

***'Nothing is more important in education than ensuring that every child can read well' (DfE, 2015)***



# **SBL Literacy Strategy**

## **The Importance of Literacy**

Young people who leave school lacking vital literacy skills will be disadvantaged and held back at every stage of their life. As a child they won't be able to succeed at school, as a young adult they are at significant risk of being locked out of the job market, and as a parent they won't be able to support their own child's learning. This intergenerational cycle makes social mobility and a fairer society more difficult. It is a shocking statistic that 16.4% of adults in England, or 7.1 million people, can be described as having 'very poor literacy skills' (Literacy Trust UK 2020)

At Sir Bernard Lovell Academy, we believe that improving literacy and building vocabulary is fundamental to the development of every young person. All teachers should be supported to understand how to teach students to read, write and communicate effectively across all of their subjects and in engaging with the world around them. We believe they should be exposed to challenging texts that make them curious about their own and other cultures, and that we can support them in gaining both pleasure and understanding in these texts. Reading helps students gain knowledge that leads to better writing, whilst writing can deepen students' understanding of ideas. Our intention is to create confident readers and writers who can participate in high quality talk that is well-structured and guided by teachers. We are striving to create a culture of reading by celebrating reading through whole school events such as author visits and World Book Day activities.

We have developed a specific curriculum for Key Stage 3, building on the core skill of literacy as we believe this will develop the knowledge, understanding, character and skills of all students. Our aspiration is simple - we want all members of our school community to be able to use high quality day-to-day skills, in particular spoken and written vocabulary. Importantly, we are striving to ensure those students who have fallen behind can narrow the gap and catch up with their peers.

## **Local Context**

Improving Literacy is an area of focus for us because experience shows that many of our students do not join us with these skills embedded in an age appropriate way in Year 7.

Our intention is for our curriculum and wider provision to address these areas, to ensure students leave us as confident, resilient and independent young adults, able to tackle the challenges of 21st century life. Equally, we know that our local labour market welcomes the skills and attributes of strong literacy.

Higher Education, Further Education and apprenticeships require these characteristics and virtues as basic starting points essential for success and for young people to thrive as they transition into adult life. As a result, we are ambitious for all SBL students to be highly literate, and as a result, ready to contribute positively to our dynamic local, national and international community – wherever the future takes them.

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### **Tutor Reading Programme**

Students in Years 7-11 read with their tutor once each week in a morning tutorial session. **'Register and Read'** promotes whole school reading, improving students' reading comprehension and encouraging them to read for pleasure by introducing them to quality young adult fiction. Our intent for this programme is:

- To develop students' understanding of academic and ambitious vocabulary;
- To explore BIG ideas and complex issues, sometimes linked to PSHE;

Texts are read aloud by the tutor as this is an opportunity to model fluency in reading by tackling Tier 2 vocabulary, enabling students to hear challenging and ambitious vocabulary being read by an expert reader.

In Term 2, KS3 students will transition to Accelerated Reader in their weekly Tutor Reading session as this will provide another opportunity for students to read independently as the teacher as expert reader will now be facilitated through the Curriculum Team Reading Programme.

### **Curriculum Team Reading Programme**

Students will follow the text being read by their subject teacher for the first 15 minutes of a lesson, in the curriculum team scheduled to read each term across the academic year. Our Curriculum Reading Programme has commenced in History in Term 1 of 2021/22. A grant secured by Futura Learning Partnership has enabled us to purchase high-quality reads. CPLD to support delivery of the programme was facilitated by UWE in Term 1. This has enabled teachers to feel more confident to model good reading aloud with confidence and fluency.

All teacher copies of texts have been annotated to provide an explanation of Tier 2 vocabulary, thus providing more opportunity for exposure to challenging vocabulary.

A reading journal will be used to track their reading journey, engagement and enjoyment in the programme.

### **Accelerated Reader**

Students in KS3 participate in Accelerated Reader, an effective programme to motivate and encourage reading for pleasure. At its heart, Accelerated Reader is simple: read a book – take a quiz – receive immediate feedback. Renaissance Learning's Accelerated Reader Programme is the world's most popular personalised reading practice, used by over 600 schools and more than 1.5 million students in the UK alone.

Students periodically take a 'STAR' reading test and this provides an up-to-date reading age to allow students to read books in their 'challenge zone' or Zone of Proximal Development

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(ZPD). Students read for 15 minutes every day, and because the level of challenge is 'just right' this impacts positively on improving reading and as students improve, they become more motivated, confident and enthused about reading. Students also have a dedicated Accelerated Reader lesson during their English curriculum time once per fortnight.

"Pupils who use Accelerated Reader enjoy reading, read frequently and think more positively than their peers who do not use Accelerated Reader." Dr. Christina Clark, National Literacy Trust.

### **Bookbuzz**

We are proud to participate in Bookbuzz, a reading programme from BookTrust that aims to help schools inspire a love of reading in 11 to 13 year olds. As a participating school we give our Year 7 and Year 8 students the opportunity to choose their **own** book to take home and keep from a list of titles. The titles are carefully selected by a panel of experts to ensure quality, suitability and to encourage reading for pleasure.

*'Bookbuzz was great because it gave all students the chance to read which they may not have elsewhere'*

*'Bookbuzz was great because there was a range of books to read to help us improve our writing.'*

We consider this to be an important aspect of our literacy strategy as research undertaken by the National Literacy Trust has found 1 in 8 disadvantaged children in the UK say that they don't have a book of their own. 9% of all children and young people say they don't own a book of their own, meaning 1 in 11 of all children in the UK miss the benefits of having their own books. Furthermore children who say they have a book of their own are three times more likely to read above the level expected for their age than their peers who don't own a book.

Based on a survey of 44, 097 children aged 8-18 in the UK, the National Literacy Trust's *Book ownership, literacy engagement and mental wellbeing* report shows that the more books a child owns, the more likely they are to do well at school and be happy in their lives.

### **Read Write Inc. Fresh Start**

Read Write Inc. Fresh Start is a structured and systematic phonics based approach to teaching literacy. Fresh Start is a catch up programme for those children who are still learning to read at the end of primary and at the start of secondary school, using age-appropriate materials. The Fresh Start programme systematically teaches phonics, carefully matching the sounds that children have been taught with books that contain only those sounds, thus improving fluency and comprehension.

Fresh Start has been tested through a previous Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) efficacy trial involving ten secondary schools and 433 Year 7 pupils. The project found a

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positive impact on all pupils of an additional three months of progress over the course of an academic year.

The EEF is undertaking a second trial with over 120 schools participating in the trial, with an evaluation report due to published in 2023.

We currently have a number of KS3 students engaging in the programme, undertaking timetabled one hour lessons. There is strong engagement in the programme.

### **Lexia**

Targeted students in Year 7, 8 and 9 attend the Lexia intervention each week to improve their literacy.

The online resources walk the students through tasks that help struggling and non-proficient readers in Years 7–11 become proficient readers and confident learners. Lexia *PowerUp* helps educators simultaneously address gaps in fundamental literacy skills whilst helping students build the higher-order skills they need to comprehend, analyse, evaluate, and compare increasingly complex literary and informational texts. Lexia blends online student-driven explicit instruction with offline teacher-delivered lessons and activities, *PowerUp* empowers secondary teachers to deliver the exact instruction each student needs to become a proficient reader. *PowerUp*, can:

- Address the instructional needs of a wide range of reader profiles
- Engage, challenge, and motivate students to take ownership of their learning
- Help students develop the skills they need to succeed in content-area classes

Each student's progress is monitored and once they have made sufficient progress and completed the programme, they will no longer need this intervention as they will have improved their literacy skills and as a consequence have better access to the curriculum.

### **Vocabulary**

We are striving to improve writing through 'No More Marking', a programme used by a significant number of schools, enabling the process of comparative judgements between different responses to a written task, where a number of teachers will agree the better response. Current Year 8 students participated in a No More Marking pilot in 2020/21. This provided us with an externally validated data set, enabling us to recognise where to target support to improve writing and vocabulary.

Due to its success, we have expanded the use of No More Marking, a tool for assessing writing, across KS3.

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## **Oracy**

What we aspire to as the SBL standard:

- Students confident to join in class discussion
- Teachers expertly drawing less confident students 'out'
- Articulate students - able to express their ideas well
- Decreased fear/negative response to peer pressure
- Better use of key words and vocabulary
- Adapt and use language appropriately
- Less passive students
- Teachers modelling good oracy
- More risk taking from staff and students
- Purposeful paired and group discussion
- Enthusiasm - students who help each other
- Develop a response to the impact of casual text speak influenced by the use of social media
- An embedded culture where students are resilient and there is no fear of failure
- Improved use of Standard English
- Improved structure to an oral response
- Appropriate use of humour!
- Students who can truly listen and engage meaningfully in their learning
- Develop a strategy for talk for writing - the building blocks for improved academic performance

We have high expectations for effective questioning and this is an important strand of our teaching and learning strategy at SBL Academy.

The SBL Literacy Strategy is at the heart of our school improvement journey, as good literacy is fundamental to the development of every student. We are enabling our students to become confident communicators equipped with the relevant skills for future learning and employment.