

## **Rugby Free Secondary School: Literacy Strategy 2025-2026 Academic Year**

### **Pre-Amble:**

Rugby Free Secondary School implements a comprehensive literacy strategy focused on fostering a love of reading, developing strong writing skills, and improving overall literacy. Our strategies are designed to improve the life chances includes the Accelerated Reader program, targeted reading interventions, and a focus on subject-specific vocabulary and writing skills across the curriculum.

### **Research Underpinning Our Approach:**

At RFSS, our plan is rooted in research and best practice that then been evaluated adapted for our context. The primary foundations for our plan have centred on the EEF’s Guide to Supporting School Planning: A Tiered Approach - and this piece of work underpins the priorities, actions and barriers for Catch-Up at RFSS. The context of our school reflects the themes and patterns from national research, but strategies have been tailored to needs of our students and their families.

When compiling potential actions for this academic year, consideration was given to the three tiers explained in the aforementioned EEF publication, which are as follows:

#### **1. Teaching**

#### **2. Targeted Academic Support**

#### **3. Wider Strategies**

Consequently, all actions and strategies are mapped against these three tiers, with research used to support the implementation of, and rationale behind, these strategies. Therefore, our strategies relate not just to the academic progress of students, but to their development as a whole.

We work hard to ensure that assumptions about the lower expectations of disadvantaged students. All students are taught to strive for maximum progress and attainment, throughout all years and subjects.

The research is consistent with surveys of parents and teachers on access to education during and since the pandemic, which indicates disparities in access to technology and levels of parental support -one potential explanation for *why* gaps might open between groups of students. The recent evidence is also consistent with subsequent research, which shows national attitudes to education changing, with almost 3 in 10 people believing that education is not significant. These studies have also influenced the thought process behind the interventions and strategies that have been implemented.

In terms of maximising progress, many of those strategies identified by EEF as delivering the biggest gains feature. For example, teacher marking/feedback is monitored by regular SLT Quality Assurance. Other targeted interventions from teaching and pastoral support staff (e.g. small group tuition, behaviour, attendance/reintegration, mentoring and counselling) are available and offered as required and their impact monitored and reviewed. Robust in-school (and external) post-assessment processes ensure timely interventions.

## Reading Across School and Assessment of Reading:

### **How do we assess?**

This year we have introduced standardised, twice-yearly reading testing for all KS3 learners at RFSS through the use of the NGRT- New Group Reading test.

The NGRT (New Group Reading Test) is used to check how well children can read words and understand what they read. It's a quick, reliable test that helps us see if a child is reading at the expected level for their age, identify any reading difficulties, and track progress over time. The results also help us to adapt and plan the best support for each child's reading development.

### **NGRT**

#### **What is it?**

The New Group Reading Test (NGRT) is a standardised, adaptive reading assessment that is designed to evaluate students' reading and comprehension skills across a range of ages, typically between 5 or 6 up to 16 years of age

- NGRT assesses **reading comprehension and word reading ability**.
- It helps identify students who may be struggling with reading or are below, at, or above age-related expectations.

#### **What are the components of the test?**

- **Word Reading:** Measures the ability to accurately read individual words.
- **Comprehension:** Assesses understanding of passages, including literal and inferential questions.

#### **Who will we test?**

All students in years 7-9 and any new starters in the academic year

### **RFSS Disciplinary Reading Strategy**

To develop students' reading skills, we use the RFSS Disciplinary Reading Strategy that is broken down into 3 stages:

- Before reading
- During reading
- After Reading

For each stage, we consider the best ways to support access to written texts, check for understanding and build reading resilience.

The breakdown of these stages can be seen in **figure 1**, with further details of how we implement each strategy in **figure 2**.

Figure 1:

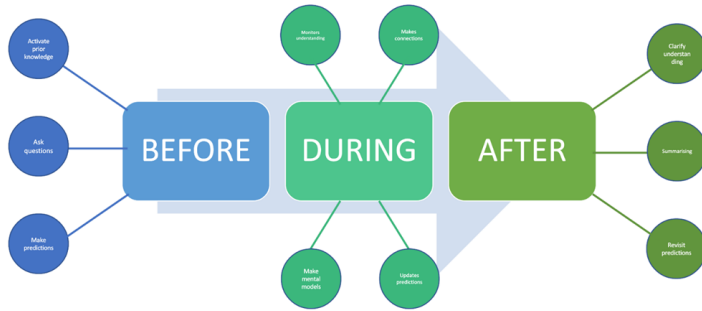


Figure 2:

<p><b>BEFORE – Pre-read the text</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Barriers to reading have been planned for</li> </ul>	<p><b>DURING – Model Reading Aloud</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The text is read by teacher or paired reading</li> <li>Key vocabulary is identified and emphasised</li> <li>When appropriate, cognitive processes are made explicit</li> </ul>	<p><b>AFTER – Check for understanding (summarise)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An appropriate CFU summary strategy is used</li> </ul>
<p><b>BEFORE – Contextualise the extract</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Necessary prior knowledge has been activated</li> <li>Necessary questions are asked to check students' current position</li> </ul>	<p><b>DURING – Ask questions to check understanding</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An appropriate CFU method is used</li> </ul>	<p><b>AFTER – does the text need revisiting?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A decision is made based on the needs of the learners</li> </ul>

In order to support our learners overcome barriers to reading, we have introduced the Time for Talk and Time for Reading strategies across the whole school. These are whole school strategies to develop the student's oracy skills, and help overcome reading barriers in the classroom, making our learning environments fully inclusive to all.

**RFSS Oracy Strategies**

**Time to Talk**  
 "We are polite and we respect each other's opinions"  
 "We listen intently - face each other, make eye contact and use non-verbal cues."  
 "we take turns."

**Make a Claim**  
 I believe...  
 In my opinion...  
 I suggest...  
 I think...  
 Did you know...  
 The answer to this is...  
 This is important because...  
 The solution to this is...

**Dig Deeper**  
 Why do you think...?  
 Give me an example of...?  
 How do you know that?  
 Can you explain further?

**Challenge the Response**  
 I disagree because...  
 There is another way to view this...  
 Have you considered...?  
 Can you clarify what you mean?

**Develop That Idea**  
 This idea is great... we could also...  
 This can be explored by...  
 Another thing we could add is...  
 Building on what... said...

**RFSS Reading Strategies**

**Time to Read**

**Pre-assess the level of text**  
 My teacher will always pre-assess the texts before they teach it to make sure there is sufficient challenge and support in place.

**Pre-teach vocabulary**  
 My teacher will pre-teach any new vocabulary to use before we read the text to make sure we can access the reading.

**Teacher reads first**  
 My teacher will always read any new texts out loud to us first so we can gain a better comprehension of what we are reading.

Targeted Support for Students, Including Interventions:

At RFSS we offer a waved intervention approach to support the needs and help overcome the barriers for all students.

To support learners with overcoming reading and literacy barriers, intervention wave 1 provides academic support for Key Stage 3 students who require additional catch-up and support with literacy in all core subjects. Targeted literacy interventions at KS3 ensure that gaps in reading and writing are addressed early, enabling all students to access the full curriculum and succeed across subjects.

### Currently we offer:

1. **Literacy Group-** Incorporating reading comprehension tasks and language techniques understanding nouns, verbs etc. Also, some short independent writing tasks.
2. **Phonics-** Lower ability students to support them in their sounds to then help with their reading.
3. **Paired Reading-** Working 1 to 1 with an LSA to support in reading skills and supporting in word vocabulary.
4. **Stareway** to spelling- A specific programme to support working on common words using them for reading and writing.
5. **Dyslexia-** We have a specific group which looks at spellings and writing for students specific with dyslexia/ potential dyslexia.
6. **Handwriting-** Both cursive and non cursive work books working to support handwriting in order to improve writing and reading skills.
7. **The reading buddy program** – one to one support from KS5 students
8. **Small group timetabled lessons** - once a week or fortnight, to support with literacy skills in subject areas. These are led by subject specialist and KS2 literacy experts

### English and Literacy Booster Groups:

At RFSS, support and inclusivity is our key priority. We also aim to help our learners' overcome barriers that they may have faced in KS2. To help support with this, in KS3 we run English Booster groups to give extra support to students who need a little more help with reading, writing, or confidence in English. These small groups provide focused teaching in key areas like vocabulary, comprehension, and extended writing, helping students to build strong foundations for success across all their subjects. Booster groups are designed to close gaps early, boost confidence, and ensure every child feels ready for the challenges of GCSE and beyond, while also encouraging a positive attitude towards reading and writing. At RFSS we currently have 2 booster groups per year groups in year 7, 8 and 9, and these are taught by English subject specialists.

### Reading for Pleasure:

To promote reading for pleasure, RFSS has worked hard to create a culture where books are celebrated, accessible, and valued. We dedicate time for independent reading, encourage student choice by providing a diverse range of texts that reflect different interests and backgrounds, and run engaging activities such as book clubs, author visits, and reading challenges. Our teachers model positive reading habits, sharing their own enthusiasm for books through our 'what are we reading?' posters and our library is a welcoming, vibrant space that encourages students to

explore and develop a love of reading widely and adventurously. At RFSS we believe reading opens doors into different worlds and cultures, sparking imagination and creativity, whilst also providing a source of comfort and enjoyment for many. Our aim is to foster a love of reading, thus empowering our learners to continue learning, questioning, and exploring the world long after they leave the classroom.

As a result, we actively promote reading for pleasure through our Read Freely, Savour Stories (RFSS) initiative:

- **Integrated Literary Spine:** Each subject contributes to our RFSS Literary Spine, promoting a diverse selection of texts across all subjects and key stages. We also have our subject reads whereby each subject will recommend a book for each Key Stage, 3 times a year, that supports with reading around their subjects and these books are found in the library.
- **Reading Challenge:** We incentivise reading for pleasure through the RFSS Reading Challenge, with progress tracked in English lessons and the library.
- **Reading reward points:** Students are awarded reading praise points in each subject and every time they visit the library. At the end of each academic year, students will be awarded a gold, silver or bronze award.
- **Personal Reading Experiences:** We foster a love of reading by sharing our personal reading journeys. Teachers display "What I am Reading" on classroom doors and engage students in discussions about various texts, including non-fiction, audiobooks, and graphic novels.
- **Celebration of National Days:** We celebrate events like World Book Week and International Read To Me Day, with participation from all departments.
- **Promotion of Non-Fiction:** Recognizing the importance of non-fiction, we utilize resources like 'The Day' website within our tutor program and across the curriculum.

### Text Choice in the English Curriculum:

When choosing what books we teach at RFSS, we aim to balance **learning, engagement, and inclusivity**. We select texts that:

- **Develop skills:** Help students with reading, writing, and critical thinking.
- **Reflect diverse perspectives:** Include authors and characters from different cultures, backgrounds, abilities, and identities.
- **Offer challenge with support:** Stretch students' thinking while providing guidance through discussion, explanations, or adaptations.
- **Balance classics and contemporary works:** Teach literary tradition while including modern, relevant stories.
- **Engage students:** Relate to their interests and experiences.

We regularly review our reading list to make sure it stays **inclusive, relevant, and supportive** for all students.

Our current reading lists and text choices can be found in the English Curriculum document on the website

### Writing Development:

#### Marking for SPAG

In order to promote high standards of literacy across the curriculum, all staff are expected to use the following marking codes. As a minimum these should be used on:

- The first paragraph of any marked extended writing
- The first page of a marked exam/assessment paper

Sp –	incorrect <b>spelling</b>
P –	incorrect or missing <b>punctuation</b>
_____ –	underline any words to indicate <b>unclear meaning</b>
V – or has	student needs to use subject specific <b>vocabulary</b> , needs to vary their vocabulary used it inaccurately

### Use of Modelling

Teachers need to use modelled examples of writing in their subjects to provide students with clear, concrete examples of high-quality work. This practice is crucial because it helps students understand the expectations for their writing, including structure, style, and content. By deconstructing modelled examples, teachers can highlight key elements such as effective use of vocabulary, coherence, and argumentation. This approach not only demystifies the writing process but also builds students' confidence and skills, enabling them to produce their own high-standard work.

Examples of writing could include:

- English Language and Literature: Analytical essays, creative writing pieces, poetry, book reviews, and literary analysis.
- Mathematics: Written explanations of problem-solving processes, justifications for answers, and reflective pieces on mathematical concepts.
- Science (Biology, Chemistry, Physics): Lab reports, research summaries, scientific explanations, and evaluation of experimental methods.
- History: Historical essays, source analysis, diary entries from historical perspectives, and argumentative pieces.
- Geography: Case study reports, geographical essays, fieldwork write-ups, and data analysis reports.
- Modern Foreign Languages: Essays, letters, diary entries, translations, and comprehension responses.
- Religious Studies: Comparative essays, reflective writing on ethical issues, analysis of religious texts, and argumentative essays.
- Design and Technology: Design briefs, project evaluations, process journals, and technical reports.
- Art and Design: Artist study reports, reflective journals, critical analysis of artworks, and exhibition reviews.
- Physical Education: Analysis of performance, fitness plans, reflective journals, and evaluations of sporting activities.

## Speaking, Listening and Oracy:

We have introduced an oracy strategy at RFSS because we believe strong speaking and listening skills are vital for learning, confidence, and future success. Oracy helps students to express themselves clearly, build vocabulary, and engage more deeply in classroom discussions. It also supports literacy and academic progress across all subjects, while preparing young people with the communication skills they will need in further education, employment, and everyday life. By making oracy a focus, we aim to give every student the confidence and ability to have a voice and use it effectively.

The Department for Education highlights the importance of oracy – speaking and listening skills – as a key part of learning and life. Oracy is built into all of our curriculums, in line with the national Curriculum, as we believe it helps our learners develop confidence, build social skills, and make better progress across all subjects.

### **Promoting Classroom Talk**

In order to promote the active participation of **all** students and support Checking For Understanding, lessons at RFSS should employ use of **'Turn and Talk'**:

#### **1. Establish Talk Partners**

- When getting students to talk to each other, they need to know who to talk to. Depending on your room layout or learning environment, you might call upon:
  - Partner A – Partner B
  - Shoulder Partners
  - Face Partners

#### **2. Set the Question with a goal and time frame**

- Set a question for all students to discuss in their pairs e.g. *"List five key features of the character..."*
- Set a precise goal to focus the time e.g. *"You've got two minutes..."*

#### **3. Establish the vocabulary you want students to use**

- Tell students which words to use e.g. *"Using the term photosynthesis, explain how..."* or *"Talking like a mathematician, use the terms .... to explain how..."*
- Support with talking frames
- Model what a good one looks like

#### **4. Build in Thinking Time**

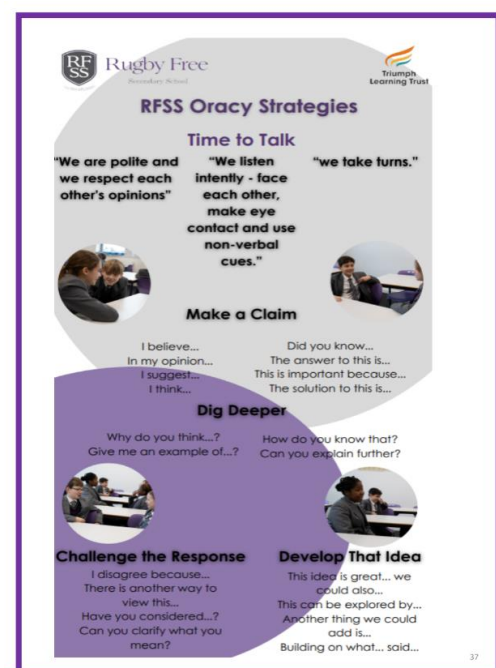
- Asking students to talk won't just make good talk happen.
- Allow students to think about their own ideas before they talk to others as this will build better discussion. It may prevent one person from dominating e.g. *"15 seconds by yourself, think about..."*, followed by *"Now with your partner, discuss..."*

#### **5. Circulate**

- One of the main aims of this technique is to hear what students say and to hear if they understand. You need to circulate
- If you don't hear discussion, maybe they don't understand
- If students know you are listening, they are more likely to do it
- This also helps you to find good ones for class feedback

#### **6. Cold Call to sample**

- Get at least two sets of ideas to check understanding



### Broadening Vocabulary:

Explicitly teaching and revisiting tier 2 and 3 vocabulary is crucial for student success. Studies indicate that a robust vocabulary is a strong predictor of academic achievement and future success. For instance, the Education Endowment Foundation highlights that students with a rich vocabulary are more likely to excel in reading comprehension and overall academic performance. By systematically teaching and revisiting advanced vocabulary, we ensure that students can access and engage with complex texts across the curriculum, thereby closing the achievement gap and enhancing their educational outcomes.

At RFSS we do this through:

- Ensure the teaching of **both** tier 2 and tier 3 vocabulary is integrated into and revisited throughout the curriculum.
- Encourage students to create vocabulary glossaries at the back of their books.
- Write key words for the lesson on the 'Key Words Poster' or display on PP's
- Word of the week is displayed on all screens and praise points awarded for use in subjects
- Explicitly discuss synonyms with students, clarifying that not all synonyms are equal.
- Use the 'RFSS Unlocking Vocabulary' sheets, or an appropriate alternative, to explicitly teach vocabulary.
- 'I say, we say, you say' oracy strategy to support with pronunciation of new words
- Skills taught to students to support the use of new vocabulary in many contexts

"RFSS is committed to developing the emotional literacy of all students as part of their personal, social, and academic development. Emotional literacy is the ability to recognise, understand, label, express and manage emotions. We know that it is a foundation for positive mental health, respectful relationships, and effective learning'.

**Throughout the school year we will promote emotional literacy through:**



- **Curriculum integration:** Embedding emotional literacy skills into PSHE, tutor programmes, assemblies and subject teaching where relevant.
- **Whole-school ethos:** Encouraging a culture of respect, empathy, and open communication across the school community.
- **Targeted support:** Providing additional guidance and interventions for students who require extra help to develop emotional awareness and regulation.
- **Staff training:** Ensuring staff are equipped with the knowledge and strategies to model and support emotional literacy.
- **Partnership with families and external agencies:** Working collaboratively to reinforce skills and provide specialist support where needed.

### Staff Professional Development - Literacy:

All of our classroom facing staff receive a range of ongoing CPD (Continuing Professional Development) focusing on literacy and oracy skills and teaching throughout the academic year to ensure that all our teachers, across every subject, have the skills and strategies to support students' reading, writing, and communication effectively. The DfE suggests, strong literacy underpins learning in every area of the curriculum, so equipping staff with up-to-date approaches—such as explicit vocabulary teaching, reading comprehension strategies, and oracy development—helps close attainment gaps, improves student outcomes, and fosters a consistent, school-wide approach to literacy. CPD also enables our teachers and support staff to model best practice, share expertise, and stay informed about research and guidance from the DfE and other educational bodies.

Currently, all of our teachers and support staff have undertaken the new DfE Supporting Reading in Secondary Schools training to ensure they have a clear understanding of effective strategies for developing students' reading and oracy skills.

### Library Lessons and Using the Library:

Our school library provides a supportive space to access a wide range of resources, from books and digital tools to quiet study areas, that help RFSS learners extend their learning beyond the classroom. The library is open daily for all year groups on a rotation at break and lunch to help learners build independent reading habits, strengthen research skills, and promote a culture of curiosity.

Library lessons take place in the English curriculum at KS3 guiding students to explore both fiction and nonfiction texts in the library, whilst also helping to develop critical thinking skills, broaden their vocabulary, and see reading as an essential part of their academic and personal growth.

### Student Leadership Opportunities:

Currently our student leaders and 6<sup>th</sup> form students support with reading and literacy through our reading buddy program.

Our 6<sup>th</sup> form students pair with KS3 students and offer one to one support with:

- Reading aloud together
- Discussing the story and asking comprehension questions
- Predicting what happens next or summarizing chapters
- Guided reading sessions

Supporting younger students with reading is a great role for 6th form students, and it can benefit both the younger learners and the older students' skills and confidence and leadership skills.

