Thomas Telford School

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**Whole School Literacy, Reading and**

**Catch up Policy**

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**Aims**

The aim of this policy is to provide clear guidance, challenge myths and misconceptions and promote practices that have been validated by empirical research. Last year, 10 % of our students were identified as having a reading age below their chronological age. Although it is usually perceived as a specialist area in secondary schools, literacy pervades every area of the academic curriculum. Illiteracy has a negative impact on comprehension and writing in all subject areas. This inevitably leads to poorer examination performance.

A significant minority of our students struggle to access the reading material that is integral to the academic curriculum of the school. The new GCSE and A level specifications have raised the demands placed upon our students and the vocabulary requirements needed for success. Literacy is simply the ability to read, write and communicate properly. If someone is literate in a language or discipline, they are able to understand and communicate within it fluently. Here we see a connection between Literacy and our own subject areas. We are all Literacy teachers because the language in which we communicate is English. Therefore, we are all responsible for the literacy of our students; we must teach the language of our subjects alongside the knowledge.

The English Department use a number of strategies to ensure that vocabulary, reading and writing are taught effectively. A rigorous intervention scheme supports those who are identified as needing extra support on entry. However, it is vital that literacy is taught in a more structured way in all subject areas for all students. Reading is the primary medium for gaining academic knowledge so it is important that every teacher has the necessary expertise to teach literacy effectively.

**Knowledge**

In recent years subject knowledge has been excluded from the curriculum in favour of transferrable skills. This has had the unfortunate effect of proliferating educational inequality. Students with a better general knowledge are more likely to understand reading material. Also, if students don’t know a topic well, they can’t write about it in an informed way. Therefore, knowledge is vital for improving literacy. We must teach the knowledge and academic language needed to be successful in each subject area in school. Not only will this make students more literate, it will enable them to be more successful in the subjects we teach.

**Vocabulary**

Alongside socio-economic status, a child’s vocabulary is the significant factor influencing the chances of achieving the desired outcome in terminal examinations. Vocabulary size relates to academic success, and schooling is crucial for increasing the breadth of children’s vocabulary (Ofsted 2018). A developed vocabulary not only improves reading and comprehension but it also encourages more accurate and sophisticated writing. Experts have sorted vocabulary into three categories:

**Tier 1** – everyday words (people, good, other, happy)

**Tier 2** – important academic words used frequently across the school curriculum (assess, examine, enquire, contrast)

**Tier 3** – subject specific vocabulary (polynomial, allegro, photosynthesis)

All Departments have developed a list of key academic and subject specific vocabulary to be taught in their subject areas. A list of Tier 2 vocabulary is also available on the Shared Area and should be promoted and modelled by all staff. Vocabulary needs to be taught explicitly and clearly with coherent planning throughout the curriculum. Regular retrieval practice should be used to ensure key vocabulary is embedded in the long-term memory and can be used accurately in oral and written communication.

**Reading**

The importance of a collaborative, whole school approach to reading cannot be overstated. The purpose of such is to develop a culture and love of reading across a school and remove barriers to accuracy, fluency and comprehension, equipping students with the knowledge and skills essential to life success and mental wellbeing. Schools should provide all students with access to the transformative power of reading, creating an environment where they are exposed to the cultural capital gifted by high quality academic texts.

The following are some of the systems that will be in place to support with reading:

* We will continue to raise the profile of the library. Library visits in English sessions will continue for 7, 8 and 9 to encourage wider reading and an increase in borrowing. Students in all year groups will be encouraged to visit the library and utilise it as a space for reading.
* All students should be reading silently in classrooms before 8.30am each day. Teachers will also read to model good practice and lead by example.
* Students should bring a reading book with them each day as part of their standard equipment.
* Students should continue to be provided a diet of high-quality academic texts in all curriculum areas.

**Catch Up Programme**

All students currently take a test on entry to identify their reading ages. This is GL Assessment’s nationally standardised NGRT. Those who are identified as performing below the required standard at the point of entry will be targeted in several ways within English and other subject areas. Interventions will include:

• Smaller group / focus group teaching

• Learning Support assistance

• Session 3 programmes as required

• Differentiated resources and lesson activities

• Relevant reading catch-up programmes

• Frequent progress assessments

Students are extracted from non-core subjects to receive reading and writing instruction from a specialist English teacher. These sessions focus on improving vocabulary, fluency, pronunciation, confidence and grammar. 6.1 students volunteer to become ‘Reading Mentors’. This involves listening to Year Seven students read on a one to one basis, prompting, supporting and encouraging them where necessary. The Year Seven students all enjoy the experience and our 6.1s find it incredibly rewarding. The progress of these students is checked to ensure the transition to Key Stage 3 is effective, preparing them for the demands of all subject areas.

**Phonics support**

Students identified as being behind their chronological reading age following diagnostic testing will be screened for gaps in phonics knowledge using the Ruth Miskin’s Fresh Start. A phonics catch-up programme will then be implemented for those identified students. Staff have been trained to deliver the phonics programme and students enrolled will be provided with 25 minutes of support each day until they have caught up with their peers. This will be through one on one and small group extraction sessions, from non-core subjects, depending on what stage they are at in the scheme.

**Guidance for subject areas**

When formulating a whole school approach to literacy departments are encouraged to consider the following questions:

* How challenging are the reading texts that we expect students to read and understand in our lessons?
* What background knowledge do we need to teach so that our students can understand these texts?
* What vocabulary do the students we teach need to know, understand and use to be successful in our subject areas?
* How do we select and teach the vocabulary we have identified as important?
* How can we explicitly teach our students to write about the subject content they have mastered in a more structured manner?

Once this information has been carefully considered, the following strategies can be implemented with the relevant guidance and support:

**Reading**

* Ensure there is a consistent diet of high quality, academic reading material throughout the curriculum.
* Make reading an integral part of each curriculum area and ensure that time is dedicated to reading texts aloud in class.
* Use a variety oof approaches to reading to ensure comprehension, from teacher reading aloud to independent reading.

**Vocabulary Instruction**

* Develop a list of key academic and subject specific vocabulary to be explicitly taught in all subject areas.
* Teach academic vocabulary explicitly and clearly, with coherent planning throughout the curriculum.
* Promote and scaffold high quality academic talk in the classroom.

**Writing Instruction**

* Promote, model and scaffold high quality academic writing.
* Give clear, focused instructions when setting writing tasks and avoid the ambiguous language of assessment criteria and examination rubrics.
* Model and deconstruct examples of excellent writing.

**Feedback**

* Expect all written work to be proofread before it is submitted.
* Use the proofreading code that is available on the shared area.
* Use feedback more effectively for teaching literacy as well as subject content

This guidance needs to be supported by promoting a knowledge rich curriculum to develop stronger reading and writing in all subject areas. It is important that we choose curriculum content that builds our students’ cultural capital to address educational inequality. This content should be revisited and tested frequently to consolidate and secure it in the long-term memory. Once our students have mastered this curriculum content, they will be in a much stronger position to read and write about it in an accurate and effective way.

**Reading Intervention Processes Summary**

1. **TAP and NNP identify pupils with literacy weaknesses from intake.**

**These pupils monitored/supported immediately on transition to school.**

**All pupils with under chronological age reading age supported to be re-tested as to reading age termly.**

1. **After a term testing to take place for graduation from programme, if pass test leave phonics programme but continue with sixth form peer reading intervention.**

**4a. Gaps identified: Pupils with phonics gaps targeted for daily 30 minute phonics support by phonics team.**

**These pupils also to be supported by sixth form peer reading support.**

**4b. Pupils with no phonics gaps but fluency issues supported by sixth form peer reading support.**

**3. Pupils with lower than age related reading ages tested for phonics weaknesses to identify specific gaps.**

1. **TAP conducts reading age test in first week of school. Pupils with lower than age expected reading ages identified.**