



Kingsmead School Literacy Strategy

Context:

Kingsmead School is set in the historic mining town of Hednesford, within the district of Cannock Chase. The Hednesford area has high levels of historical socio-economic deprivation, with the multiple deprivation index ranking Cannock Chase as the most deprived district in Staffordshire. Several Cannock Chase wards which surround the school have also been identified as falling within the most deprived national quintile. The district has the highest number of adults in receipt of working-age benefits in Staffordshire; only 35% of residents work in a role associated with higher skills and earnings, compared with the national figure of 46%. In the local area only 35% of leavers in Key Stage 5 move on to higher education compared with a regional figure of 53% although this has improved since 2019. Adult literacy levels are low, with the Department for Business Innovation and Skills estimating that as many as 19% of 16-64 year-olds had literacy skills that were entry level and below in 2011. This is well-below the national average of 15%, placing the district in the second lowest quintile.

Aim of this strategy:

The main aim of our literacy strategy is to improve all students' reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills to ensure they can effectively communicate, understand, and engage with information. This helps our students access the full curriculum, supports their academic success, and prepares them for lifelong learning and participation in society. More specifically our strategy aims to:

- **Develop foundational literacy skills** — such as vocabulary and comprehension.
- **Support diverse learners** — including those who struggle with reading or writing.
- **Encourage a love of reading and writing** to motivate continuous improvement.
- **Integrate literacy across subjects** so that students apply skills in all areas.
- **Raise overall literacy standards** to meet educational goals and benchmarks.

Our Literacy Strategy

The research makes clear that reading is the hallmark of almost all professional jobs, it is the master skill of secondary school and the greatest tool any school has to unlock social mobility and move children and their families out of poverty. The problem for students is their vocabulary:



Kingsmead School Literacy Strategy

students can only write as well as they can speak and need to know 95% of words on a page in order to properly comprehend a passage of text. As a direct result, “vocabulary at 5 correlates directly with attainment in English and Maths at 16” – Alex Quigley¹

At Kingsmead we have weekly hour-long reading lessons for all Year 7, 8, 9 students to address precisely this need. 60 minutes of reading per week puts each Kingsmead student in to at least the 70th percentile of readers nationally, before it is even then supplemented by their own reading for pleasure and reading in tutor time. 60 minutes of curriculum time dedicated to reading each week is the equivalent of 1800 minutes in the average school year and exposes students to over 564,000 new words – Nagy and Herman, 1987.²

For many Kingsmead students, reading is the highlight of their week, however for some we know it is the only reading they get. As a direct result of what Geoff Barton calls *The Matthew Effect*, “the word-rich get richer and the word-poor get poorer”.³ For this reason and this reason alone, the essentiality of curriculum time dedicated solely to reading and the development of reading skills cannot be understated. Reading is vital, it is life-giving, and it is the key to enabling our students to confidently take the next steps on their chosen career path when they eventually leave us.

Kingsmead’s Literacy Strategy

Reading for pleasure, Kingsmead library and ‘The Room of Curiosities’

- Our well stocked library has an open-door policy where students are encouraged to sit, work or simply just read
- The Room of Curiosities was conceived and created as a truly unique space to stimulate creative writing ideas for students and be used to facilitate the development of extended writing across the school. The room contains a great range of curious, genuine, historical artifacts such as skeletons, swords and shields, preserved animals and fossils, a typewriter and even a mermaid’s hand and is regularly booked by all subject staff to use in conjunction with lessons where extended and creative writing is completed.
- We hold half termly events and competitions designed to encourage reading and develop literacy skills, e.g. Poetry slams and Poet Laureate competitions
- World book Day is celebrated every year in the library and across school, including author visits, competitions and ROC activities

¹ Closing the Vocabulary Gap, Alex Quigley, 2018

² Breadth and Depth of Vocabulary Knowledge: Implications for Acquisition and Instruction, Nagy and Herman, 1987

³ Don’t Call it Literacy, Geoff Barton, 2013



Kingsmead School Literacy Strategy

- Our 'Reading for Pleasure' programme recommends exciting and challenging new texts and encourages students to read at home independently. Reading is tracked and monitored by reading teachers and is part of the weekly homework set for Yrs 7-9
- Tutor reading boxes are kept in Yr 7 tutor rooms for students to borrow books
- Yr 7 are given the opportunity to visit the library and complete an activity in the Room of Curiosities
- Subject reading corners in school promote a love of reading across the school
- Our library also hosts the 'Parent Book Club' once a half term ensuring:
 - Home/school literacy links
 - The idea that if parents engage with reading, children may read more at home
 - Good reading habits are modelled to students
 - Conversations about books at home reinforce what children are learning at school
 - Parents feel part of the school community
 - Parents gain confidence to talk about books and learning with their children.

Reading lessons- EEF Strand 3 Develop students' ability to read complex academic texts

- CPD for all staff focused on teaching reading
- Weekly hour-long reading lessons for all Year 7, 8, 9 students built into the English curriculum
- A wide variety of complex texts of differing genres offered to engage students
- Specialist staff model effective reading strategies to students, creating opportunities for them to engage with complex and enriching texts through a variety of formats. These include reading aloud, working in pairs, participating in group reading, and reading individually. Modelling and scaffolding of reading strategies (predicting, summarising, clarifying, question-asking) is built into the lesson, especially for complex text. This multifaceted approach ensures that students spend substantial, focused time developing their reading skills, developing vocabulary, knowledge and fluency.
- Identified students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) benefit from small group reading sessions led by the teaching assistant assigned to their class. This structure provides more personalised and targeted support, fostering focused literacy development.
- Vocabulary development is a key component of each lesson across all subject areas. Activities are designed to offer explicit instruction in the etymology and morphology of words, equipping students with the tools to understand and use new vocabulary effectively. Students are supported in the pronunciation of words (decoding) but also about understanding them (comprehension).



Kingsmead School Literacy Strategy

- To monitor progress and identify needs, students complete standardised reading tests using Literacy Assessment Online three times per year. These assessments help diagnose current literacy levels, pinpoint students who require additional support, track improvement over time, and evaluate the overall effectiveness of literacy interventions.
- The Bedrock literacy programme, which utilizes AI, personalises reading and literacy development for all students in Years 7 to 9. Class teachers actively monitor student engagement and progress within this program.
- A range of intervention programs are implemented, in line with EEF Strand 7, to provide high-quality literacy support for struggling students. Reading test data is used to identify those not reading at their chronological age, ensuring timely and appropriate intervention.

Intervention Programmes: EEF Strand 7 Provide high-quality literacy interventions for struggling students

- Reading test data allows us to identify students who are not reading at their chronological age
- Intervention is implemented in a variety of ways including Sixth form support, enrichment intervention and more specific 1:1 or small group support with a teaching assistant.
- All students' reading ages are recorded in Bromcom, enabling teachers to apply targeted strategies in the classroom to support weaker readers effectively.
- Students with particularly low reading ages read regularly with a teaching assistant in the Launchpad
- EAL students also receive additional reading and literacy support with a teaching assistant in the Launchpad

Specialist intervention: EEF Strand 7 Provide high-quality literacy interventions for struggling students

- Students are identified at the end of Yr 6 and begin the Ruth Miskin Phonics programme immediately in Yr 7
- Reading test data and progress data also identifies other students in differing year groups
- Pupils are assessed first so that they begin at the "challenge point" that's right for them — i.e. where they need to start with phonics (or fluency) rather than repeating unnecessary earlier steps.
- Short, focused lessons are tailored to the pupils' level. The idea is frequent, cumulative exposure, practice, review.
- The programme covers more than just decoding: practising fluency, comprehension, spelling ("tricky words", etc.), writing linked to what is being read



Kingsmead School Literacy Strategy

Vocabulary Development- EEF Strand 2 Provide targeted instruction in every subject

- Literacy training is delivered through whole school CPD where effective approaches, including those related to etymology and morphology is explored
- In SOL (Scheme of Learning) development meetings subject leaders are asked to consider which words and phrases to teach as part of curriculum planning.
- Tier 2 and 3 vocabulary is made explicit to students through lesson design and teachers ensure effective modelling of speaking and listening, writing and reading supports pupils in developing their language and vocabulary
- The correct use of language is modelled by specialists in all subject areas
- The One Page Profiles identify if a student needs additional wordbanks in specific subject areas
- Bedrock Core Programme allows students to access challenging vocabulary and develop grammar skills through non-fiction and fiction texts

Disciplinary Literacy- EEF Strand 1- Priorities Disciplinary Literacy across the curriculum

- Subject Leaders have Disciplinary Literacy Frameworks which have been devised in conjunction with the Teaching and Learning Team identifying how teachers in their subject areas should be supported to understand how to teach students to read, write and communicate effectively in their subjects.
- A whole school focus on Accountable talk as part of CPD in Primers and in Subject Pedagogy sessions ensures training is related to subject specificity over general approaches
- Opportunities are built into lessons for structured high-quality talk, reading and writing.

Developing writing- EEF Strand 4 Break down complex writing tasks

- Teachers are supported across the curriculum to guide student practice in extended and creative writing, including modelling and scaffolding at sentence and whole text level.
- The stepped approach, explicit instruction, live writing and 'I do, we do, you do' used throughout the school
- Young writers and Debate club are examples of enrichment activities that foster the love for extended writing
- One Page Profiles identify students who need additional scaffolding and support with writing

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Kingsmead School Literacy Strategy