



Baines School

Nil Sine Labore

The Governors of Baines School

Whole School Reading Policy 2025/2026

Date approved: February 2026

Date of review: September 2026

Roles and Responsibilities:

Lead Teacher/s Whole School Reading: Simon Davies, Katy Streetly

Lead Teacher/s Strategy for Supporting Weaker Readers: Simon Davies, Katy Streetly, Gill Newhouse

School Librarian: Beth Simmons

Reading Vision

At Baines, reading is central to learning and underpins the entire curriculum. Our vision is **to encourage, engage and empower** all pupils to become confident, fluent readers who can successfully access knowledge and communicate effectively. Through a careful process of testing and interventions from year 7 onwards, pupils build strong **foundational knowledge**, vocabulary and comprehension skills, enabling them to make sense of increasingly complex texts. We foster both reading for pleasure and subject-specific, disciplinary reading, supporting a smooth transition from primary to secondary education and equipping pupils with the literacy skills, cultural capital and independence they need to succeed in further education, employment and life beyond high school.

Aims

To enable all of our students to access the curriculum to the best of their ability. To support those who may struggle with reading and to stretch and challenge those who already have strong skills. We aim to ensure that every child, regardless of background, has the skills they need to succeed both in examinations and in life beyond Baines. We understand that in order for our learners to be good readers, they need to have good foundational knowledge built upon sound phonological awareness, good word recognition and strong comprehension skills.

Approach

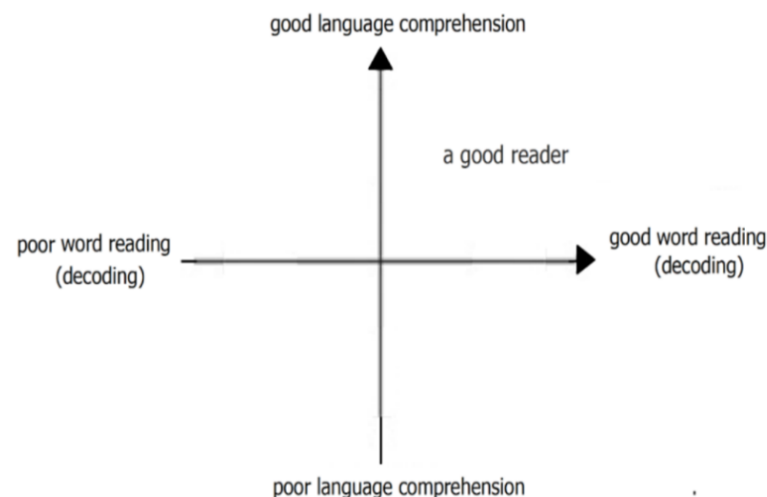
At Baines we use three points of information to form the basis of our knowledge of our learners from transition at Primary. We speak with Primary schools to get a teacher assessment (with more detailed conversations for those with SEND or additional needs), KS2 data plus our own in-house testing with Sparx and NGRT. This gives us a reader profile and a basis to check for any anomalies and cross reference with CAT data. If a student requires intervention, we begin the first wave in the second half term and this is reviewed during half term 3 to assess the impact. If we feel a student has more complex needs then our SEND team will conduct further tests to ascertain the area of need. We then continue to track all students' progress throughout KS3 to ensure all are improving, not just the weaker readers.

We provide regular opportunities for students to engage with reading through a variety of means:

- Sparx Reader is used in year 7 and 8 to ensure regular reading is taking place in the form of independent learning.
- Subject leaders are expected to provide opportunities for reading within lessons and as part of independent learning.
- In progress tutor time through shared reading activities.
- Through initiatives run by the School Librarian in the ILC.
- Through literacy interventions run by support staff and literacy leads.

Where a student may speak English as an additional language we have the EAL Lead, Gill Marsden-Holt who works closely with these students to ensure they can access the curriculum and get extra help and support as required. Again, students in this area have varying degrees of need so we take each student on a case by case basis and assess the level of support they will require. Every EAL student requires exposure to rich use of the English Language within the classroom as well as opportunities to get immediate feedback followed by support

Figure 1: The knowledge of a good reader



external to the classroom to plug any gaps. We take every step possible to make sure EAL students feel included and involved in life at Baines – for students who struggle most we encourage staff to use words and phrases from the child’s home language to help form positive relationships to engage the learner.

Supporting weaker readers

At Baines we understand that some of our learners may not be close to their chronological age in terms of their reading. For those students who are still working at a KS1 level we know that they may need further phonics support to help them decode words. Whilst the alphabet has 26 letters, there are 44 phonemes in the English language. By teaching phonics students can learn about grapheme-phoneme correspondence. By teaching the rules around digraphs, split digraphs and trigraphs students are able to identify them when reading which will in turn improve fluency and support understanding. This phonological knowledge is also reversible – students should be able to spell words they have heard using their set of phonics rules. It is the key to unlocking language is this systematic synthetic phonics approach.

IDL

Most of our learners who are below chronological age use the IDL intervention software. This has been proven to increase the reading age of dyslexic students, dyspraxic students, and students who are weaker readers, by 11 months after just 26 hours use. It provides the missing step in their literacy development. It ranges from phonological awareness to fluency. It also improves spelling, touch typing, vocabulary and comprehension skills. In order to register students on IDL we first need to assess their area of need to ensure the programme responds to the needs of the learners. This is done through a spelling test and a comprehension test.

The benefits of IDL are:

- A multisensory approach – sight, sound and touch, linking visual, auditory and tactile pathways
- It monitors progress
- It is available anywhere. Many of our learners choose to do IDL at home as well as at school.

We recognise that IDL does not suit all of our learners and, as a result, we offer another level of support in phonics level support.

Phonics level support

Launch the Lifeboat	A specialised scheme designed to support students with dyslexia and low levels of literacy.
When does the intervention take place?	During progress tutor time, or during withdrawal from languages lessons.
How are children selected for the support?	Students who have a very low level of reading ability or who do not engage well with IDL.
What does the intervention aim to do?	<p>The lifeboat read and spell scheme is a self-guided programme with worksheets, led by a teacher, that teaches individual letter recognition then moves on to phonics such as split digraphs e.g. i_e. Each lesson introduces a new phoneme via a recognisable process:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify the phoneme 2. Track the phoneme in different lists 3. Match the words with the correct phoneme 4. Spell and write the phoneme within words 5. Read and choose the correct words with the phoneme in 6. Dictation or look – say – cover – write – check 7. Listening skills 8. Cloze procedure 9. Wordsearch <p>By this comprehensive methodology involving different methods of introducing the phonemes (listening, writing and reading) it aims to cement the phoneme and recognition and use of it with the learner.</p>

Additional Reading Support

Group Reading	<p>Students in year 8, 9 and 10 may take place in our progress tutor time programme, led by either the SLT link for Literacy Katy Streetly, the Literacy Lead Simon Davies, or the School Librarian Beth Simmons.</p> <p>Year 8 work with Beth Simmons on small group reading of a shared text with the librarian modelling reading skills and enabling the students to engage orally with comprehension skills to enhance understanding or address vocabulary they may struggle with in a non-threatening setting. This year we are using the Angel of Grasmere by Tom Palmer. This reading group will culminate in a trip to Grasmere to bring the book to life.</p> <p>Year 9 work with Katy Streetly in the same way but on a YA text to engage the students more. This year we are using local author, Nathan Parker, and his first book from the Granville series. This group will culminate in a workshop with Nathan Parker about his book and the characters.</p> <p>Year 10 have a bespoke form group each half term to develop specific skills to support with their first GCSE, English Literature, with Simon Davies. In the first term this was students who struggled and to plug gaps. Term two is to stretch and challenge the most able.</p>
Sparx Reader	<p>We use the online programme, Sparx Reader, with our year 7 and 8 students as part of their independent learning. The programme enables the children to select genres they are most interested in and read books appropriate to their age and stage. We are also able, as teachers, to look at question level analysis for each student to address any literacy needs. Data is tracked weekly to review impact and to close gaps quickly.</p>

Paired Reading	We use data from Sparx Reader and NGRT to ascertain which children may need additional support and motivation to read. We train year 9 students to be paired reading ambassadors to support those who may need help with vocabulary or comprehension.
KS4 Literacy Support	Students who require additional support at KS4 are invited to the KS4 literacy support sessions in the ILC run by Katy Streetly (Assistant Headteacher for Literacy). These sessions look at different skills from Reading and Writing to enable the students to access support as required. Last year students chose to focus on skills such as how to chunk texts and comprehend more complex texts such as those in the history curriculum and word lists and vocabulary in Chemistry.
What training do people supporting weaker readers have?	<p>The Literacy Lead, Simon Davies, was head of English and has a wide set of skills enabling him to support KS4 with the demands of Literature.</p> <p>The Assistant Headteacher for Literacy has a background in English Language (BA Hons) with specialised units on child language acquisition and accent and dialect which has given knowledge of both the IPA and phonics.</p> <p>The Librarian, Beth Simmons, has degree level training and has been an experienced Librarian working across the private and public sector. She has experience in leading interventions and is supported by Simon Davies and Katy Streetly.</p> <p>The paired readers are taught by Katy Streetly to support with reading.</p> <p>The support staff leading IDL and Launch the Lifeboats are supported by Gill Newhouse and Janet Immison in the SEND department.</p>

Whole school reading approaches

In English lessons we explore a range of texts from a variety of cultures, time periods and perspectives that are carefully planned to meet national curriculum objectives.

In addition to this we also engage in the following:

Progress tutor time reading

In this time our students are expected to engage in reading and discussing a range of high quality texts together. We want our students to be familiar with the patterns, language and structure of a story and this is why we begin the school year with a focus on short stories. These enable us to explore a range of stories in the time allocated during progress tutor time. We have carefully considered stories which are appropriate and engaging for all students and they are selected for appropriateness with each year group to present the correct level of challenge in terms of ideas presented.

In progress tutor time we encourage reading aloud which should be led by the progress tutor initially to model strong oracy and reading approaches. It is important that novice readers are able to hear how expert readers respond to texts. As part of our professional learning programme, all teachers have engaged in the DFE's Secondary Reading CPD and teaching of Professor Jessie Ricketts.

If staff have literacy difficulties themselves or require more CPD to support their learners effectively, this is offered by the literacy team from training on how to deliver reading to offers of support in reading from the school librarian.

2026 – The year of reading

KS4 were first introduced to the year of reading initiative. They have been given opportunities to select and borrow books as well as being rewarded for actively reading by entering yellow tickets in to a draw for every book they complete.

In term 2 this is extended to KS3 and linked to Sparx Reader to engage students in reading as regularly as possible.

The James Baines Book Award

At Baines we also run the James Baines Book Award and encourage students from year 7 through to 10 to read a selection of UK debut authors from a diverse range of backgrounds and discuss what they have read with the author at the end of year award ceremony. Local primary schools are also involved in this.

National reading events

At Baines we also support events such as Harry Potter Book Night and World Book Day through reading activities and quizzes. As previously mentioned we are also promoting 2026 being the year of reading.

Reading for pleasure

At Baines, we have a well stocked and welcoming Library that we call the ILC (Independent Learning Centre). The librarian is also the chair of the School Librarians Association so her knowledge of books and current practice is strong. Reading for pleasure is actively promoted through our library, the **ILC**, which is designed to inspire curiosity and a lifelong love of reading. Students are encouraged to explore a wide range of genres and authors, selecting books in the same way they might browse a bookshop—guided by interest, curiosity and enjoyment rather than perceived ability. While our collection is colour coded to support and guide choice, it does not restrict access; instead, it empowers students to make informed, independent decisions about their reading. By creating a welcoming, inclusive reading environment, the ILC nurtures confidence, autonomy and engagement, helping all students to see themselves as readers and to develop positive reading habits that extend beyond the classroom. Borrowing rates show an engagement with reading with an average of 90 books loaned each month. With each initiative we launch e.g. the year of reading, we see a surge in borrowing again. It is important this is maintained throughout the year.

Academic Reading

Academic reading is explicitly taught and valued across the curriculum. Through our Word of the Week approach, students are taught Tier 1 and Tier 2 vocabulary to strengthen language comprehension and support access to academic texts in all subjects. Teachers consistently embed key reading within their subject areas and set clear expectations for students to be active, not passive, readers, engaging with texts through questioning, annotation and discussion. Where groups include weaker readers, staff thoughtfully scaffold texts and tasks to ensure all students are supported to meet the highest standards. Our librarian has developed comprehensive 'Read Around' lists, accessible via the library software *Access It*, which broaden subject knowledge, encourage reading to learn and support cross-curricular understanding,

including PSHE and popular themes. A strong, well-maintained non-fiction section—regularly reviewed and updated—ensures students have access to current, relevant texts that enhance their learning and academic success.