

Reading at Evelyn Grace Academy

At Evelyn Grace Academy, we are committed to providing our students with lifelong literacy skills. Over the past year, we have implemented several initiatives to create a reading culture within the school. We have developed discrete word reading skills alongside comprehension to foster the love of reading and the foundations for future academic study.

Creating a Reading Environment

The library has been re-structured to become a well-organised space where students feel comfortable interacting with displays, reading materials, and technology. Here, a book club enrichment consisting of Key Stage 3 and 4 students continues once weekly, returning from our online meetings. This term we are engaging with *We are All Made of Molecules* by Susan Nielsen. Further, the library has been timetabled across the week to immerse our students within our reading culture, providing a comforting background for study and reading. This is reflected through our dedicated Key Stage 4 afternoons, where students have a dedicated study space designed to help them prepare for GCSEs.

Additionally, we are excited to introduce e-reading to our students! Students of all year groups (7-11) have access to a shared reader, Overdrive books, both at school and at home. Students can access school-purchased Library material, and the wider Ark network library on the SORA app.

At the beginning of the school year, our students are assessed using the NGRT, a test which compares their reading skills against the national average. We follow-up their original assessment scores by periodically testing students during the year to determine their progress and literacy ability. This test assists us in setting-up further academy-wide support, such as reading intervention groups and support, thus allowing students to flourish.

Encouraging Reading for Pleasure

We have created our own tutor group reading sessions inspired by the 'Drop Everything and Read' campaign (also known as DEAR). Here students acquaint themselves with authors of popular fiction, including S.E. Hinton, Benjamin Zephaniah, Morris Gleitzman, Malorie Blackman, and Anthony McGowan. These weekly reading sessions provide students the opportunity to cultivate their oral reading skills in an entertaining manner but also introduce students to world issues, helping them engage and critically consider the world around them. Students are surveyed on DEAR time, providing them with a voice in the types of books which are selected to read.

In the classroom, our English department has implemented reading for pleasure lessons. Typically, students would be able to have library lessons, but due to the Covid-19 pandemic, students now use a shared classroom reader, with a structured lesson built around the chosen book.

From January, staff have also widely encouraged reading for pleasure through our EGA Reads recordings. Staff took turns reading chapters from *The Hobbit* by J.R.R. Tolkien, enabling students to listen to the book during lockdown. These recordings have been uploaded and shared widely across the SPark library webpage and inspired our digital enrichment this summer term.

Reading within the Curriculum

This Autumn term, the Fresh Start program has been rolled out to our Key Stage 3 students. After it showed improvement in the literacy of our previous Year 7 cohort. This program enables students to decode and comprehend lengthy texts which they will encounter through their time at the academy and in further education. This program, set out and managed by the librarian, run in conjunction with our LSA and English teams, enables more confident readers who can reflect and engage with their texts.

Lexia is being introduced across the school in the Spring 2022 term. Suitable for students across Key Stage 3 and 4, Lexia PowerUp assists students in gaining literacy ability through the study of morphology, grammar, and comprehension. This computer-based program is tailored to individual strengths and weaknesses, further developing the critical thinking skills necessary in secondary curriculum. Students participating in our Lexia groups have in-schools sessions once weekly and complete sessions at home twice weekly.

There is a whole school vocabulary strategy in place, which is department specific. Students are given the meaning of key words of the lesson and then are asked to engage with this through an activity where they use this word. This year, we are excited to introduce guided annotation and vocabulary development through the Ark developed strategy, 'Inside, Outside, and Beyond'.

Academic Reading has been introduced to students, motivating them to read challenging texts which go above and beyond the scope of their lessons. These Academic Reading sessions take place across the curriculum, with specialised texts selected by each department. In lessons we use close reading, which links the reading with vocabulary acquisition, decoding and comprehension. Close reading is set 3 times per term as a minimum in all subject areas. We also use text in every lesson, so that students have the opportunity to read and use annotation strategies to decipher text. Academic reading is provided as homework tri-weekly to engage with subject content outside of the lesson.

All of these initiatives are designed to assist students' literacy, alongside the delivery of high-quality lessons and enrichments. As a school, we are committed to providing positive literacy and reading habits to ensure the best outcomes for our pupils. This knowledge is also fostered to make reading a life-long skill used and treasured outside of the school.

