

## **How do we support students with developing their Reading Comprehension skills?**

### **Through the teaching of context:**

Reading comprehension is supported through an understanding that students often need to understand specific background information and vocabulary in order to be able to effectively comprehend what they read. This can sometimes mean that explicit teaching of the context of a text needs to take place first before students access the text – many of our units of work explicitly teach vocabulary and contextual information simultaneously in order to support students in accessing complex texts.

As stated above, we have chosen our texts across KS3 and KS4 so that earlier, more accessible, texts studied in the KS3 curriculum contains knowledge that is necessary for accessing more complicated texts later on in the curriculum. For example – our study of a KS3 play version of Jekyll and Hyde allows students to understand contextual factors related to Victorian London which later allows an access point to the far harder to decode text, 'The Sign of the Four', in year nine. Our development of the understanding of the colonial representations of Caliban in 'The Tempest' in year seven allow student to have an access point for understanding the representations of Tonga in year nine. The study of the full dystopian text 'Animal Farm' in year seven allows for better understanding of dystopian short stories and extracts studied in year nine.

As well as this, reading comprehension is obviously supported through the following facets:

### **Through supporting vocabulary acquisition:**

Students with lower than chronological age reading ages are all assigned a vocabulary development home learning each week which is designed to push students into understanding a wider range of tier 2 words – newly acquired vocabulary is integrated into home learning comprehension exercises so that students can read new vocabulary within context. Tier 3 words are developed through knowledge organisers. Schemes of learning identify important vocabulary and these are highlighted within slides. Students who struggle with single word decoding, as identified through Lucid screening, are offered secondary phonics support through lexonic which also includes discussion of prefixes and suffixes.

### **Through developing fluent readers:**

For students to comprehend texts effectively, they must become fluent readers. To become fluent readers, put simply, students need to be exposed to a wide number of texts and read a lot. For this reason, we have heavily invested in the library, a qualified librarian, and use student voice to help us shape which novels are read during tutor time with all tutors. Students read every day allowing them to have oral exposure to high quality texts and hear the prosodic cues from their tutors which helps with comprehension of more complicated texts. Home learning is central to developing reading fluency and we have a tiered home learning system that places our weaker literacy readers on an intervention programme that develops reading fluency and our more fluent readers on reading logs. Our librarian works with a targeted group of students during tutor times in order to get the right books into the right hands. Our librarian runs a series of 'library appointments' where psychographic data is collected on students to allow her to support those students with choosing texts and contact is made with home regarding which texts are chosen.

All students are offered an induction to the library and we promote the web app version of the library to parents so that there is an understanding of what students can access at school

There is evidence to suggest that repeated readings of texts can support fluency development. Some of our students with weaker literacy levels pre-read some of their GCSE texts in additional lessons in order to support understanding of comprehension of plot, characterisation and key events. In the case of year nine, our students with lower literacy levels will read a simplified version of 19<sup>th</sup> century texts allowing them an access point to the 19<sup>th</sup> century version of the text later in the year.

### Through carefully planned written and spoken tasks:

Comprehension of texts can be supported by scaffolded talk tasks and writing. The role of talk prior to writing should not be underestimated but talk itself requires the same level of modelling for students. Regarding comprehension of texts, we encourage our students to speak to each other prior to writing in order to discuss ideas and have provided scaffolding for this to happen based on best practice from the guidance. There is a further moral imperative to support talk in schools given the impact of the pandemic.

## Exploratory Talk:

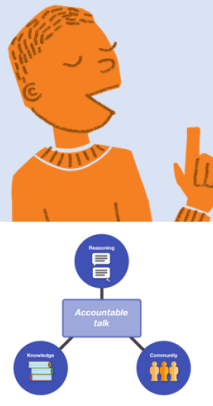
Agree, Build, Challenge, Question

### What does it look like?

- Everyone listens actively
- People ask questions
- People share relevant information
- Ideas may be challenged
- Reasons are given for challenges
- Contributions build on what has gone before
- Everyone is encouraged to contribute
- Ideas and opinions treated with respect
- There is a sense of shared purpose
- The group seeks agreement for joint decisions

### What does it sound like?

- It often involves incomplete sentences:  
'It might be that...' 'It could be that'
- People may finish each other's comments, interrupt, compete to take a turn, argue, disagree with or agree with what is said.
- Some talk might take place with speakers speaking at the same time.



Do you feel that we should use hydrogen fuel cells or electric vehicles to replace petrol engines?

Base your ideas on your **knowledge** and try to **justify** your viewpoint whilst being open to other people's ideas.

## Exploratory Talk – be accountable to your community:

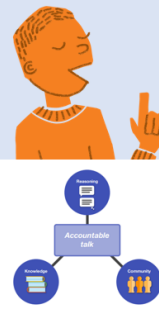
Agree, Build, Challenge, Question

### How to disagree without offending?

- That's an interesting idea but have you considered...
- **Could** it also be the case that...
- **Might** another way to think about it be...
- Rather than say 'you are wrong' say 'could you be wrong'?

### How to compete to take turns without being aggressive?

- 'Could I just make a point here...'
- 'When you've finished, can I add...'



### How to discuss?

- Use these phrases to help:
- 'possibly', 'maybe', 'I guess', 'I suppose' and 'perhaps'...
- 'Could it be...' / 'Might it be...'

Base your ideas on your **knowledge** and try to **justify** your viewpoint whilst being open to other people's ideas.

## Through making comprehension processes explicit and using them within teaching:

Where necessary, we will explicitly teach comprehension strategies for students to support understanding of texts. This includes making inferences based on their existing knowledge.

**Reading Strategy: Skimming**

Why and when? We do this to gain a general idea of what we are reading. We do this when we first encounter a text and are working out where it fits in with the task we need to do.

**Skimming: Steps to Success**

- ✓ Read the title, subtitles and subheadings to find out what the text is about.
- ✓ Look at the illustrations to give you more information about the topic.
- ✓ Read the first and last sentence of each paragraph.
- ✓ Let your eyes skim over the text and look out for key words.
- ✗ Don't read every word or every sentence.

**Reading Strategy: Scanning**

Why and when? We do this when we are looking for some specific information within a text, for example, to answer a very specific short question.

**Scanning: Steps to Success**

- ✓ Use clues on the page, such as headings and titles, to help you.
- ✓ Let your eyes move quickly across the page until you find what you're looking for.
- ✓ Read the first and last sentence of each paragraph.
- ✓ Let your eyes skim over the text and look out for key words.
- ✗ Don't read every word or every sentence.

**Reading Strategy: Reading for Comprehension**

Why and when? We will often need to fully comprehend a text in order to extract important information, ideas and viewpoints. Ultimately, most assessment activities really rely on skills of comprehension.

**Reading for comprehension: Steps to Success**

- ✓ In your first reading, look for the main idea(s) in the text.
- ✓ Re-read the text and underline words and phrases that seem important.
- ✓ As you read, think of questions about the text.
- ✓ Break the text up into small sections.
- ✓ Write summary notes of what you have read.

**Reading Strategy: Summarising**

Why and when? Summarising means recalling the main points or ideas. This helps us to sequence a text, re-tell a text using our own words and select the most important ideas to sum up what the author has told us.

**Summarising: Steps to Success**

- ✓ Look for the key information.
- ✓ Look at each paragraph, locate the topic sentence (often the first one) and decide what the main point is.
- ✓ List the key points (you might use your whiteboard).
- ✓ Only include the main ideas of the text.

**Reading Strategy: Questioning**

Why and when? When we ask questions about the ideas, viewpoints, language and organisation of a text, we become more actively involved in the reading process. This is especially useful when we are looking to explain and identify the reasoning behind actions and the attitudes expressed within a text.

**Questioning: Steps to Success**

- ✓ Before, during and after you have read the source, write down questions about the source and the author's meaning so you can gather information and build on your understanding.

**Reading Strategy: Inferring**

Why and when? Inferring means figuring out something that the author doesn't actually say. You can use clues that are in the text, and things from your own mind. Sometimes it's called "reading between the lines," and it helps us to understand the full meaning of a text.

**Inferring: Steps to Success**

- ✓ Read the text.
- ✓ Read between the lines: what is being implied or suggested?
- ✓ What evidence is there to show this is being suggested?

**Reading Strategy: Synthesising**

Why and when? When we synthesise we use our schema, our prior knowledge, and combine these with the information in the text. Synthesising requires the reader to take that summary or partial retelling and add in their own thoughts, experiences, opinions, interpretations and connections to generate a new, and bigger idea - it's going beyond the text.

**Synthesising: Steps to Success**

- ✓ What do you already know about the topic?
- ✓ Read the source(s) about a topic and record your ideas.
- ✓ Combine your notes with what you already know about the topic.
- ✓ Think about your new ideas and link them to what you already know.

When introducing new texts/writing, repeated referencing and practising of these common strategies will enable every one of our students to approach reading in a more effective way.

HOFs/HODs and other colleagues have been adding these to (applicable) SOLs; please do add the seven slides to your own lessons – I will send them separately today. Further CPD/departamental discussion time will follow this month.

## Through encouraging reading for pleasure:

At 'The Purbeck School' we prioritise reading for pleasure. Fluent students are given opportunities to read at home and are given reading logs so that we can track their reading. Our librarian meets a large group of students during tutor time to support them with their reading for pleasure and their book choices. Last year, all our high ability readers met regularly to discuss the books that they were reading at home and also worked hard to help the school replenish their tutor time reads. Each tutor reads to their tutor groups between Monday and Thursday each week.

This academic year, our librarian, Mrs Bartlett, will be meeting a group of students in each year group who we have identified may need further support with book choices but that are fluent readers so that they can use this time to discuss book choices with each other. Some readers need more help in getting the right book into our hand so we have organised 'library appointments' with our school librarian where psychographic profiles are written down so that she can best support the reading choices of emergent readers. Many students are proud to work as library monitors and we have coordinated events in order to encourage reading at the school– such as live screening popular authors from the Hay Festival (Alice Osman), booking popular authors to visit school to speak to students and regularly responding to the requests for texts that students want.

Reading lists are updated regularly and curated on the web app as well as a half termly newsletter which is well read by parents. Reading displays are often thematically linked to school assemblies or calendared events such as Black History Month or LGBTQ+ history month or world book day.