



LITERACY POLICY

Summary:

Newmarket Academy is committed to raising the standards of reading, writing, and verbal communication of all of its students. This is so that they develop the ability to use these vital skills effectively in all areas of the curriculum and use them as a platform to cope confidently with the demands of further education, employment and adult life.

This policy details the way in which staff can achieve this objective.

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1 RATIONALE

“Teachers should develop pupils’ spoken language, reading, writing and vocabulary as integral aspects of the teaching of every subject. English is both a subject in its own right and the medium for teaching; for pupils, understanding the language provides access to the whole curriculum. Fluency in the English language is an essential foundation for success in all subjects” (DfE, 2014, p.10)

Literacy underpins the school curriculum by developing students’ abilities to speak, listen and communicate; to think, explore and organise. This includes helping students to express themselves orally and in writing. All departments and all teachers have a crucial role to play in supporting students’ literacy development.

Competent literacy skills also enable students to read, understand and access teaching and examination materials, so that students are able to achieve their educational potential across the curriculum.

A student’s progress in literacy is related to their ability to think and learn.

The link between literacy and life chances has never been as widely researched and recognised as it is now. It is for this reason that the current government is focused on how many adults have literacy levels equivalent to a good English Language GCSE and how many pupils are achieving the equivalent of a good English Language GCSE in England. According to the National Literacy Trust’s report, *Literacy: State of a Nation* (2012), around 16 per cent, or 5.2 million adults in England, can be described as “functionally illiterate”. They would not pass an English GCSE and have literacy levels at or below those expected of an 11-year-old.

Literacy opens up personal pathways to success and is central to personal expression and active participation in the society, economy and culture. The importance of literacy is expressed in the 2012 OFSTED publication ‘Improving Literacy in Secondary School’:

“If smart growth is about knowledge and innovation, investment in literacy skills is a prerequisite for achieving such growth... Our world is dominated by the written word, both online and in print. This means we can only contribute and participate actively if we can read and write sufficiently well. But, each year, hundreds of thousands of children start their secondary school two years behind in reading; some leave even further behind their peers... Literacy is about people’s ability to function in society as private individuals, active citizens, employees or parents... Literacy is about people’s self-esteem, their interaction with others, their health and employability. Ultimately, literacy is about whether a society is fit for the future.”

2 DEFINITION OF LITERACY

Literacy involves the ability to read, write and speak articulately; however, it is also the capacity to recognise, reproduce and manipulate the conventions of a range of texts. There are also new forms of literacy (on-screen literacy and moving image media) to consider alongside the more traditional print literacy. Literacy is important because it enables students to gain access to the subjects studied in school, to read for information and pleasure, and to communicate effectively. Poor levels of literacy impact adversely on what students can do and have a negative impact on students’ self-esteem.

3 RAISING STANDARDS OF LITERACY

(a) Literacy is a whole school issue:

OFSTED in the 2012 publication 'Improving Literacy in Secondary School', states the benefits to all departments in a school for working collectively to improve literacy. These are:

- Literacy supports learning. Students need vocabulary, expression and organisational control to cope with the cognitive demands of all subjects.
- Writing helps us to sustain and order thought.
- Better literacy leads to improved self-esteem, motivation and behaviour. It allows students to learn independently. It is empowering.
- Better literacy raises students' attainment in all subjects.

(b) Newmarket Academy's Literacy Plan

- Literacy levels will be tested upon entry and subsequently to show progress.
- Thorough marking for literacy will take place in English lessons supported by marking for literacy across the school.
- Students will also have specific opportunities for Literacy in lessons
- We will encourage and facilitate students' reading for pleasure;
- The use of Accelerated Reader in years 7 and 8 to ensure extensive literacy development.
- Departmental Literacy plans;
- Further staff training.

Reading for pleasure is a vital first step in raising literacy levels within the school. We want our students to enjoy reading, to be able to use their reading to help them to learn and to develop increasing confidence and competence in reading so that they are able to read fluently, accurately and with understanding.

This is augmented by the use of "accelerated reader" for years 7 and 8. The competitive element and rapid feedback help make reading an enjoyable challenge for many students. Additionally, the data it generates allows for the tracking of reading ages across these two years and allows for effective intervention to take place. The rationale is to try and reduce the gap between the weakest and strongest readers before they get to year 9.

All departments want our students to become independent and critical readers who make informed and appropriate choices. To this end, all students are assisted to select personal reading material that is appropriate for them in terms of content, topic and challenge. Students are required to carry personal reading material with them throughout the school day and opportunities will arise for them to participate in private reading.

As part of the whole school approach to literacy, all departments, in consultation with the Literacy Coordinator, are required to produce a literacy plan for the academic year. Such planning will start with an audit of literacy needs in that subject area. This bottom up approach is designed to include all teachers in building literacy skills and is intended, in part, to emphasise the importance of literacy in all subject areas.

4 DEPARTMENTAL LITERACY PLANS

The plans will consider the following areas (many of which cross-over with the whole school teaching and assessment policies):

(a) Reading

The whole school has an approach to independent reading and research, within which we demonstrate and share a pleasure in reading and co-ordinate students' acquisition of, and expertise in, research methods. At KS3 this is supported by extended project based homework assignments.

(b) Learning through talk

- Using questioning to clarify ideas and develop deeper thinking skills;
- Active listening to understand;
- Thinking together.

Talk is our main means of communication in everyday life and is fundamental to the development of understanding. We want our students to develop increasing confidence and competence in Speaking and Listening so that they are able to:

- Clarify and present their ideas, explain and develop their thinking;
- Develop their ability to listen actively and respond sensitively and appropriately;
- Adapt their speech to suit a wide range of circumstances, including paired and group discussion and speaking to a larger audience;
- Use varied and specialised vocabulary, including subject specific vocabulary
- Use talk to question, hypothesise, speculate, evaluate, solve problems and develop thinking about complex issues and ideas;
- Deliver formal presentations in all subjects and as part of the extra-curriculum menu.

(c) Writing

Secure and developed writing skills are necessary if students are to maximise their potential. Examinations and other assessments require students to be able to compose extended writing that is perceptive, clear and well structured, using the formal rules of spelling, grammar and punctuation.

[Across the curriculum] writing helps us to sustain and order thought.

Students are provided with explicit skills training that will enable them to structure and organise writing in a cohesive manner with clear and appropriate expression. Students will be taught to adapt their writing to suit a wide range of audiences and purposes, including creative writing, formal letters, reports, instructions, journalism and marketing, using appropriate specialised vocabulary.

5 RESOURCING

Clearly, resourcing will depend on the needs assessed by subject leaders. However, certain elements should be in place in all classrooms:

- Each classroom displays subject specific vocabulary which students are encouraged to use regularly;
- Where appropriate, laminated word mats, dictionaries, glossaries and thesaurus are prominently available during lessons and students are actively encouraged to use them;
- Newmarket Academy has a Whole School Marking Policy which identifies the key aspects of Literacy that each department is required to address in their marking of students' work.

Furthermore, our Academy Library enables students throughout the Academy to develop their enjoyment of reading and to have access to a selection of regularly refreshed, non-fiction and fiction texts. Librarians assist readers to select appropriate reading for pleasure. In addition, the Library subscribes to a wide range of magazines, periodicals and daily newspapers, all of which are available to the students.

6 OTHER LITERACY OPPORTUNITIES

A positive reading culture is fostered by the promotion and participation in "World Book Day" and "The Carnegie Reading Challenge". These campaigns provide students with competitive reading activities.

Students are also encouraged to participate in annual House competitions:

- War memorial writing competition
- 500 words short story writing competitions
- Rotary Club public speaking competition

7 TRAINING

Newmarket Academy provides training for all members of staff so that they are able to comply with this policy document. This will apply to new members of staff as well as those established at the time of adoption of this policy. A Deputy Head of School (with the brief for Learning and Teaching) leads on Literacy while the Literacy Coordinator, in conjunction with the Learning and Teaching group, are there to advise and assist different departments to develop specific aspects of literacy. This includes providing information about Literacy approaches and QWC in respect of Ofsted requirements and examination board specifications.

8 FURTHER PLANS

Further plans to be adopted throughout 2018-2019 include:

- Working with the SEN Department to train literacy mentors from the upper years to coach and mentor weak readers and writers in the lower school;
- Produce information for parents giving advice on how they can help support improvements to their child's literacy and inform parents of pupils' reading ages.