

Literacy Policy

Statement of Intent

At The Cornerstone Academy, we want our students to be confident, convincing, and creative communicators who are unafraid of the challenges that the future may bring. We believe that it is imperative that all students are equipped with the essential disciplines of reading, writing and oracy, to succeed and achieve their full potential in the ever-changing world around them.

Literacy *'profoundly affects our lives, offering us a vehicle to store and share essential knowledge of our culture. The inextricable links between reading, literacy and health, wealth and well-being are well established. It is not just a means to other ends. It is an end in itself that proves one of the greatest rewards for living.'*¹

It can be said that Literacy is required for all to succeed in life. It underpins all that we do at The Cornerstone Academy, and as such it is the responsibility of all staff at the academy to model and teach these skills effectively.

Overall Aims:

As an Academy we aim to ensure that each and every student is in possession of an effective literacy skillset, which in turn is integral to students' achievement, self-esteem, engagement, and behaviour both during their school career and their life beyond our walls.

The curriculum at The Cornerstone Academy has been developed alongside the Education Endowment Foundation 's (EEF) Improving Literacy in Secondary Schools guidance, which includes:

- To prioritise 'disciplinary literacy' across the curriculum
- To provide targeted vocabulary instruction in every subject
- To develop students' ability to read complex academic texts
- To break down complex writing tasks
- To combine writing instruction with reading in every subject
- To provide opportunities for structured talk
- To provide high quality literacy interventions for struggling students.

Implementation

We will support all students in their skills of communication by:

- Expecting that all teachers understand how to teach students to read, write and communicate effectively in their subjects.
- All teachers provide explicit vocabulary instruction to help students access and use academic language.
- Staff are trained to use a range of reading strategies, for example activating prior knowledge, prediction, and questioning, which can then improve students' comprehension.
- All teachers can break writing down into planning, monitoring and evaluation, and support students by modelling each step.
- All staff ensure that writing is challenging and that students in every subject will benefit from explicit instruction in how to improve.
- Across every subject staff combine writing instruction with reading so that students recognise conventions of good writing within each subject therefore improving and deepening students' understanding of ideas.
- Teachers model high quality talk, which is typically well-structured and guided, ensuring that talk is of expert quality and subject specific.
- The Academy creates and uses a co-ordinated tiered system of support, using assessment to match students to appropriate types of intervention, consistently monitoring the impact.

¹ Quigley, A Closing the Reading Gap

Reading

At The Cornerstone Academy, we believe that every one of our students deserves to discover a love of reading and the worlds within, benefiting them both academically and personally. Furthermore, we believe that it is our duty to expose our students to a rich, diverse, and exciting variety of texts and viewpoints, that in ordinary circumstances they would otherwise not encounter.

To facilitate this, we will do all that we can to ensure that our students can decode texts, understand them, and enjoy them. Our desire is that all students are confident, capable, and courageous readers who refuse to be intimidated by any text that they are confronted with.

Furthermore, we subscribe to a uniformity of lesson processes to ensure that all student's reading skills are developed. All students are required to carry a Reading Ruler as part of their equipment. All teachers model this practise under the visualiser, ensuring that all students see positive reading role models in all subjects. Moreover, in our lessons and schemes of work, key vocabulary is identified and explicitly taught, their understanding is regularly checked through questioning and recall tasks.

To enable this, we have re-established our library to support the development of a whole school reading culture. Alongside this, there are specific, tailored interventions and provisions for students who need extra support in their reading journey through Lexonik and Lexonik Advanced.

We are committed to delivering an equitable reading offer to all students. This is called Drop Everything and Read (DEAR). Our DEAR programme, ensures that students are explicitly taught the techniques of how to read, that they read classics which will stretch and challenge them whilst their understanding to the narrative is constantly checked by a variety of questioning techniques. We also read a wide range of culturally diverse books through our tutor reading programme which runs three mornings a week.

Writing

Writing allows students to discuss their opinions, beliefs, and ideas, giving them the opportunity to voice their own perspectives and influence others. With reading, we provide a way for students to explore the world, whilst writing allows them to create and become part of their own narrative. We strive to build these skills in our students and encourage them to become both ambitious and confident writers, who express themselves with authority and certainty.

The strategies which underpin our whole school drive to improve writing are research led. We ensure that all students use techniques which are research led such as 'The Writing Revolution,' from Judith C. Hochman and Natalie Wexler, and 'Closing the Writing Gap' from Alex Quigley.

Oracy

Through Format Matters and Turn and Talk students are given the opportunity to develop their oral academic responses. We used a structure talk approach using sentence stems to support student's oracy. Staff across the academy are trained to develop student's oracy skills.

Teaching and Learning Strategies

At The Cornerstone Academy, our lessons are underpinned by Rosenshine's Principles of Instruction, this ensures that when developing our student's schema for each discipline we have a uniformed, or Whole School strategy for Literacy.

We build in opportunities for students to check their understanding. In the 'Do Now' tasks – students are invited to verbally contribute answers after their quiz, strengthening the key foundational knowledge of their subject. Furthermore, when we introduce new material in small steps, our I, We, You cycle allows teachers to ask questions to check for misconceptions and apply fast paced responses to address them.

Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) and Tutor Reading

Furthermore, in years 7-9 we utilise a wide range of scientific reading strategies to enable students to build their vocabulary quickly and profoundly.

Students are introduced to difficult texts and hear their teacher read aloud as they track the text with a 'reading uler,' to strengthen and condition their reading fluency and stamina. Furthermore, teachers will call upon students to read aloud, stop them if any mispronunciations occur, correct them, and ensure that they say it precisely.

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