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Reading Policy

"To learn to read is to light a fire; every syllable that is spelled out is a spark."

Victor Hugo, Les Miserables

Introduction

Acorn AP is committed to raising the standards of reading of all of its students so that they develop the ability to use their reading skills effectively to enjoy reading for both purpose and pleasure. Skilled and capable readers are better able to cope confidently with the demands of further education, employment and adult life.

Rationale

Evidence suggests that children who read for enjoyment every day perform better in reading tests, develop a broader vocabulary, increase their general knowledge and have better access to the rest of the curriculum and a better understanding of other cultures. There is a strong correlation between reading and vocabulary knowledge. The best way to acquire a comprehensive vocabulary is to read widely and those who do so are likely to become more competent readers.

"Students who read independently become better readers, score higher on achievement tests in all subject areas, and have greater content knowledge than those who do not" (Krashen 1993; Cunningham and Stanovich 1991; Stanovich and Cunningham 1993).

"Research findings in applied linguistics and reading research consistently show a strong correlation between reading proficiency and academic success at all ages, from the primary school right through to university level: students who read a lot and who understand what they read usually attain good grades." (Pretorius, E)

The ability to read is vitally important as it enables students to gain access to information, to communicate effectively and to have the skills for reading for pleasure. Poor levels of reading can impact negatively on what students can achieve and may have an adverse effect on self-esteem.

Why learn to read?

Reading is important for a number of reasons:

- Words – spoken and written – are the communication channels for everyday living.
- Reading is fundamental to function in today's society. Everyday activities require the ability to read information and instructions.
- Reading is a vital skill for future education and employment. A person is limited in what they can accomplish without good reading and comprehension skills.
- Reading is important because it engages and develops the mind.
- Through reading we discover new things. Learning tools – books, magazines and even the Internet – require the ability to read and understand what is read. There is an immense amount of information available to us and the best way to take

advantage of it is to read it. Students who know how to read can educate themselves in any area that interests them.

- Reading develops the imagination and therefore our creative and thinking skills.
- Reading is essential in developing a good self-image. Poor or non-readers often have low opinions of themselves and their abilities.
- Reading improves spelling and expands vocabulary. Seeing and understanding how words are used in different contexts can give a better grasp of word usage and definitions

Reading and learning from texts

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.
- Become independent and critical readers who make informed and appropriate choices.
- Select information from a wide range of texts and sources including print, media and ICT and evaluate those sources.
- Apply techniques such as skimming, scanning and text-marking effectively in order to research and appraise texts.

Building vocabulary and understanding

Developing reading skills is about listening and understanding as well as exposure to print. Through regularly hearing fiction stories and non-fiction extracts, students are exposed to a rich and wide vocabulary. This helps them build their own vocabulary and improve their understanding when they listen, which is vital as they continue developing their reading skills.

Assessment and planning

We use information provided by referring schools and data provided by baseline assessments taken during induction to assess students' reading abilities. This information is used to make informed choices about appropriate texts and to plan appropriate support for students in order that they may successfully access texts. Regular and ongoing assessment is recorded to ensure progress is being made by individual students and where necessary, intervention strategies will be deployed.

The teaching of research skills and opportunities for independent reading and research are planned into the timetable and detailed in medium and short-term plans to ensure students develop the relevant skills. Teaching staff use every opportunity to demonstrate and share a pleasure in reading.

Where appropriate, reference to reading should be planned into lessons, including:

- Explicit reference to the skills or reading strategies to be taught, used, or reinforced.
- The intended purposes of reading within the lesson, e.g. gain, enhance or verify information and knowledge or to read for enjoyment.

- Teaching and enabling students to acquire the basic skills of reading.
- Teaching and giving opportunities to practise skimming for overall meaning and scanning for key points, words or phrases.
- Teaching and giving opportunities to practise sifting and selecting information and taking notes from texts.
- Teaching and enabling students to infer and deduce meanings, recognising the writer's intentions.
- Teaching and giving opportunities to research and investigate from printed words, moving images and ICT texts.
- Teaching how to use quotations correctly to support points and to link them with students' own comments.

Strategies for developing reading skills

A number of recognised strategies will be implemented depending on the needs of students. Within timetabled lessons, these may include:

- Phonemic awareness and the teaching of phonics, including through That Reading Thing.
- Decoding and word studies, including the learning of a sight vocabulary.
- Language development, including vocabulary development.
- The explicit teaching of comprehension strategies, including Reciprocal Reading.
- The development of fluent reading by reading and rereading familiar texts.
- Use of a wide range of reading materials.
- Opportunities for both guided and independent reading, for shared, paired and group reading.
- Planned opportunities for students to read every day.
- Use of reading and spelling games.

In addition, arrangements may be made for:

- Allocated 1:1 reading intervention for specific students.
- The use of recognised recovery programmes for students who are below the expected reading age, such as: Catch Up; Read, Write, Inc.; Fresh Start; Every Child a Reader; Alpha and Omega; Toe by Toe.

Already fluent readers will be:

- Encouraged to develop higher-order reading skills, enabling the use of inference and deduction.
- Encouraged and inspired to broaden their choice of texts, analysing, reflecting and evaluating a variety of written language.

Classroom practice

Acorn AP is committed to providing:

- Interactive and interesting displays of reading material relevant to the topic or subject.
- Classroom displays of subject-specific vocabulary which students are encouraged to use regularly.

- High-quality reading material, which is up-to-date, relevant and balanced in its presentation of ethnicity, culture and gender.
- Access to a good quality range of texts during lessons.
- Access to quality reading resources throughout the day, including newspapers, e-books and comics.
- Dictionaries, glossaries and lists of appropriate subject vocabulary during lessons, which students are encouraged to use.
- Access to appropriate audio-visual equipment.
- A classroom environment which is conducive to good literacy practice.
- Lessons and resources adapted for SEND students including those with Dyslexia.
- Accessible formats and appropriate content of reading material.

Home links

Extensive research indicates that children who learn language in their homes through listening to stories had a direct correlation to their reading skills.

‘Six years of schooling could not make up for the loss children suffered by not engaging in literacy events in their early lives.’ (Wells 1986).

‘... daily experiences with books help all children succeed in school and that gifted children were more likely to be read to daily, have books and reading areas in their homes, and go to the library more than once a month. He concluded that primary caregivers influence a child’s development and learning’ (Ginneti 1989).

Our policy is to encourage reading at home and to create links with parents/carers, involving them in reaching reading targets. This need not only be through reading with their child but also through talking to them about a variety of subjects.

Snow (1996) found that talking with children had an even stronger effect on literacy learning than reading aloud to them. During table talk, parents/carers answer children’s questions, give them focused attention, and listen to their words. Children learn new vocabulary, clarify misunderstandings, and expand surface-level understandings.

We promote a tri-angulated approach to improving and extending reading skills, involving the student, the parent/carer and Acorn AP.