



Baines School

Nil Sine Labore

The Governors of Baines School

Whole School Literacy Policy

Date approved: February 2026

Date of review: September 2026

Definition

The term literacy covers oracy, listening, reading, and writing. Students need to use these skills across the school to access the curriculum; therefore, all staff share responsibility for literacy, whatever their subject, and must address together and as a priority the issues that literacy raises.

Literacy Vision

The purpose of education at Baines is to be healthy and happy and to achieve and have high aspirations through our ethos 'encourage, engage, empower'. Through the ongoing and developing study and execution of increasingly complex literacy skills, our students are better equipped for life beyond our school gates. Through analysing and questioning what they hear and read they will be able to gain a better understanding of other people and other ideas – be they academic or rooted in practical, everyday situations in the world beyond our school. Through literacy our students will also become adept at communication – making what they say precise and impactful which can lead to success and happiness in both professional and personal circumstances. Through literacy, we encourage a passion for reading and a questioning mind. We look at how to spot fake news, bias and prejudice in writing so that our students are informed participants in the world they will enter. The students will learn that words have power and they must use them responsibly and effectively in order to prepare them for life in modern Britain. We want to equip our students to enable to enter whichever field of work or further study they intend to go on to. Literacy is the foundational knowledge that has the advantage in being able to be the Velcro that sticks all their learning together; whatever their passion, words realise their potential.

Aims

Our aim is to ensure that all students develop strong literacy as a core element of their foundational knowledge, enabling them to access the full curriculum and succeed academically and beyond school.

All staff have a shared responsibility for developing students' communication and literacy skills so that students can:

- Read fluently and to age related expectations
- Write legibly, fluently, accurately and with increasing speed.
- Develop secure foundational knowledge of vocabulary, spelling patterns, and text structures.
- Communicate effectively across all curriculum areas.
- Write confidently and coherently across a range of genres and levels of formality.
- Plan, draft, edit, and improve their own writing by identifying inaccuracies.

- Read with confidence, enjoyment, and understanding, monitoring and correcting errors independently.

Rationale

At Baines, we believe that foundational literacy is central to enabling all students to access, engage with, and progress through the curriculum. Strong literacy links allow students to read, write, speak and listen with increasing accuracy, confidence, and fluency in every subject. These skills are vital both in school and in the world of work once our students leave.

Strong literacy skills have multiple positive outcomes: maximising academic potential; improving self esteem and mental health; increasing motivation and behaviour. Secure foundational literacy empowers students to become more independent learners.

The Education Endowment Foundation, based on their research, have given seven recommendations for improving literacy in secondary schools, as shown below:

1. Prioritising disciplinary literacy across the curriculum.
2. Providing targeted vocabulary instruction.
3. Developing student's ability to read complex texts.
4. Breaking down complex writing tasks.
5. Combining writing instruction with reading in every subject.
6. Providing opportunities for structured talk.
7. Providing high quality literacy interventions.

These, along with training videos provided by the DfE 'Supporting all readers in Secondary Schools' (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supporting-all-readers-in-secondary-school>) have formed the basis of our approach to Literacy which is enriched by knowledge from the Literacy Lead and the school Librarian to keep our school practice up to date and relevant.

Disciplinary Literacy

The teacher standards (2012) require all teachers to “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.” Therefore, all teachers are teachers of language and literacy and this is emphasised through our professional learning programme at Baines.

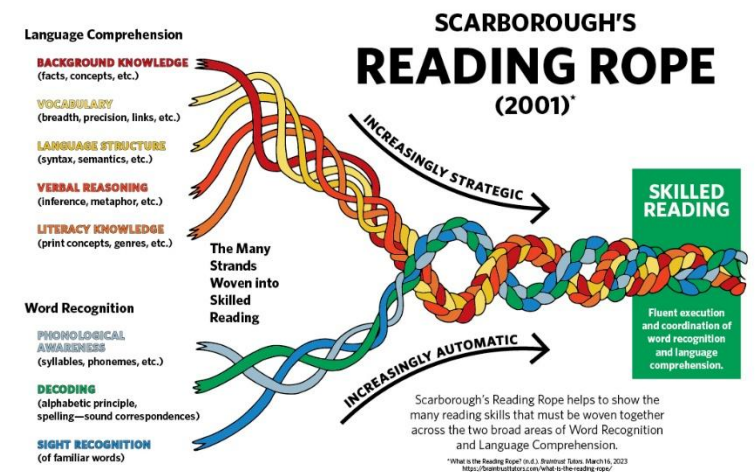
Disciplinary literacy is vital as it acknowledges there are some literacy skills common to all subject areas (such as grammar and punctuation, or tone of voice) but that for children to succeed there must sometimes be subject specific foci required. There is not a one size fits all method at Baines. Instead, we share strategies of what works in different subjects and each SLT link ensures that literacy needs are being met in the curriculum plans for each curriculum area. Through staff CPD and inset sessions we can share good practice to create a collegiate response to the demands of disciplinary literacy.

As part of this strategy we address four strands of disciplinary literacy:

Vocabulary instruction

As we see in Scarborough’s reading rope there are multiple strands that are required in order for a student to develop fluency in reading. Vocabulary is essential for comprehension and word recognition (phonological awareness, decoding, sight recognition) all help to alleviate some of the strands of the rope to enhance fluency. As a result, if we pre-teach vocabulary that is required in our subject area then this helps students to engage with their reading, writing and oracy in order to know more and be able to do more.

Subject leaders and classroom teachers work to ensure that key terminology is taught effectively to maximise retention. Staff may choose to use dual coding, freya models, glossaries, independent learning tasks or ‘do it now’ activities to activate prior knowledge of tier 2 and tier 3 vocabulary necessary for their lesson. This should alleviate some of the cognitive load of the learners enabling them to understand better and articulate themselves more effectively.



In addition to this, teachers will model the correct use of vocabulary within the learning environment. Teachers may also explicitly teach spelling strategies, for example by using etymology (the study of the origin of words) and morphology (the study of the structure and parts of words) and will explore common word roots e.g., in Science 'photo' (light) then generating other words e.g. phototropic, photosynthesis.

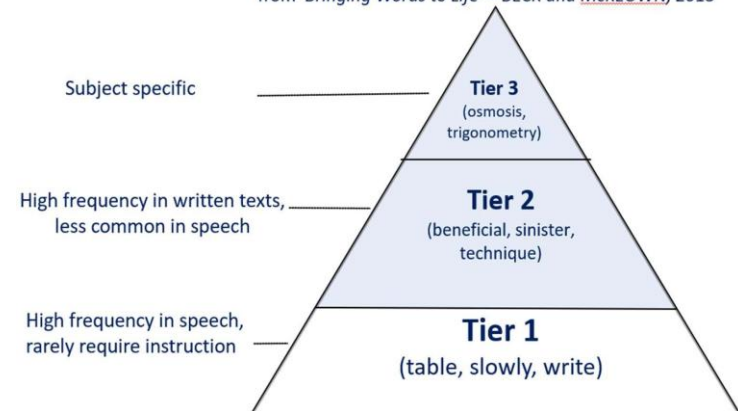
Reading

Baines has a wide and diverse range of feeder primary schools. As part of our transition we ensure that we communicate with schools to establish any areas of SEND to put the correct literacy support in place from the start. However, in secondary, on the whole, our children are not learning to read, they are reading to learn. We understand that not all of our students enter with the same level of ability so early testing is vital to supporting students accurately. Regardless of ability we aim to support all learners to develop strong reading skills to enable them to cope with the increasing demands of the curriculum content. We encourage staff and students to implement the following strategies for reading:

- Pre-teach key vocabulary (see previous section)
- Staff will lead by strong modelling of reading as well as verbalising the process of how to link reading to learning.
- Chunk reading in to manageable pieces for learners to comprehend meaning.
- Directly teach students how to decode a variety of texts and forms of text specific to their disciplines.
- Monitoring the level of text provided to ensure it provides appropriate challenge.
- Planning and using questioning effectively to develop students' independent reading comprehension.
- Promoting reading for pleasure and learning in form time reading and engaging in wider reading strategies devised by the school librarian to engage in national reading initiatives.
- Explicitly engage with the reading strategies:

Tiered Words Hierarchy

from 'Bringing Words to Life' – BECK and MCKEOWN, 2013



HOW TO IMPROVE COMPREHENSION



You need to read things slowly, in small chunks, and think about each section that you've read.



Clarifying – what does it mean?



Prediction – what are you expecting to read in the text?



Questioning – use this text as a starting point to think of more ideas



Summarising – can you summarise each paragraph to help you make sense of the text?



Visualisation – can you picture what you are reading?



Inference – can you add your own knowledge to what you've read to make new meanings?

Writing

Students' writing must increase in complexity both lexically and grammatically as they progress from year 7 to year 11. Teachers will use a variety of strategies to ensure this is achieved such as:

- Teachers explicitly model the cognitive processes involved in planning, drafting, editing, and revising a range of written text types and genres. Visualisers are used where appropriate to support this process.
- Written work is regularly assessed for spelling, punctuation, and grammar, with students expected to respond to feedback and take responsibility for correcting errors. Common misconceptions are identified and addressed through explicit teaching.
- High-quality models, including pupil exemplars, are shared and discussed to identify effective features of writing and to consider how work could be further improved.
- Additional support is provided for students who require it through the use of scaffolding, sentence stems, writing frames, key vocabulary, and teacher modelling.
- More able writers are challenged through extension tasks and sustained writing opportunities, with scaffolds progressively removed to promote independence.
- Pre-writing strategies, such as revisiting key knowledge or using sentence starters, are used to support students in preparing for writing.
- Students are given frequent opportunities to write for a range of purposes and audiences, with clear and shared expectations for outcomes.
- Complex writing tasks are broken down into manageable steps through the use of structured supports, such as writing frames or structure strips, which are gradually withdrawn as students become more independent.
- High expectations are consistently maintained for the presentation, spelling, punctuation, and grammar of all written work.

Oracy

Oracy firstly makes learning more enjoyable as students are able to bring their own voices and experiences to school and present them in a clear and succinct manner and will be listened to by peers and staff. Oracy works hand in hand with a student's mental lexicon and internal grammars – if they are able to speak in well planned and structured ways it follows that their writing will form the same patterns. The ability to express themselves through speech is important for their wellbeing, their ability to build successful relationships, and gives them the capacity

to flourish in further education, higher education and employment. This is a vital part of our transition to support students in life beyond Baines whilst always being proud of the skills Baines has given them to set firm foundations whatever their background or socioeconomic status.

Evidence (Oracy Education Commission, 2024) suggests that high quality classroom discussions benefit all students, but especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Developing oracy is therefore an important part of narrowing attainment gaps which could otherwise affect the future success of students. Teachers will support the development of oracy skills through a variety of means including:

- Students are provided with regular, planned opportunities for **structured and accountable talk** across the curriculum to develop confidence, clarity, and fluency in spoken language.
- Teachers **explicitly teach and model** the conventions of effective speaking and listening, including the consistent use of **standard English**, and clearly distinguish between formal language and informal or slang usage.
- Classroom strategies are used to ensure students **listen attentively and with purpose**, respond appropriately, and **build constructively** on the ideas of others.
- Talk is **purposeful and exploratory**, enabling students to collaborate, articulate thinking, and work towards shared learning outcomes.
- Teachers **plan and sequence questioning** carefully within lessons and across sequences of learning to support progression in students' thinking, while also encouraging students to **formulate and ask their own questions**.
- Questioning is used to **probe, extend, and challenge** students' understanding. Low-level disengagement (e.g. "I don't know") is not accepted; students are supported to articulate partial or developing responses (e.g. "I'm not asking what you know, I'm asking what you think")
- Students are routinely expected to respond in **full sentences**, reflecting the grammatical structure and vocabulary of the question, to support the development of accurate and academic spoken language.
- Teachers **identify and address grammatical inaccuracies** in spoken language (e.g. incorrect verb forms), supporting students to improve accuracy over time.
- **Appropriate wait time** is consistently built into questioning to allow students to think and formulate considered responses. Strategies such as **pose, pause, pounce, bounce** are used to promote inclusive participation.

- Feedback and praise are **specific and purposeful**, recognising not only students' knowledge and understanding but also the **quality of spoken language**, clarity of expression, and effective participation in discussion.

The Wider School Environment

Although there is a real emphasis on disciplinary literacy (see subject literacy methodologies), we recognise the importance of literacy beyond the classroom and we aim to provide rich oral and written language environments, where there are multiple opportunities for students to hear, see and use new words. In this way they can broaden their vocabularies, understanding and literacy skills. This occurs in a variety of ways, for example:

- Staff modelling good literacy skills in lessons and around school.
- Displays of excellent student work, demonstrating and modelling the high levels of literacy skills.
- An active and welcoming school library which encourages wider reading.
- Guest speakers including writers and poets who give workshops to students.
- Displays of key vocabulary, conventions for talk and for writing in classrooms.
- Extra-curricular activities and trips to theatres, shows and events.
- Focused reading within form time.
- PROUD work that models strong literacy is praised and rewarded.

Supporting Students for whom literacy is challenging.

We recognise that some students find literacy skills challenging for a variety of reasons, and some will join the school with reading and writing skills below national expectations. We will therefore:

- Sparx Reader is used with year 7 and 8.
- Use data and information from national tests, regular assessments, feeder schools, parents, and staff, to identify students who need additional support with literacy.
- Work with the SEND team to address any specific literacy or learning needs.

- Provide targeted evidence-based intervention programmes delivered by trained staff to address the literacy needs of individuals, such as IDL, Launch the Lifeboats and Reading support groups as well as Literacy Support Sessions at KS4.
- Provide appropriate support in class to enable students with literacy challenges to access lessons and make progress alongside their peers.
- Monitor progress over time and put in place appropriate evidence-based intervention strategies if students make less than expected progress.
- Assess students for exam access arrangements as required, based on evidence of need.

Supporting Teachers

- Literacy is a regular element of ongoing teacher professional development as part of the School's CPD Programme.
- Teachers can develop their own skills in explicitly teaching to improve literacy, prioritising disciplinary literacy, as well as addressing any gaps in their own literacy knowledge and skills.
- Teachers should seek opportunities to share good practice, within school and with other networking opportunities or CPD events.

Roles and responsibilities

All school staff will support the development of literacy skills by modelling high standards of written and verbal communication, and by promoting a wider love of reading for pleasure and learning.

Senior leaders and managers:

- Lead and give a high priority to the development of literacy in school.
- Keep up to date with developments in pedagogy around literacy, adjusting school policies, training and curriculum plans accordingly.
- Ensure effective monitoring systems are in place to ensure literacy delivery is embedded and effective in school.
- Ensure departmental schemes of learning highlight the opportunities for literacy skill development and the strategies/resources that could be used to promote these skills.

Teachers across the curriculum:

- Contribute to students' development of a wide range of disciplinary and critical literacy skills using the strategies outlined in this policy, and given in CPD.

- Keep up to date with developments in pedagogy around literacy and adjust teaching and learning strategies accordingly as disseminated through communication from the Literacy Lead.
- Seek opportunities to expose students to different literary experiences e.g., speakers/trips.
- To expose students to a wide range of texts appropriate to the subject area.
- To encourage a high level of written and spoken communication.

Form tutors:

- Contribute to students' development of a wide range of literacy skills by encouraging and supporting students to use the literacy skills and strategies they have learned.
- Undertake literacy form activities, as per the form activity schedule provided by SWD.
- Provide opportunities for students to develop social literacy skills – the ability to speak and listen to each other with respect, whilst acknowledging and valuing differences in opinion.
- Keep up to date with and support developments in literacy strategies used around the school.

Librarian:

- Contributes to the development of student literacy skills by maintaining a well stocked and up to date library with a wide range of extra-curricular activities promote a love of reading.
- Supports the implementation of Sparx Reader and rewarding the most engaged students.
- Supports with Reading Intervention programmes and promotes opportunities for all students to engage with reading regardless of background.
- Keeps up to date with and supports developments in literacy strategies used around the school.
- Liaises with SLA and other professional bodies to maintain a focus on current thinking and practice.
- Works to promote national and internationally recognised Literacy events to curate reading for pleasure.

Support staff:

- Contribute to students' development of a wide range of literacy skills by encouraging and supporting students to use the literacy skills and strategies they have learned.

- Apply the CPD they have received with regards to supporting literacy and embedding foundational knowledge.
- Keep up to date with and support developments in literacy strategies used around the school.

Parents:

- Communicate with the school if they feel their children need additional support in developing good literacy skills or are concerned about progress in any way.
- Encourage their children to use the range of opportunities available and strategies learned to improve their literacy as shared via Synergy and social media platforms.

Students:

- Take increasing responsibility for recognising their own literacy needs and making improvements in their work.
- Take opportunities to extend their critical literacy skills through extra-curricular activities and reading, where possible.

Literacy Lead:

- Liaises with colleagues to identify current provision within the school.
- Broadens their own CPD by using online and in person resources.
- Disseminates their learning by organising and leading literacy CPD events within the school.
- Facilitates the sharing of good practice across departments.
- Leads organisation of literacy interventions.
- Contributes to whole school improvement planning and self-evaluation processes regarding literacy.

Monitoring and Evaluation

To ensure disciplinary and critical literacy is embedded and having impact across the curriculum, it will be monitored throughout the academic year.

This includes:

- Lesson observations and learning walks to monitor the quality of literacy in all its forms within lessons.
- Work scrutiny to monitor that teachers are taking opportunities to develop and support disciplinary literacy.

The governors will receive regular reports on:

- The initiatives undertaken to raise the profile of reading and wider literacy within Baines.
- The impact of any interventions and strategies used to improve literacy for groups or individual students in school. These include (but are not limited to)
 - o Students performing below their age related expectations
 - o Students who have protected characteristics
- Staff CPD and the impact on teaching and learning.
 - o Lesson observations and learning walks
 - o Schemes of learning

IMPROVING LITERACY IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Summary of recommendations

1

Prioritise 'disciplinary literacy' across the curriculum



- Literacy is key to learning across all subjects in secondary school and a strong predictor of outcomes in later life.
- Disciplinary literacy is an approach to improving literacy across the curriculum that emphasises the importance of subject specific support.
- All teachers should be supported to understand how to teach students to read, write and communicate effectively in their subjects.
- School leaders can help teachers by ensuring training related to literacy prioritises subject specificity over general approaches.

2

Provide targeted vocabulary instruction in every subject



- Teachers in every subject should provide explicit vocabulary instruction to help students access and use academic language.
- Effective approaches, including those related to etymology and morphology, will help students remember new words and make connections between words.
- Teachers should prioritise teaching Tier 2 and 3 vocabulary, which students are unlikely to encounter in everyday speech.
- Teachers and subject leaders should consider which words and phrases to teach as part of curriculum planning.

3

Develop students' ability to read complex academic texts



- Training focused on teaching reading is likely to help secondary school teachers teach their subject more effectively.
- To comprehend complex texts, students need to actively engage with what they are reading and use their existing subject knowledge.
- Reading strategies, such as activating prior knowledge, prediction and questioning, can improve students' comprehension.
- Strategies can be introduced through modelling and group work, before support is gradually removed to promote independence.

4

Break down complex writing tasks



- Writing is challenging and students in every subject will benefit from explicit instruction in how to improve.
- Teachers can break writing down into planning, monitoring and evaluation, and can support students by modelling each step.
- Targeted support should be provided to students who struggle to write fluently, as this may affect writing quality.
- Teachers can use a variety of approaches, including collaborative and paired writing, to motivate students to write.

5

Combine writing instruction with reading in every subject



- Combining reading activities and writing instruction is likely to improve students' skills in both, compared to a less balanced approach.
- Reading helps students gain knowledge, which leads to better writing, whilst writing can deepen students' understanding of ideas.
- Students should be taught to recognise features, aims and conventions of good writing within each subject.
- Teaching spelling, grammar and punctuation explicitly can improve students' writing, particularly when focused on meaning.

6

Provide opportunities for structured talk



- Talk matters: both in its own right and because of its impact on other aspects of learning.
- High quality talk is typically well-structured and guided by teachers.
- 'Accountable talk' is a useful framework to ensure talk is high quality, and emphasises how talk can be subject specific.
- Teachers can support students by modelling high quality talk, for example including key vocabulary and metacognitive reflection.

7

Provide high quality literacy interventions for struggling students



- Schools should expect and proactively plan to support students with the weakest levels of literacy, particularly in Year 7.
- Developing a model of tiered support, which increases in intensity in line with need is a promising approach.
- Assessment should be used to match students to appropriate types of intervention, and to monitor the impact of interventions.
- Creating a co-ordinated system of support is a significant challenge requiring both specialist input and whole school leadership.