the activities of their morning meeting.
 - **Words of the Week:**
 - Every week, each subject shall introduce one piece (two or three pieces for Key Stage 5) of Tier 2 (frequent) or Tier 3 (subject specific) vocabulary, linked to that week’s learning. This shall be introduced to students using a Frayer Model (emphasising the word’s definition, characteristics, etymology, morphology, examples and non-examples). These words shall be explicitly mentioned throughout the week’s content, utilising spaced retrieval practice to drive strong student retention. Every 5 weeks, there shall be a ‘recall week’, testing students’ ability to retrieve one of the previous 4 words.
 - **Sounds-write:**
 - A large group of staff within St. Bede’s Catholic School and Byron Sixth Form have been accredited through Sounds-Write training. This is a DfE approved synthetic phonics programme, omnipresent in primary schools, which allows staff to explicitly teach new pieces of vocabulary to students who may still struggle with understanding the connection between sounds and letters, and the grouping of letters together. This will allow them to manipulate the phonemes in their own writing.

○ **Staff Planning:**

- Throughout sequences of learning, expert subject teachers are expected to note any key vocabulary and complex terms within medium term plans in order to anticipate their introduction, scaffold their learning and embed their application.

○ **Writing:**

- 'Writing is challenging and pupils in every subject will benefit from explicit instruction in how to improve.' Education Endowment Foundation (EEF).
- Writing tasks, including high stake questions in exams, can require pupils to recall and marshal large quantities of information, communicate with accuracy and group ideas in structured ways.
- We recognise that all too often writing is not embedded throughout the curriculum offer, instead 'literacy based' subjects are often the only fields in which students can develop their extended writing techniques and capabilities.
- Every single KS3 subject, in every cycle, has a formal assessment, which shall be 'deep marked' according to our Marking Policy for literacy, that tests students ability to write in an extended manner. Pupils must be provided with regular opportunities within every subject's curriculum to transcribe, that is, physically write or type and compose, generating ideas and translating them into words, sentences and structured texts. Specifically, in 'Write Like A...', students will be given a stimulus, providing an audience, a purpose and a form as well as a variety of scaffolds, so they can apply their Words of the Week, embed their learning of core, threshold concepts as well as their general writing skills. These tasks are deliberately designed to allow students to foster and refine their original ideas, recap knowledge, fostering their classroom learning and Scholarly Reading; coupling this with curiosity and risk, in order to develop authentic ideas and arguments.
- Pieces of extended writing assessment must be triangulated between subject teachers and across departments in order to ensure a coherent, consistent approach to improving students' writing. Students with SEND may receive adapted forms of assessment, such as the opportunity to use a word processor, or a more advanced writing frame.
- Write Like a... Framework to scaffold and support pieces of extended writing:



Year 7 | Cycle 2 | Write Like A... Key Task

Suggested structure/plan	Task (please provide a form of writing, purpose and audience)	Key Words/SOAR Words to include
Paragraph 1: Introduction		
Paragraph 2: Point 1		
		Key pieces of recent learning to discuss
Paragraph 3: Point 2		
Paragraph 4: Point 3		
Paragraph 5: Conclusion		

Teacher Feedback:

WWW:

EBL:

POW (complete on the next page in GREEN pen)



- Reading:
- ***“The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you’ll go.” Dr Seuss***
 - **Reading Canon** – reading for pleasure:
 - Every afternoon, each tutor group has a thirty minute dedicated reading session. Their texts are determined by the school reading canon (see Appendix 1), allowing students to read at least a significant amount of high quality texts by the end of Key Stage 4 (more so by Key Stage 5). Exposing pupils to a culture where storytelling is valued and rich, aids all of the school community: it enables older pupils to look to anecdotes to help them understand new concepts; it helps younger pupils assimilate ideas; and it encourages us all to think about our curriculum as a collection of great stories of world culture. The range of books have been picked for their interest and challenge, introducing pupils to new vocabulary and developing pupils’ confidence and strength in reading. The books that make up the prescribed Canon come from a range of cultures, timelines and genres, with the intention of promoting inclusivity and diversity, allowing our pupils to become citizens of the world. Research suggests that pupils who read more frequently tend to have more academic success, more regulated emotional wellbeing, and go on to have better career prospects after they leave school, than those who read less frequently.
 - Tutors will lead the reading with students strongly encouraged to also lead communal reading. Tutors may record students’ articulation, speed, comprehension and tone levels so the impact of tutor reading can be annually reviewed.
 - **Accelerated Reader** – reading for progress:

- Every Key Stage 3 class shall complete a screening (STAR Test) at the beginning of each cycle, which shall determine their reading level range. All books in our library are labelled/coded with their bespoke reading level ranges. Reading ages are available and resulting intervention is signposted to all staff via online drives. Each Key Stage 3 class shall have a dedicated lesson every fortnight (within their timetabled English curriculum) where they shall independently read texts that have been selected in a bespoke manner according to their reading level and age.
- Students read independently but they are also listened to and assessed against a fluency rubric so we can monitor the progress made alongside the end of text quizzes.
- Students will be allowed to bring their AR texts home in order to facilitate independent reading. Between each text read in the cycle, students shall do a 'reading quiz' through the Accelerated Reader software, which will provide a surface level indication of their comprehension and information retention.
- **NGRT (New Group Reading Test) and Reading Plus** – reading for progress:
 - We use the NGRT – a standardized diagnostic reading assessment designed to measure pupils' reading ability and comprehension. The test includes a mix of sentence completion and passage-based questions, assessing vocabulary knowledge, inference skills, and overall reading fluency. The test is adaptive, meaning the difficulty level adjusts based on pupil responses, providing an accurate picture of individual reading levels. We use this data to:
 - Identify Reading Levels: it provides a standardized reading age for each pupil, helping teachers understand where students are compared to age-related expectations.
 - Spot Gaps and Strengths: it highlights areas of strength and weakness in vocabulary and comprehension, informing targeted interventions.
 - Track Progress Over Time: it enables us to monitor improvement and evaluate the impact of literacy strategies.
 - Group and Curriculum Planning: it supports decisions about adaptive teaching, guided reading groups, and curriculum adjustments.
 - Whole-School Analysis: the aggregated data can reveal trends across cohorts, year groups, or demographic groups, informing strategic literacy development.
 - Students most at need of rapid intervention following the diagnostic results will enrol on Reading Plus instead of the Reading Canon sessions. Reading Plus is an adaptive online program that develops reading fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary through personalized practice. It combines silent reading exercises with comprehension questions and vocabulary development activities, adjusting to each pupil's reading level
- **The Bell Foundation Assessment Framework** – reading for pupils who use English as an additional language
 - The Bell Foundation Assessment Framework is a structured tool designed to support schools in assessing and tracking the progress of pupils who use English as an Additional Language (EAL). It provides a set of descriptors across different stages of language development, enabling our teachers to identify pupils' current proficiency and plan targeted support. In our school, we will use this framework to ensure that EAL learners receive appropriate scaffolding in reading, writing, speaking, and

listening. By embedding the framework into our literacy strategy, we aim to promote equity and inclusion, monitor progress effectively, and inform teaching strategies that accelerate language acquisition. This approach ensures that all pupils can access the curriculum and achieve their full potential.

- **Paired Reading** – reading for comprehension and fluency:
 - Pupils who are below expected reading level/age significantly due to low levels of comprehension (according to the diagnostic assessment) shall be paired with Sixth Form reading partners. These Sixth Form students will read with designated students during Reading Canon timetabled lessons, explaining new vocabulary and discussing concepts. The Sixth Form partners will have basic training, provided by our school Librarian/specialist reading staff.
- **Scholarly Reading** – reading for knowledge:
 - Within every sequence of learning, each department has selected a range of texts that will allow students to delve deeper into their learning outside of the classroom. These texts will allow students to observe taught concepts, their words of the week within context and how subject experts discuss, articulate and argue pioneering, specific and/or complex topics.
- **Book Clubs** – reading for fun:
 - Our School Librarian has a variety of timetabled Book Clubs throughout the week, allowing like-minded students to discuss books, their reading and different relevant topics. Book Clubs are a vital way for students who have ignited their love of books and reading to be challenged, perhaps through recommendations of different genres, more complex texts or juxtaposed concepts in order to develop their opinions, arguments and reasoning.
- Oracy
 - At St. Bede's Catholic School and Byron Sixth Form, we understand that spelling, reading and writing shall only take our students so far. Oracy, that is verbal, discussion and critical skills are necessary in order to unite these other literacy foci, elevating our students to become young people and British citizens who can talk respectfully, discuss holistically and reason critically.

POLICY IMPACT & MONITORING

- The impact of this policy will be determined by:
 - Development of reading, writing and communication in relation to starting points.
 - The acquisition of powerful knowledge that exposure to reading brings.
 - Reading fluency so that all can access the richest of curriculums.
 - Students' love of reading and writing for pleasure.
 - Academic excellence in writing in all subjects and ready to succeed in their next phase of learning.
 - Outcomes such as creativity, empathy and students understanding more about themselves and others.
 - Relationships: students sharing their enjoyment of reading with family and friends.
 - Communication skills; students' drawing on their knowledge of texts, vocabulary and information gained through reading, in their verbal explanations and written

communication.

- Students having the skills to confidently express themselves to a range of audiences.
- Social outcomes such as eliminating the impact of early life literacy disadvantage and ultimately closing the reading gap between the ‘word poor’ and the ‘word rich’.
- Methods to monitor and assess this policy’s impact against intent are:
 - Quality Assurance (student voice, book scrutiny, lesson observations)
 - Accelerated Reader baseline/end of cycle assessment
 - NGRT diagnostic testing
 - Key Assessment tasks, including Write Like A (both results and design)
 - Increased participation in class discussion or assembly, or extracurricular activities
 - Word of the Week Records
 - Student voice and attendance at book clubs
 - Use of the library as a space to read
 - Tutor reading records
 - Student Voice

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: OUR READING CANON

- Year 7: Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone, The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas
- Year 8: Millions, I Have No Secrets, The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time
- Year 9: Noughts and Crosses, The Hunger Games, The Hound of the Baskervilles
- Year 10: Animal Farm, Up, Lord of the Flies
- Year 11: Notes From a Small Island, Jekyll and Hyde
- Year 12: Where the Crawdads Sing, Mythos
- Year 13: And Then There Were None, Mythos

Our Reading Canon is carefully designed to create meaningful links across the curriculum, including English, mathematics, science, history, geography, computing, design and technology, music, modern foreign languages, art, physical education, careers education, religious education, and PSHE. Each text has been selected to foster rich discussion and critical thinking, while promoting the five British Values: democracy, individual liberty, the rule of law, mutual respect, and tolerance. In addition, the canon provides opportunities to explore and reflect on the protected characteristics outlined in the Equality Act—age, gender, race, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity—ensuring that our reading curriculum supports inclusion, diversity, and respect for all.

APPENDIX 2: STRATEGIES FOR STAFF

- Aim to hear a minimum of five students read every lesson (even a sentence)
- Provide a writing frame or sentence starters to students embarking on a piece of extended writing
- Employ a reading pen (SEND students) to allow increased accessibility for some students

- Provide word-level, sentence-level and whole text level instruction
- Ensure that students understand the subject specific connotations of Tier 2 vocabulary used in writing questions
- Help students monitor and review their writing, for example by providing a checklist of features included in high quality answers or using it as a self or peer-assessment tool
- Recap key ideas before beginning a writing task which will help pupils use them in writing more successfully
- Over time, it is recommended that modelling and scaffolding strategies from the teacher is gradually removed, supporting pupils to become increasingly independent (EEF).