



<b>Adopted:</b>	November 2014
<b>Last reviewed:</b>	April 2016
<b>Next review:</b>	April 2019

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## Harrogate High School

### Literacy Policy

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**A teacher must:**

demonstrate an understanding of and take responsibility for promoting high standards of literacy, articulacy and the correct use of standard English, whatever the teacher's specialist subject (**Teachers' Standards**)

#### **What is language for learning?**

It is about recognising the importance of language to all subjects. There is an integral relationship between learning and language. Across the curriculum, students learn by acquiring language and they learn by using, experimenting with and developing language – through writing and, importantly, through talk. Teaching and learning in all subjects are mediated through language. To learn in any subject is to learn the language of that subject; to teach any subject is to teach the language of that subject.

**Therefore all teachers are teachers of language.**

Students' confidence and motivation are affected by the messages they receive about language and about how they use it. The values they form will also affect the way they treat others. All staff have a responsibility for ensuring that students receive **consistently appropriate messages** about language and about how it is used:

- language is powerful and can be used to persuade and have influence
- use of language is closely related to sense of identify
- language is used differently in different situations and it is important to understand and control this

## **What is literacy?**

**Reading/writing/speaking and listening:** to be literate is to be able to read, comprehend and react to ideas in texts and language. It means being able to use language to communicate both in spoken and written forms. Literacy is an intrinsic life skill. Functional literacy is not enough; reading ages must be aspirational and keeping pace with the demands of GCSE.

**Non-verbal literacy:** to be literate is to be able to read and communicate in a variety of different kinds of languages and texts – visual as well as verbal.

**Literacy as participation:** messages, ideas, feelings and identity are all mediated through language and texts of all kinds. To be literate is to be able to take control of these forms in order to participate as a member of society.

### **The four Cs of literacy:**

**Cultural literacy** – how language and texts operate in culture and society

**Critical literacy** – the ability to decode, interpret and respond to all kinds of language and text.

**Creative literacy**- the ability to use language and texts of all kinds to communicate and organise ideas and feelings, to express identity and to influence others.

**Competence**-the ability to control the forms, conventions and tools of communication including spelling, punctuation and grammar.

**“... talk is essential to children’s thinking and learning ... and to their productive engagement in classroom life ... We now have additional evidence that high quality classroom talk raises standards in the core subjects as typically measured in national tests.” Robin Alexander (2012)**

### **Speaking and Listening**

All teachers have a responsibility to help students become confident, skilled speakers and listeners:

- students routinely reflect on their use of talk and self or peer assess spoken work
- effective talk is modelled for students and its structures are taught explicitly
- co-operative learning structures are used to promote effective talk within groups
- listening is framed in terms of skills which can be developed

### **Questioning**

Questioning is one of the main ways in which teachers elicit language from students.

- classroom questioning is as inclusive as possible
- follow-up questions are used to probe, challenge and extend thinking
- students are encouraged to frame their own questions

### **Words and meanings**

Teachers have a responsibility for consolidating and developing students’ vocabulary:

- students are encouraged to be experimental with word choices
- students have access to dictionaries and thesauruses
- students are encouraged to use subject vocabulary with precision in both talk and writing
- the meaning of words is reinforced visually
- the learning environment is infused with subject vocabulary
- key words and concepts are displayed in an appropriate way
- adventurous vocabulary, concept formation and debating skills are modelled and supported
- the idea of emotive language is embedded and practised in lessons

**“Teachers should develop pupils’ reading ... in all subjects to support their acquisition of knowledge ... and be encouraged to read for pleasure.” DfE (2013)**

## **Reading**

Teachers have a responsibility to help students to become confident, skilled, critical and reflective readers of all kinds of texts:

- teachers read with students and model reading processes
- students are encouraged to read collaboratively in pairs or groups as well as on their own
- teachers are aware of how to use a simple phonics approach to support early or vulnerable readers
- students are encouraged to use specific reading strategies (skimming, scanning, annotation, highlighting) and become used to making their own choice of the most appropriate strategy
- teachers monitor the level of text so that students are challenged but not alienated by what they are reading, using all available data including reading ages
- the importance of reading enjoyment and engagement is explicit throughout the school and a priority in the curriculum
- the LRC provides a range of easily accessible stock including subject specific reading materials relating to all curriculum areas
- teachers develop students’ reading stamina by fostering the opportunity to read texts of suitable challenge independently
- teachers use questions effectively to develop students’ independent reading comprehension

## **Skimming and Scanning Skills**

Teachers need specifically to develop students’ skimming and scanning skills. Opportunities should be given in lessons for students to skim texts; a short section of text can be provided and a restricted time limit given for reading it, with a summary being produced at the end. Students could also read a text to themselves quickly and then explain its meaning to the rest of their learning team. To promote scanning skills, the teacher could introduce key words and set up a race in which students compete to be the first to find all the given words in a text. A text could be read and then questions set which require scanning to find the key phrases which will provide the answer.

## **Inference Skills**

Teachers must continue to develop students’ inference skills. Students could be asked to give their personal opinion on aspects of a text, with reasons; they could also look at the author’s purpose. They will be using clues from the story to deduce something not overtly told by the author.

**“Teachers should develop pupils’ ... writing and vocabulary as integral aspects of the teaching of every subject. English is both a subject in its own right and the medium for teaching.” DfE (2013)**

## **Writing**

All teachers have a responsibility to help students become confident, skilled writers who can use writing to process and organise ideas and to communicate effectively:

- students are encouraged to write clearly in a variety of forms for a variety of audiences
- students can refer to models when writing
- word and phrase banks help students to develop precision
- scaffolding is used to support writing as appropriate
- marking of writing is supportive and encourages reflection and improvement
- teachers encourage students to see writing as a mutually enhancing activity along with reading and speaking and listening
- teachers design and set writing tasks with clear learning outcomes. These tasks are authentic and real or creative and imaginative. All writing tasks have a clear and identifiable purpose, audience and format
- teachers collect and provide quality examples of writing across a range of genres

## **Spelling**

Accurate spelling is important for the convincing presentation of ideas in any subject. All teachers have a responsibility to help students become confident, skilled spellers.

- correct spelling is taught and valued but not in a way that discourages students from being adventurous with vocabulary
- students are equipped with a range of strategies for remembering or inferring spellings
- students are encouraged to use dictionaries to check spellings
- overt use of literacy mats
- marking pays attention to spelling

## **Marking for Literacy**

All teachers have a responsibility to use marking to secure and develop the literacy of students. There must be a consistent approach to the marking of spelling, punctuation and grammar and expectations should be high and should be discussed with students. Pupils are expected to respond to mistakes in spelling, punctuation and grammar and they should always be given the opportunity to rectify such mistakes. Reference to necessary improvements in this area must be made in written formative assessment;

students could act on this feedback in a closing the gap activity or be given the chance to practise correct forms in a manner of their choice.

The following is a guide to best practice in marking for literacy:

**sp** indicates a spelling error. This should be used to indicate no more than five errors in a piece of work and should focus on key or basic words. The error will be highlighted and corrected.

**gr** indicates a grammatical error. The error will be highlighted and corrected.

**p** indicated a punctuation error. The error will be highlighted and corrected.

Suggestions on improving punctuation and the use of paragraphs will feature throughout students' work. Areas for improvement will be highlighted with suggestions indicated in the margin.

### **Handwriting and presentation of work**

**All teachers have a responsibility to help students develop control and confidence in** the way they present their work. The clarity and impact of handwriting and presentation are important for communication in any subject and are also important for students' self-esteem:

- students are not allowed to feel disadvantaged by poor handwriting but are helped to feel that they can improve it
- teachers are aware of basic handwriting strategies such as letter-size differentiation and the use of a range of pens

### **What literacy looks like in lessons**

#### Maths

Students could work in small groups to investigate a problem – discussing and developing ideas through talk, making notes by hand and then presenting their findings in a Power Point for the rest of the class,

#### RE:

Marking a piece of writing about myths, an RE teacher might selectively mark the spelling of subject terms such as 'odyssey', 'mythical' and 'legend' by directing the students to a word wall in the classroom.

#### Science:

Students might prepare for a group practical task by identifying and exploring the speaking and listening skills which they will need. At the end of the activity, each group

might nominate one member as their most effective listener/giver of instructions/explainer.

PE:

Students might look at different sports company logos and discuss the sporting or physical qualities suggested by their shapes, colours and symbols. They then use these ideas to frame reflection on physical activity and attitudes in the lessons.