

The Culture of Reading at Somervale School

“The importance of reading for children cannot be underestimated. Reading for pleasure can benefit a child’s education, social and cognitive development, their wellbeing, and their mental health.” (<https://www.highspeedtraining.co.uk>)

Somervale School has a positive culture for reading in all subjects. We encourage, motivate and support students to read. Reading for pleasure and independence are key. We have embedded within the school this positive culture of reading through using a range of strategies to support students. Our vision is that all students achieve their full potential and we promote reading strategies throughout the curriculum so our students not only perform better academically but their vocabulary is larger and more extensive. As students progress through their education strong readers develop imagination, creativity, empathy and gain a greater understanding of their world.

The school has used successfully, for many years the Accelerated Reader programme, which supports students to read a wide range of books from our school library and complete frequent star reading comprehension quizzes to monitor their reading. Accelerated Reader supports students by guiding them through personal goals and engaging them by providing suggestions of titles linked to their interests and reading ability. It also provides opportunities for monitoring comprehension and to also build student’s literacy skills mastery, which motivates students to engage and read more frequently. We have had many students during the last year read over 1 million words.

Our inviting school library has over 10,000 books and students have access to use the library before school, during the school day, during lunchtime and after school. In addition to our school library students in KS3 have access to myON, an online library that gives students access to more than 6,000 enhanced digital books, including audio books which helps foster student engagement and achievement and support weaker readers. This resource can be accessed by the students both within school and at home. This improves student engagement, use of vocabulary and impacts on their overall academic performance in all subjects across the curriculum.

Reading ages are shared with teaching staff through class mark sheets and this supports staff to ensure that all information used within lessons is presented in a way that is appropriate to each student’s needs. This supports students' engagement in lessons through the use of a variety of suitable reading material and texts. These enable students to develop their social skills, interactions with peers and cognitive development is supported.

Staff use a wide range of strategies in lessons to support students which include:

- presenting reading tasks at a suitable level
- showing students how to work on a text when they are expected to read alone (eg. skim and scan, how to take notes, how to identify key points)
- promoting reading to students in and out of lessons
- displaying key words and using them
- identifying the purpose for reading different texts

Where students have specific needs in literacy they are placed on the SEND register and a provision plan listing individual strategies is produced and shared with teaching staff to support the acquisition and support of core literacy skills as part of Quality First Teaching.

At Somervale School we use the high five next steps model to promote active reading of texts to support students comprehension.

High Five: Next steps



Read aloud the article: you are likely to have students with low reading ages who will struggle with the silent reading of a complex text

Live model active reading strategies. As you read aloud, stop and refer back to what was discussed earlier, ask questions, re-read, clarify vocabulary and discuss

Once an article is read aloud, you can ask students to read it again silently, ideally with focus questions for them to answer (struggling readers will feel more confident as they have heard it read aloud).

Summarising key ideas can be tricky – it is best to initially use shared writing for this so that you can help them to identify main points.

Reinforce key vocabulary from the article several times, including in subsequent lessons. Remember that some students need to be exposed to a word 20 times before they remember it! Choral repetition, dual coding and quizzing work well.

Students will read a wide range of materials in lessons but also read their own selected reading book during tutor time every day, promoting reading for pleasure. Furthermore, all English classes have assigned 'library lessons' as part of their curriculum time. To reward students' engagement in reading and completion of Accelerated Reader quizzes we have celebration assemblies promoting our reading culture across the whole school. The use of Accelerated Reader is having a positive impact engaging students and motivating them to read regularly and this is evident in the data analysis we have received. Our school usage of Accelerated Reader quizzes from September 2019 to March 2021 increased by 66% and our Star Reading assessments increased by 106%.

Throughout the year the school is involved in a number of events and activities that help to promote reading for pleasure. These have included the Scholastic Book Fair, World Book Day celebrations, The National Literacy Trust's Euro Story and the Carnegie Book Award group. Students have also taken part in the National Literacy Trust Survey which has supported our culture of reading.

Findings from the National Literacy Trust Survey (2021) demonstrated that Somervale students read to relax (58.4% of students surveyed); to learn new things (51.2% of students surveyed) and to learn new words (45.5% of students surveyed). 89.3% of Somervale students surveyed stated they liked reading. 23.1% of students said that their enjoyment of reading had increased since returning to school following the first lockdown. 69% of students identified that outside of school they read at least once a week or more (59.1% stating they read two times or more per week). 79% of students surveyed stated they were a good or very good reader.

Additionally, in the survey students identified that events such as World Book Day at school had supported them to read more books (60.26%) and talk about books with family and friends (52.56%).

Where students find reading more challenging a number of strategies are used to develop students' reading ability and enjoyment in reading. In addition to the Accelerated Reader programme and myON interactive library discussed above struggling readers are involved in the IDL intervention. This is a speaking-computer based multi-sensory system which supports learners with dyslexia and other learning difficulties to increase their reading and has been assured by the Dyslexia Association.

Furthermore, research has shown that this programme has a positive impact on improving both reading and spelling ages (Scrase, 2002; Lifting Barrier, 2014 and research by the University of Lancaster, 2018). This programme is used primarily with students in Key Stage 3. Students are identified for this programme through both information passed on from primary schools during transition; initial spelling tests in Year 7; referrals by class teachers or through being identified as requiring intervention through their regular Accelerated Reader assessments.

This programme runs through afternoon registration slots and each student works on an individualised programme based on their initial spelling and reading assessment. The progression through the programme follows a standard path similar to that defined in any standard phonics-based scheme, e.g: Alpha-Omega (Hornsby and Shear, 1993). Additionally, a touch typing course is woven into the fabric of the exercises.

IDL supports phonological awareness and re-reading pulls together the available information to make the sentence (or phrase) whole, clarifying meaning. The design of short, finely graduated

exercises ensure over-learning and frequent positive feedback. Particular letter/sound correspondence is secured before moving on.

In the academic year 2020-21 with the programme we found that on average in a 10 week intervention, students in Year 7 students made on average 7 months progress / improvement in reading; Students in Year 8 made on average 5 months progress in reading and students in Year 9 made on average 3 months progress, based on standardised assessment.

Further strategies such as using computers, reader pens and coloured overlays support the development of students' independence in reading within the classroom. Teaching Assistants have been trained in Active Reading Strategies and also in precision teaching to support students with acquisition of skills in reading e.g. when learning specific skills and knowledge such as phonological awareness and phoneme-grapheme correspondence. Teaching Assistants are also trained in how to support students as readers both within lessons and in internal and external assessments, in line with JCQ regulations.

Previously Peer Reading schemes have been in place and this is something that we would like to re-introduce now year group bubbles are no longer required. Our aim is to continue to embed our culture of reading across the curriculum, sharing best practice strategies across departments, raising standards and aspirations for all students.