

Literacy Support at The Cornerstone Academy: Parent FAQ

1. What is your approach to Reading?

All staff have the same approach to reading, based on extensive educational research. We ask that all students use a reading ruler to help them follow the text. The teacher may call upon different students read aloud – this is essential fluency practice. The teacher may also use the aid of the visualiser to show students where they are in the text. We ask all teachers to provide a glossary and line numbers on any text they use in a lesson to support students' reading. All teachers should be frequently checking that students understand and can comprehend what is happening in the text. They may do this through the use of cold call, mini-whiteboards or partner talk.

We are ambitious for our students, and our English curriculum reflects this. The texts on the English curriculum range from Shakespeare to poetry to non-fiction and aim to inspire academic rigor and curiosity. We also have a tutor-time reading programme where students in Y7-Y10 will read 3 times a week. These texts are broad and diverse to inspire a love for literature; there is something for everyone. Students in Y7-Y9 will also have a DEAR lesson (Drop Everything and Read) on their timetable. This is a curriculum of non-fiction articles which aim to ignite students' cultural capital and critical thinking skills. The lessons involve reading, comprehension, discussion and writing tasks.

2. How do you support students who need extra help with reading or literacy?

We provide a range of targeted support based on each student's needs.

Additional support in the classroom may include additional scaffolding, an adapted text to suit the child's reading age, the use of different colour overlays and specific support with spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Additional interventions may include small group literacy lessons, Lexonic (phonics) and comprehension intervention. Students will be placed in these interventions based on the outcome of their screening assessments.

3. What screening or assessments do you use?

We use a range of assessments including NGRT testing which takes place at multiple intervals throughout the year (see below). We also use a dyslexia screener which indicates (but does not diagnose) the likelihood of dyslexia in a student. We use this data, in conjunction with looking at the student, to decide on the best intervention to support them.

Attendance to NGRT tests is vital to ensure your child is getting the best possible support with reading.



NGRT testing windows – 26/27 Academic year

026-27	Year Groups	Testing window
Baseline reading age assessment - NGRT Test A	7	03 Sep 2026 - 02 Oct 2026
Mid year reading age assessment - NGRT Test B (MANDATORY for pupils scoring in stanine 1-3 in their latest test)	Subset of 7-10	01 Feb 2027 - 26 Feb 2027
End-of-year reading age assessment - NGRT Test C (for all of Year 7 and 8 AND Year 9 and 10 pupils scoring in stanine 1-3 in their latest test)	7, 8 and subset of 9 and 10	07 Jun 2027 - 02 Jul 2027

4. What is reading age and why does it matter?

A reading age indicates how well a student understands texts compared to typical expectations for their age. It helps us tailor support, select appropriate materials, and track progress. However, at TCA, we focus on ‘Stanines’ which means standard nine. This gives students a number of 1-9 based on their ability to decode and comprehend texts. A stanine score of 1-3 is generally below average, 4-6 is average and 7-9 is above average.

5. How do you support vocabulary development?

We explicitly teach key words, revisit vocabulary regularly, and encourage use in speaking and writing while teaching strategies to understand unfamiliar words. We focus on the vocabulary linked to foundational knowledge students need to succeed in the subject; many of these words will be in knowledge organisers.

6. How do you support spelling?

We have a whole-school approach to spelling which is run through the English department. Students in Y7-Y10 will have a spelling test, within their English lesson, once a half term. The focus of these spellings will be commonly misspelled words e.g. immediately. Their teacher will collect data on the words students misspelled and this will feed into whole staff training on explicitly teaching the spelling of these words, to ensure that all staff are checking and correcting spelling.

7. How can I support my child at home?

It is vital that students are engaged with reading and oracy at home. This may involve encouraging your child to visit the local library and taking out books, reading articles online or simply discussing what is going on in the news. Students may prefer to listen to audiobooks and we encourage this as an ‘alternative route’ to reading. Other alternative routes include comics or manga. We strongly encourage that outside of the classroom, students find texts that they enjoy and build their love for reading. On the school website, we have linked recommended reading lists for Y7-Y9 and these books are available in our school library for students to borrow.

8. What if I am concerned about my child’s literacy?

Please contact your child’s English teacher, the Literacy Lead, or the SEND team. We can share assessment information and put support in place. Please email enquires@cornerstoneacademy.org.uk and they will be able to direct your query to the right place.

