

Hartlepool School

Literacy Reading and Phonics' Strategy:

2025 – 2026

INTENT

Hartlepool School's intention for reading is to create a holistic approach to literacy across the curriculum, developing an environment where students cultivate curiosity about the world around them whilst fostering a lifelong love of reading. We support early readers to develop their phonics knowledge and encourage all students to read for pleasure, building confidence, fluency and improving literacy across all subject areas. We recognise that literacy skills are both general and subject-specific, and have therefore implemented a strategy that promotes wider reading across all subjects we teach and strengthens literacy across the curriculum.

We aim to create a whole-school approach to reading within a language-rich environment where students are regularly exposed to ambitious vocabulary and a wide range of texts.

IMPLEMENTATION

At Hartlepool School, all learners are assessed shortly after entry to establish their reading age. This is measured using GL Assessments and provides a baseline from which progress can be monitored.

Learners whose assessment results indicate a reading age of 9 years or below are also given a further phonics assessment. From this, low-level readers are supported through targeted phonics interventions delivered on a 1:1 basis. The timing of these interventions is planned carefully in response to the individual needs of each learner.

The main phonics intervention programme used at Hartlepool School is **Fresh Start by Ruth Miskin**, which supports older students who require additional support in developing decoding, fluency and reading confidence.

Alongside this, Hartlepool School also utilises **Bedrock Learning** as part of its wider literacy and vocabulary development strategy. Bedrock provides structured vocabulary instruction and reading comprehension activities which help students to develop a deeper understanding of academic language. The platform supports students in building vocabulary knowledge, improving reading comprehension and strengthening their ability to access complex texts across the curriculum.

Together, these approaches ensure that both **foundational reading skills (through phonics intervention)** and **academic vocabulary development (through Bedrock Learning)** are supported across the school.

Read, Write, Inc - Fresh Start (Ruth Miskin)

Fresh Start is a catch-up and intervention programme with proven results for students aged 9–13 who are still developing their reading skills. It offers a simple but powerful solution to accelerate reading progress.

Developed by Ruth Miskin, Fresh Start teaches students at their challenge point so that they learn to read accurately and fluently. Through targeted activities, students also develop their comprehension, spelling and punctuation skills.

Resources are age-appropriate, matched to students' increasing knowledge of phonics and carefully levelled to accelerate progress.

Fresh Start is a systematic synthetic phonics programme for struggling readers in secondary schools and is particularly appropriate for students who:

- did not meet national expectations at the end of Key Stage 2
- have missed schooling or experienced disrupted education
- are new to the UK education system
- are learning English as an additional language.

Fresh Start can significantly accelerate reading accuracy, fluency and stamina through structured daily sessions. Quick diagnostic assessment ensures that students begin the programme at the most appropriate point for their needs, whether this is developing accurate decoding or improving reading fluency.

Consistent phonics lessons take place at each student's challenge point. Students make rapid progress because they learn and review letter-sounds and words at their level, while engaging with age-appropriate texts and modules that reflect students' everyday experiences.

Bedrock Learning

Alongside phonics intervention, Hartlepool School uses **Bedrock Learning** as a core part of its literacy strategy to develop vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension.

Bedrock Learning provides structured vocabulary instruction and reading activities designed to strengthen students' understanding of academic language. Through regular engagement with the platform, students develop deeper knowledge of key vocabulary, improve their comprehension of complex texts and build confidence when reading across the curriculum.

The use of Bedrock Learning has proven effective in supporting literacy development by:

- systematically teaching Tier 2 and Tier 3 academic vocabulary
- supporting students to access increasingly complex texts across different subject areas
- strengthening reading comprehension and contextual understanding
- improving students' confidence when encountering unfamiliar vocabulary
- reinforcing vocabulary learning through retrieval practice and repeated exposure

- enabling teachers to monitor student progress through platform analytics and assessment data

By combining targeted phonics intervention through Fresh Start with vocabulary and comprehension development through Bedrock Learning, Hartlepool School ensures that both the foundational and academic elements of reading development are supported.

All learners will have access to texts to support and encourage reading for pleasure both within school and at home, but teachers will ensure books are mapped to the learners current reading ability and interests, for example in PE lessons books are provided for learners based on sports' celebrities' autobiographies, in RSE books on culture and relationships and humanities provides books on geography, cultures and history.

The National Literacy Trust states that *"If we want to be skilful in helping other people, especially children, become willing, avid and – most important of all – thoughtful readers, we need to know how to create a reading environment that enables them."* Many learners arrive at school with low reading levels. At Hartlepool School, we ensure that individual gaps are identified so that learners can begin their journey towards becoming confident readers.

The Department for Education's *Reading Framework* highlights that the Simple View of Reading describes reading as the product of decoding and comprehension. This model was first proposed by Gough and Tunmer in 1986 and has played a significant role in shaping how reading is taught. It is commonly represented as a diagram consisting of two axes: a horizontal axis representing word reading (decoding) processes and a vertical axis representing language comprehension processes.

The National Curriculum programmes of study for reading reflect this model, presenting reading as two dimensions: word reading and comprehension. At Hartlepool School, targeted support for low-level readers is delivered through the Read Write Inc. Fresh Start programme by Ruth Miskin, while guided reading is supported through the careful mapping of reading materials, including Bedrock Learning and GCSE texts, to ensure access for all learners regardless of their reading ability.

Figure 1 -



Hartlepool School has drawn heavily on the recommendations of the **Education Endowment Foundation (EEF)**, particularly the guidance report *Improving Literacy in Secondary Schools* (first published July 2018).

1. Prioritise disciplinary literacy across the curriculum

Disciplinary literacy is an approach to improving literacy across the curriculum. It recognises that literacy skills are both general and subject-specific, emphasising the importance of supporting teachers in every subject to teach students how to read, write and communicate effectively within their discipline.

At Hartlepool School, subject-specific key vocabulary is displayed in classrooms to ensure regular exposure to the language and vocabulary conventions associated with each subject.

Bedrock Learning and Reading for Pleasure

Reading for pleasure is actively encouraged both during school time and beyond the classroom. Alongside structured literacy programmes, students are supported to engage with a wide range of texts that match their reading ability, interests and developmental needs.

Hartlepool School uses **Bedrock Learning** to support the development of vocabulary and reading comprehension. Through structured vocabulary instruction and reading activities, Bedrock helps students develop confidence when accessing complex texts and strengthens their understanding of academic language across the curriculum. Students can also engage with Bedrock outside of school, enabling staff to work collaboratively with parents and carers to support ongoing reading development.

Books for group reading are carefully selected based on the National Curriculum, current affairs and themes related to personal growth and development. Reading

materials are differentiated to support a range of reading levels and abilities, and teachers support learners in accessing texts that are appropriate to their reading stage.

Current affairs texts support learners in developing knowledge and interest in important social, cultural and political events. Personal development texts support learners in developing new skills, attitudes and perspectives that can positively impact their wellbeing. In some cases, these texts can also provide a safe and reflective space for students to explore experiences through the lens of characters and narratives rather than their own personal circumstances.

All texts are carefully selected and vetted by the school in conjunction with the Senior Leadership Team.

Students are provided with individualised support where necessary, including coloured overlays, modified or enlarged texts and other reasonable adjustments to support reading and writing.

Reading engagement is encouraged through a **competitive reading chart system**, where students track the amount of reading they complete over time. As students read more frequently, they progress further up the chart, creating a visual representation of their reading journey. This approach promotes motivation, healthy competition and sustained reading habits among students. Those who reach key milestones or the top of the chart receive recognition through certificates, rewards or prizes to celebrate their achievement and commitment to reading. This system helps reinforce the importance of regular reading and supports the development of confident, independent readers.

1. Provide targeted vocabulary instruction in every subject

All lessons focus on the key vocabulary required for the topic being taught. Staff encourage students to identify unfamiliar words and consider their structure and context in order to infer meaning. Subject-specific knowledge organisers are also used across a range of subjects to support students in learning and revisiting unfamiliar vocabulary.

Where appropriate, staff highlight word etymology and morphology to help students understand the origins and structure of words, enabling them to make connections with vocabulary they already know. For example, in science the prefix photo- means light; therefore photosynthesis refers to a process involving light. This approach supports students in decoding unfamiliar academic vocabulary and strengthens their understanding of language across the curriculum.

2. Develop students' ability to read complex academic texts

Across the curriculum, students are given opportunities to read complex texts that are relevant to the subjects they are studying. These texts may be used for comprehension, analysis or to support the development of subject-specific knowledge. For example, in mathematics students engage with extended written questions that require them to read carefully and identify key information in order to solve problems. This approach supports students in developing the reading skills needed to access challenging academic material across the curriculum.

3. Break down complex writing tasks

Where students are expected to create extended pieces of writing, teachers use a combination of planning, monitoring, evaluation and modelling to support students to structure their text appropriately and to a high academic standard. We also provide targeted support for those who need it through the use of (templates)scaffolded structures, acronyms, sentence starters and keyword mats as appropriate.

4. Combine writing instruction with reading in every subject

Aims and objectives are shared at the start of each lesson to support learners with clear written instructions that all students can follow. This also supports students who may struggle with verbal instructions in the classroom, providing a visual prompt to guide their learning. Students are encouraged to recognise the key features and conventions of effective writing within each subject through the use of model answers and structural analysis. SPaG (spelling, punctuation and grammar) is marked across all subjects in the school, with opportunities for students to correct and improve their work during lesson time.

5. Provide opportunities for structured talk

Students at our school can sometimes be reluctant writers; therefore, verbal discussion forms an important part of the learning process and is used as a platform to stimulate written work. Staff encourage high-quality talk through effective questioning techniques, modelling examples of academic discussion and encouraging students to use key vocabulary from lessons in their responses. This ensures that discussions include subject-specific language and support the development of higher-level vocabulary.

6. Provide high-quality literacy interventions for struggling students

All students receive targeted literacy intervention appropriate to their level and individual needs. This is in addition to SPaG marking across all subjects, dedicated reading opportunities and an emphasis on academic reading texts throughout the curriculum. Our literacy interventions are informed by the DfE Reading Framework (2021) to ensure that support aligns with national guidance.

Learners with SEN or disabilities are assessed termly, and staff provide targeted support that is regularly reviewed and evaluated so that it can be adjusted where necessary to meet the needs of the learner.

IMPACT

Through the implementation of our Reading Strategy, Hartlepool School aims to foster a genuine love of reading in all students. As students develop greater confidence and fluency in reading, they will be better able to access a wide range of texts across different subjects and genres.

Improved reading skills will enable students to engage more effectively with written material across the curriculum, supporting their academic progress and helping them develop essential communication and comprehension skills. These skills are transferable beyond the classroom, supporting future education, employment and lifelong learning.

Ultimately, our approach aims to ensure that all students develop the literacy skills necessary to become confident, independent readers who are well prepared for life beyond school.

QUESTIONS FOR EACH SUBJECT LEAD TO CONSIDER

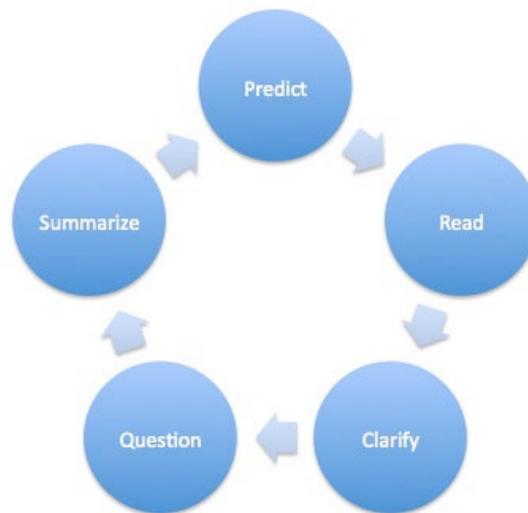
1. What is unique about your subject discipline in terms of reading, writing, speaking and listening? What is common with other subject disciplines?
2. How do members of the subject discipline use language on a daily basis?
3. Are there any literacy misconceptions held by students, for example, how to write an effective science report?
4. Are there words and phrases used typically, or uniquely, in the subject discipline?
5. How can we ensure that vocabulary instruction is effectively integrated into classroom teaching?
6. How can we move beyond static word lists to support students to develop a deeper understanding of the meaning and applications of words?
7. How can we ensure that subject specific vocabulary becomes memorable and that students can use new words in writing and talk?
8. How can we best teach students to read academic texts?
9. Which reading strategies improve the accessibility of subject specific texts and genres?
10. How can we support students to become effective independent learners?
11. How do we break down complex reading tasks?
12. How can we support students to become independent writers?
13. How can we motivate students to persist with challenging writing tasks?
14. Where should writing tasks sit within lessons and lesson sequences?
15. How can we integrate reading and writing tasks in different subject areas?
16. How can we support students to improve their spelling, punctuation and grammar?
17. Is it right to view talk as a luxury?
18. How can we structure speaking and listening activities to support learning?
19. Where should discussion activities sit within lessons and lesson sequences?

20. What types of interventions are most likely to have an impact?
21. Who should provide targeted support?
22. How will the impact of the intervention be monitored?

ACTIONS

- Evaluate the quality and complexity of existing reading materials across the school
- Ensure that the development of disciplinary literacy is coherently aligned with curriculum planning and delivery
- Identify 15 – 20 words of academic vocabulary needed for each topic and SoW, and teach these within lessons
- Identify opportunities to use the **Reciprocal Reading approach** to support students in accessing and understanding academic texts:

The Reciprocal Teaching Cycle



- For extended writing opportunities, break down writing tasks by providing word-level, sentence-level and whole-text instruction. Explicitly teach planning strategies and support students to monitor and review their writing
- Review Schemes of Work (SoW) to identify opportunities for structured talk and ensure these are clearly embedded within lesson activities or task instruction.
- Promote vocabulary development through initiatives such as Word of the Week
- Use educational board games and interactive activities where appropriate to reinforce vocabulary and literacy development
- Develop and deliver targeted intervention programmes for students who require additional support