Literacy Policy

Issue No	Author/ Owner	Date Written/ Reviewed	To governors for information	Comments
1	BJH	June 2015		
2	ISG	March 2017	22 March 2017	
3	ISG	December 2019	22 January 2020	

1.   Introduction

Backwell School seeks to take a coherent approach across the school and across departments towards explicitly teaching literacy skills. This policy is aimed at ensuring curriculum leaders successfully incorporate literacy into schemes of work and classroom teachers have the skills to implement these. Literacy includes writing, reading, comprehension and communication, and this policy intends to provide a unified approach and highlight the importance and the expectation towards explicitly teaching these skills (see "rationale").

2.   Context

The new Ofsted framework specifies that "*Teachers ensure that their own speaking, listening, writing and reading of English support pupils in developing their language and vocabulary well.*" As well as *"Reading is prioritised to allow pupils to access the full curriculum offer."* (Ofsted Inspection criteria, Sept 2019). Students with less developed literacy skills have problems with accessing the curriculum. This includes following instructions, processing texts and accessing work, as well as writing coherently. "*Students who struggle to express themselves adequately and to read and write efficiently quickly fall behind and give up. They encounter demands on their literacy skills that are often not acknowledged by their teachers, let alone supported. It is not just the illiterate who have literacy problems: anyone whose literacy skills lag behind their other skills is liable to slip into frustration, defeatism and disruption"* (Less Good Writing, ed. Durrant, R, 2011). Additionally the Teacher Standards hold all teachers accountable: "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." At Backwell we wish to provide a curriculum across the school that values and develops literacy skills, promotes students' ability to access all learning and to ensure that literate young people leave the school able to fully engage with all the challenges of the twenty first century.

3.   Procedures

On entry to Backwell School, all students' literacy skills are assessed by the Education Support department who then provide individualised literacy support to those that are identified as needing it. All pupils are tested again in years 8 and 9 to monitor their progress. (Appendix 1) Whole school training of literacy has taken place to ensure that all teaching staff are clear on their role in developing literacy of their students, and to develop common approaches. Written literacy skills will be assessed through a whole school feedback and assessment policy, which will be incorporated into departmental marking, feedback and assessment policies (Appendix 2). Explicit training has been provided on expected approaches to literacy (Appendices 3 – 7) and curriculum areas have identified key developments and have action planned the implementation of these.

4.   Monitoring

The policy will be publicised to staff in the Staff Handbook, and whole school training has and will continue to take place to develop teachers' skills and understanding of the issues surrounding literacy and effective tools to develop it. Monitoring of literacy across the school is carried out through the school observation form (used in appraisal of all teaching staff). The literacy feedback and assessment policy will be monitored through the whole school work monitoring process.

5.   Evaluation

The policy is regularly reviewed. The review will include governors, parents, staff and students. The criteria for the provision and effectiveness of this policy evaluates: how well the marking criteria is being used across the school through work monitoring, how literacy skills are taught in lessons through lesson observations, and how students' views on literacy change over time through student voice work. In addition, there should be a positive impact on attainment, though of course this is a measurement dependent upon highly multifarious factors and is not a reliable mechanism for determining specifically how effectively literacy skills are being taught.

The rationale

"In the secondary schools where teachers in subject departments had received training in teaching literacy and where staff had included an objective for literacy in all lessons, senior managers noted an improvement in outcomes across all subjects, as well as in English" (Removing Barriers to Literacy, Ofsted 2011)

Whole school approaches to literacy have proven to have had a positive impact on students' literacy skills, their ability to engage with the curriculum and their attainment (NCSL). The single biggest impact that any school can have on attainment (including those with EAL, in receipt of FSM or with SEN, or those in other focus groups) is through the provision of good quality teaching and effective feedback. This policy intends to lay out what this means in terms of literacy.

Appendix 1

Literacy skills from Education Support

The Education Support Dept. assesses every child as they enter the school using the literacy online reading and spelling tests. These tests are repeated in years 8 and 9 to ensure all pupils are making adequate progress.

Students who have an initial standardised score of below 90 are withdrawn for small group teaching for a minimum of 6 weeks. They follow a structured literacy programme, attending between two to six times a fortnight depending on their level of need. Students are provided with a personalised offer based on their individual need that can include one or more of the following:

Rapid plus reading groups 2 tutor times per week.

Lexonik 1 withdrawal lesson or 2 tutor times per week.

Snip spelling groups 2 tutor times per week.

Touch, Types, Read, Spell 2 tutor times per week.

Older struggling readers attend a reading group 2 tutor times per week.

If pupils have significant need, and are supported by an EHCP or top up funding, they follow a bespoke program of reading support advised by a specialist teacher.

Students are continually assessed and formally tested every six weeks to ensure they are making good progress and catching up with their peers.

Appendix 2

Literacy feedback – formative assessment

A unified approach to marking literacy skills was highlighted as clearly valued by Backwell students through student voice work, as well as being deeply rooted in the research to indicate the importance in raising literacy standards and skills. As classroom teachers we clearly are already focused on ensuring content is formatively marked. Having a unified approach for us all to follow will help students understand what they have been asked to do.

Literacy codes

S	Spelling
P	Punctuation error
C	Capital letter
//	Use a new paragraph
?	This doesn't make sense

When identifying an incorrect spelling, use the code in the margin and underline the error. In most cases the expectation is that the student will write out the correct spelling underneath their work. As a suggestion (key stage and ability dependent) no more than three spelling corrections per piece of work should be expected. This approach should be duplicated for punctuation errors.

High expectations: Setting high expectations can stop students from 'not bothering' and ignoring small mistakes that they rely on the teacher fixing. Consequently the expectation is that students proof read their work: When students complete a piece of work to hand in give them two minutes to proof read their work for accuracy with spelling, punctuation and grammar. Find their mistakes and fix them. Students could circle parts of words they're not sure of.

Appendix 3

Key Words

Curriculum areas should develop topic word banks, and within lessons key words should be highlighted and explicitly taught. The research is clear that word banks that are relevant to what is being taught at that time are valid and effective in increasing students' understanding of those words, and even more powerful are the use of just the key words for that lesson. What is not so useful are generic subject key words that are permanently on display and have only a small relevance to what is being taught at a particular time. When new words are introduced that are not spelt phonetically, then the classroom teacher should emphasise any silent/unusually spelt words (for example, s-c-ience).

Tier theory

Tier 1: spoken language
Tier 2: high frequency written text vocabulary
Tier 3: subject specific vocabulary

Students need to recognise 95% of the vocabulary in a text to understand it. Curriculum areas should be mindful of the tier 2 words that are used within subject texts and exam questions. These words should be highlighted and discussed with students in the same way as key words (tier 3 vocabulary).

Appendix 4

Paragraph structuring

- The PEE(L) model: Paragraphs should start with a **p**oint, followed by **e**vidence and/or **e**xample followed by **e**xplanation (and to extend **e**xploration).
- Useful connectives charts can be used to help students coherently join up ideas and explanations, and can be found in the student planner.

ADDING and also as well as moreover	**CAUSE AND EFFECT** because so therefore thus
SEQUENCING next then firstly finally	**QUALIFYING** however although/even though except despite
EMPHASISING above all particularly especially significantly	**ILLUSTRATING** for example such as for instance as revealed by
COMPARING equally similarly likewise just as	**CONTRASTING** whereas instead of alternatively otherwise

Appendix 5

Extended Writing tasks

Students at all levels of ability and stages of learning will be expected to complete extended writing tasks. There are some key techniques in ensuring that extended writing tasks are completed effectively. It is important that we do not inadvertently allow students to practise 'bad writing', at Backwell School we value high quality language whatever the content of the text. Before launching an extended writing task, planning and structuring writing should be explicitly taught. Establish agreed success criteria and utilising models and teacher modelling of what is expected are key to success. Before setting an extended task, consider:

> **Purpose** – what the writing is for
> **Audience** – who the writing is aimed for
> **Format** – the style of writing you want the students to take

A highly effective cross-curricula approach is to follow a stepped model for teaching writing.

- **Step 1 – establish clear aims.** What are the learning objectives? What is the point of the task? What is the task and how long will students have?
- **Step 2 – Provide examples** –one or two examples of what you want the students to write
- **Step 3 – Explore the features of the text.** Project the example and possibly annotate it, thinking aloud as you do so.
- **Step 4 – Define the conventions/marking criteria.** Make sure that the process produces a clear set of conventions (text features) or marking criteria that students will be able to use to develop their own writing
- **Step 5 – Demonstrate how it is written.** Write a sample text, thinking aloud about the choices you are making as a writer, and referring to the list of conventions. This is known as modelling
- **Step 6 – Compose together.** Get the students to help you to continue with the text. Take, consider and select from their suggestion. Give relevant reasons for your choices.
- **Step 7 – Scaffold students' first attempts.** You want students to write their own similar text, or continue your one. Some will not be ready or will need prompting to go further. Work with one group who need further guiding to help them what they have learnt in steps 1 – 6.
- **Step 8 – Independent writing.** Most of the class will spend time working independently – of you, but not of each other. Encourage them to learn by talking and writing collaboratively. Mini-whiteboards (or computers) are useful.
- **Step 9 – Draw out and review key learning.** 10 minutes before the end review the learning by getting students to clarify what they have learnt, how, and how they might use their learning elsewhere. They could peer assess each other's work using the marking criteria they agreed in step 4.

    Additional strategies include:
- Using academic language; 'say it like an essay'.
- 'If you can say it you can write it'; repurpose writing frames as **thinking frames** to help students with high quality writing.
- Re-write the sentence stems of a writing frame.

Appendix 6

Developing Reading

Reading is a complex active process in which readers use past experience and present skills to construct meaning. One of the most common reasons for a lack of engagement in the classroom is the difficulty experienced by many pupils in working with texts. Strategies for focussing on the structure and meaning of different texts are applicable to students of all abilities. Those learning English as an additional language, ethnic minorities or those from socially challenging backgrounds may need particular support in accessing formal, more academic texts or those which depend on metaphor or cultural knowledge for their meaning. Students are more likely to complete a reading task successfully if they have:

- a good working knowledge of subject-specific vocabulary and how this may vary from meanings in every-day life
- support from their teacher about which approach to reading they might need through modelled or shared reading
- a chance to access their prior knowledge before beginning – this cues them in to the subject as well as allowing you to deal with misconceptions
- support for how to make notes or record the information
- ways of monitoring their meaning as they read
- the teacher reading the text aloud, and/or inviting students to read
- a chance to work together, with the teacher supporting groups according to need

Approaches to reading include:

- **Scanning** – searching for a particular piece of information

- **Skimming** – glancing quickly through to get the gist, e.g. the sub-headings in a textbook to see whether there is something pertinent

- **Continuous reading** – uninterrupted reading or extended text, often for pleasure

- **Close reading (zooming in)** – careful study of a text, which includes pausing to look back or think in order to examine the text in detail, e.g. studying a text to provide a summary for colleagues or selecting key reasons for events and evaluating their veracity

- **Zooming out –** pulling back from the detail to consider the wider context.

Reading is a key in developing research skills, which is increasingly utilised through coursework, the writing of EPQs and to extend understanding outside the classroom. There are four key stages to research skills:

Stage	Pupil questions
Stage 1 – Establishing purposes	What do I already know about the subject? What do I need to find out and where will I go for the information? Who is this for? Who would it be good to talk to about this?
Stage 2 – Locating information	Where and how will I get this information? How should I use this information to get what I need? What does the reader need to know?
Stage 3 – Interacting with the text	What should I make note of? Which items should I believe and which should I keep an open mind about? What can I do to help myself understand this better? What can I do if there are parts I do not understand?
Stage 4 – Shaping and communicating information	How can I best communicate this? Does it need to be on paper? (voice or video recording, wall display etc.) Which is the best section? What might I have done differently? What have I learnt about research?

Appendix 7

Research Skills

P	Plan	What EXACTLY is my topic about and who is it for? What do I already know about the subject? What questions do I need to ask about my topic? Where will I go for the information? The Library The Internet Conduct a survey Approach a company/organisation Who would it be good to talk to about this?
L	Locate	How will I search for this information? What keywords should I use for the Library Catalogue or Search Engine? Is this information useful to me? What does the reader need to know?
U	Use	How do I find useful information in this book/website? How shall I take notes? Is this information RELEVANT to my topic? Is this information biased or out of date? Do I understand what I am reading, or should I look elsewhere? Have I made a note of the authors, titles etc
S	Shape & Evaluate	How can I best communicate this? (paper, voice, video, wall display) How can I best structure my project? What have I learn about my research? What might I have done differently?

From an idea by James Herring