

Policy Title: Literacy Policy	Effective Date:	November 2025
LT Member Responsible: Deputy Headteacher (ACS)	Review Date:	November 2027
Governors' Committee Responsible: Quality of Education		

1. Literacy Intent

To be literate in its most basic form is to have the ability to read, write, communicate, and react to ideas in text and language. It is a basic skill needed to function in modern day society as language is all around us. Literacy is thought of as this most basic of human needs. The vision for the Sheldon literacy policy however runs much deeper than our ability to read, write and communicate. We believe that developing literacy is foundational to achieving our values of Being Brave, Being Kind, and Being the Best You. National statistics show a concerning downward spiral with regards to the literacy of the nation. National Literacy Trust statistics¹ suggest that:

- 1 in 8 disadvantaged children in the UK say that they don't have a book of their own.
- The longer children maintain an enjoyment of reading, the greater the benefits are in the classroom.
- Children born into communities with the most serious literacy challenges have some of the lowest life expectancies in England.
- Only half of children in the UK enjoy writing.
- Children who enjoy reading and writing are happier in their lives.
- 1 in 6 adults in the England (16.4%/7.1 million people) have very poor literacy skills.

It is clear that an increased level of literacy leads to a longer and happier life, which must be our priority. It is also clear that children whose literacy skills are underdeveloped when they join secondary school require additional support and attention to help them to close gaps with their peers and achieve the outcomes they deserve. Therefore, the vision for literacy at Sheldon is simple: for no child to be left behind. Shared literacy and language are important in the ways in which we communicate and also the ways in which we understand and respect each other. The Literacy Policy is rooted in academic research and is heavily influenced by the EEF's guidance report on 'Improving Literacy in Secondary Schools'.² This policy should be read in conjunction with the Teaching and Learning, Homework, and SEND Policies.

¹ 'What is literacy?', National Literacy Trust <https://literacytrust.org.uk/information/what-is-literacy/>

² Education Endowment Fund, '[Improving Literacy in Secondary Schools: Guidance Report](#)'

The Sheldon literacy policy is underpinned by 5 key levers:

- **Disciplinary literacy**
- **Reading fluency**
- **Intervention**
- **Vocabulary**
- **Enjoyment and exploration through literacy**

2. DRIVE Lever 1 - Disciplinary Literacy

2.1. Overview

Disciplinary literacy is an approach to improving literacy across the curriculum. It recognises that literacy skills are both general and subject specific, emphasising the value of supporting teachers of every subject to teach students how to read, write and communicate effectively. As they progress through an increasingly specialised secondary school curriculum, there is a growing need to ensure that students are trained to access the academic language and conventions of different subjects. Strategies grounded in disciplinary literacy aim to meet this need, building on the premise that each subject has its own unique language, ways of knowing, doing, and communicating.

2.2. Reading

Teachers have a responsibility to help students to become confident, skilled, critical and reflective readers of all kinds of texts. Reading is developed and supported through a variety of subject-specific academic texts across the curriculum. Across all subjects, the development of reading skills is aimed at fostering critical thinking, comprehension, analysis, and interpretation of subject-specific texts.

2.2. 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. The school's aim is to ensure consistent and straightforward methods used to teach writing across different subject areas in order to manage the cognitive load of students effectively. This approach ensures that contradictory or repetitive methods are avoided, resulting in a consistent and coherent writing curriculum.

2.3. Oracy

All teachers have a responsibility to help students become confident, skilled speakers and listeners. The development and support of oracy are prioritised. Oracy refers to the ability to effectively communicate and engage in spoken language, which is crucial for academic success and overall student development.

To ensure the development of oracy, Sheldon provides students with regular structured opportunities to practice high-quality subject-specific talk. This is achieved through strategies that focus on adapting speech to suit different contexts and audiences, rehearsing key vocabulary, and promoting metacognitive reflection.

Students are provided with structured opportunities to practice subject-specific talk through class discussions and debates. Teachers facilitate these discussions, ensuring that students have the chance to express their thoughts, ideas, and opinions on specific topics related to the subject being taught. This encourages our students to adapt their speech to suit different contexts, such as formal debates or informal group discussions.

3. DRIVE Lever 2 - Reading Fluency

3.1. Overview

While there are elements of literacy that are subject-specific, there are also key components of literacy instruction that can be used across the curriculum to secure a culture of reading and drive progress in reading for all students. Reading Fluency refers to the importance of having designated reading, comprehension, and vocabulary practice as a part of both subject curriculum and whole school planning. As such, reading fluency is a one of the strategic priorities and the curriculum statement of intent and is therefore a priority for development at Sheldon.

Included below are details of the school approaches to improving reading fluency as part of the literacy policy.

	Details of approach	Staff leading on this area	Where would this be seen across the school?
Reading age assessment processes <i>NGRT</i>	All students are baseline assessed using the NGRT when they join the school so that any intervention needs are swiftly identified.	AFS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All year 7 students assessed in term 1. ▪ Any in-year enrolments assessed as part of their induction (all year groups).
Whole school reading approach <i>FASE Reading</i>	A consistently adopted reading approach across the school that develops a culture that ensures students' reading is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fluent ▪ Accountable ▪ Social ▪ Expressive 	ACS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ During learning episodes across the curriculum, where extended pieces of text are being explored
Whole school literacy strategies used	Tutor time reading programme	SHM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ During tutor time
Targeted Guided Group Reading	Teaching Assistants and Sixth Form students work with groups of students in order to develop their accuracy and automaticity using the VIPERS model	ACS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Timetabled daily interventions provided by the Librarian and Teaching Assistants within Learning Support
Targeted Phonics Intervention	All students who have a reading age of less than 9 years old will be baselined for systematic synthetic phonics intervention and receive appropriate interventions thereafter.	LLZ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Timetabled interventions delivered within Learning Support

4. DRIVE Lever 3 - Intervention

4.1. Overview

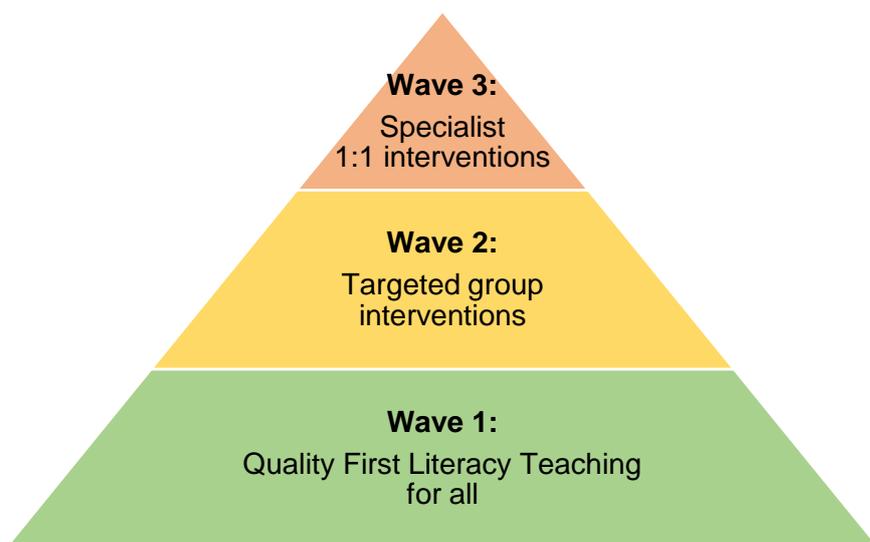
While whole-school approaches to literacy are essential in driving progress for the majority of students and will reduce the need for additional literacy support, high-quality, structured interventions are an important aspect of the whole school literacy strategy to ensure that accelerated progress is secured for students whose reading ages fall in the lowest stanines. These students need targeted support to catch up with their peers and meet age-related expectations.

4.2. Graduated Response

We take a graduated approach to intervention, moving from whole class teaching through small group tuition to one-to-one support, to ensure that appropriate, meaningful and measurable interventions are targeted at the right students to drive accelerated progress in literacy and ensure that all students can make significant progress, regardless of their entry point to the secondary phase.

A graduated approach is one in which levels of support and intervention increase in intensity matched to need:

- **Wave 1** is the universal, whole-school approach, that will meet the needs of the majority of students.
- **Wave 2** provides targeted intervention for students working below age-related expectations, who need additional, structured group interventions to catch up with their peers.
- **Wave 3** provides specialist and more intensive intervention for a very small group of students working significantly below age-related expectations, for whom group interventions would not be bespoke enough to meet their complex literacy needs.



Red group:

Intensive 1:1 literacy interventions for those who are unable to make progress in group interventions, or who need bespoke interventions (e.g. due to severe dyslexia).

Amber and yellow group:

Targeted group interventions for students who require additional support and intervention to catch up to age-related expectations.

Green groups:

Whole-class literacy strategies to secure continued progress at least in line with age-related expectations (see other DRIVE levers).

4.3. Diagnosis

Students are identified for interventions using NGRT data as a starting point, which provides the data required to being categorising students into waves in order to coordinate a targeted response to meet their needs:

Wave	Category	NGRT score
1	Dark green	Stanines 7-9 or SAS of 110+ - significantly above expected
	Light green	Stanine 5-6 or SAS of 100-109 – reading at expected levels
2	Yellow	Stanine 3-4 or SAS of 90-99 – reading approx. 1-2 years below
	Amber	Stanine 2-3 or SAS of 80-89 – reading approx. 3-4 years below
3	Red	Stanine 1 or SAS of 69-79 – reading approx. 5+ years below

When planning literacy interventions, Sheldon recognises the simple view of reading. This supports us to understand the full range of skills required to gain full reading comprehension:



4.4. Intervention Offer

The Literacy Lead will co-ordinate with SENDCo to record all assessment data, and wave 2 and 3 interventions centrally and in TES ProvisionMap. This will ensure that all intervention provisions are tracked centrally to support analysis and evaluation of impact.

Examples of intervention strategies on offer at each wave of intervention could include:

Wave	Intervention	Entry Criteria	Description	Baseline assessment (BA) and success criteria (SC) for completion at Wave 2 and 3
Wave 1	Disciplinary Literacy	<i>All students</i>	The domain specific approach to teaching reading, writing, oracy and vocabulary in every subject area. See DRIVE lever 1, 2 and 4 for more details.	<p>SC: Improved outcomes in external and internal assessments</p> <p>Improvement observed in NGRT/SparxReader data captures</p>
	Explicit Vocabulary Instruction	<i>All students</i>	Whole school approach in sharing and developing the understanding of tier 2 and 3 vocabulary using student friendly vocabulary slides and Frayer Models	<p>SC: Good practice identified in drop ins and recorded on StepLab.</p> <p>Improvement observed in NGRT/SparxReader data captures</p>

Wave	Intervention	Entry Criteria	Description	Baseline assessment (BA) and success criteria (SC) for completion at Wave 2 and 3
	Reading for pleasure curriculum	<i>All students</i>	Tutor Time Reading Programme promotes reading for pleasure. Students in years 7 and 8 are expected to read approximately 30 minutes per week using the SparxReader platform	SC: Improved outcomes in external and internal assessments Improvement observed in NGRT/SparxReader data captures
Wave 2	VIPERS - Guided Group Reading	Yellow or amber group	Daily/weekly interventions that improve the fluency and comprehension of students. Teaching assistants, the librarian, or KS5 students use the VIPERS programme to read with KS3 children who are reading below age related expectations.	BA: NGRT and KS2 data SC: Improvement made towards reading at chronological age evidenced through NGRT data captures
Wave 3	1:1 Phonics Intervention	Red group	Daily 1:1 intervention targeted at students reading significantly below age-related expectations, who are unable to make progress in a group setting, or who are new-to-English language speakers. See above for description of the curriculum.	BA: NGRT, KS2 and Fresh Start Phonics diagnostic assessments. SC: Successful completion of FS diagnostic – speed sounds (& passage 1)
	Specialist teaching for dyslexia	Red group	Weekly specialist teaching delivered by a specialist teacher in dyslexia for an EHC student with complex literacy needs.	Baseline: NGRT and KS2 data SC: Improvement made towards reading at chronological age evidenced through NGRT data captures

5. DRIVE Lever 4 - Vocabulary

5.1. Overview

Research suggests that students need to understand 95% or more of the words on a page to have a strong comprehension of a text. Even students with comprehension as high as 90% can struggle to decipher or ascertain the meaning of the unknown 10% of words on a page. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds are disproportionately impacted by struggles to develop age-related vocabulary acquisition.

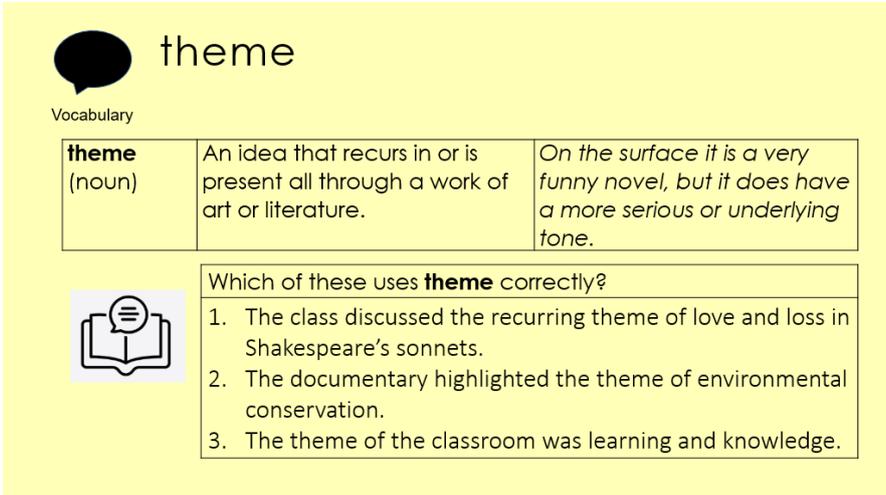
The Sheldon approach to vocabulary focuses on the development of tier 2 and tier 3 vocabulary across the curriculum. All curriculum areas include well planned tier 2 vocabulary instruction within their mid-term planning documents, with a minimum of 4 tier 2 words taught per term in KS3. Low stakes quizzing homework tasks should include tier 2 vocabulary. This will test students' ability to accurately define key vocabulary to ensure that it is committed to long term memory over time.

5.2. Explicit Vocabulary Instruction

Explicit Vocabulary Instruction aims to help students understand important and useful words deeply, and model for students how complex, nuanced, and mutable words can be.

5.2.1. Sheldon vocabulary instruction will use a standardised PowerPoint slide and should include:

- a student-friendly definition.
- a sentence presenting the word in a student-friendly context that can be understood beyond the confines of the subject.
- a multiple-choice question supporting teachers to check for understanding.



 **theme**

Vocabulary

theme (noun)	An idea that recurs in or is present all through a work of art or literature.	<i>On the surface it is a very funny novel, but it does have a more serious or underlying tone.</i>
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 Which of these uses **theme** correctly?

1. The class discussed the recurring theme of love and loss in Shakespeare's sonnets.
2. The documentary highlighted the theme of environmental conservation.
3. The theme of the classroom was learning and knowledge.

5.2.2. In addition, it is best practice for lessons to incorporate a further opportunity for students to process and embed their new learning through a turn and talk activity using the Hochman method to apply the sentence correctly in a sentence, using 'but' and 'because' to exemplify understanding of the vocabulary word in context.

6. DRIVE Lever 5 - Enjoyment and exploration through literacy

6.1. Overview

Enjoyment of literacy is the benefit that comes when children learn to love reading and keep getting better at it. At Sheldon, we have a well-stocked library and digital platform (SparxReader) to support our learners. There is a strong focus on how to promote reading for pleasure in our school. This is an increasing concern in a world where social uses of technological innovation often detract from, rather than enhance students' engagement with the written word.

SparxReader is used in years 7 and 8 to promote a love of reading and to develop students' confidence, independence, and engagement with texts. The platform provides each learner with personalised reading recommendations, adaptive questioning and regular opportunities for success, helping students to build positive reading habits over time. The school librarian monitors progress through detailed analytics, allowing us to celebrate achievements, identify barriers, and provide targeted support where needed. By integrating SparxReader into homework routines, we ensure that students has access to high-quality, age-appropriate texts and meaningful opportunities to enjoy reading for pleasure.

Exploration through literacy is the opportunity to see the world through literature. It is a focus not just on the number of books in our libraries or classrooms, but the variety, how appropriate these choices are, how engaging they are and how much they open the eyes of our students to the world around them.

6.2. Sheldon School Reading Pledge

Over Key Stages 3 and 4:

- All students will read text by BAME authors
- All students will read text by female authors
- All students will read text by LGBTQI+ authors
- All students will read classic text
- All students will have the opportunity to write reflectively and expressively