

Literacy as an area for improvement at Coombeshead Academy

The problems we need to solve are:

- improving outcomes for all students at KS4 and KS5, but particularly those who have experienced disadvantage
- engaging students with their learning, removing barriers and ensuring an ambitious and challenging curriculum is accessible to all our students
- Ensuring all pupils can read at their chronological reading age.

The data shows:

- Significant proportion of our students are not at their chronological reading age
- We have a significant DS gap in reading
- Not enough students are getting strong passes in both English and maths at KS4
- Some students who come in with expected reading levels from primary are not making enough progress with reading or wider progress across subjects
- Curriculum overviews (outside of English), do not yet have a great enough consideration for reading opportunities and associated writing tasks
- School reviews, lesson drop ins and book scrutinies identify that the quantity and quality of writing across our schools can be further strengthened and developed.
- In Year 7 54/200 have an NGRT SAS of less than 90.

Arguing the case

- Low literacy levels cost the UK economy an estimated £20 billion a year
- 120 000 pupils left primary school in 2019 below the expected standard for reading. Only 1 in 10 is projected to reach grade 4 in maths and English
- The average reading age of GCSE papers is over 15 years
- Stronger reading will mean that outcomes are better for all students
- Building opportunities to develop reading strength will provide children with greater self-esteem and self confidence as well as providing access to knowledge and agency.
- Our schools have reading canons, love of reading opportunities such as accelerated reader, reading interventions but common curriculum development work has not focused on subject specific, disciplinary reading. We need to use the literacy recommendations from the EEF to develop a stronger reading and writing curriculum.

The Vision for reading

Having a strategic approach to literacy including reading intervention and cross curricular literacy pedagogy where all teachers at our secondary schools in ESW are skilled and knowledgeable teachers of reading, teachers of writing and advocates for promoting oracy opportunities within our classrooms will support students being confident and competent readers, writers and orators; working at their chronological age.

- All children at Coombeshead must be able to read at or above their chronological reading age. It is their entitlement and our responsibility.
- We aim to close the gap to enable children to read at or above their chronological age through rapid and targeted provisions being put in place to rapidly improve reading. By providing reading practice across the curriculum and through a range of actions pupils will become fluent readers
- All children will have a broad and varied vocabulary through systematic teaching of vocabulary and reading across the curriculum.
- Staff will be upskilled and experts in literacy and reading; knowing how to effectively implement carefully selected and skilfully enacted strategies to access well-chosen text and engaging texts and thus establish a culture which places reading at the heart of our provision.

Progress towards our vision

So far, we have:

- Input literacy pedagogy into our ESW pedagogical principles
- Joined a network for reading intervention leads and practitioners to provide support and conversation around early reading.
- Provided all our schools with access to teaching CPD around reading
- Trained our CDLs and are using our common curriculum networks led by CDLs to support development of disciplinary literacy
- Audited where senior leaders think they are and shared this information with heads
- Planned a student voice survey for summer term to get student views of sparx reader, library use and reading for pleasure

Recap: The implementation journey

Training layer



Outcomes

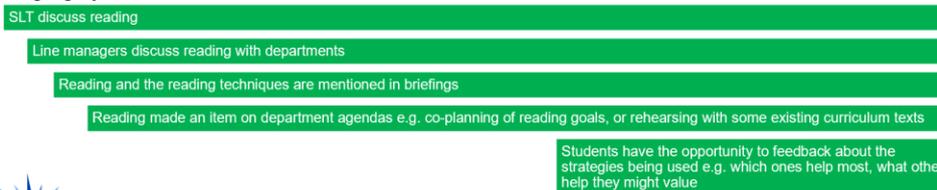
Students encounter more reading in lessons, but feel supported to engage with it

Curriculum layer



Staff increasingly confident in supporting reading

'Ongoing' layer

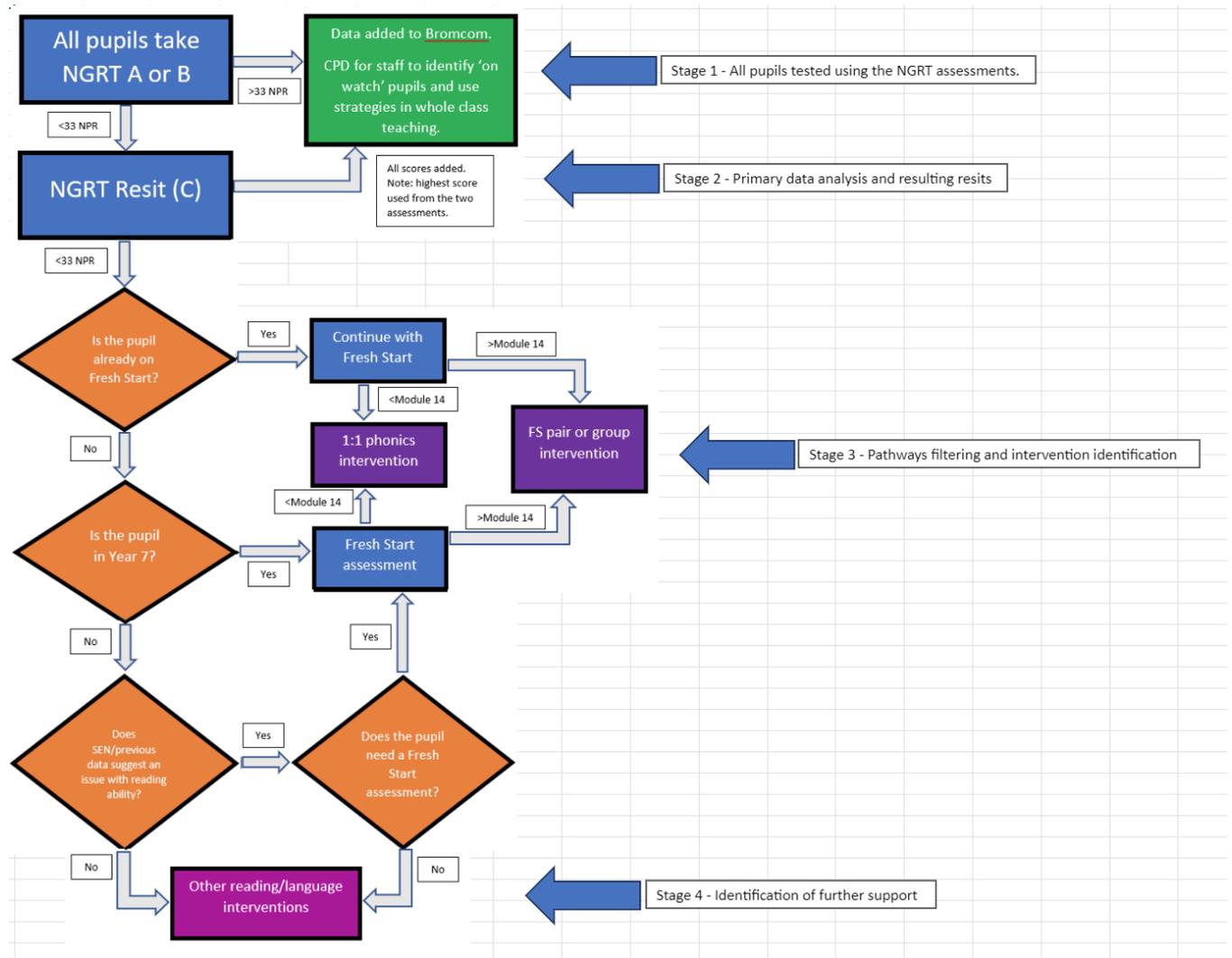


Curriculum includes more reading, and more challenging reading

Expectations around reading monitoring:

<p>NGRT tests completed for all pupils years at the start of year 7, end of year 7 and end of year 8. Students in years 9-11 with SAS score of less than 90 in the most recent test will be retested annually.</p>	<p>NGRT are embedded within the calendared year and tests conducted with fidelity at the end of the academic year for years 7& 8 (10 for the UTC) and by the end of the first whole week for year 7 (and year 10 at the UTC).</p> <p>Staff are trained on how to interpret and use NGRT (and other assessments) SAS data and reports.</p> <p>SAS scores will be shared with staff on assessment sheets within Bromcom/Classcharts.</p>
<p>Accurate diagnosis of specific reading need.</p>	<p>Pupils that are below 90 SAS have further diagnostic testing (need to agree trust approach to what this looks like) by the end of the 3rd full week of term to see whether the pupil needs phonic intervention. Diagnosis supports accurate choice of intervention – see flow chart diagnostic tool below.</p> <p>Students that show a significant drop in SAS (10 or more points) between tests are retested on paper to get an accurate assessment score. Interventions are then put in place if need is established.</p>
<p>Well targeted intervention for all those below 90 SAS.</p>	<p>Every school needs to have evidence-based programmes that are used for intervention and delivered with fidelity.</p> <p>Interventions are timetabled and follow the recommended frequency</p> <p>Interventions begin as swiftly as possible in September and no later than October half term for the greatest priority year 7 pupils.</p> <p>Regular assessment and evaluation for pupils on intervention programmes in line with the programme interventions. Where necessary changes and additional support are put in place.</p>
<p>FreshStart Phonics is in place in every school</p>	<p>Timetabled phonics programme in place for all pupils that need it.</p> <p>Appropriate book match in place for pupils on phonics programme.</p> <p>Half termly assessment in place and results are uploaded onto RWinc portal</p>
<p>Interventions led by trained adults</p>	<p>All adults are trained in the interventions they are using.</p> <p>Staff have a clear understanding of progress.</p> <p>Adults receive feedback, support and coaching for their teaching in line with school's wider approach.</p> <p>Reading Leads attend all recommended network and other reading programme training.</p>
<p>Clear monitoring and Evaluation</p>	<p>SLTs /Reading Leads must be upskilled and trained in order to monitor carefully the sessions to ensure fidelity to the scheme and track pupils reading level using SAS.</p> <p>Tracking and monitoring of reading interventions and reading ability</p> <p>Obtaining pupil voice on at least an annual basis to gain their views around reading.</p> <p>Trust to establish clear summary of the different interventions, the capacity needed to run them the intervention with fidelity through Early Reading network and Devon Research School.</p>

Diagnostic Tool



Developing Practice and Expertise through:

- Reading Fluency and comprehension -
- Training
- Reading for pleasure
- Culture of reading
- SEND strategy -OAIP
- Curriculum and assessment development

Use of Sparx Reader

- Sparx Reader is used to help pupils build consistent reading habits and practice reading comprehension of a range of texts whilst saving teacher time through the automated weekly homework.

- English teaching staff are given clear guidance around how to use sparx reader and how to measure progress of pupils through the year.

Questions for Leaders to ask themselves:

- Is reading prioritised in your school improvement plans?
- Is reading embedded in monitoring and quality assurance processes?
- Are you confident that your reading age data is accurate and your diagnostic assessments ensure interventions match your specific need?
- Do you have capacity in place for all pupils that are behind in their reading to get the right intervention and remain on it until they have caught up? What plans need to be put in place to build/sustain capacity to ensure consistency of high-quality interventions for all pupils who need support?
- Do you know which interventions are having an impact? Do you take action where there are weaknesses?
- Do teachers model reading with confidence across the curriculum?
- Do pupils have access to reading to build fluency?
- Are teachers considering accessibility of text and what strategies would help when planning lessons?
- How are pupils matched to books according to their reading ability?
- Are library lessons impactful? How do you know?
- Do you know how pupils feel about reading? How often they read and what they think about text choices on the curriculum?
- Are parents actively engaged to support their children with reading?
- Do you have a clear plan to develop the culture of reading over time?

Action Plan 2025/6

Aspect of literacy to be developed	Actions	Owned by	By When	Success Criteria
Trust strategy defined	Strategy document developed and shared with key stakeholders (Exec Trust leadership, Heads, QELs, literacy leads, ER leads, Trustees and placed on ESW intranet. Update the pp slide showing the implementation journey for 2025/26	SLW & JEA JEA	May 2025 May 2025	Feedback from stakeholder is positive Actions as described on this plan are fulfilled.
Building reading fluency and comprehension	JEA to continue to work with CDLs (prioritising geog and history) – to elicit and develop reading opportunities within	JEA	Half termly and	Curriculum has a good number of reading

through curriculum development	<p>the curriculum and make explicit the reading goal, key vocabulary, suggested reading method to be employed and guidance around comprehension checks.</p> <p>This work will include regular input into CDL meetings and support with subject network meetings to help build expertise and capacity</p>	JEA	<p>regular meetings with individual CDLs</p> <p>Half termly</p>	opportunities build across lessons and teacher guidance gives clarity about approaches that will support pupils reading.
Building reading fluency and comprehension through effective staff training.	<p>Third training session is written for September delivery</p> <p>All teaching staff receive the third, one hour training session in September 2025 on first inset day delivered by literacy leads within the secondary schools.</p> <p>Training will give examples and linked to what is being developed in geography schemes of work to model good practice.</p> <p>Film clips of ESW lessons to be used in the training to support modelling for staff</p> <p>Develop 4 x 30 min training that can be slotted in half termly throughout the year and provide exemplars for staff ped principles e.g. paired reading for students.</p> <p>Professional development to include how to effectively use talk to support reading comprehension and writing. Focus on partner talk to check understanding. Think/pair/share. Give pupils opportunity to write after they have read.</p> <p>Communicate to QELs to support CPD planning</p> <p>Time on curriculum inset days for En, Sci, Geo, Hi, RPE, Ma to focus on reading/literacy within the curriculum. Jon to provide support for subject specific CPD.</p>	<p>JEA</p> <p>Literacy leads</p> <p>JEA</p> <p>JEA</p> <p>JEA</p> <p>JEA</p> <p>SLW/TGr</p> <p>CDLs</p>	<p>June 2025</p> <p>Sept</p> <p>July 2025</p> <p>For sept training</p> <p>ongoing</p> <p>Autumn 25</p> <p>Summer term</p> <p>Dec 25 and March 26</p>	<p>Staff highly rate the training they receive in September and across the year</p> <p>Observation of classroom practice across the curriculum demonstrates reading opportunities are in place and well executed to support pupils reading and comprehension.</p> <p>Pupil SAS increase, particularly those pupils with lower SAS.</p>
Reading strategies are accessible to all staff on ESW	Reading strategy guide is written and published on intranet for staff to access.	<p>JEA</p> <p>JEA/SLW</p>	<p>June 2025</p>	Reading strategy provides staff with clarity of reading strategy with the trust.

intranet within the Teaching Portal	<p>Produce clear rationale for use of placeholders to support pupils looking at the text.</p> <p>Communication to schools that all pupils need a clear ruler as part of their equipment.</p>	TGR/QELs	<p>June 2025</p> <p>May/June 2025</p>	
SPAG	Trust wide approach to be considered and developed during 2025/26	DCQIs/QELs/ Heads	25/26	
Pupil Attitudes to reading and reading for Pleasure	<p>Survey to be completed and shared with schools</p> <p>Information gleaned from survey to inform future planning and strategy</p>	JEA/SLW/ QELs	May 25	
Implementation planning within schools	<p>Schools to have plans for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading for pleasure • Reading intervention (Freshstart) • Tutor Reading <p>Trust wide implementation plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disciplinary Reading –curriculum and pedagogy. 			Literacy implementation plans are in place within schools
Sparx reader	Development of staff guidance for sparx reader and how to interpret data from sparx	LRE/LWI	June 2025	100% completion rate for sparx Pupil reading ages increase

What about Writing?

(Taken from Alex Quigley Blog- [What is happening with writing?](#))

How writing is approached is fundamentally different in primary and secondary school. In most secondary schools, writing instruction and interventions are where writing is located. Few whole school approaches exist. This is in stark contrast to primary school, where school-wide, cross-curricular approaches are common.

What are the implications of this practice finding?

Training, assessments, curriculum materials, will all need to be substantively different to support different teachers in different phases. One-size-fits-all approaches are unlikely to work across phases. A 'disciplinary literacy' approach will be needed in secondary – which is trickier, more nuanced, and harder to implement than generic writing approaches.

Schools are trying to support struggling writers with 'build-your-own' approaches and interventions. Writing lacks good diagnostic assessment as well as interventions to address problems that emerge through such assessment.

What are the implications of this practice finding?

School leaders, SENCOs, and teachers are likely to be ploughing collective energies in trying to help struggling writers. This is not likely to prove a workload friendly approach, and we are also unlikely to know if their efforts are working. The EEF will generate new, important research, but the curriculum is mediated by writing in countless ways, so writing will need to be a sustained priority in the school system.

At key stage 4, writing is tested through national English Language exams. The problem with these assessments is they don't tell us a great deal about the specific writing issues schools and teachers care about.

What are the implications of this practice finding?

It confirms what we already know: GCSE specifications drive practice. In secondary school, reading and writing instruction is a pale shadow of the high-stakes exams students sit. Such practice is unlikely to have the focused support on writing features, such as handwriting and spelling limitations, grammar issues, or limited expression.

In short, when we explore what is happening with writing in English schools, we likely need more of the following:

- **Better writing assessments (that are adapted for primary and secondary)**
- **Better writing curricula (particularly sensitive to subject disciplines in secondary school)**
- **Better interventions for struggling writers**
- **Better training for teachers to identify problems and to enhance their universal approach to writing in the classroom.**
- **Better guidance on how to use, or not use, national assessments as a proxy for diagnosing writing problems and development.**

Related:

- The **Education Endowment Foundation** has commissioned a research round on writing in English primary schools that you can find out more about the trails and how to join them here: [READ MORE HERE](#).
- The **Education Policy Institute** and **Oxford University Press** have just released a short paper on what is needed from policy to improve writing. It syncs well with the practice review conducted by the **EEF**: [READ MORE HERE](#).

What about oracy?

- Will be integrated into pedagogical principles
- Schools need to consider how to prioritise and build whole school culture of oracy
- KCC have done some work around oracy.