



Leigh Academy
Mascalls

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Information for Staff at Mascalls Academy

Mascalls Academy Literacy Policy 2025-2026

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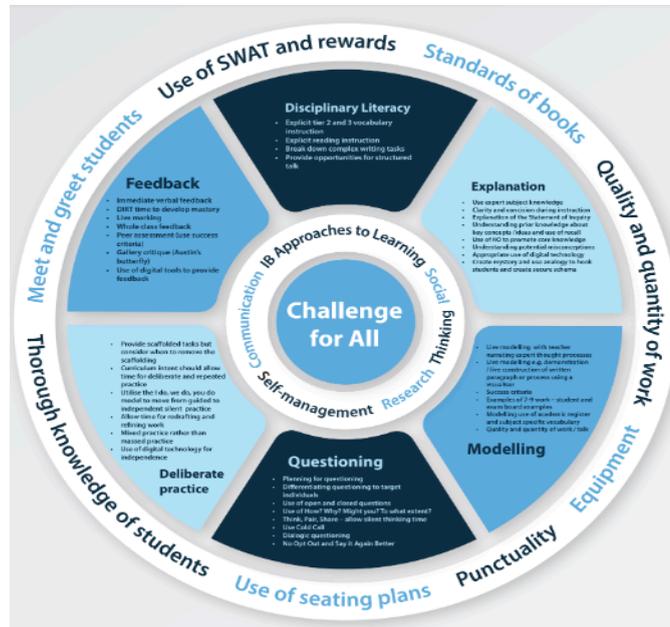
'If students do not acquire this language at home, school is their second chance. If they are not getting it at school, they are not getting it. Literacy, therefore, is not just an educational choice, it's a moral imperative.'

Neil Mercer, Emeritus Professor, University of Cambridge

Literacy at Mascalls

The development of strong literacy improves the life chances of young people and gives them the key skills that are the fundamentals of everyday life. Literacy includes reading, writing, speaking and listening; all of which need to be developed each day in the core element of all curriculum areas.

At Mascalls, Disciplinary Literacy, is an integral part of the Challenge for All wheel. Our Literacy policy and improvement plan is research informed from the EEF's: Improving Secondary Literacy.



Prioritising Disciplinary Literacy at Mascalls

All teachers are teachers of literacy. At Mascalls, every teacher and all Directors of Learning recognise that it is their responsibility and priority to ensure that literacy is an integral part of their practice. As such, literacy is evident in curriculum planning, reflected in lesson resources, and visible within classroom environments. To support staff, the Literacy Lead, with additional support from the Trust and the Curriculum Advisors, provides continuous professional development on the four strands of literacy.

“The transition to secondary school represents not so much a ‘slump’ in attainment, but a ‘jump in expectations’ — students suddenly face far greater vocabulary and comprehension demands across many subjects”

Jessie Ricketts, Professor, Royal Holloway, University of London

Targeted Vocabulary Instruction

Referring to the quotation above, it is vital that staff at Mascalls explicitly track and teach Tier 2 and Tier 3 vocabulary. To support this, staff have received training on explicit vocabulary instruction, including the use of the SEEC model, etymology, and morphology. We do not adopt a ‘one size fits all’ approach at Mascalls. Instead, it is at the discretion of each Director of Learning and their teams to decide which key vocabulary will be explicitly taught in a module and to deploy the most appropriate instructional methods at the right point in the sequence of learning.

Developing students' ability to read

Sparx Reader is fully embedded at Mascalls Academy. Each year, every student completes a reading test to ascertain their standardised age score and chronological reading age. Students who are significantly below age expectations are diagnostically assessed using NGRT to identify specific reading difficulties and are placed in the appropriate intervention (see below). All reading age data is shared with staff via BromCom and students with low reading ages are flagged.

Sparx Reader is an online educational tool designed to support reading development. It provides students with age appropriate, adapted texts that match their reading ability and guides them through the text, ensuring close reading via timely comprehension questions. Sparx Reader is used as our English homework platform for Years 7–9. It is fully embedded and monitored weekly. We currently track significant success, including the number of books read and hours spent reading. Over the last three months alone, students have read 1,912 books.

Across the curriculum, students are exposed to academic texts and reading in a variety of subjects. Staff have been trained to use VIPERS when reading to ensure that vocabulary is explicitly taught and defined where appropriate, and that inference, prediction, and explanation skills are developed when appropriate. Comprehension is checked through retrieval and summary activities. In lessons, staff will sometimes model fluent reading to the class and also select appropriate students to read aloud.

Library

Within the MYP, students are encouraged to become independent, inquisitive learners, and the school library plays a central role in nurturing this curiosity. At Mascalls, we actively promote a love of the library so that students develop not only the skills required for the MYP, but also the intrinsic motivation to read widely, explore new ideas, and pursue personal interests through books. The library is open at break and lunchtime for all students to access.

It also offers a range of extracurricular opportunities, including book clubs for KS3, KS4, and KS5 (titled *Page Turners*), activities to celebrate World Book Day such as short story competitions, and visits and talks from authors. All Year 7 students receive a library induction, and lessons are held in the library where appropriate.

Developing students ability to write

A vital part of Quality First Teaching is the ability to adapt, model, and scaffold learning regardless of students' ability. All teachers at Mascalls have strategies and tools to support the development of students' writing skills. In line with disciplinary literacy, this may include live modelling, guided writing, deconstructing and labelling modelled paragraphs, and providing sentence stems, word banks, or writing frames. It is at the teacher's professional judgement to select the most appropriate tool for a particular class or student at the right point in the learning journey.

Independent practice, typically in the form of extended writing, is mapped within the curriculum documentation to indicate when students are expected to write at length. Extended writing tasks are disciplinary in nature, and the quantity and complexity of writing will vary depending on the subject.

“The ability to talk and to think are closely linked; talk provides the means by which children develop ideas, solve problems, and prepare to write. Without talk, writing is impoverished.”

James Britton , Language and Learning (1970)

Providing opportunities for structured talk

Staff at Mascalls recognise the importance of structured oracy opportunities in enabling students to explore learning: explain their reasoning, formulate arguments, and engage in meaningful debate and discussion. Lessons therefore incorporate purposeful talk activities, including think, pair, share, turn and talk, and other structured dialogue routines.

In addition, oracy is used across the curriculum as a means for students to present and communicate their understanding. As communication, and specifically oracy, is a key 'Approaches to Learning' skill within the MYP framework, it will be explicitly modelled, taught, and embedded throughout our practice. It is a valued mode of expression that not only supports students in articulating curriculum knowledge but also contributes to their development as confident, well rounded individuals.

Providing high quality literacy interventions for struggling readers

The Literacy Lead works collaboratively with the SEND department and the Sparx Reader Lead to screen and diagnose the reading needs of all students. Students are initially screened using Sparx Reader to determine their standardised age score and chronological reading age. Those who are significantly below age related expectations are further assessed using NGRT to identify specific reading difficulties and are then placed in the appropriate intervention.

Based on diagnostic pathways, students are allocated to one of the following interventions: Phonics, VIPERS, Reader's Theatre, or Reading Buddies. Schofield and Sims is a phonics programme designed for secondary students and is used to strengthen phonics knowledge and decoding skills. To develop vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency, a tailored intervention programme has been created using the VIPERS mnemonic. To further support fluency and comprehension and confidence with reading aloud, Reader's Theatre is implemented. To further support fluency and inline with our PP strategy, Reading Buddies will be implemented in Module 3 with trained KS5 students hearing younger students read aloud on a one to one basis. Pairs will be selected based on mutual interests to aid engagement.

All interventions take place during advisory sessions, ensuring that students do not miss curriculum learning time. Intervention staff are fully trained, and students are assessed on entry and at regular intervals (three times a year), with students graduating from the intervention when appropriate.