



The Valley School

Whole School Literacy Strategy

“Literacy supports learning. Pupils need vocabulary, expression and organisational control to cope with the cognitive demands of all subjects... Better literacy leads to improved self-esteem, motivation and behaviour. It allows pupils to learn independently. It is empowering.”

OFSTED - Improving literacy in secondary schools: a shared responsibility

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Mission Statement

At The Valley School, we are committed to developing the highest standards of literacy in all of our students, enabling them to read, write and speak to the best of their ability in every subject across the curriculum. Students with poor literacy skills are often disengaged from their learning and believe they cannot learn; we recognise that improving all aspects of literacy can have a positive impact on students' self-esteem, motivation, behaviour and academic progress. These skills are essential during school years as students' navigate a broad curriculum but even more vital beyond school; within the wider world, proficient literacy skills will enable students to make sense of the world around them and to meet the demands of further education, the workplace and adult life. Literacy skills are arguably the most important tools a young person will need as they make the transition into adulthood; they are keys that will unlock opportunities and experiences they might otherwise miss out on.

The Valley School is committed to promoting reading across the curriculum, encouraging students to read for pleasure and explicitly supporting the development of reading skills to build confidence and remove barriers. We aim for all our students to work towards a fluency in writing that will enable them to communicate clearly, both in their studies and in the wider world. Furthermore, The Valley School is committed to recognising the value of constructive speaking and listening across the curriculum, in all key stages, and ensuring that opportunities to develop this important skill are built into all lessons so as our students are able to be effective verbal communicators during their time at The Valley School and beyond.

The Valley 3 – Key Literacy Priorities 2022/23:

- **Building Our Students' Vocabulary**
- **Reading Across The Curriculum**
- **Speaking And Listening – Every Student Having A Voice**

Building Our Students' Vocabulary

Why building vocabulary matters:



- **It Improves Reading Comprehension**

Research has shown that students need to understand **98%** of the words they read to understand **what** they are reading. Improving vocabulary skills will improve their understanding of all texts they encounter.

- **It's Important to Language Development**

Students who develop a rich vocabulary tend to be deeper thinkers, express themselves better and read more. Improving language and literacy skills early in life will help them be more successful academically and communicatively.

- **Communicating Ideas**

Successful communication or “saying what you mean” is dependent upon a good vocabulary base. Using the right words when talking, makes students far more effective communicators.

- **Expressing Yourself in Writing**

Having a good vocabulary to draw from can help students write more effectively. Students need to use a more formal tone when writing – not conversational language – and to do that, they need a richer vocabulary to tap into those words we don't use when we speak.

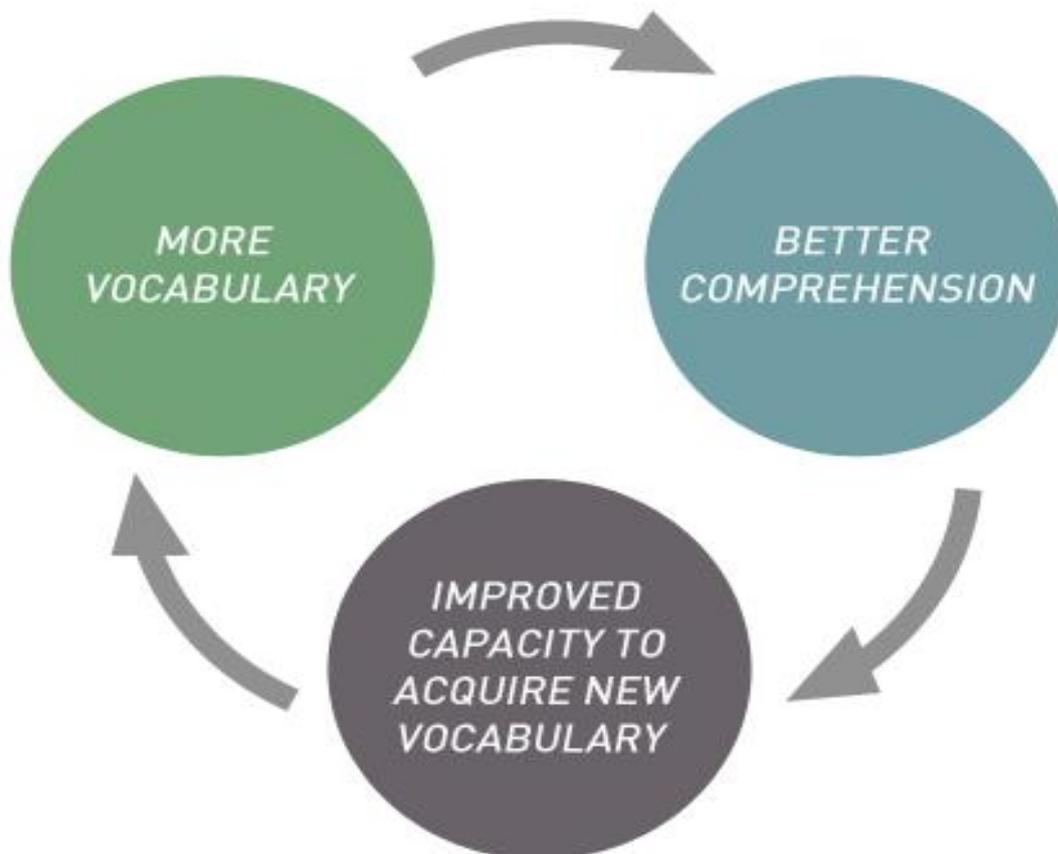
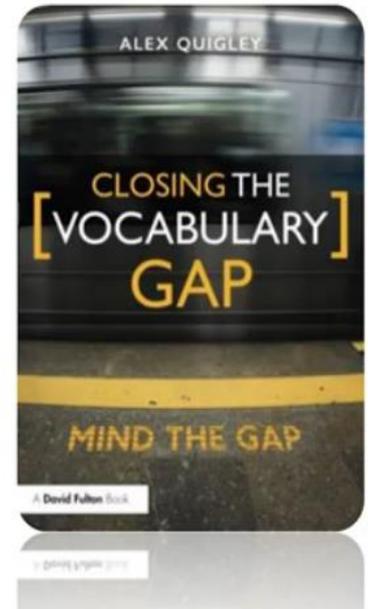
Closing the vocabulary gap

By explicitly teaching a mere 300 to 400 words a year we can foster an annual growth of around 3000 to 4000 words.

With a bigger, harder curriculum, in any subject, we begin with the words.

Vocabulary teaching can be incidental, disorganised and limited, when it needs to be organised, cumulative and rich.

(Quigley, 2018)



How will we do this?

Approaches across the school may include:

- CPD for all staff with a focus on vocabulary.
- All staff will have an awareness of the three tiers of vocabulary and the role of each tier.
- Teachers to include key vocabulary acquisition on planning documentation (for example on medium term plans, learning journeys, etc.).
- Teachers to explicitly teach tier 2 and tier 3 vocabulary; Learning Partners to support this process.
- Planned opportunities to revisit key vocabulary at regular intervals.
- CPD for all staff on colourful semantics and visual coding to support the inclusion of key vocabulary within written work.
- Key vocabulary to be displayed, and regularly referred to, in classrooms/learning environments.
- Whole-school template for teaching new vocabulary, which supports the ongoing work being done by the SALT.
- Teachers and Learning Partners to model using key vocabulary verbally and in written form.
- Use of aides in class to support the application of key vocabulary (e.g. vocabulary mats, writing frames, etc.).
- Glossaries of key vocabulary at the start of new topics.
- Low stakes testing of vocabulary to support retrieval and retention of key words.
- Learning walks to observe, celebrate and share good practice whilst identifying where additional support may be needed.

Reading across the Curriculum



Why reading across the curriculum matters:

- Reading is a fundamental skill, necessary for **navigating all aspects of the curriculum**. Reading skills are needed to decode word problems in maths, understand recipes in food technology and read scripts in performing arts.
- Reading is an **essential life skill**. Being able to read, is key to increasing independence as students move towards adulthood. Our aim, as a school, is for all of our young people to have sufficient literacy skills that will enable them to read a book or newspaper, understand road signs or price labels, make sense of a bus or train timetable, fill out a form, read instructions on medicines or use the internet.
- There is a wealth of **evidence to support the importance of developing reading skills** and why it is something that goes **hand in hand with explicitly teaching vocabulary**. Some key points to consider are:

‘Children who read more will come across a greater number of words and get more practice at decoding words and have greater opportunities to enhance their knowledge of morphology and spelling than less avid readers.’ (Cain and Oakhill 2011)

'There is a strong reciprocal relationship between word knowledge and reading comprehension.' (National Reading Panel 2000, Biemiller 2003)

'Teaching definitions by themselves are unlikely to enhance comprehension.' (Baumann, Kame'enuu & Ash 2003)

How will we do this?

Approaches across the school may include:

- CPD for Learning Partners on reading, with a focus on guided reading and strategies to support the development of key skills when working with young people.
- CPD for all staff on various aspects of reading.
- All departments to revisit long/medium term planning to identify where there may be additional opportunities to include reading.
- All staff to promote reading for pleasure by proudly displaying their 'What I am reading' signs and keeping them up to date.
- Staff to model reading strategies during lessons. This may include using phonics to break up the words, looking at suffixes or prefixes to better understand the word, or looking at the other words within the sentence for clues about the context.
- Utilise a wide variety of reading materials during lessons, for example fiction, non-fiction, poems, song lyrics, news articles, instructions, recipes, reviews.

- Staff to be signposted to additional CPD/professional reading opportunities by Whole-School Literacy Lead.
- Heads of Year to ensure some form time each week is dedicated to reading and/or wider literacy activities and monitor this is happening.
- Form tutors to support whole-school literacy aims by planning reading activities that are best-suited to the needs of their group.
- Learning walks to observe, celebrate and share good practice whilst identifying where additional support may be needed.

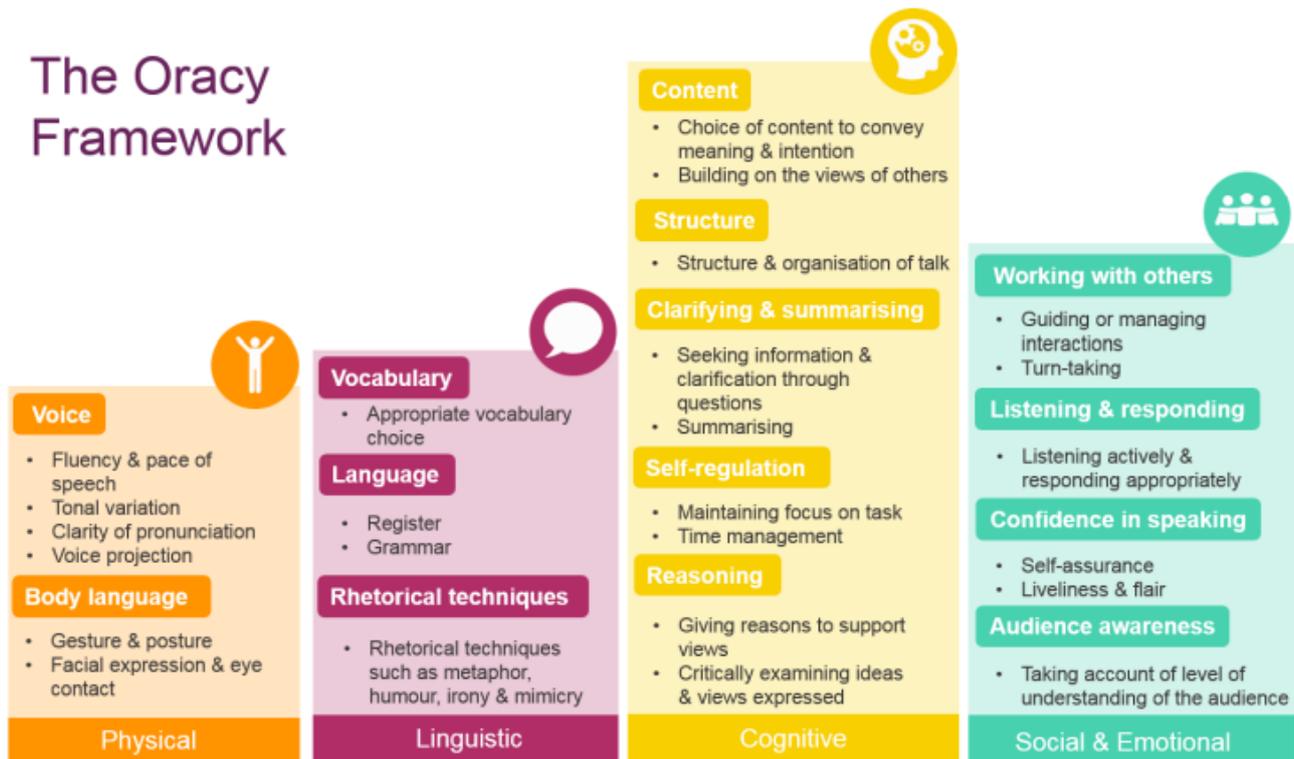
Speaking and Listening – Every Student Having a Voice



Why speaking and listening matters:

- At The Valley School, we want to develop the oracy skills of our young people. This means explicitly teaching and supporting students to express themselves clearly, articulately and politely. Speech and language difficulties are an additional learning need for many of our students and therefore this is a key reason why every lesson, regardless of subject, should incorporate speaking and listening.
- Speaking and listening is a vital skill that needs to be developed at school because an aptitude in the ability to communicate is a key requirement often cited by many employers across a range of sectors.
- Oracy skills enable an individual to become an active member of their local community. A person that is proficient in speaking and listening will be able to assert themselves, voice objections and advocate for themselves.
- The ability to communicate clearly and listen are necessary for developing and sustaining both friendships and professional relationships.
- Typical day-to-day transactions and encounters (such as purchasing shopping, going to the post office or visiting the bank) require speaking and listening skills.

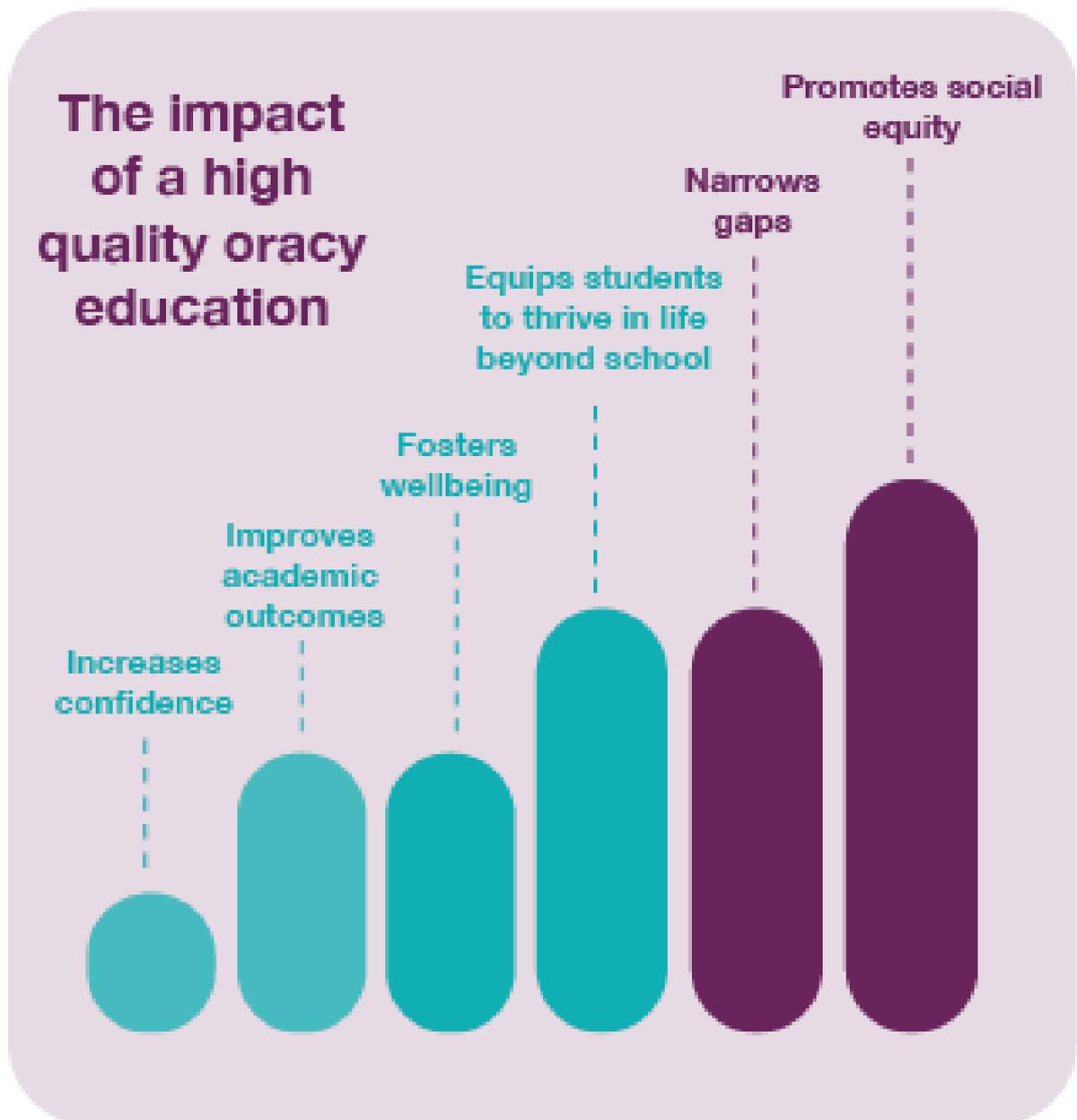
The Oracy Framework



Above is a visual representation of The Oracy Framework which was developed by The University of Cambridge and Voice 21. This framework breaks oracy into four strands: physical, cognitive, linguistic and social and emotional.

This framework illustrates what makes good spoken communication. The four strands enable successful discussion, inspiring speech and effective communication. The framework can be used by staff to give feedback and assess progress. Students could also use the framework to self-assess, peer-assess and talk about talk.

The Oracy Framework is not subject-specific and all teachers can use it to develop speaking and listening skills within the curriculum.



How will we do this?

Approaches across the school may include:

- Planned speaking and listening activities within schemes of learning. Students should have the opportunity to develop skills in a range of activities such as presenting, debating and role-play, as appropriate to individual subjects.

- Targeted verbal questioning in every lesson to ensure students are both able to demonstrate their understanding verbally and develop/practise using their oracy skills. Questioning to be tiered low-level to high-level thinking (Blanks questioning, Blooms Taxonomy, etc.) to ensure all students are able to participate and develop their speaking and listening.
- Regular opportunities for paired and/or group work during lessons to encourage and develop verbal communication and purposeful conversation skills.
- Frequent opportunities to invite students to share their thoughts and opinions about a range of topics. This could be subject specific, about whole-school issues or related to current affairs/the wider world.
- All staff to model positive communication (with other staff and students) and explicitly teach respectful responses/interactions, if necessary for the needs of the group or individual students.
- There should be regular activities which require students to practise their active listening skills. This does not mean just being quiet but actively listening to what is being said and being able to demonstrate they have understood what has been communicated. Examples of active listening could include answering questions on what has been said, completing a task based on verbal instructions or paraphrasing what they heard in their own words.

Evaluating impact

Dedicated CPD time will ensure that all staff have a thorough understanding of The Valley School Literacy Strategy and their responsibilities in the implementation of it.

The Literacy Strategy is a working document and will therefore be reviewed regularly with additions or amendments being made as necessary.

As the key priorities from the Literacy Strategy are embedded across the curriculum and across key stages, half-termly Literacy focused learning walks will take place to monitor how effectively the three identified areas are being delivered and developed during lessons. This may include some or all of the following: observing a short part of the lesson, looking at the use of display (including working walls), looking in student books and talking to students. Literacy learning walks will include all subjects and all year groups.

To measure long-term impact we will use Lexia to assess students and obtain baseline data. We will do this at the beginning and end of each academic year. Between these points, we will also look at English teacher assessment data to identify any students that may need additional support in one or more of the key priority areas. Data from Lexia will show which school year group a student is working at in their reading. This is the same way termly reports will document student progress.

Literacy Marking Codes

When marking for literacy, it can be helpful to use codes and then encourage students to refer to the grid below as they make their corrections. This will encourage them to proactively engage with feedback and hopefully avoid repeating the same mistakes time after time.

Literacy marking should have a focus, especially for students that find written communication especially challenging. We would not correct every spelling error; instead we would focus on key terminology or topic-specific vocabulary.

Notation	Description	Students' Task:
SP	Spelling	Write the correct spelling in the margin 3 times.
T	Subject terminology	Add the correct subject terminology – verb/adjective/simile
C	Capitals	Fix this capital letter error.
P	Punctuation	Figure out which punctuation needs to be changed/added and fix it.
//	New paragraph	Use the TIPTOP paragraph rule to fix this error.
/	New sentence	Add a full stop and ensure your next sentence begins with a capital.
D	Date	Add a date to your work.
U	Underline	Underline your date and title.
^	Missing word	Reread your work and add the missing word.
?	Does not make sense	Rewrite this sentence so that it makes sense.

Display Expectations

- **Key terminology and topic words should be spelt correctly on display work.**

Key terminology and topic words should be on display in classrooms, maybe on a working wall, whiteboard or a display board. Students should be regularly directed to them during lessons and use when redrafting their work, if necessary.

- **Capital letters should be used at the beginning of sentences and full stops should be used to show where sentences end.**

Some students will need to be explicitly reminded of this during the drafting process. If there are capital letter errors on display work (such as when using proper nouns, I as a personal pronoun, etc.) marking should acknowledge these errors. Other punctuation errors may be addressed, depending on the level the student is working at.

- **Writing on display work should be legible.**

If legible handwriting is a challenge, consider whether ICT could be used to present written work or could ideas be presented in an alternative format such as drawing or photographs?

- **Make displays purposeful.**

Every piece of work a student produces does not need to go on display. Before you display work, be clear about why you're doing it and how long you're going to leave it up. Be selective; covering every possible space will make the room seem cluttered and overstimulating.

- **Display work does not have to be perfect but should be complete and reflect the best work a student was capable of producing.**

The 'working wall approach' can be utilised to display work in progress, early drafts, sketches, mind maps and planning documents.

- **There should be a brief explanation accompanying display work to explain the context and purpose.**

If there was a particular aim/learning objective associated with a particular piece of display work, it would be useful to include this.