

Music Stuff Disciplinary Literacy policy

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“Literacy is fundamental for success in school and later life. Students who cannot read, write and communicate effectively are highly unlikely to access the challenging academic curriculum in secondary school and are more likely to have poor educational outcomes across all subjects.

The academic challenges faced by students moving from primary to secondary education are often underestimated. For example, students in Year 7 must adjust to being taught by a range of teachers—often undertrained in the literacy demands of their subject —using a range of new types of texts, which are often dense and more technical than those encountered in primary school. Such challenges can create a ‘literacy gap’, meaning that many students making the transition from primary struggle to access the secondary school curriculum.”

Education Endowment Foundation, Improving Literacy in Secondary Schools

1. Introduction and rationale

This policy supports Musicstuff’s aims to provide a high quality education for all students, to raise standards in all subjects and to equip students with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed beyond school. Disciplinary literacy will underpin our curriculum and will be an integral part of every lesson. Low student literacy levels can make access to the curriculum difficult; Musicstuff will put interventions in place for these students to improve both their literacy levels and their learning in all subject areas.

2. Context

A large percentage of students at Musicstuff have poor literacy skills when they join the school which hinders their progress and achievement in other subject areas. This can be due to poor attendance, EAL issues or the impact of EBD on students. Students’ literacy levels will be assessed when they enter the school so that should interventions be required, they can be put in place early.

Our school operates on several sites providing intensive support for some students identified by the PRU in KS4 and by providing specialist support for some students identified by their

mainstream schools from year 7 to year 11. Students in this latter cohort may stay for 5 years or they may only need support for a shorter timescale before returning to mainstream education. It will be important for student progress and early intervention that literacy data is communicated between stakeholders.

3. Aims and Objectives

- To develop a clear direction for disciplinary literacy at Musicstuff
- To embed disciplinary literacy in all subject areas
- To improve the literacy knowledge and understanding of all staff
- To improve students' literacy knowledge and skills by explicit teaching of disciplinary literacy in all subject areas
- To identify those students who need literacy interventions
- To develop a range of intervention strategies, including digital options*
- To monitor student progress
- To develop a culture of reading across the school
- To promote wider reading
- To improve students' knowledge of tier 2 and tier 3 vocabulary
- To provide opportunities for appropriate extended writing in subject areas

4. Literacy underpinning the curriculum in action

- Yearly action plan drawn up by literacy coordinator and priorities shared with all staff
- Embedding the seven literacy recommendations from the Education Endowment Foundation's guide to improving literacy in secondary schools (see appendix)
- Opportunities for explicit teaching of disciplinary literacy identified on medium term planning
- Use of *NGRT* and *Hodder Access to Reading* testing to establish reading ages and subject baseline assessments to identify low literacy levels and inform interventions.
- Share reading age data with all staff
- Intervention programme to be established re timing, staff and students. This will be divided into 2 pathways: for those students with a reading age below that expected to access secondary education we will use *Pearson's Rapid Plus* and for those students whose reading age is a little lower than expected we will use supervised *Bedrock Literacy* sessions and TA led individual reading sessions.
- Use of digital literacy platform such as *Bedrock* as part of improving literacy for all students
- Monitoring progress of literacy interventions
- Reading to be timetabled- reading out loud culture established and individual reading sessions
- Library stock to be improved/ developed in all centres to extend diversity of reading matter
- Opportunities for students to be exposed to more challenging texts in all subject areas
- Focus on explicit teaching of vocabulary both tier 2 words and subject specific words

- Displays to highlight subject specific vocabulary where appropriate
- Opportunities for extended writing in all subject areas, focussing of the conventions of specific text types appropriate for subject areas

Appendix 1

Seven literacy recommendations from the *Education Endowment Foundation's* guide to improving literacy in secondary school

Recommendation 1

Prioritise 'disciplinary literacy' across the curriculum

- Literacy is key to learning across all subjects in secondary school and a strong predictor of outcomes in later life.
- Disciplinary literacy is an approach to improving literacy across the curriculum that emphasises the importance of subject specific support.
- All teachers should be supported to understand how to teach students to read, write and communicate effectively in their subjects.
- School leaders can help teachers by ensuring training related to literacy prioritises subject specificity over general approaches.

Recommendation 2

Provide targeted vocabulary instruction in every subject

- Teachers in every subject should provide explicit vocabulary instruction to help students access and use academic language.
- Effective approaches, including those related to etymology and morphology, will help students remember new words and make connections between words.
- Teachers should prioritise teaching Tier 2 and 3 vocabulary, which students are unlikely to encounter in everyday speech.
- Teachers and subject leaders should consider which words and phrases to teach as part of curriculum planning.

Recommendation 3

Develop students' ability to read complex academic texts

- Training focused on teaching reading is likely to help secondary school teachers teach their subject more effectively.
- To comprehend complex texts, students need to actively engage with what they are reading and use their existing subject knowledge.

- Reading strategies, such as activating prior knowledge, prediction and questioning can improve students' comprehension.
- Strategies can be introduced through modelling and group work, before support is gradually removed to promote independence.

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Recommendation 5

Combine writing instruction with reading in every subject

- Combining reading activities and writing instruction is likely to improve students' skills in both, compared to a less balanced approach.
- Reading helps students gain knowledge, which leads to better writing, whilst writing can deepen students' understanding of ideas.
- Students should be taught to recognise features, aims and conventions of good writing within each subject.
- Teaching spelling, grammar and punctuation explicitly can improve students' writing, particularly when focused on meaning.

Recommendation 6

Provide opportunities for structured talk

- Talk matters: both in its own right and because of its impact on other aspects of learning.
- High-quality talk is typically well-structured and guided by teachers.
- 'Accountable talk' is a useful framework to ensure talk is high quality, and emphasises how talk can be subject specific.

Teachers can support students by modelling high-quality talk, for example including key vocabulary and metacognitive reflection.

Recommendation 7

Provide high-quality literacy interventions for struggling students

Schools should expect and proactively plan to support students with the weakest levels of literacy, particularly in Year 7.

Developing a model of tiered support, which increases in intensity in line with need is a promising approach.

Assessment should be used to match students to appropriate types of intervention, and to monitor the impact of interventions.

Creating a co-ordinated system of support is a significant challenge requiring both specialist input and whole-school leadership.