

## Whole School Literacy Policy

***'Literacy is fundamental for success in school and later life. Students who cannot read, write and communicate effectively are highly unlikely to access the challenging academic curriculum in secondary school and more likely to have poor educational outcomes across all subjects.'*** (EEF Improving Literacy in Secondary Schools, 2019)

### 1. Purpose and scope of this policy

This policy sets out:

- Aims for whole school literacy within St Benedict's.
- Guidance to inform good practice in whole school literacy amongst all school departments and staff.
- The kind of teaching and learning that will support the raising of standards in literacy across the curriculum. This consists of general as well as specific expectations that can impact the literacy development of all pupils in the classroom.
- Additional key elements in the school's commitment to raising standards through disciplinary literacy across the curriculum.<sup>1</sup>

### 2. Aims

Literacy can be defined as the ability to communicate effectively using language and includes the core skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening. It also includes the ability to use new technologies effectively in this process. Literacy is an essential component of effective learning.

By promoting and supporting pupil literacy across the whole curriculum, St Benedict's aims to:

- Develop the ability of all pupils to communicate effectively
- Develop the reading, writing and speaking and listening skills of all pupils
- Raise the achievement and attainment of pupils in school regardless of ability
- Prepare pupils effectively for further education (post-16) / the world of work and as effective Christians in the modern world
- Encourage in pupils a love of learning beyond the boundaries of the classroom

Four important aspects of literacy hold special importance within the school environment:

- The spoken word including listening (oracy)
- The literary imagination
- Reading for pleasure and mental well-being
- Improving the literacy of all pupils who fall below expected norms

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<sup>1</sup> EEF Improving literacy in secondary schools 2019: disciplinary literacy being an approach to improving literacy across the curriculum as it recognises that literacy skills are general and also specific; disciplinary literacy allows students to access all subjects so that they can read, write and communicate effectively in all subjects

The development of literacy within St Benedict's needs to take account of all aspects of literacy learning with the recognition that good literacy is learned in many different ways and through all subjects. It also needs to take account of the differing needs of both ability and age, from those who are struggling to learn to read to those whose skills challenge us as teachers to give of our very best.

### 3. A Whole-School Approach

For Departments, the improvement of literacy within each subject has considerable and significant benefits:

- Literacy supports learning. Pupils need vocabulary, expression and organisational control to cope with the cognitive demands of subjects
- Reading enables us to learn from sources beyond our immediate experience.
- Through language we express and discover meaning which supports our personal faith journey
- Writing helps us to sustain and order thought
- Responding to higher order questions encourages the development of thinking skills and philosophical debate
- Better literacy leads to improved self-esteem, motivation and behaviour. It allows pupils to learn independently

In raising the attainment of learners in literacy who are most at risk of not gaining the skills they need for success, the following factors are important:

- teachers with **high expectations** for pupils' achievements in literacy
- an emphasis on speaking and listening skills from an early age (oracy)
- a rigorous, sequential approach to developing speaking and listening and teaching reading, writing and spelling through synthetic phonics<sup>2</sup>
- sharp **assessment** of progress in order to determine the most appropriate programme or support
- carefully planned **provision to meet individual needs**
- rigorous **monitoring** of the impact of provision
- high-quality **pastoral care** to support learning in literacy
- highly effective use of time, staff and resources

***Clearly the English department have a special role to play in developing pupil literacy. However, the wider development and fostering of pupil literacy is the responsibility of all departments and teachers irrespective of subject.***

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<sup>2</sup> Synthetic phonics is defined as the explicit teaching of letter and sound relationships in the teaching of reading

#### 4. Ethos

St Benedict's is committed to creating a love of reading amongst its pupils, as well as a love of learning both in and out of the classroom. In order to foster this, all subjects have an important role to play in encouraging reading amongst all pupils and in supporting the planning and delivery of all lessons to effectively engage learners. Both the English curriculum and the other subjects need to work in partnership with children and their parents to promote excellence in all aspects of literacy including the spoken and written word as well as the use of new technologies.

Staff training and the use of the library both have an important role to play in this, as do the development of cross-phase links to both feeder Primary schools and to post 16 provision. Adequate intervention based on rigorous monitoring and assessment will also contribute to creating a climate of aspiration, as well good pastoral care and support offered by all staff, especially the Head of English, the SEND Department, and the English Department.

#### 5. Reading

In order to support pupils in their reading developments, Departments will:

- Select texts that are appropriate to the age and ability of pupils in order to facilitate
- access to learning
- Provide examples of keywords to pupils to learn and discuss to enable pupils to understand key concepts and how to apply them in speaking and writing
- Ensure that schemes of work indicate where reading takes place and how it can be supported
- Encourage independent reading by pupils in their own subject areas
- Ensure that literacy is a feature of all lessons and homework

Heads of Department and SLT are responsible for monitoring how reading is supported in subject lessons through lesson observation, learning walks and the reviewing of schemes of work and lesson plans and book scrutiny. Where appropriate, further support can be made available for Departments through the school CPD programme.

Teachers will:

- Ensure they are aware of and understand pupil levels/ages of reading where appropriate to providing support with reading in lessons
- Where appropriate, use synthetic phonics to help students sound out words
- Be aware of pupil levels of reading and spelling ability/age by referring to the SEND register / One Page Profiles / Accelerated Reader data
- Where appropriate, differentiate texts according to pupil reading ability
- Where possible, ensure that texts are presented clearly to pupils by, for example using non-serif fonts such as Calibri, Arial or Berlin Sans FB.
- Encourage pupils to read aloud in lessons, independently and chorally, to practice and develop fluency with a wide range of texts

- Support pupil comprehension by asking text-related questions to pupils while or after reading
- Provide opportunities to ask higher-order questions to pupils about text such as 'why' or 'how' questions to support analysis and evaluation of text
- Support pupil reading by identifying new or potentially difficult key words in texts for pupils to learn and discuss, if necessary prior to reading or as part of topic Knowledge Organisers
- Display common subject-specific key words in classrooms
- Encourage the development of literacy through discussion of the morphology and etymology of words including those which are cross-curricular
- Encourage and support pupils' use of skimming and scanning as techniques for identifying key information in texts as well as whole text meaning and purpose
- Where appropriate, encourage the use of annotation and/or forms of text marking so that pupils develop skills of close reading where possible
- Encourage pupil use of dictionaries and thesauruses as literacy tools when approaching texts for the first time
- Where appropriate, use a range of techniques to support pupil learning from text such as table completion, cloze activities or other simple procedures to structure pupil access to text
- Mark pupil work according to the Whole School Marking Policy which includes marking for literacy
- Seek advice and ideas in supporting literacy in their subject areas from the Head of English

Form Tutors will:

- Facilitate the delivery of the Tutor Time Literacy programme, using the resources supplied by the Head of English
- Where appropriate, discuss reading with their forms and/or individual pupils to encourage engagement and enjoyment

Reading Weeks

- Once a term, the Head of English will organise a Reading Week, which is designed to promote both reading for pleasure and reading to support learning across subjects
- Teachers will deliver one lesson during the week with a reading focus
- Form tutors will use the materials supplied by the Head of English to encourage good reading habits
- Further activities will be run in the library also designed to encourage reading

## 6. Writing

In order to support the whole-school development of pupil writing skills, Departments will:

- Ensure that schemes of work include adequate and regular opportunities for pupils to complete extended writing tasks. Extended writing means writing for a specific

purpose that demands the use of continuous prose organised into paragraphs. It may include for example:

- Formal letter
  - Science Report
  - Historical essay
  - Physical Education Evaluation
  - Religious Education discussion
- Ensure that schemes of work include opportunities for pupils to complete extended writing on a range of different purposes related to the subject
  - Ensure that schemes of work include reference to the kinds of support offered to support pupil writing in subject lessons
  - Explicitly teach academic writing as part of the curriculum<sup>3</sup>

Heads of Department are responsible for monitoring how writing is supported in subject lessons through lesson observation, learning walks and the reviewing of schemes of work and lesson plans and book scrutiny. Where appropriate, further support can be made available for Departments through the school CPD programme.

Teachers will:

- Support pupil writing by regularly setting opportunities for extended writing in their subjects
- Teach key words (Tier 3 vocabulary) linked to their subjects in order to foster comprehension and accuracy<sup>4</sup>
- Encourage pupils to plan using spider diagrams, mind maps, lists or notes and where appropriate draft extended writing to improve the quality of their work
- Promote high standards of presentation in pupil work by for example expecting pupils to write neatly and legibly and to underline all headings
- Where appropriate, encourage pupils to work together to discuss ideas and plans for writing as well as to work independently
- Encourage and model to pupils how to proof-read their work regularly
- Encourage pupils to use dictionaries and thesauruses when writing
- Encourage the use of good standard English in writing, unless this is specifically not required (e.g. in a transcript of a conversation)
- Where appropriate, model the writing process to students to help students understand that writing is both complex and not necessarily linear
- Where appropriate, support pupils to use subordinating conjunctions, correlative conjunctions and conjunctive adverbs in their writing e.g. for comparison
- Where appropriate, support pupil use of and reinforce the importance of topic sentences to create fluency and cohesion in their writing

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<sup>3</sup> Academic writing focussing on clear, concise, focussed and structured writing which uses evidence when necessary. Academic writing includes focussing on punctuation and grammar and reasoning.

<sup>4</sup> Tier 2 vocabulary being high-frequency words found in many different subject disciplines, e.g. examine, evaluate, establish. Tier 3 vocabulary being subject specific vocabulary, e.g. photosynthesis in Science and pilgrimage in RE

- Where appropriate, provide writing frames to scaffold pupil writing on the understanding that for some pupils these can be restrictive and can lead to ‘writing-by-numbers’
- Regularly mark pupil writing according to the whole school marking policy especially with reference to subject-specific terminology (Tier 3 vocabulary)
- Ensure they spell correctly when marking pupil work

## 7. Handwriting

Good handwriting and presentation is an important aspect of literacy as it relates to the ability to communicate clearly. To enable students to become fluent in handwriting and presentation, Departments and staff should ensure that they:

- Expect good presentation in pupil written work
- Highlight poor handwriting to pupils to encourage clearer and more legible handwriting
- Monitor pupils’ use of pens to ensure that pupils use adequate pens for written responses (e.g. black or blue biro or fountain pen)
- Support this by modelling good presentation in their own written responses to pupils and in their use of the whiteboard as far as possible
- Highlight specific pupils with problems in handwriting to the SEND department using the Initial Concerns Form to enable further intervention to be put in place such as attendance at Handwriting Club

By working together, staff can raise expectations for good handwriting to enable pupils to write clearly and well for the purposes of good communication.

## 8. Speaking and Listening / Structured Talk

Good speaking and listening is a life skill. It also provides many opportunities for pupils to develop and consolidate learning and Departments should ensure that they:

- Create regular opportunities in their schemes of work for pupil speaking and listening of both formal and informal kinds.
  - A) Formal opportunities might include:
    1. Presentation to a group or class
    2. Role play
    3. Group work with identified roles
    4. Demonstration of learning to a group or class
  - B) Informal opportunities can occur frequently and might include:
    1. Pair discussion of a topic
    2. Group work to plan a topic or activity
    3. Question and answer session as a whole class
- Identify ways in which pupils can learn through talking and indicate these in schemes of work and signpost to students in lesson that they are practising their speaking and listening skills
- Identify in schemes of work where pupils could use talk to clarify, explain or justify their ideas

- Identify in schemes of work where pupils can use talk for a range of different purposes such as to narrate, analyse or explain

Teachers will:

- Provide adequate opportunities for pupils to learn through talk through both structured formal tasks and through less structured informal tasks
- Provide opportunities for pupils to talk about reading and writing in their subject including the processes of both
- Ensure that pupils have opportunities to talk about Tier 2 and Tier 3 vocabulary to help them internalise learning
- Where appropriate, use questioning to promote discussion of learning as a whole class and amongst different groupings of pupils
- Where appropriate, encourage higher-order questioning amongst pupils by their own questioning in order to promote engaged talk in lessons
- Where possible, give pupils opportunities to listen to good standards of spoken English
- Monitor their own use of talk in lessons to model grammatically correct English to pupils through the correct use of language and pronunciation unless a specific activity requires otherwise (e.g. drama or role-play)

## 9. Literacy Intervention

Where pupils have been identified by early-entry testing in Year 7 or otherwise to need additional support in literacy, St Benedict's will provide a number of possible interventions to support the development of pupil basic skills. These include where appropriate:

- Accelerated Reader programme for pupils in Years 7 and 8
- A Reading Buddies scheme involving pupils reading regularly with a Reading Mentor from either KS4 or KS5
- Additional mentoring in reading by staff allocated during registration and at other times to support pupils on a one-to-one or small group basis
- One-to-one or one-to-few teaching of basic skills by a dedicated one-to-one specialist
- Attendance at Handwriting Club in The Hub on Thursday lunch times

Where staff are concerned about the literacy needs of particular pupils, these should be communicated to the SEND department via the SEND Concern Microsoft form so that the appropriate intervention can be allocated as appropriate.

## 10. Monitoring the Teaching and Learning of Literacy

Heads of Department are responsible in the first instance for monitoring how literacy is being supported in school. This should be carried out through the normal processes of lesson observation, work scrutiny and learning walks. Regular discussion with department members should give some priority to literacy issues in the subject area and to promoting good practice within departments.

The SLT are also responsible for monitoring literacy across the curriculum through lesson observation, work scrutiny and learning walks.

## 11. Whole School Marking Policy

This policy is available for all staff on the shared network area. All staff are expected to adhere to its principles within their subject areas to support literacy across the curriculum.

## 12. Training and Development

SLT and the Head of English are responsible for providing a high standard of staff training in the development of pupil literacy across the curriculum. This should include teaching and learning strategies to support for example:

- Developing pupil extended writing
- Reading and writing non-fiction
- Teaching basic reading strategies like skimming and scanning
- The development of pupil oracy
- The use of writing frames
- Spelling and vocabulary development
- Reading for information
- Making notes and planning
- The use of the library

## 14. The Library

This facility is central to the development of literacy in the school and as such represents a considerable opportunity to support pupil learning in literacy. The library is committed to providing:

- A positive atmosphere in which reading and study can take place without interruption or disturbance
- Effective resources to support pupil literacy and learning including fiction and non-fiction
- An imaginative and pupil-friendly approach to the organisation of resources that encourages pupil enjoyment and engagement with reading
- Support for staff and pupils in using the library resources on a daily basis
- Pupil participation in library-led literary events
- Support for further opportunities for pupil participation in literacy schemes such as the 'Readathon'

The library has the potential to support the raising of literacy standards and is an exciting development that will enrich the literacy environment of St Benedict's.

## 14. Pupil Entitlement

Where pupils cannot access the curriculum because their literacy skills do not allow this, they have an entitlement to interventions that will support their development and that enable them to gain better access to learning at St Benedict's. The Special Needs Department have the primary responsibility to ensure that pupil entitlement is addressed by the school but all staff have a role in identifying forms of entitlement including literacy



needs. Where these have gone previously unidentified, they should be reported to the SEND department using the SEND Concern Microsoft form so that suitable intervention can be put in place.

This applies in particular to pupils in receipt of the Pupil Premium i.e. those who are entitled to Free School Meals, are Looked After Children or have a parent or carer in the Armed Forces. The school is accountable for how the pupil premium is used to support the academic attainment and achievement of these pupils. All staff are expected to:

- Know which pupil premium pupils they teach
- Identify how they can be supported to achieve in their subject
- Where this is an issue, discuss their literacy needs and how these can be supported within either their departments or the member of SLT responsible for pupil premium students

#### 15. The Role of Parents and Carers

Parents and Carers have an important role to play in supporting the development of pupil literacy both at home and at school. Where appropriate, subject staff may wish to discuss how parents / carers can support reading and writing in their subjects with parents either:

- At parents' evenings
- By telephone where a specific issue arises

St Benedict's recognises that not all parents / carers are fully literate in English and will endeavour to support these parents where support is wanted through a variety of ways:

- Signposting of adult literacy classes
- Signposting of English classes for parents / carers who have English as an additional language



#### **Literacy Policy**

Owned by: Mrs H Oakes (Head of English)

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