

LITERACY, EAL & LANGUAGE POLICY

Date	Review Date	Contact
01.02.19	01.02.20	Head of School & Education

This policy is underpinned by the core values of Newbury Hall as stated in our aims & ethos.

Definitions & rationale

We are guided by the Basic Skills Agency’s definition of literacy: “The ability to read, write and speak in English ... at a level necessary to function and progress... in society in general”. We seek to develop our pupils’ literacy with this baseline aim in mind and with a further, more pressing focus on pupils’ immediate needs of academic literacy. Academic literacy is defined by King’s College London’s Academic Literacy department within its Centre for Language, Discourse & Communication as: “the reading and writing of academic texts”.

Good academic literacy skills equip pupils to achieve well in school and to play their part in society when they leave. They are a fundamental addition to our students’ language-learning aims, and especially so given differences in cultural background where literacy may not be learnt so explicitly nor from such a young age as in the UK system (see the Curriculum Policy for a description of our students’ backgrounds). They are a fundamental part of granting students access to the rest of the curriculum; not only academic aspects, but including PSHE and SMSC provision, fundamental British values, sport and the rest of school and community life.

Academic philosophy

Pupils do not come to Newbury Hall to repeat what they had been doing in lessons elsewhere; that has not worked well enough for them and they need a more satisfying academic experience. What we give pupils is a more relevant alternative - academic literacy across the disciplines in a tutorial learning atmosphere - so that they are properly supported towards their next step, be it to return home with better English or to enter mainstream UK education with more confidence.

Academic literacy at Newbury Hall means new language, knowledge and skills in the service of better thinking and becoming a better pupil generally. Academically literate pupils can successfully face the challenges of understanding and responding creatively to complex ideas in English and can generate both informed and personal opinions. To encourage this, many lesson types aim ultimately for ‘elaborative recreation of the stimulus’ through ‘motivate, stimulate, articulate’ processes as described in lesson guidance documents and lesson plans.

The classroom atmospheres created by the teaching team are vastly more important than any small-scale learning within an individual lesson; durable, flexible learning happens over longer periods and neither can nor should be measured in an hour. We ask, rather, how our classroom atmospheres promote positive attitudes to learning: “Do our pupils enjoy being challenged by teachers they respect?” and then whether they make progress because of this in the longer term.

Literacy in school life

We aim to embed literacy throughout the school curriculum and culture. See the Curriculum Policy, guidance documents for individual lessons and development plans for further details.

Literacy examples in the whole-school timetable

- ReadTheory's adaptive online reading platform with weekly certificates to motivate;
- Eloquence Workshops and Debates involving critical and creative thinking and discussion;
- Book Club on a weekly basis and the addition of a Poetry Club by 2019;
- Personal Trajectories & Global Citizenry lessons to cover careers and PSHE provision.

Testing: Pupils do weekly Progress Tests (100-gap C-tests) for general proficiency. Long-stay pupils also do NGRT (reading ages) and NGST (spelling ages) tests and often take IELTS exams.

Interventions: Additional literacy support is provided on a 1:1 basis; changes of class, programme or exam entry can be made; teaching can be adapted within lessons, etc.

Literacy in Intensive Academic Literacy & Intensive Exam Skills programmes

These programmes focus specifically on literacy and language skills throughout. See the Curriculum Policy for more details.

Literacy in subject exam preparation programmes

- Weekly IELTS academic English lessons with reading and writing tests as typical prep;
- Subject lessons differentiated for EAL students with a focus on the four skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking, regular spelling tests on terminology, a focus on rubric, etc.
- Extra subject, language and exam skills practice as needed (afternoons, evenings, weekends).

Development

We aim to improve the visibility of reading around school with posters; move books to more immediately available places; do more structured reading for pleasure; restrict access to distractions such as wifi and phones; improve emotional responses to reading by conditioning and gamification whilst avoiding superficial, temporary gains; support teachers in their delivery of skills in class through training delivered by experienced EAL professionals; respond swiftly to EAL concerns flagged by staff or other students, for example by performing phonics screening as deemed appropriate; ensure pupils see literacy as important in all subject areas and in life itself.

Signed:

Alex McNish
Head of School & Education
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