

Birchwood High School Literacy Policy

Summary of key changes:

Literacy for Students who require intervention

Update to the EEF Appendix B

Principles:

For everyone, everywhere, literacy is, along with education in general, a basic human right.... Literacy is, finally, the road to human progress and the means through which every man, woman and child can realize his or her full potential.

Kofi Annan

The development of an effective literacy skillset (that is, speaking, listening, reading and writing) is fundamental to the achievement of a rich and fulfilling life. We use these skills every day in order to communicate with, and make sense of, the world around us. As such, the better we are at these skills the more successful we can expect to be in life. We believe that improving literacy and learning can have an impact on students' self-esteem, motivation, behaviour and attainment. It allows them to learn independently and is empowering.

At Birchwood, we recognise that all teachers at our school are teachers of literacy. Language is the prime medium through which students learn and express themselves across the curriculum and as such, all teachers have a responsibility in supporting students' literacy development.

Aims

Birchwood High School is committed to raising the standards of literacy for all of its students, so that they develop the ability to use literacy skills effectively in all areas of the curriculum and as a platform for the demands of further education, employment and adult life. We aim to:

1. support students' learning in all subjects by supporting teachers to be clear about the ways in which their work with students contributes to the development of literacy skills;

2. help students develop competent literacy skills and also enable students to read, understand and access examination materials, so that students are able to achieve their educational potential across the curriculum;
3. personalise learning in order to create a coherent learning system tailored to the individual pupil;
4. use effective literacy across the curriculum as a tool to enhance students' abilities to think and learn; and
5. give students opportunities for personal expression and active participation in society, economy and culture.

Literacy development across the curriculum

Literacy is seen at Birchwood as a collective responsibility for *all* teachers. Our strategy can be found in appendix B. Accordingly, CPD has been provided to ensure that all teachers feel secure in delivering aspects of literacy support as an integral part of teaching their subject. This CPD has included a focus on using the Talk-Model-Write method, with a specific focus on developing vocabulary, reading skills and adaptive teaching.

We believe that good literacy teaching across the curriculum requires:

- all teachers to understand that teaching literacy explicitly is a facet of good teaching itself;
- a shared understanding among teachers of the relationship between language and learning, and how the work undertaken in different subject areas can contribute to the development of literacy skills;
- teachers to be aware of the language demands made upon students in their subject areas;
- the development of consistent approaches and appropriate resources within subjects to improve their students' use of language;
- transition between KS2 and KS3, KS3 and KS4, KS4 and KS5;
- whole school and Faculty CPD appropriate to the development of literacy skills within the subject; and
- sharing good practice through learning forums.

The English Faculty

In addition to all the whole-school aspects of literacy, the English teachers at Birchwood High School have a leading role in providing students with the knowledge, skills and understanding they need to read, write, speak and listen effectively. The English faculty is well placed to offer good advice and expertise. The role of the English department includes:

- a literacy coordinator to oversee strategy implementation;
- A literacy element within the job description of all postholders in the faculty
- identifying literacy priorities, targets and objectives;
- making a specific, literacy-related contribution to the STP; and
- contributing to the CPD provision of the school.

Delivery of Literacy

Birchwood's curriculum is underpinned by developing students' abilities to speak, listen, read and write for a wide range of purposes, including using language to learn, communicate, think, explore and organise. Helping students to express themselves clearly, through development of vocabulary, both orally and in writing, enhances and enriches teaching and learning in all subjects and prepares the student for life after school. We believe that reading, and particularly reading for pleasure, has a direct impact on cognitive and social communicative development. Our strategy can be found in appendix B. There are three key areas of focus:

1. **Disciplinary literacy:** this approach recognises the importance of subject-specific literacy support. Teachers should be supported to understand how to teach students to read, write and communicate effectively in their subjects.
2. **Targeted academic support:** Some pupils may require additional support alongside high-quality teaching in order to make good progress. The evidence indicates that small group and one to one interventions can be a powerful tool for supporting these pupils when they are used carefully. (EEF, 2022)
3. **Wider strategies:** These are whole school strategies which aim to promote reading for pleasure and improve literacy skills of all students.

Learning through Building vocabulary

We believe that students need to develop a wide and varied vocabulary so that they can understand the world around them and express themselves with confidence. We will promote vocabulary through:

- explicitly teaching tier 2 and tier 3 words (Appendix A) in our lessons and through Home Learning;
- checking for understanding of key vocabulary as part of our teaching;
- the use of high quality reading material, which is up-to-date, relevant and balanced in its presentation of ethnicity, culture and gender;
- dictionaries, glossaries and lists of appropriate subject vocabulary that are available during lessons, and which students are encouraged to use;
- displays of relevant reading material which promotes subject-specific vocabulary which students are encouraged to use regularly.

The Building Vocabulary element encompasses reading. Reading helps pupils to learn from sources beyond their immediate experience and inspires them to acquire knowledge. At Birchwood High School we want our students to enjoy reading, to be able to use their reading to help them to learn and to become more confident and competent in reading. We aim to give students a level of literacy that will enable them to cope with the increasing demands of subjects in terms of specific skills, knowledge and understanding. This applies particularly in the area of reading (including from the screen), as texts become more demanding.

We aim to create an environment where reading is promoted across the school by:

- providing time in school every week for all students to read fluently and accurately out loud and/or to themselves;
- supporting reading through exposure to a range of varied and appropriately differentiated reading resources;
- promoting and supporting reading in non-school hours;
- using assessment processes in order to identify weakness and strength, which in turn is used to inform planning and intervention;
- teachers planning activities which involve texts that require students to select, analyse and synthesise information from what they have read;
- encouraging students to read around a topic and share views on what they have read; and
- developing students' ability to compare texts and express opinions about them.

Learning through Talk

A range of studies show that improving the quality of talk inside the classroom raises standards. Talk is our main means of communication in everyday life and is fundamental to the development of understanding. This means that not only do we need to think about the way that our students speak, but we as teachers need to model speech which moves towards the academic language pupils need to access our subjects. Students should also be taught how to listen to others, and to respond and build on their ideas and views constructively. We will promote talk by:

- developing strategies to teach students how to participate orally in class, including using structured talk to develop and clarify ideas in paired, group or whole class contexts;
- identifying the main points to arise from a discussion;
- allowing opportunities to adapt talk for a specific purpose and audience e.g. formal situations, discussion, evaluation; and
- making use of think-pair-share.

Many lessons include and depend on written communication. We want our students to develop increasing confidence and competence in writing so that they can write in a widening variety of forms for different purposes e.g. to interpret, evaluate, explain, analyse and explore. It is important that we recognise and reinforce students' language skills, through:

- making connections between students' reading and writing, so that students have clear models for their writing;
- using the modelling process to make explicit to students *how* to write;
- being clear about audience and purpose;
- providing opportunities for a range of writing including sustained writing; and
- making use of AFL to improve writing outcomes.

Learning through improving accuracy

Students' work must be annotated using the agreed symbols, as outlined in the T&L policy, in the staff calendar and student planners. This includes:

- using the agreed marking symbols
- marking spelling, punctuation and grammar in all written subjects
- ensuring students respond to teacher guidance in marking in green pen
- ensuring that high standards of presentation are maintained.

All teachers are expected to develop students' literacy skills by correcting their written English. Teachers will use their professional judgement as regards how many errors to highlight in an individual student's work. Students must do the corrections which teachers have drawn attention to in their work.

Literacy for Students who require intervention

Upon entry to Birchwood High School, all students are assessed according to a standardised reading test. Through this, our lowest performing 20% of students are identified for intervention through the Paired Reading Program, Echo reading and Guided Reading in year 7. Students in year 8-11 receive specific support through our intervention hub. In year 9, we are trialling the use of IDL, an online literacy support package for our lowest 10% readers. Progress is closely monitored and the effectiveness of these interventions are reviewed annually.

Appendix A

Tier 1—Basic Vocabulary

Tier one consists of the most basic words. These words rarely require direct instruction and typically do not have multiple meanings. Sight words, nouns, verbs, adjectives, and early reading words occur at this level. Examples of tier one words are: book, girl, sad, run, dog, and orange. There about 8,000 word families in English included in tier one.

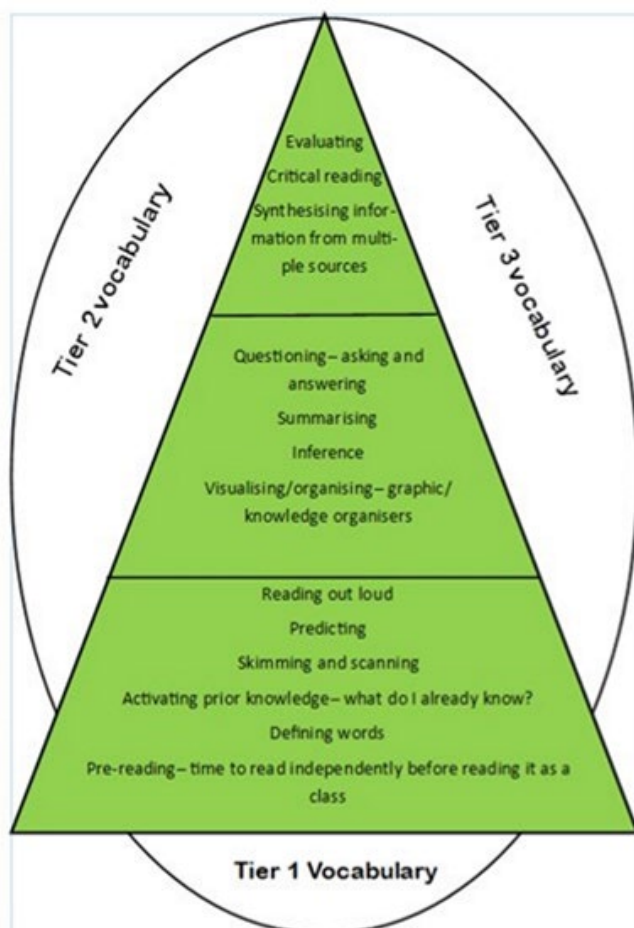
Tier 2—High Frequency/Multiple Meaning Vocabulary

Tier two consists of high frequency words that occur across a variety of domains. That is, these words occur often in mature language situations such as adult conversations and literature, and therefore strongly influence speaking and reading.

Tier 3—Low-Frequency, Context-Specific Vocabulary

Tier three consists of low-frequency words that occur in specific domains. Domains include subjects in school, hobbies, occupations, geographic regions, technology, weather, etc. We usually learn these words when a specific need arises, such as learning amino acid during a chemistry lesson. Examples of tier three words are: economics, isotope, asphalt, Revolutionary War, and, crepe. The remaining 400,000 words in English fall in this tier.

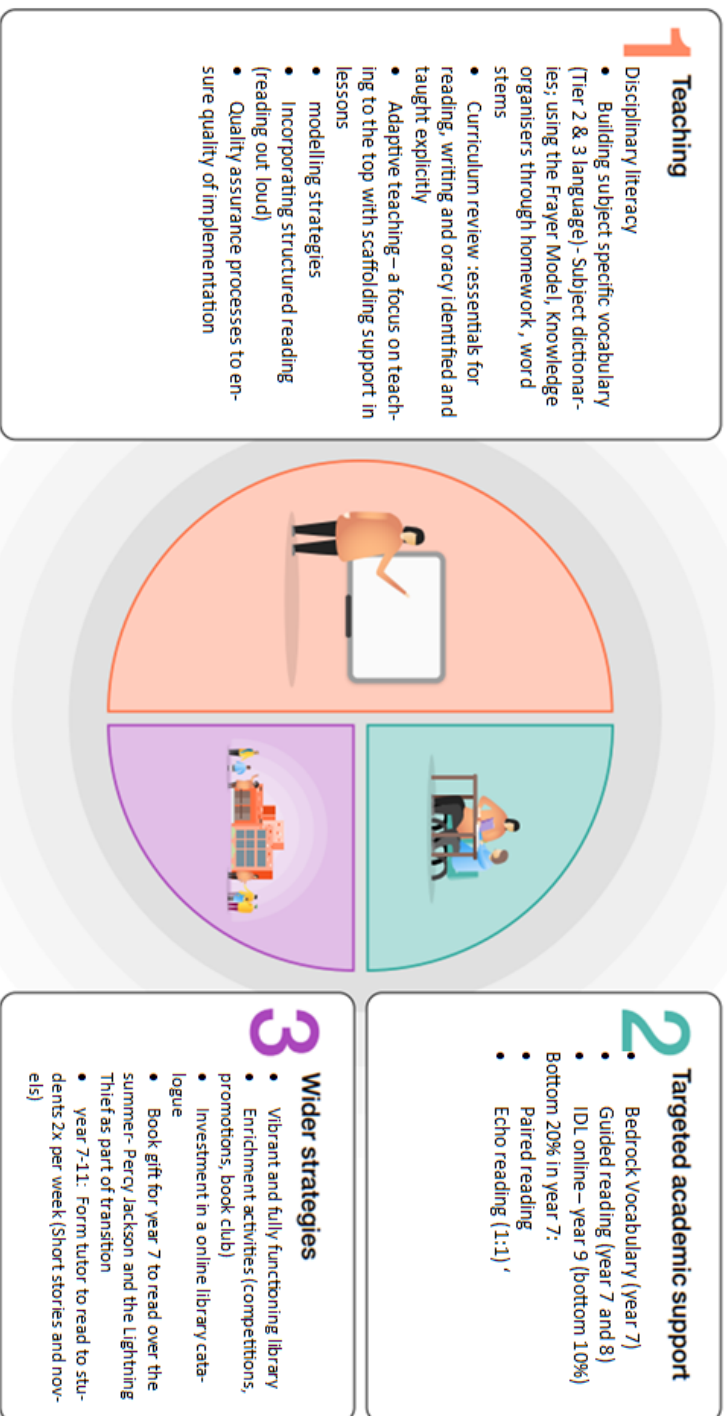
Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
bad	atrocious	apocalypse
hungry	ravenous	famine
dry	arid	not irrigated



Appendix B

EEF Tiered School Improvement Plan: Literacy at Birchwood 2022-2023

With every passing year, in education and beyond, the level at which youngsters are expected to read increases dramatically, with the average reading age across GCSE papers being found to be 15 years and 7 months. According to the 'Read All About It' report (a study of 370,000 secondary school students during 2018/19), 20% of all 15-year-olds have a reading age of 11 and below, and 10% a reading age of 9 and below. The report authors conclude that "given the importance of literacy to the whole school curriculum, it follows that those students who struggle with reading are at a significant disadvantage in every one of the GCSE examinations they take". As well as the surprising link between maths and reading it also discovered that doing well in creative subjects such as art, drama, music, media and PE has very strong correlations to a student's reading ability, underscoring how 'text heavy' and challenging these subjects are too. <https://www.gf-assessment.co.uk/press-office/press-releases/new-study-highlights-the-importance-of-reading-to-the-whole-school-curriculum/>



'Welcoming all, supporting all, encouraging all'

