

RAINHAM MARK GRAMMAR SCHOOL

LITERACY POLICY

Review Body:	School Improvement and Personnel Committee
Leadership Group Responsibility:	Assistant Headteacher/Head of English
Type of Policy:	Non-Statutory
Review Period:	Every three years
Reviewed:	February 2019
Next Review:	February 2022

A cross-curricular approach to literacy matters for our students and is a necessity. There is considerable evidence from employers, Ofsted reports and special studies that weak literacy skills can hold back students’ achievement, not only in education but also their employment prospects beyond the school. As a result of our high expectations, all of our students should leave the school fully confident and competent in their ability to use the English language correctly, effectively and appropriately for specific purposes. All students should also leave school having experienced the pleasure and benefits that come from wider reading. The new Teaching Standards make it clear that it is our responsibility as professionals to **“demonstrate an understanding of and take responsibility for promoting high standards of literacy and the correct use of Standard English, whatever the teacher’s specialist subject.”**

The aims of this policy are threefold: to raise awareness among staff, pupils and parents of the importance of literacy; to create a school culture which places the highest value on pupils’ literacy; to promote active reading and response to texts across the curriculum.

The fulfilment of these visions for students is therefore the shared responsibility of all teachers across all departments. The responsibility for ensuring the application of this policy rests with a nominated member of the Leadership Group. In order to fulfil this responsibility, the following will be implemented:

1. Use of base-line data

Assessment of students’ literacy skills will take place at the following points:

- (a) In every term of Years 7, 8, and 9
- (b) At the start of Years 10 and 11
- (c) In Years 12 and 13

All staff should access, take note of, and make use of data gathered to support, praise, encourage students. If students have been identified as weak spellers, for example, it will be expected that staff in all subjects take care to address specific spelling issues if they arise with that student in relation to work in their own subject. **English department** staff in particular will be expected to address literacy concerns with individuals.

2. Attention to literacy issues in marking

It is necessary for errors in writing to be drawn to pupils’ attention and for them to understand what is wrong and how to improve/correct the issue. This cannot be left only to English teachers. As outlined in the school’s spelling policy, teachers need to mark spelling, punctuation and grammar mistakes and build time into lessons/homework tasks for pupils to review any issues. Subject specialists should also feedback to a group the improvements in the style/format of a written piece of work; using short unnamed examples from students’ work on the board can be an effective way to do this.

3. Teaching for subject-specific writing tasks

Students need to understand the need alongside the requirements for writing not only for different genres but for audiences and purposes as well. This is most effectively taught by subject specialists being clear to students about the requirements of the writing in their own subject. There should also be opportunities for writing in both formal and informal situations. All staff should be clear about the expectations and conventions of the written forms used in the subject and to create opportunities for writing for specific and different purposes within the subject. It is the role of the literacy coordinator to liaise with staff and department heads to give advice if required on the specific language skills.

4. Development of reading skills

It is part of the school's aim for literacy that all students will experience the pleasures and benefits of wider reading. Fiction and non-fiction reading will feature in English lessons but the skills need to be encouraged and developed across all subjects. Staff should clarify the type of reading required in lessons, such as scanning, close reading for information retrieval, identification of key points, following an argument, drawing attention to the source, purpose and structure and in particular, inferential reading. Teaching these will involve the effective use of question and answer in the classroom as outlined in the school development plan. The school will aim to maintain a well-resourced library and the English department will endeavour to deliver challenging and engaging texts appropriate at each key stage whilst teaching specific reading skills. This has been particularly important, given the changes across Key Stages 3 and 4. Texts have been brought down into KS3 from the previous GCSE specification in order to not only prepare students for the rigours of GCSE, but also to ensure that they are exposed to a wider variety of texts than in previous years, particularly in poetry and fiction. To develop reading the English Department have set texts for KS3 form groups to read once every two terms on a rota basis. These are both fiction and non-fiction. All staff should provide opportunities for subject-specific reading and to model interest and promote the value of reading through displays and discussions.

5. Developing oral skills

Speaking and listening are also extremely important for students and this is an aspect of literacy that should be developed across the curriculum. Good questioning skills, group oral work, reporting, investigating and adopting the 'expert' role are all excellent opportunities to promote good oral skills. Teachers should show students the need to be alert to the precise use of language through the gentle re-enforcement of expectations and the proper use of Standard English. Opportunities for such skills should be built into schemes of work where appropriate and all staff should endeavour to correct the inaccurate use of Standard English in a sensitive manner during lessons.

6. Remedial support

Students who are in need of any additional literacy support must be effectively and quickly identified and this responsibility must not fall solely on the English department and literacy coordinator. Base-line testing will be used and the SEN register will be specifically checked for language issues. Other students need to be identified by subject teachers. The literacy coordinator will liaise with the SENCO and the English department to identify students through base-line testing; all staff should be aware of the presence of these students and to be alert to opportunities to support them in literacy. Upon arrival in Year 7, pupils undertake an initial written assessment within the English department. Post-marking, individual pupils are identified for the purposes of any intervention that may be necessary. One-to-one support is offered with the help of Year 12 pupils and Senior Students within English. Furthermore, pupils across all other year groups are referred throughout the year for similar support, coupled with targeted intervention at Year 11 for basic skills support prior to exams.

7. Provision of literacy training for teachers

It is acknowledged that while the enhancement of students' literacy is a responsibility for all staff, knowledge of how to do so or about specific grammar points may not be in the skill set of teachers outside of the English department. To further support staff, we would look to front a potential menu inset for 'Literacy Across the Curriculum' and a Literacy training session for NQTs. Any member of staff should feel able to ask for support in relation to literacy issues and the aim is to create a culture where any staff member feels comfortable enough to do so. The literacy coordinator will provide literacy training and in relation to specific grammatical knowledge as required and can provide advice on an ad hoc basis. All staff should model accurate use of Standard English and seek advice if needed. To further establish literacy as a key focus school-wide we are seeking to introduce and implement 'Module Summary Sheets' school-wide (key terms, enriching vocabulary, improving spelling) and a 'word of the week' for students to use in all subjects.