

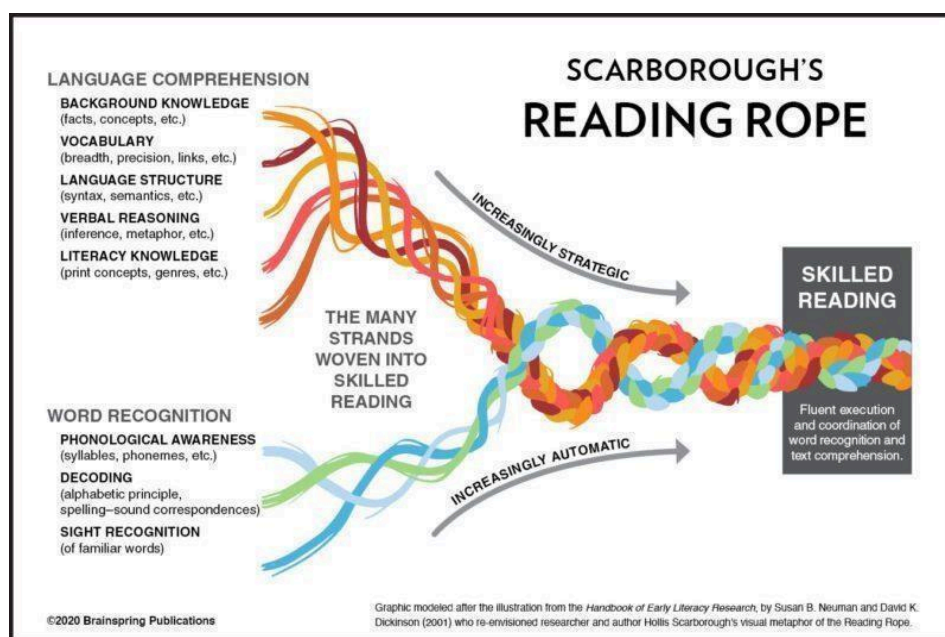


ST GEORGE'S SCHOOL
A CHURCH OF ENGLAND ACADEMY

READING AND LITERACY

CURRICULUM PHILOSOPHY

At St George's Academy, we recognise that reading is not a natural process, but a complex, acquired skill. Skilled reading depends on the interaction of accurate word recognition, fluency, vocabulary, background knowledge, syntax, verbal reasoning and language comprehension. Scarborough's Reading Rope helps us understand this complexity, preventing us from reducing reading to decoding alone while still recognising that secure decoding remains essential.



Reading is one of the strongest predictors of future academic success. Weak reading is strongly associated with wider disadvantage, including reduced academic outcomes, limited future opportunities and over-representation within the criminal justice system. Ensuring that all students continue to improve as readers is therefore one of the most important responsibilities of a secondary school.

At St George's, we use assessment, technology and teacher expertise to identify students' reading ability, diagnose specific barriers and provide appropriate support. Our approach is multi-layered: students receive regular opportunities to practise reading, explicit instruction from teachers, targeted intervention where needed and access to a broad culture of independent, volitional reading.

READING PLUS – A RIGOROUS, SUPPORTIVE APPROACH TO READING INSTRUCTION

At St George's, we use the Reading Plus programme to drive reading improvement and development across Key Stage 3. Reading Plus provides precise diagnostic information about students' reading fluency, comprehension and areas for development, allowing teachers to respond quickly and intelligently to students' needs.

Every child in Year 7 and Year 8, alongside identified pupils in Year 9, receives one hour of Reading Plus lesson time. During these lessons, students complete a range of structured reading exercises, culminating in short comprehension assessments. These assessments allow our trained staff to deliver bespoke intervention within lesson time, addressing specific gaps and helping students make measurable progress.

Reading Plus is not used as a replacement for teacher instruction. Instead, it provides high-quality diagnostic information and structured reading practice, which teachers use to plan timely, targeted support. Students are also expected to complete weekly Reading Plus assignments, ensuring that reading improvement is built through regular practice over time.

Alongside this, homework is dedicated to independent reading assignments, with students selecting texts from within Reading Plus. As the programme operates from primary through to higher education level, all readers, regardless of their starting point, can be challenged appropriately and supported to succeed.

For a detailed introduction to Reading Plus, please watch the following 10-minute video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PJaOfCyYzeE>

YEAR 9 - A RICH DIET OF CURATED FICTION AND NON-FICTION TEXTS

In Year 9, students study carefully selected fiction and non-fiction from the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries, developing the stamina, vocabulary and knowledge needed for successful GCSE study. Reading lessons in Year 9 centre around carefully chosen texts and combine reading comprehension with sentence-level writing tasks drawn from Judith C. Hochman and Natalie Wexler's *The Writing Revolution*. From nature writing to a diverse range of short stories, students in Year 9 receive a rich academic diet of challenging and engaging literary material.

Students continue to read regularly in lessons, with teachers making use of choral reading strategies and giving students opportunities to read aloud individually. These approaches help students develop prosodic reading: the ability to read aloud with appropriate pace, expression, phrasing and emphasis. Teaching staff also model expert reading delivery and comprehension strategies through teacher-led instruction, all within carefully sequenced curriculum booklets for each half-term.

In the final summer term, students in Year 9 complete their reading of *Lord of the Flies*, a challenging GCSE set text. In addition to reading the text in class, students complete a series of comprehension tests after each chapter. These comprehension tests are aligned with the key reading comprehension anchor skills identified through Reading Plus, allowing teachers to identify gaps in understanding, address misconceptions and prepare students for the academic study of the text in Year 10.

INTERVENTION – A MULTI-STAGE APPROACH

We recognise that students arrive at secondary school with a wide range of reading levels and abilities. However, we do not accept that any student should be held back by barriers to reading. With this in mind, we have adopted a comprehensive, responsive and detailed approach to reading intervention.

Reading Plus gives us regular assessment information about every student's areas of strength and development. This allows us to assign students to appropriate waves of support and to adjust that support when necessary. Movement between waves is expected, responsive and based on evidence.

Waves of Intervention	Focus
Wave 4	Highly Individualised and Intensive support through Specialised Programmes (Direct Instruction)
Wave 3	Targeted Intervention Support (Classroom Teacher)
Wave 2	Classroom Intervention Support (Classroom Teacher)
Wave 1	Foundational Instruction (All Pupils)

CRITERIA FOR INTERVENTION	ASSIGNED WAVE OF INTERVENTION	SUMMARY OF SUPPORT PROVIDED
Identified through KS2 data. Communication with feeder primary schools. Substantially below age-related expectations.	Wave 4	Students will participate in a highly individualised and intensive support programme using specialised approaches designed to meet the unique needs of the student. Pupils selected for this group undertake Direct Instruction to support accessing their whole school curriculum.
Identified through initial reading plus assessment and additional reading data. Significantly below age-related expectations.	Wave 3	Students will further enhance their reading proficiency by engaging in their reading programme during their reading lessons. Students will receive timely individual or small-group in-class interventions delivered by their class teacher.
Below age related expectations.	Wave 2	Students will further enhance their reading proficiency by engaging in their programme during their reading lessons. Students will receive timely whole group in-class interventions delivered by their class teacher.
Equal to or above age related expectations.	Wave 1	Students will further enhance their reading proficiency by engaging in their reading programme during their reading lessons. Pupils will be given recommendations to extend their range of reading and supported to develop further independent reading strategies when reading more challenging texts.

READING FOR PLEASURE OR *VOLITIONAL READING* AND CREATING A POSITIVE READING CULTURE

In 2025, we launched our volitional reading programme at St George's. While we value reading for pleasure, we recognise that this phrase does not resonate with every young person. We therefore use the broader idea of volitional reading: helping students become independent readers who choose texts that interest, challenge, inform and engage them.

We promote a strong, positive reading culture across school in a number of key ways.

Reading routes are guided pathways through a range of fiction and non-fiction genres. Using Lexile ranges, each sequence of texts builds in challenge, ending with a canonical example of a given genre. For example, the dystopia route builds from *The Hunger Games* through to the more challenging and demanding text *1984*. Students are incentivised through our rewards programme to continue reading within and across genres, helping them discover and understand their own reading preferences. This is a crucial aspect of becoming a confident adult reader.

We want students to feel that the library represents their tastes and interests. We have therefore invested heavily in new books, including a wide range of manga texts selected in response to student feedback. The library needs to be a place students choose to go, with books that genuinely interest them and reflect the wide range of reading experiences available to young people.

Reading recognition has been established as part of our merit rewards system, with students praised for selecting personal reading books and reading during social time. Reading is consistently normalised across school as a healthy, rewarding and valued activity.

All students in Key Stage 3 have the opportunity each half-term to visit the library and select an individual reading book. This is an expectation for all students, ensuring that independent reading is not left to chance but is built into the rhythm and culture of school life.

DIRECT INSTRUCTION: SUPPORTING VULNERABLE LEARNERS TO ACCESS READING PLUS

At St George's School, we understand that reading is a foundational skill essential for academic success and future opportunities. Yet, reading is not an innate ability; as mentioned previously, it is a complex, acquired skill that requires explicit and carefully structured teaching. For our most vulnerable learners, who face significant barriers to learning, developing reading proficiency is both a necessity and a priority.

Research consistently shows that poor literacy is closely linked to wider societal challenges, including reduced life chances and an increased likelihood of economic hardship. At St George's, we are committed to closing the literacy gap for these students, ensuring that every learner has the tools needed to succeed academically and beyond. To achieve this, we have embedded evidence-based and targeted interventions, with Direct Instruction (DI) forming a cornerstone of our approach.

Direct Instruction allows us to focus intensively on students whose reading ability is significantly below age-related expectations, equipping them with the essential skills they need to progress and ultimately access Reading Plus, our whole-school reading development programme.

OUR INTERVENTION APPROACH

Recognising the diverse range of reading abilities across Key Stage 3 and 4, our intervention strategy is tailored to meet the needs of each student. At the highest level of support (Wave 4), we employ Direct Instruction to provide intensive, highly individualised programmes for learners who require the most help.

Delivered by specialists trained in the methodology, Direct Instruction ensures that these learners receive precise, targeted teaching to address specific gaps in their reading fluency, decoding, and comprehension. This evidence-based approach is delivered with fidelity, ensuring maximum impact on student outcomes.

WHAT MAKES DIRECT INSTRUCTION EFFECTIVE?

Direct Instruction is a structured, teacher-led approach designed to eliminate ambiguity and accelerate progress. Its key features include:

- Scripted and clear lessons: that focus on reducing confusion and ensuring consistency in delivery.
- Incremental learning: allowing students to master one skill before progressing to the next.
- Continuous assessment and immediate feedback: enabling targeted support and ensuring no child is left behind.

Extensive research has demonstrated the effectiveness of Direct Instruction in improving reading outcomes, particularly for students with significant literacy difficulties. It is a method that prioritises mastery, ensuring students develop the confidence and competence to tackle increasingly complex texts.

INTEGRATION WITH READING PLUS

Direct Instruction provides the foundational skills needed for students to transition successfully into our Reading Plus programme. Reading Plus builds on these skills by allowing learners to practise and apply their reading abilities across a wide range of genres and text types. Together, these programmes ensure a seamless progression for students, enabling them to:

- Engage with age-appropriate reading materials.
- Build reading stamina and develop comprehension through scaffolded practice.
- Foster a lifelong love of reading.

IMPACT AND OUTCOMES

At St George's, the integration of Direct Instruction within our intervention strategy is already making a measurable difference. By prioritising this approach, we aim to:

- Narrow the literacy gap between disadvantaged students and their peers.
- Provide vulnerable learners with the tools they need to access the broader curriculum.
- Develop students' independence, confidence, and enjoyment of reading.

Direct Instruction is not simply a method; it is a lifeline for our most vulnerable learners. It empowers them to overcome barriers, realise their potential, and open doors to future academic and personal success.

LITERACY

RATIONALE AND PHILOSOPHY

At St George's Academy, we understand literacy as the means through which pupils access, develop and express knowledge. Literacy enables pupils to read with understanding, speak with clarity, write with precision and engage confidently with the language of each subject.

Literacy is therefore not the responsibility of one department alone. Every subject has its own vocabulary, forms of reading, modes of explanation and expectations for written expression. Our approach to literacy is rooted in the belief that pupils need explicit teaching, regular modelling and structured opportunities to practise the language of learning.

We recognise that pupils' ability to read, speak and write effectively has a direct impact on their confidence, academic progress and future opportunities. Strong literacy allows pupils to access a knowledge-rich curriculum, communicate their thinking with accuracy and participate fully in the life of the school. For this reason, literacy is a shared priority across St George's.

VOCABULARY AND DISCIPLINARY LITERACY

All staff are trained and expected to teach vocabulary explicitly within their subject. This includes technical vocabulary, high-value academic vocabulary and words that carry specific meanings within a particular discipline. Pupils need to understand not only what words mean, but how they are used by subject specialists.

We recognise that vocabulary is central to successful learning. New words unlock new knowledge, and precise vocabulary allows pupils to think, speak and write with increasing sophistication. Teachers therefore introduce, model, revisit and assess key vocabulary as part of normal classroom practice.

Departments are supported to identify the vocabulary pupils need in order to access their curriculum. This includes subject-specific terminology, command words, tier two academic vocabulary and words that may be familiar in everyday speech but have more specialised meanings within a subject.

ORACY AND VERBAL REHEARSAL

We recognise that oracy plays a vital role in pupils' learning. Structured talk helps pupils rehearse ideas, develop vocabulary, clarify understanding and strengthen long-term memory before expressing their thinking in writing.

At St George's, oracy is developed through deliberate questioning routines. Pupils are expected to extend and refine their verbal responses, moving from brief

answers to more developed explanations. Teachers use questioning, prompting and modelling to help pupils improve the quality of their spoken responses over time.

The SHAPE framework supports pupils in structuring extended verbal responses with increasing clarity and confidence. Through this approach, pupils are encouraged to speak in full sentences, use precise vocabulary, explain their reasoning and develop answers that show depth of understanding.

Oracy is not treated as an isolated skill. It is used to support reading, writing, recall and understanding across the curriculum. By giving pupils regular opportunities to articulate their thinking, teachers help them prepare for more successful written responses and more confident participation in lessons.

READING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

Reading is central to accessing the curriculum. Pupils encounter a wide range of texts across their subjects, including literary texts, historical sources, scientific explanations, mathematical problems, geographical case studies, religious and ethical arguments, technical instructions and examination questions.

Teachers support pupils by modelling how expert readers approach texts within their discipline. This includes reading aloud, clarifying vocabulary, explaining unfamiliar concepts, annotating key information and showing pupils how to track meaning across a text.

The teacher, as the expert reader in the room, models reading aloud in class. This supports accurate pronunciation, phrasing, emphasis and comprehension, particularly for pupils who may struggle to access challenging texts independently. Choral reading, echo reading and carefully guided individual reading are used where appropriate to build fluency, confidence and understanding.

Bespoke CPD is provided for departments where additional support has been identified. This may focus on reading strategies, vocabulary instruction or ways of helping pupils access complex texts. Leaders work collaboratively with subject teams to ensure that reading support is purposeful, manageable and appropriate to the demands of each subject.

WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

Writing is one of the key ways pupils demonstrate understanding. However, successful writing looks different in different subjects. A strong explanation in science, an evaluative paragraph in history, a geographical case study response and a literary analysis essay all require different forms of disciplinary thinking and expression.

At St George's, pupils are taught how to write effectively within each subject. Teachers model the structure, vocabulary and style of successful written responses, making the thinking process visible before pupils are expected to write independently.

Departments receive support and training on the teaching of extended written responses. Leaders work collaboratively with subject teams to ensure that extended writing is developed progressively across the curriculum. This includes identifying the types of writing pupils need to master, modelling successful responses, using sentence-level scaffolds where appropriate and helping pupils improve the precision and clarity of their written work.

A growing number of colleagues at St George's are examination markers for GCSE boards. This strengthens subject expertise in assessment, particularly in relation to extended written responses. Colleagues use this expertise to support departmental CPD, share effective models and refine curriculum planning so that pupils are better prepared for the demands of formal assessment.

TARGETED LITERACY INTERVENTION

We recognise that some pupils require additional support in order to access the curriculum successfully. Specialist staff deliver the Direct Instruction Literacy Programme to identified cohorts of pupils working significantly below the expected reading level for secondary school.

This programme supports pupils' reading fluency, comprehension and writing skills, helping to close gaps and enabling pupils to access our knowledge-rich curriculum with greater confidence. Pupils are identified through reading data, prior attainment information and professional judgement, ensuring that support is targeted where it is most needed.

Targeted literacy intervention is part of our wider commitment to reducing barriers to learning. By strengthening pupils' ability to read, understand and communicate, we support both academic achievement and wider participation in school life.

LIBRARY, READING CULTURE AND AUTHENTIC AUDIENCES

The library is led by a full-time librarian and provides pupils with access to a rich, varied and up-to-date range of texts. Pupils are encouraged to visit regularly, change their books frequently and develop their own reading preferences over time.

All pupils in Key Stage 3 have a weekly reading lesson. During these lessons, pupils are guided towards appropriate book choices, take part in reading competitions

and have opportunities to read aloud one-to-one in order to improve fluency and confidence.

We also recognise the importance of giving pupils authentic audiences for their reading, writing and speaking. As part of our electives programme, pupils can write for our school newspaper. This encourages pupils to engage with local events, book reviews, interviews and Christian values, while developing their ability to write for a real readership.

Through explicit vocabulary instruction, structured oracy, disciplinary reading, extended writing, targeted intervention and a strong reading culture, St George's ensures that literacy is not left to chance. It is taught, modelled, practised and valued across the whole school.