



Holbrook Academy

Literacy Policy

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'Every school should specialise in literacy and set targets for improvement in English. Similarly, every teacher should contribute to promoting it. In shaping their plans it is essential that schools do not see work on reading and writing as exclusively the province of a few teachers in the English and learning support departments.' (DFEE, 1997)

1. Introduction

The curriculum should offer opportunities for pupils to:

- ✓ engage in specific activities that develop speaking and listening skills (such as debating, guided discussion, evaluating and developing the ideas of others) as well as activities that integrate speaking and listening with reading and writing;
- ✓ develop speaking and listening skills through work that makes cross-curricular links with other subjects;
- ✓ develop reading skills through work that makes cross-curricular links with other subjects;
- ✓ develop writing skills through work that makes cross-curricular links with other subjects;
- ✓ work in sustained and practical ways, with writers where possible, to learn about the art, craft and discipline of writing;
- ✓ redraft their own work in the light of feedback. This could include self-evaluation using success criteria, recording and reviewing performances, target-setting and formal and informal use of peer assessment. Redrafting should be purposeful, moving beyond proofreading for errors to the reshaping of whole texts or parts of texts;
- ✓ read for pleasure, exploring both fiction and nonfiction texts. This can be achieved through Accelerated Reader (Years 7 and 8), Form time activities (whole school), staff modelling and wider reading lists linked to subjects.

Literacy involves the ability to read and write; however, it is also the capacity to recognise, reproduce and manipulate the conventions of a range of texts. Literacy and English are intertwined and it is an important aspect of our ability to communicate clearly and effectively, expressing complex ideas with fluency and confidence.

Literacy is important because it enables pupils to gain access to all the subjects studied in school, motivating them to read for information and pleasure, and to communicate their thoughts, feeling and ideas effectively. Low levels of literacy impact negatively on what pupils can do and have a negative impact on their self-esteem. Furthermore, low levels of literacy can have a detrimental impact throughout their adult life: limiting career prospects (many with low literacy skills are more likely to be in low paid jobs, unemployed, dependent on the state for benefits or unlikely to access work related training); live in poor housing and have suffer from poor health.

Holbrook Academy is committed to raising the standards of Literacy of all of its students, so that they develop the ability to use Literacy skills effectively in all areas of the curriculum and use it as a platform to cope confidently with the demands of further education, employment and adult life.

2. Rationale

Literacy is essential to all learning throughout the school, in all years and across all subject areas, and we have high expectations for all students in terms of what they can achieve.

Effective delivery of literacy will broaden students' knowledge and experience, increase their ability to learn for themselves, build self-esteem and promote the development of good relationships.

Literacy underpins the school curriculum by developing students' abilities to speak, listen and communicate, to think critically, explore, evaluate and organise.

This includes helping students to express themselves orally and in writing. All departments and all teachers have a crucial role to play in supporting students' literacy development. The Secondary National Curriculum states that as part of this development of language and vocabulary, teachers should "develop vocabulary actively, building systematically on pupils' current knowledge." Furthermore, teachers should also "increase pupils' store of words in general; simultaneously, they should also make links between known and new vocabulary and discuss the shades of meaning in

similar words.” Competent literacy skills also enable pupils to read, understand and access examination materials, so that pupils are able to achieve their educational potential across the curriculum. Effective delivery of literacy is of particular importance in the context of the attainment gap between boys and girls, which we feel is of significance at the Academy.

Particular care needs to be taken in ensuring that resources for learning and approaches to learning are effective for boys.

A second attainment gap that is becoming significant is that between advantaged and disadvantaged pupils. Due to this, effective resources for learning and approaches to learning for disadvantaged students – alongside effective training for staff – are key.

One approach to achieve this reduction in the attainment gaps between boys and girls, advantaged and disadvantaged, would be through the explicit teaching of new and key terminology, exploring its etymology and morphology, linking closely to the requirements of the Secondary National Curriculum.

Our GCSE results show that there is a gender gap in attainment. Student perception and teacher feedback recognises that lengthy writing requirements often deter a number of our male students from writing well. Since many of the GCSE examinations assess students by lengthy writing questions, this is a crucial step to improving progress of students at Holbrook Academy.

At Holbrook Academy we recognise that our students have very good verbal skills but this is not always reflected in a high quality of writing. We have a low degree of accuracy in spelling and accuracy of grammar and punctuation.

Although some of our students enjoy reading, the love of reading is an area we need to develop for a wider range of students especially since the downgrading of the LRC in 2010 has hampered access to new texts and an enriching reading area.

At Holbrook Academy the Literacy Policy aims to address these main areas of concern in order that writing can be improved across the curriculum.

At Holbrook Academy we accept the fundamental principle that Literacy is the key to improving learning and raising standards across the curriculum. All members of staff have responsibility for the delivery of literacy across the curriculum.

All pupils should be encouraged to:

- ✓ make extended, independent contributions that develop ideas in depth;
- ✓ make purposeful presentations that allow them to speak with authority on significant subjects;
- ✓ engage with texts that challenge preconceptions and develop understanding beyond the personal and immediate;
- ✓ experiment with language and explore different ways of discovering and shaping their own meanings;
- ✓ use writing as a means of reflecting on and exploring a range of views and perspectives on the world.

3. Our aims in relation to Literacy

We aim to:

- ✓ consistently develop students' skills in literacy in all subjects across the school curriculum;
- ✓ adopt a whole school approach to literacy across the curriculum;
- ✓ enable pupils to reach and exceed their potential in reading, writing, speaking and listening;
- ✓ provide additional provision (interventions) for pupils who do not reach the minimum national expectations at KS3;
- ✓ provide additional support strategies (interventions) for EAL, SEN students and those eligible for PP funding;
- ✓ develop an awareness on the part of all staff and students that literacy is the key for all teaching and learning, with a clear link to success in public examinations;
- ✓ embed literacy across the whole school curriculum using a range of resources;
- ✓ continue to raise levels of literacy to improve learning and raise standards across the whole school;
- ✓ celebrate literacy success and progress.

4. Practical strategies

4.1 Literacy and Learning will focus on three areas:

- Learning through talk
- Reading and Learning from text
- Learning through writing
- Enjoyment through writing

These main areas can be sub-categorised as:

4.2 Learning through talk/Speaking and Listening:

- Using talk to clarify and present ideas
- Active listening to understand
- Talking and thinking together

4.3 Reading and Learning from text:

- Developing research and study skills
- Reading for meaning (reading like a subject specialist)
- Understanding how texts work

4.4 Learning through writing:

- Using writing as a tool for thought
- Structuring and organising writing
- Developing clear and appropriate expression

4.5 Enjoying Literacy:

- Reading for pleasure
- Creative writing for pleasure
- Storytelling in all written and oral forms

4.6 Learning through talk / Speaking and Listening

Talk is our main means of communication in everyday life and is fundamental to the development of understanding.

We want our students to develop increasing confidence and competence in Speaking and Listening so that they are able to:

- ✓ clarify and present their ideas and explain and develop their thinking;
- ✓ develop their ability to listen actively and respond sensitively and appropriately;
- ✓ adapt their speech to suit a wide range of circumstances, including paired and group discussion and speaking to a larger audience;
- ✓ use varied and specialised vocabulary, including subject specific vocabulary;
- ✓ speak for a range of purposes e.g. to narrate, to analyse, to explain, to reflect and evaluate;
- ✓ recall the main points of a presentation, reflecting on what has been heard to ask searching questions, make comments or challenge the views expressed;
- ✓ identify and report the main points emerging from discussion;
- ✓ provide an explanation, summary or commentary which links words with actions or images;
- ✓ use talk to question, hypothesise, speculate, evaluate, solve problems and develop thinking about complex issues and ideas;
- ✓ use standard English to explain, explore or justify ideas
- ✓ Identify the underlying themes, implications and issues raised by a talk, reading or programme;
- ✓ discuss and evaluate conflicting evidence to arrive at a considered personal viewpoint.

In order to achieve this, our teaching plans will include specific reference to purposeful pupil Speaking and Listening. This involves, as appropriate:

- ✓ provide pupils with opportunities to engage in purposeful talk, in both formal and informal situations;
- ✓ structuring tasks in lessons so that students know the purpose for their listening, providing note-taking frames as appropriate;
- ✓ planning carefully the size and organisation of groups, matching these to the purpose of the activity, ability of the pupils and the desired learning outcomes;
- ✓ model effective examples of successful speaking and listening for pupils using standard English, relevant academic terminology and sophisticated vocabulary as appropriate;
- ✓ evaluate speaking and listening activities through teacher and AFL;
- ✓ give pupils the opportunity to deliver formal Speaking and Listening presentations, in all subjects and, when appropriate, use these presentations as part of the formal assessment process.

The role of the teacher is to raise pupils' awareness of the strategies and skills involved when developing their Speaking and Listening skills.

4.7 Reading and Learning from texts

We want our students to enjoy reading, to be able to use their reading to help them to learn and to develop increasing confidence and competence in reading so that they are able to:

- ✓ read fluently, accurately and with understanding;
- ✓ become independent and critical readers who make informed and appropriate choices;
- ✓ select information from a wide range of texts and sources including print, media and ICT and to evaluate those sources;
- ✓ apply techniques such as skimming, scanning and text-marking effectively in order to research and appraise texts
- ✓ feel confident at reading a range of more challenging texts to support study at further and higher education levels (Doug Lemov, 'Reading Reconsidered', identifies how disadvantaged students feel held back in further and higher education as they have not read widely or extensively enough).

We will use available data on students' reading abilities in order to make informed choices about appropriate texts and to plan appropriate support for students in order that they may successfully access texts. Reading assessments are an integral part of the English Department assessment process. The SEN Department also assesses pupils throughout Key Stage 3 in order to ascertain what the individual pupil's reading age is. The reading ages are then distributed to staff so that staff can use this information to determine appropriate texts for the reading age range of a particular class.

With the introduction of the Accelerated Reader programme for years 7 and 8, reading comprehension ages can be more closely monitored and tracked, with Form Tutors and relevant staff conducting informed discussions with all students, recommending books within their ZPD, supporting their progress and rewarding achievements.

4.8 Learning through writing

Many lessons include and depend on written communication. We want our students to develop increasing confidence and competence in writing so that they are able to:

- ✓ write in a widening variety of forms for different purposes e.g. to interpret, evaluate, explain, analyse and explore;
- ✓ develop ideas and communicate meaning to a reader using wide-ranging and technical vocabulary and effective style, organizing and structuring sentences grammatically and whole texts coherently;
- ✓ present their writing clearly using accurate punctuation, correct spelling and legible handwriting;
- ✓ the purpose and intended audience for each piece of writing;
- ✓ how pre-structured writing (writing frames) is used and gradually withdrawn as appropriate;
- ✓ the vocabulary related to specialist subjects and the use of helpful spelling strategies;
- ✓ the relevant ways of paragraphing writing and linking paragraphs;
- ✓ how students are helped to develop the ability to synthesise information from different sources;
- ✓ providing students with cross curricular success criteria to encourage the transfer of skills and connect their learning across all subjects.

4.9 Check and Correct

As part of the Academy's marking policy, it is an expectation that all teachers use Check and Correct to help support and improve students' SPaG skills. Check and Correct has been devised to enable students to both identify errors in their work and correct them with the main purpose being that they learn from their mistake and improve their literacy skills.

As part of their marking strategy and their lesson planning, teachers at the Academy should:

- ✓ regularly identify SPaG errors in students' workbooks using a pink highlighter;
- ✓ give students opportunities within lessons to correct their mistakes;
- ✓ encourage students to proof-read and edit their work before it is marked;
- ✓ allow students opportunities to peer and self-assess their working using Check and Correct;
- ✓ allow students the use of dictionaries and their own mobile phones to help support their learning; and
- ✓ provide opportunities for students to improve their vocabulary through the use of Check and Correct / Word Walls and effective feedback from staff. For KS4, this feedback should be closely tied to the subject's exam awarding body mark scheme/s.

As part of the Academy's improvement plan, the Check and Correct system is checked and monitored on a half-termly basis.

5. Enjoying Literacy

We want our students to feel a sense of pleasure in reading, writing and speaking so that they develop a life-long love of these skills.

6. Resources

Holbrook Academy is committed to providing:

- ✓ interactive displays of reading material relevant to the topic or national curriculum subject; each classroom displays subject specific vocabulary which pupils are encouraged to use regularly;
- ✓ high quality reading material, which is up to date, relevant and balanced in its presentation of ethnicity, culture and gender;
- ✓ subject specific reading lists linked to topics studied in each subject and covering a range of both fiction and nonfiction texts;
- ✓ dictionaries or access via the students' mobile devices, glossaries and lists of appropriate subject vocabulary are readily available during lessons, which students are encouraged to use;
- ✓ access to appropriate audio visual equipment;
- ✓ a classroom environment which is conducive to good literacy practice;