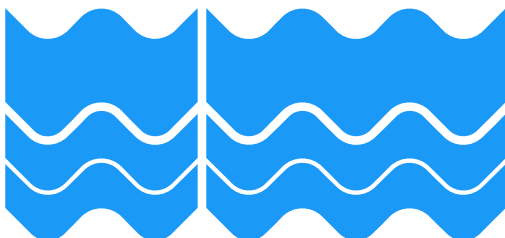


# The East Sussex Way

Good practice in  
oracy, reading & vocabulary  
at the point of  
primary/secondary transition



**East Sussex**  
County Council





# The East Sussex Way



This publication has been produced by a group of East Sussex teachers and funded by East Sussex County Council.  
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## Foreword

I began my working life in education in HM Prison Brixton. All educators should spend time in the education department of one of Her Majesty's prisons. It is a poignant reminder that basic literacy is a birthright that should be denied nobody.

In my days at the National Literacy Trust, I used to give talks entitled 'Have you ever met a mugger who's read *Middlemarch*?' – my way of saying that whatever else we do for children and young people in classrooms, we must give them the dignity of being able to speak, read and write with fluency to make their way in the endlessly fascinating global society which they inhabit.

For close on two years in classrooms, teachers' and students' voices have been muzzled. In the early months of online learning, children's voices were little heard, teachers relying on the 'chat' function to check understanding, and once masks became the order of the day in secondary classrooms, the vital conversational sparks and interactions were curtailed.

Teachers and support staff across all phases have made the very best of their own facial restrictions, but I know few who were not beaming as they cast off their protective gear.

Life in any classroom is simply not the same when smiles are hidden, students' mutual conversations are half-heard, and answers to teachers' questions are muffled. The very wearing of a mask affects how we structure our speech.

Someone will be quick to observe that there is published research into 'the masked classroom' which pre-dates Covid, and that research showed advantages and disadvantages. I don't believe it! In all the classrooms I've visited over the past months, I detect loss: the pivotal role of oracy and keen listening have suffered immeasurably.

Two particular groups of students have felt the effect of the masked voice. Those with English as an additional language and those with identified speech and language needs have been impacted significantly.

With masks optimistically a thing of the past, the coming months in schools and colleges across the country should ensure that every voice is heard and every smile encouraged. Let us plan for this trinity:

- Reading aloud across the curriculum.
- Oracy opportunities at every turn, for every child.
- Vocabulary practice - say it loud, say it proud.

Let the fun and fundamentals of speech and language sing in our classrooms.

**Roy Blatchford, Chair, East Sussex Secondary Board**

## Introduction

There are many important trios. Gold, frankincense and myrrh. Faith, hope and charity. Blood, sweat and tears. In oracy, reading and vocabulary, you might allow, we have found the most important trio of them all.

Teachers have always had the power to make their classrooms places where oracy is valued and promoted, reading is actively taught and vocabulary is explicitly grown. In these classrooms, pupils value their own and others' opinions, read with pleasure and critical skill, delight in words and express themselves with care.

This culture is one we all recognise as crucial to academic success across the curriculum, as well as pupils' wider social and emotional development. Increasingly, schools are taking action on pupils' entitlement to an education in oracy – and appreciating how this improves outcomes. Some schools are curating pupils' reading journeys and tracking reading ages, using this data to ensure no school leaver is unable to read. Many schools are emphasising the importance of vocabulary, putting in place robust and meaningful systems for its teaching.

*The East Sussex Way* aims to help more schools do all three of these things equally well.

Here, primary and secondary teachers have worked together for the first time to assert the value of effective and strategic communication and language teaching for all pupils. They make a compelling case for constructing primary to secondary transition around oracy, reading and vocabulary.

Improvements in writing, of course, will follow, but even more importantly, East Sussex schools will be carving out a new template for truly effective transition.

**Jane Branson**

## Section One: Oracy at the Point of Transition

Language and the ability to communicate reasoned, articulate ideas is an invaluable, life-long skill. In schools, speech and communication sit at the heart of classroom practice with oracy being fundamental to learning, at any age and across the curriculum.

Putting oracy first in *The East Sussex Way* emphasises the importance of talk as a means of learning in all subjects, and its role in bridging the gap in oracy skills between primary and secondary transition. We aim to:

- Convince teachers of all phases and all subjects of the moral imperative to teach oracy.
- Empower teachers to take risks, in order to develop good classroom practice in oracy.
- Persuade school leaders to commit the time and resources needed for robust oracy education, especially at the point of transition.
- Suggest tried-and-tested teaching strategies which encourage peer-to-peer exploratory talk and will support effective transition from primary to secondary.

The most recent comprehensive report on oracy, *Speak for Change* (APPG, 2021) alongside other significant research, for example by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) and Oxford University Press (OUP) shows there is a significant need to raise the status of oracy and spoken communication skills in schools.

**'Pupils are being pushed far out of their comfort zone academically.'** (OUP, 2020)

The Oxford Language Report 2020 highlights the immense language and vocabulary challenge pupils face when they transition from primary to secondary school:

**'In an average day at secondary school, pupils are exposed to three or four times as much language as at primary school, purely in terms of quantity.'** (OUP, 2020)

The report also explores the 'changing demands on pupils' use and understanding' of vocabulary and language as they make this transition. Pupils who struggle with language at primary face an 'even bigger challenge when they meet a more academic curriculum and a more academic discourse at secondary' (OUP, 2021). Highlighting the 'negative impact of a widening word gap

on their learning and future life chances' (OUP, 2020), the report emphasises the widening attainment gap in the context of Covid-19.

Strengthening links between local primary and secondary schools should help to close the gap in vocabulary and raise curriculum expectations during transition, a time when pupils need to build friendships and articulate to adults when they are feeling vulnerable or uncertain. When young people struggle to express themselves effectively and eloquently, this can have a negative impact on their 'mental health, their confidence, their social skills, their ability to form relationships and engage in even very basic conversation' (OUP, 2021).

For all these reasons, oracy is a vital tool which teachers must use to bridge the gap between primary and secondary language skills. Schools should therefore place oracy at the heart of their efforts to ensure a smooth transition, in order to support pupils emotionally during this key moment in their lives.

**'Reading and writing float on a sea of talk.'** (Alexander, 2020)

Effective oracy education involves pupils learning through talk, allowing them to deepen their understanding through dialogue with their teachers and peers (Alexander, 2020). Oracy is the ability to speak eloquently, to articulate ideas and thoughts, to influence through talking, to collaborate with peers and to express views confidently and appropriately, as well as using talk to show sensitivity and respect to the views and ideas of others. It allows pupils to develop fundamental, life-long skills, including the ability to articulate ideas and thoughts, to influence, to collaborate and to express views confidently and appropriately (APPG, 2021).

There are two strands to oracy education:

1. Learning *to* talk.
2. Learning *through* talk.

**Learning to talk** is the 'development and application of a set of skills associated with effective communication' (Menzies, 2016). Mercer adds that 'oracy represents the set of talk skills that pupils should develop... and sums up that teachable set of competencies to do with spoken language' (Mercer, 2016). It is clear that explicitly teaching the skills of speaking and listening should be included in the curriculum at every key stage.

**Learning through talk** is when speaking and listening is ‘used a means’ to support high quality teaching and learning across the curriculum. Alexander suggests that oracy can provide opportunities for teachers and pupils to:

- **receive, act and build upon answers**
- **analyse and solve problems**
- **speculate and imagine**
- **explore and evaluate ideas** (Alexander, 2020)

Learning through and to talk are not mutually exclusive, and both strands will frequently be taught together. Peter Hyman, Executive Headteacher at School 21, explains the interplay between the two strands:

**‘We explain oracy as the overlap between learning to talk and learning through talk... learning to talk is a skill in itself. How do you learn to be a compelling speaker, to hold an audience?... Then learning to talk is how talk gives you better writing, thinking and understanding of key concepts.’** (Hyman, 2016)

We should aim to give pupils ample and consistent opportunities to engage in exploratory classroom talk such as discussion, problem solving and reaching a consensus. Pupils should grapple with ideas and make them their own. Exploratory talk is the most desirable type of group talk; it is educationally productive, helping pupils to develop their understanding and move their learning forward. (Stott & Gaunt, 2018)

**‘Teaching oracy is an issue of social equity.’** (APPG, 2021)

All pupils should have the opportunity to find their voice: oracy should be sustained across their entire education, within every subject and phase, to ensure they learn how to articulate their ideas effectively.

However, effective teaching of oracy has the biggest impact on disadvantaged pupils:

**‘If pupils do not acquire this language at home, school is their second chance. If they are not getting it in school, they are not getting it. Oracy, therefore, is not just an educational choice but a moral imperative.’** (APPG, 2021)



Robust oracy education promotes social equality for all pupils because:

- Oracy has the potential to empower young people to advocate for themselves.
- Oracy helps young people negotiate difficult conversations and empathise with alternative perspectives.
- Oracy can strengthen democratic participation and political literacy.

**‘Too much oracy is left to chance.’** (APPG, 2021)

Spoken language is too often seen as something that will develop naturally and the oracy curriculum is therefore not sufficiently planned or prioritised. There is a perception that oracy is only occasionally relevant and the production of written outcomes is allowed to dominate. This may be partly due to the apparent challenge of demonstrating progress in oracy, alongside the fact that it is not valued in the assessment frameworks at the end of key stage 2 or at GCSE.

In fact, the cognitive benefits of oracy are reflected in the robust evidence that quality classroom talk has a measurable impact on academic attainment (Alexander, 2012). These benefits include greater retention of subject-specific knowledge, vocabulary acquisition, and reasoning skills. They are not confined to subjects traditionally associated with discussion and dialogue, such as the arts and humanities: the benefits of talk-rich teaching and learning can be found across the curriculum, in mathematics and science (Jay, et al., 2017).

**‘Great speakers are made, not born.’** (Stott & Gaunt, 2018)

Good practice in oracy is risky and messy. It does not always go to plan. It is teacher-guided but student-led. But schools and teachers need to feel empowered to embrace the ‘messiness’ of exploratory talk. *Speak for Change* found that school policies that insist on evidence of learning in books can be counterproductive and a particular barrier to oracy education (APPG, 2021). Best practice in oracy will emerge when teachers and pupils understand that the talk **is** the work and not just an added extra to prepare pupils to write.

A lack of confidence and expertise in oracy teaching, exacerbated by an absence of high-quality training, resources and guidance, means that some teachers do not have a clear idea of what ‘good talk’ looks like or how talk can be used to support teaching and learning. Teachers don’t even agree on the types of talk that

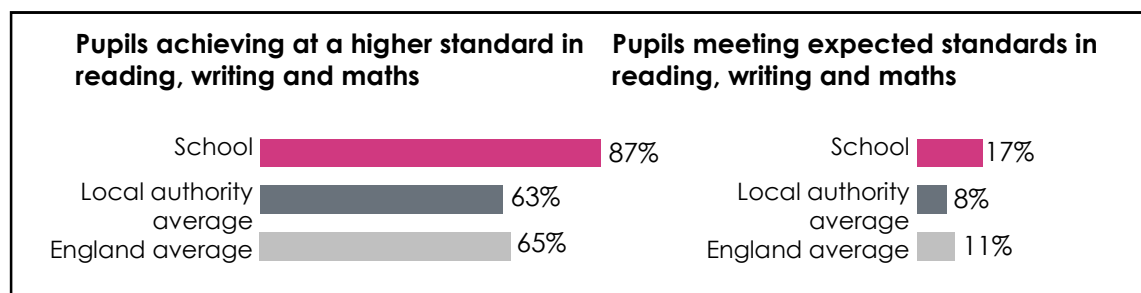
promote good oracy skills (Menzies, 2016). In this context, schools should devise strategic plans for oracy development, outlining a clear rationale for oracy whilst recognising that oracy looks different in different contexts (Voice 21, 2019).

In order to overcome the barriers to providing a good oracy education, schools need to invest time and resources in creating and implementing an oracy strategy which, first, defines good talk and then, guarantees pupils have ample and consistent opportunity for speaking and listening in all subjects across all phases.



## Case Study 1: Creating 'Talk-rich' Learning in all Subjects

- Polegate School, East Sussex, is a primary school with years Nursery – Year 6 and 618 pupils on roll.
- The number of pupils in receipt of the pupil premium grant is higher than the national average.
- The school performs above the national dataset and LA dataset when analysing for combined reading, writing and mathematics:



(UK Government, 2019)

- The school received a judgement of outstanding from Ofsted in 2020 and has been expanding into a three form-entry school.

### The context

Despite the school's excellent results and progress in reading, writing and mathematics, feedback from local secondary schools raised awareness that pupils were arriving in Year 7 with inconsistent levels of vocabulary, different skills and confidence in speaking and listening, plus variable ability to articulate answers in verbal and written answers across all subjects.

We wanted to ensure that, by the time our pupils left Year 6, they were secondary-ready and confident at speaking. We also wanted them to have an enriched, robust vocabulary knowledge which they could use effectively in oracy activities as well as writing.

### Action taken

Since 2019, we have embedded robust vocabulary, including tier 2 and tier 3 words (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002). This applies across all lessons and allows us to emphasise specific subject terminology.

We developed a 'talk-rich' approach to teaching in all subjects with the emphasis on talking to discover, explore and communicate findings and ideas. This supports subject knowledge and deepens understanding. Over a number of years, this has been strengthened across the school and is increasingly seen in all subjects. Rich discussion with an emphasis on talk is an important tool to develop understanding.



All staff model talking with reasoning and specified vocabulary for each subject. This complements Philosophy for Children (P4C) and debate lessons which are taught across the whole school. Many elements of P4C have also been applied to other subjects and lessons – for instance, using ‘palms out and up’ (instead of hands-up) during small group discussions and whole-class talk.

These approaches have helped create a learning environment where talk and sharing ideas is welcomed and valued. Lessons centre around collaborative learning through exploratory talk and discussions. By the time pupils reach Year 6, we intend that their language skills – taught through our ‘talk-rich’ approach, robust vocabulary and imitating through practice – will help close the word gap predicted at the point of transition.

In 2020, staff were trained in Pie Corbett’s Talk for Writing (TfW), which is based on the principle of enabling pupils to imitate language orally before reading and exploring targeted writing skills. Teaching includes ‘thinking aloud’ to make the writing process explicit, articulating thought processes and explaining choices. Pupils then mimic this through practice and apply a range of language and writing skills in their own work. Whilst predominantly used in English, many aspects of TfW have been adapted and applied to other subjects too.

### **Impact**

Across the school, pupils are more confident in using key taught vocabulary and increasingly demonstrate robust vocabulary skills. Year 5 and 6 pupils especially use focus vocabulary regularly in their written work, including tier 2 and tier 3 vocabulary taught the previous year.

Staff and visitors to the school regularly comment on pupils’ confident oracy skills across the school. Pupils of all abilities have become increasingly confident when talking and discussing ideas, sharing fuller answers and using richer vocabulary. Particularly in upper key stage 2, pupils show even greater maturity around concepts they discuss and apply thoughtful reasoning. Responses have become more sophisticated and articulate.

Since using TfW, pupils have shown more enjoyment, interest and respect for exploring language and are developing greater understanding of the writing process by talking aloud about this. Adapting and applying the approach in other subjects has consolidated pupils’ understanding still further, especially higher up in the school.

The 'talk-rich' approach has been applied across the curriculum, for example when discussing the reliability of sources in geography and history in Years 5 and 6, which allowed pupils to apply specific topic vocabulary and terminology accurately in their oral answers and later written responses. TfW has allowed pupils to use oral retelling to recap and explain a key event (the Treaty of Versailles in Year 6 History) and to discuss the media and purpose of a design using tier 2 and 3 vocabulary before writing detailed, well-informed evaluations.

With a particular focus on the word gap at transition, pupils in Year 5 and Year 6 have a greater appreciation of the contributions they make, actively participating and engaging in group and paired work through collaborative talk. P4C and TfW mean that they are beginning to lead class discussions with less adult input.

### **Next steps**

Subject leaders will monitor and ensure subject specific vocabulary is consistently taught and used within lessons across the whole school, including pupils having weekly opportunities in all subjects to use robust vocabulary in exploratory talk and discussions as well as applying this in written work. We will continue to apply our oracy strategies from P4C and TfW to strengthen our talk-rich approach, with the aim that all staff will consistently model productive talk in all subjects.



## Case Study 2: Starting Year 7 History with a Talk-centred Approach

- Chailey School, East Sussex, is a secondary school with a largely rural catchment area and 810 pupils on roll.
- The number of pupils in receipt of the pupil premium grant is lower than the national average.
- 32% of pupils have an identified learning need.

### The context

The history classroom should be a noisy and vibrant place where pupils' voices are heard and valued in every lesson, but the word gap at transition means that some pupils lack confidence when it comes to speaking in lessons. Arriving from a high number of feeder schools, they do not have a common understanding of what 'good talk' looks like in the classroom.

It is important to establish a consensus on how to achieve high-quality paired, group and whole-class discussion so that oracy activities are purposeful and productive. We also wanted to give Year 7 pupils ample time to speak to their peers in lessons in order to build relationships, but we needed these opportunities for oracy to remain focused on learning.

### Action taken

In 2021, we taught a new scheme of learning on Islamic Civilisations at the beginning of Year 7. Chailey School takes pupils from a high number of primary schools with varied history curricula. We therefore chose a topic which very few pupils have encountered before, to create a level playing field and fresh start for all.

We designed the lesson sequence with a strong focus on tier 2 vocabulary and oracy in an attempt to bridge the word gap at transition. We hoped that, as a result, we would see pupils instinctively reaching for targeted tier 2 vocabulary and thus improving their ability to write historical explanations in a written assessment at the end of term.

We built every lesson around collaborative speaking tasks, which grew in length and complexity over time. Our strategies can be seen in Appendix 1. We curated a list of key tier 2 and 3 words which we explicitly taught and revisited over the scheme of learning, and we encouraged pupils to use the key vocabulary in their speech and gave them ample opportunities to do so.



The assessment for the scheme of learning was an essay explaining why European Christians went on Crusade. We hoped that as a result of our vocabulary-driven teaching we would see pupils choosing, for example, the tier 2 word 'motivated' rather than the tier 1 word 'wanted' in their essays, alongside the key tier 3 words related to the subject material.

## Impact

Many pupils opted to use the more sophisticated language of explanation correctly. Assessment and pupil voice indicated that pupils were able to recall the key vocabulary taught through oracy strategies more confidently than the vocabulary taught in a written context.

Pupils in Year 7 are more confident in group and paired talk tasks and these tasks are productive since pupils are familiar with routines and expectations regarding their talk.

## Next steps

To develop the scheme of learning still further, we will spend time at the very beginning teaching pupils how to have productive group discussions. This happened over time with practice, but making expectations more explicit at the outset would establish set a clearer standard.

We intend to make time to teach all key vocabulary across the history curriculum through oracy and embed opportunities to use academic language in speech before expecting pupils to use this language in their writing.

## Practical recommendations

### First steps

#### Give them something to talk about

Embed talk-based starters and plenaries into lessons. For example, play 'secret picture' to introduce to a visual source or end a lesson with a game of Taboo.

Encourage teachers to find the controversy, hook, or puzzle so that pupils can't resist talking about it. For example, a competitive game of image/key word matching or asking pupils to fill up 'a woman's mind magnified' to begin learning about the suffragettes.

Create meaningful talk opportunities across the school to discover, explore and communicate findings/ideas. For example, ask pupils to feed back verbally on learning using subject knowledge and key vocabulary to deepen understanding.

Suggested strategies:

- Enquiry questions
- Intriguing hooks
- Controversial questions
- 'Big' questions

### **Next steps** **Keep them talking**

Base entire lessons around discussion and exploratory talk, for example using a drip-fed-facts approach requiring pupils to work in pairs to build on a hypothesis as facts are slowly revealed to them.

Provide reassurance that evidence of talk activities is not required. Pupils take more risks if there is no formal writing involved. If a record of thoughts is needed, use mini-whiteboards or flipchart paper.

Use visual cues to support explanations using oracy skills. For instance, concept cartoons in science to explain processes or picture prompts to explain a key event in history.

Ensure that teachers and pupils have a shared understanding of what 'good talk' looks like. Provide models of how to listen actively, disagree politely and have discussions which build rather than repeat or dispute.

Suggested strategies:

- Decision makers
- Continuums
- Posters with no words

### **Advanced steps** **Improve their talk over time**

Encourage teachers to develop talk-centred lesson sequences and schemes of learning, perhaps building up to a verbal assessment.

Ensure teachers have thought about what progress in oracy looks like and how they might track it.

Teach and model the use of rich vocabulary in all lessons and subjects. Teachers should model using complex, specialist vocabulary, consolidating pupils understanding so they can apply and use it themselves.

Use the Voice 21 oracy benchmarks to plan clearly and deliberately for oracy teaching.

Suggested strategies:

- Teach debate, philosophy and public speaking.
- Create debate clubs and engage with local schools to promote oracy through competitions and peer-to-peer presentations.
- Enter local and national oracy competitions such as Poetry by Heart and the Schools' Mace.

### Moving forward together

- **Create East Sussex Oracy Champions** to establish clear links between primary and secondary schools to ensure consistency, provide staff training, complete research.
- **Complete long-term research:** follow a cohort of pupils and their oracy education from Year 5 to Year 8 to measure impact and refine next steps.
- **Empower school leaders to value oracy for its own sake:** use oracy champions to train and empower school leaders to give staff the flexibility they need to embrace and embed oracy in their practice in every subject at every phase.

### Further reading on oracy

Alexander, R. (2008). *Towards Dialogic Teaching: Rethinking Classroom Talk*. Dialogos.

English Speaking Union Schools' Mace. <https://www.esu.org/competitions/schools-mace/>

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Mercer, N. & Dawes, L. (2018). *The development of Oracy skills in school-aged learners* Part of the Cambridge Papers in ELT series. [pdf] Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mercer, N. & Littleton, K. (2007). *Dialogue and the Development of Pupils' Thinking: a socio-cultural approach*. The Open University.

Poetry by Heart [www.poetrybyheart.org.uk](http://www.poetrybyheart.org.uk)



## Section Two: Reading at the Point of Transition

Reading is the foundation of success at school and beyond. Readers can learn about the wider world, and escape into other worlds. Reading raises aspirations.

The Oxford Language Report (2021) has exposed the critical word gap that has the potential to damage the progress of pupils at the vulnerable point between primary and secondary. In response, The East Sussex Way sets out some of the ways that pupils can 'master the most crucial of academic tools for our pupils: reading' (Quigley, 2018).

In primary schools, pupils are taught to decode and comprehend, applying a range of skills such as prediction, summarising and inference. By the end of key stage 2, pupils are expected to read and write fluently so that they can progress into the secondary phase, where the focus will shift from 'learning to read' to 'reading to learn'.

In secondary schools, the focus moves to disciplinary reading. Here, the significant skills are the ability to learn from and analyse text, pull out relevant information, and understand subject-specific vocabulary. Other well-documented aspects of transition – the move to multiple teachers and teaching modes, to a larger, unknown environment, and often a decline in monitored personal reading – only exacerbate the reading demands of the secondary curriculum.

Some pupils are not ready for this transition. Year on year, one in ten boys leave primary school with the reading skills of an average seven year old, unable to read the simplest secondary school texts (Ofsted, 2013). A government study (Renaissance Learning and Education Policy Institute, 2021) demonstrates the impact of the Covid pandemic on reading ability: all year groups have decreased in reading ability when compared to previous cohorts – by at least one year.

Pupils will fall further behind if the gap is not closed, as assessment and exam vocabulary becomes inaccessible. Data from 2018 shows that fewer than one in five pupils who fail to reach their expected reading age at the end of key stage 2 go on to achieve a grade 4 or above in GCSE English (Quigley & Coleman, 2019). A quarter of pupils at the age of 15 have a reading age of 12 or below (GL Assessment, 2019).

Beyond school, there are links between poor literacy levels and higher rates of unemployment, low incomes and poor health behaviours, which in turn can be linked to lower life expectancy (Gilbert, Teravainen, Clark, & Shaw, 2018). A proper focus on reading at the point of transition can help to address this pattern, and give pupils the positive start to their secondary reading career that they need.

### **Shared responsibility**

If a pupil cannot read in one subject, they are not going to be able to read in others: every teacher, primary and secondary, must share the responsibility of teaching pupils to read. Training is needed to allow all teachers to play their part, while school leaders focus on building a whole-school reading ethos, monitoring progress and recommending good practice.

### **Unfamiliar texts**

To deduce the meaning of unfamiliar words from context, pupils need to be able to read and comprehend 95-98% of the other words in a passage (Gross, 2021). But pupils also need to be exposed to a range of texts over time – texts which challenge them, represent them and open their eyes. The 'Five Plagues of Reading' (Lemov, Driggs, & Woolway, 2016) explains five text types that pupils should be exposed to in order to become expert readers. Their reading diet should be broad, progressive, diverse and representative; pupils need to see themselves in the books they encounter.

Yet many pupils' reading is dominated by books that have been neither mindfully curated nor explicitly planned for. Teachers need the skills and experience to analyse the reading level of the texts across the curriculum, and adapt choice of text and teaching so that pupils can enjoy and learn from them.

### **Pupil reluctance**

Some pupils are reluctant to read, and others display negative behaviours when asked to. By the time they arrive in secondary school, some insecure readers have developed skills that mask their inability to decode and comprehend text, often relying heavily on teachers or other pupils reading aloud in the classroom. Giving pupils choice in their reading, showing them how to enjoy reading and building reading fluency to develop confidence – there should be room in every school improvement plan for these priorities.

## Case Study 1: Better Reading Partnership

- Gildredge House School was established in 2013. There are 1240 pupils on roll (422 primary and 818 secondary). The school also has a sixth form.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is below the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is below the national average.

### The context

Primary leaders identified reading as an area to further strengthen in July 2020. They targeted pupils who were working below the expected standardised score in reading and lacked fluency.

### Action taken

The Better Reading Partnership (BRP) (Edge Hill University, 2022) was introduced, funded by a local school-to-school partnership. BRP was selected as it supports pupils from Year 1. Training was delivered to one school leader as well as to an assigned reading lead. As BRP requires parent support, all parents were invited into school to receive information about the programme and how they could best support their child at home.

BRP is based around the understanding that building a pupil's confidence is the key to improving their reading and follows a simple structure:

- Read a familiar text for three minutes.
- Read a recently introduced text for four minutes.
- Read a new text for eight minutes.

Reading partners (the adults who lead the sessions) learn to identify good reading behaviours and develop techniques to both praise and gently prompt the pupil when necessary. They provide a relaxed environment, three times a week, which gives pupils time and space to practise and apply the skills taught by their teachers, and to talk about their reading with an interested adult.

### Impact

Four groups of six pupils all saw an advancement in their standardised scores due to improved fluency and accuracy.

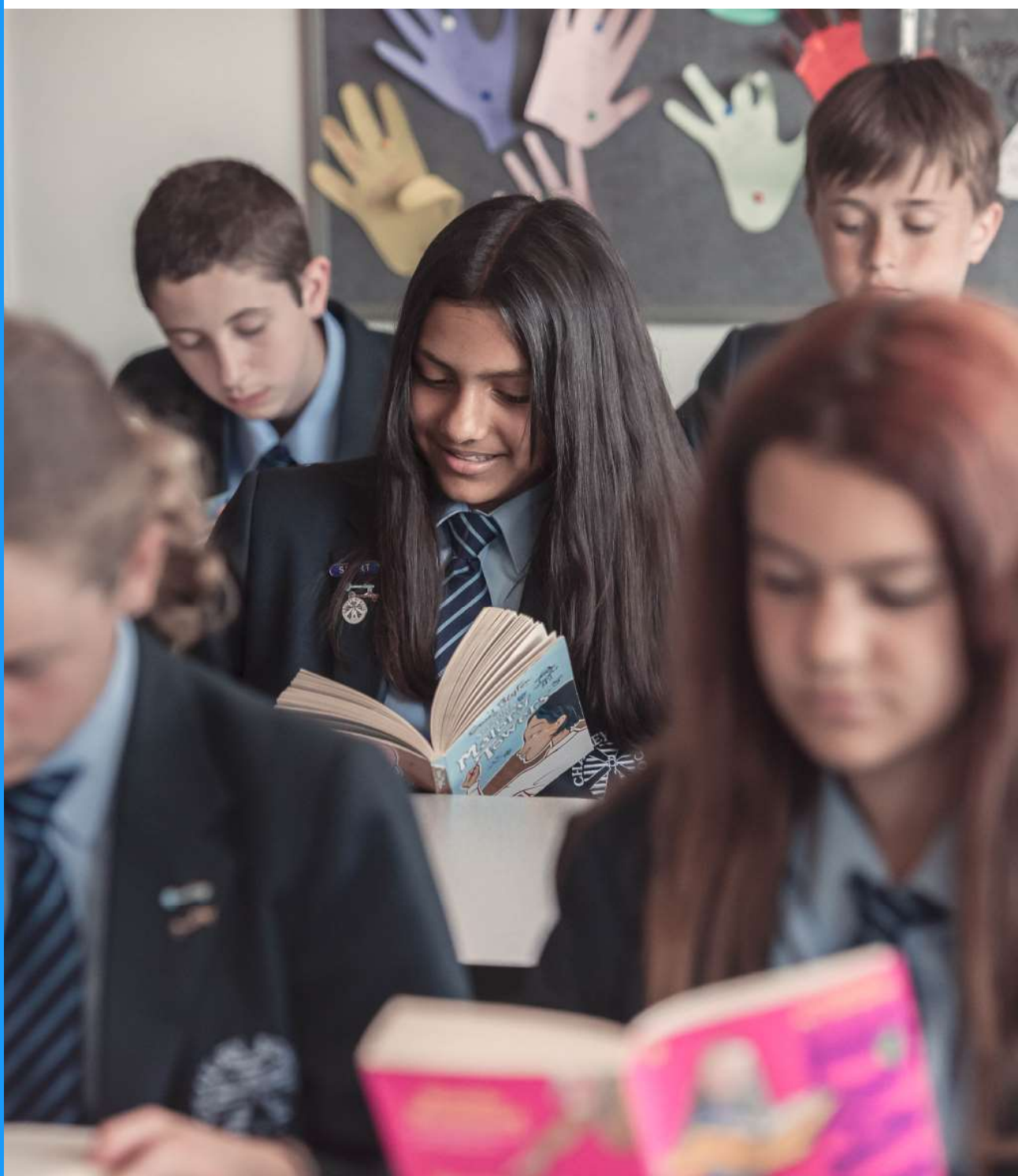


Pupils made, on average, 15 months' progress in their reading age in ten weeks (based on the York Assessment of Reading for Comprehension).

Intervention Baseline to Dec	Reading
Number of children receiving intervention Autumn term	6
% making outstanding progress	(5) 83.3%
% making good progress	(1) 16.7%

### Next steps

More staff are now being trained to extend the provision to more pupils.



## Case Study 2: Supporting Reading through Bedrock Vocabulary

- Hailsham Community College first opened its doors in 1878. It is an all-through pre-school to sixth form college with 1505 pupils on roll.
- The number of pupils in receipt of the pupil premium grant is higher than the national average.
- 15% of pupils have an identified learning need.

### The context

Teachers identified the need to focus on the skills pupils require to read and comprehend what is being read. With GCSE exams requiring an average reading age of 15 years and 7 months, it is crucial that pupils develop the reading skills necessary to reach their full potential. Pupils' low vocabulary skills were considered to be a key barrier.

### Action taken

Bedrock Vocabulary (Bedrock Learning, 2022) was introduced. This is an online programme aimed at key stages 2 to 5. Pupils should access it at least twice a week. When pupils first start the programme, they take a short test to determine which block of words is suitable for them to start on. Pupils work through blocks of words based on their individual levels.

Using the programme, pupils experience language-rich fiction and non-fiction texts that expand their knowledge of the world as well as their vocabulary. The school intended that they would develop further reading skills and deepen their understanding of words, in turn improving their reading levels to enable them to confidently access vocabulary used within exam papers.

The reading programme was promoted through a summer school for Year 6 pupils. In total, 205 pupils were shown how to use the Bedrock programme over the summer holidays, alongside being encouraged to read for pleasure.

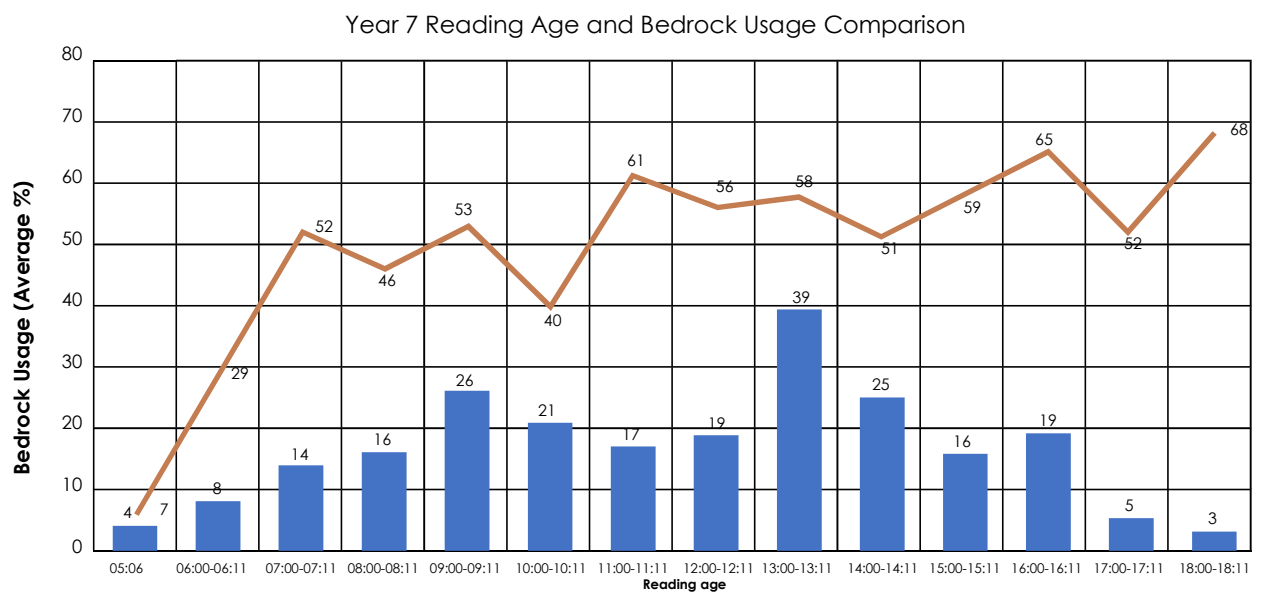
### Impact

Of the Year 6 pupils introduced to the programme before arrival at secondary school, 40 used it regularly throughout the summer break. The scheme proved very successful in building pupils' confidence with the programme and enabled the school to instil reading and learning expectations early on.

From the data collected during the summer holidays, staff identified a number of pupils who encountered barriers to using this programme. These pupils were provided with appropriate support.

Key stage 3 pupils are now into their second year of Bedrock Vocabulary learning. Bedrock has had a significant positive impact on students' reading ages, allowing them to develop their reading for learning skills.

The graph below shows pupils' reading ages and Bedrock usage for the 2020/2021 Year 7 cohort. The blue bars represent how many students are at a particular reading age. The red line represents these pupils' average Bedrock progress over the year. For example, the 8 pupils with a reading age of between 6 years and 6 years 11 months have shown 29% progress on average.



113/235 (48%) students are below their chronological age. Of them 21 (19%) are SEN students and 26 (23%) are PPI students.

Reading age	SEN	PPI
5:06	2/4 50%	0/4 0%
6:00-6:11	4/8 50%	3/8 38%
7:00-7:11	4/14 29%	5/14 36%
8:00-8:11	3/16 19%	6/16 38%
9:00-9:11	7/26 27%	4/26 15%
10:00-10:11	1/21 5%	5/21 24%

### Next steps

The success of the programme means it is now being launched in key stage 4 and piloted in key stage 5.



## Case Study 3: Teaching to Reading Ages

- Hailsham Community College first opened its doors in 1878. It is an all-through pre-school to sixth form college with 1505 pupils on roll.
- The number of pupils in receipt of the pupil premium grant is higher than the national average.
- 15% of pupils have an identified learning need.

### The context

Poor reading levels were a concern in the College catchment area. Leaders wanted to provide staff with information and strategies so that the curriculum could be differentiated to meet pupils' reading needs.

### Action taken

An 'Access Reading Test' (Hodder Education) is now undertaken by all pupils at the beginning of the academic year and at the end to monitor progress. Year 7 pupils are assessed three times a year, as no reading age data is currently provided by feeder schools. Resulting data is shared with all teachers and reading ages are added to electronic seating plans, an effective way to show teachers the wide range of reading ages within each class. Reading age results are also shared with parents.

The data identifies which pupils may need support and intervention. Staff received training on how pupils with different reading ages require different levels of explanation when using texts in lessons. Staff were asked to explore the texts being used in their lessons and identify whether they could be adapted to meet the needs of pupils with reading ages below the expected level. If changes were not appropriate, scaffolding would be expected, as well as pre-teaching of key words.

It is also essential that all teachers model reading, and re-reading and regularly stop to check understanding. Staff are given the opportunity to observe this in practice.

### Impact

Communicating results has raised awareness of the importance of reading amongst pupils and parents. Pupils are aware of their reading ages and feel positive about developing their skills. Parents are encouraged to be involved with reading as well as accessing the Bedrock Vocabulary tool at home.



By term 3 of the implementation year, learning was being successfully adapted to meet the reading ages of pupils in 100% of sampled lessons. Adaptations included changes to teaching resources, careful choice of font size, scaffolding of reading and modelling of reading. Teachers are now explicitly planning:

- How new vocabulary is introduced.
- How instructions are presented (for example, on PowerPoints).
- How suitable texts are.
- How to model unpicking and using key language.
- Appropriate reading-focused questioning within lessons.

Since the school has started using reading age data in the ways described, there has been a steady improvement in reading ages. For example, Year 7 pupils have improved on average by 11 months and Year 10 by 20 months.

### Next steps

Building on the success described, the use of reading age data to target and support reading development will be enhanced through further training, sharing of good practice and research. The link between behaviour and reading ages will be a focus.

### Practical recommendations

#### First steps

#### Work with local schools

Establish a shared reading ethos by reviewing progression, breadth and diversity in the range of texts used (including fiction, non-fiction and poetry).

Share CPD opportunities across primary and secondary schools on the teaching of reading strategies, for example, how to synthesise information from two or more source texts.

Establish shared approaches to modelling reading to ease transition.

Ensure attractive, up-to-date resources are available that support reading for pleasure and learning.

Use summer schools and transition days to promote the habit of reading. Carry out initial reading tests to identify currently reading levels in preparation for early

intervention. Introduce pupils to reading interventions and the library.

### **Next steps**

#### **Gather reading age data and strengthen the reading culture**

Collect and share reading age data and ask teachers to adapt teaching to make it more bespoke for individual pupils.

Include reading ages in reports from Year 6 onwards, allowing parents and carers to be involved in the reading journey.

Review the curriculum to ensure pupils are being taught to manage the 'Five Plagues of Reading' (Lemov, Driggs, & Woolway, 2016).

Develop a reading for pleasure culture across primary and secondary – see Open University Reading for Pleasure (The Open University, 2022). For example, set up a cross-phase staff book club and a staff summer reading challenge, and undertake pupil voice to identify when and why reading enthusiasm fades and what pupils think would help.

Recruit / upskill a school librarian and engage their support with a range of cross-phase reading events.

### **Advanced steps**

#### **Refine teaching and provision**

Plan a coherent reading diet which promotes inter-disciplinary reading.

Provide ongoing training for teachers on reading questions and reading strategies, assessing texts to use in class, how best to model and scaffolding tasks.

Code library books to match reading ages to allow the pupils to choose books suitable to their reading ability.

Research and implement the right reading interventions for the right pupils. Consider Just Reading, University of Sussex (Westbrook, Sutherland, Oakhill, & Sullivan, 2019), The Better Reading Partnership and Herts for Learning's Reading Fluency Project.

Give your librarian reading age information for all pupils so that they are able to assist and recommend books.

Continue to monitor provision and progress, listening to pupil voice at every stage.

## Moving forward together

In an ideal world, primary and secondary schools would work in harmony to address the reading gap by having a fluid and consistent transition programme in which the teaching of reading matches individual and community needs. In this world:

- Every teacher shares responsibility for reading, understanding its importance for learning in their subject and beyond.
- Further research is undertaken into reading ages, looking at why it is beneficial to recognise these and how to develop teaching to cater for the varied reading ages.
- Teachers regularly share reading priorities, and observe and learn from each other’s practice across primary and secondary.
- Primary and secondary schools share information, strategies and expertise so that pupils’ reading does not falter at the point of transition, but strengthens.
- An East Sussex adviser for ‘Reading through transition’ helps schools to establish a consistent approach to reading before, during and after transition.

### Further reading on reading

Boag, H. (2021). *Reading at the Transition*. Research Schools Network.

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Higgins, S., Katsipataki, M. & Coleman, R. (2014). *Reading at the Transition: interim evidence brief*. (EEF)

Huntington Research School 2018 *The ‘Reading Gap’ between Primary and Secondary School* (Research Schools Network)

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## Section Three: Vocabulary at the Point of Transition

The importance of a broad and robust vocabulary cannot be overstated. If we empower pupils with vocabulary, we give them the means to live an ambitious and successful life, both academically and socially. An articulate pupil is one with the potential to become a powerful, resilient and well-rounded member of society.

The 'vocabulary leap' between Year 6 and 7 needs to be carefully planned for to ensure pupils have the best chances of success across all curriculum areas. Research clearly identifies a gap in language – 'the word gap' – which appears in primary and builds over time. Pupils who do not achieve age-related expectations at the end of key stage 2 are likely to be most at risk of falling further behind.

The Oxford Language Report (2020) carried out extensive research, including 3,500 surveys, finding that 87% of teachers agreed that increasing academic requirements at the point of transition are a key challenge, and school closures due to Covid-19 have only widened the word gap (OUP, 2020). Unless addressed, the vocabulary problem will impact pupils' enjoyment of school, their academic outcomes, their self-esteem and their personal relationships. With language underpinning so many variables in a child's life, it is imperative that we challenge this situation and provide opportunities for pupils to develop a commanding vocabulary which masters both breadth and depth (Lemov, Driggs, & Woolway, 2016).

There is a strong correlation between language acquisition and academic success across the curriculum. Vocabulary is fundamental, not just for speaking and communicating, but for reading and comprehending. Pupils need to develop a rich vocabulary which continually grows through their language and literacy experiences and will support them in oracy and when comprehending and constructing increasingly challenging texts.

Stronger links between primary and secondary schools will streamline the vocabulary journey; curriculum connections and consistent language across the key stages will smooth transition. Multiple encounters of words in different contexts will embed key vocabulary. Pupils will be more likely to use language for their own purposes, both in written and oral forms.

It is not enough for pupils to know a word: to truly understand the meaning of a word, and own it, 'is to know not just its definition, but its different forms, its multiple meaning, its connotations and the situation in which it is normally applied' (Lemov, Driggs, & Woolway,



2016). With this goal in mind, pupils need an understanding of word structure (morphology), use (grammar), meaning (semantics) and knowledge of how words links to other words (etymology).

Pupils who recognise and understand the power of language and multifaceted perspectives of vocabulary will have unlimited access to new information, better able to think and learn about their world.



## Case Study 1: Explicit Teaching of Vocabulary

- Manor Primary School in Uckfield has 350 pupils on roll.
- The number of pupils on the SEND register is approximately 31%.
- The number of pupils eligible for Pupil Premium is lower than the national average, at 19%.
- A high percentage of pupils access speech and language support and a large proportion of pupils across the key stages have limited vocabulary.

### The context

Quality texts are at the core of Manor Primary School's integrated English curriculum and this has proved to have a positive impact on pupils' writing outcomes. However, vocabulary remains a high priority and is considered central to academic progress. The large proportion of pupils with limited vocabulary, especially in the wake of school closures during the pandemic, means this has become central to the school development plan.

### Action taken

Staff training events, including the Word Aware approach to vocabulary teaching (Branagan & Parsons, 2017), led to the integration of a range of strategies across key stages aimed at growing pupils' vocabulary knowledge. This includes: encouraging reading for pleasure; developing purposeful talking activities; word banks and working walls to support pupils with embedding knowledge; and using new vocabulary in their writing.

Quality first teaching remains a priority, ensuring vocabulary tasks are provided for all the pupils, not limited to intervention groups. This is complemented by explicit teaching of vocabulary from the class text and short, active tasks throughout the day. Teachers select a range of words to integrate into their teaching. These are recorded on working walls, referred to during the day and used for 'short burst' activities to help pupils embed their understanding.

Activities include:

- Developing child-friendly definitions, some of which have been written collaboratively with the pupils. These are displayed and used on the working walls and included within word banks.
- Child-friendly RAG-rating of new vocabulary at the beginning and end of a topic to support pupils in recognising the progress they have made in language acquisition.

- Use of drama to act out specific words when needed or as a 'guess my word' game to help pupils to remember words and use them in their own writing.
- Playing Pictionary on small whiteboards to help associate an image to a word to support memory.
- Working with a peer partner to talk and write sentences in a correct context to provide effective responsive assessment opportunities.
- Keeping new words in a 'word pot' and having pupils randomly select words to use in a sentence provides opportunities to review and revisit learning.
- Short interactive tasks to keep new vocabulary prominent in pupils' minds are built into daily routines (lining up for assembly, sanitising hands, first thing in the morning), including 'Would you rather be... or... , what might I look like if... If I were... what might I say'.

## Impact

Vocabulary teaching is integrated across the curriculum with explicit teaching taking place throughout the day and words being regularly reviewed and revisited. This is supporting vocabulary acquisition. Selecting words from class texts has supported pupils in having a clear context to aid understanding and this has helped with engagement and motivation.

Pupils are more confident in orally constructing their own sentences to share with peers and the teacher, and are less fearful of getting it wrong. Their writing shows evidence of words being used accurately and appropriately. Opportunities to use the language in their own writing is empowering for pupils and analysis of writing outcomes has confirmed that that explicit vocabulary approaches are having a positive impact.

Visitors to the school comment on the high level of vocabulary used in writing across the school and how high expectations from teachers are supporting pupils to achieve their best.

## Next steps

A longer-term approach will help ensure pupils retain their knowledge within and across the key stages. If teachers pre-plan the words they are going to teach each term, and these words are moved into working resources, vocabulary could be better reviewed and referred back to, not just throughout the year, but across year groups. This will ensure a consistent approach across the school and provide valuable records to be shared at the point of transition to secondary school.

## Case Study 2: Command Vocabulary

- Gildredge House School was established in 2013 and provides for a range of age groups. There are 1240 pupils on roll (422 primary and 818 secondary). The school has a sixth form.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is below the national average. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is below the national average.

### The context

Primary and secondary subject leaders met to discuss the learning and teaching within their subject areas. Secondary staff explained key language that was not secure when pupils started Year 7. As a result, humanities and science leaders across the school set out to ensure target vocabulary was evident in the primary humanities and science curriculum policies, with the expectation that all primary colleagues would deliver the agreed vocabulary.

### Action taken

The agreed vocabulary is as follows:

Geography	History	Science
describe explain compare	describe explain compare	identify classify group comparative concluding evaluating

A pilot group of primary colleagues introduced Word Aware (Branagan & Parsons, 2017) to support fluent reading and vocabulary knowledge. The Word Aware pedagogy is that spoken language and communication skills matter because they:

- form the foundation for early literacy development
- underpin reading comprehension
- are the means by which pupils and young people access the curriculum
- are crucial to forming social relationships
- lead to better life outcomes.



This structured whole-school, whole-class approach promotes the vocabulary development of all pupils. Words are grouped into three categories:

1. Anchor Word – pupils have a thorough understanding of these words.
2. Goldilocks Words – words that are topic specific and core to the topic.
3. Step-on-words – words that are particularly topic specific and not core to the topic.

## **Impact**

At the time of writing, the full impact of Word Aware has not been measured. However, following positive staff feedback it is now being rolled out across all primary classes.

## **Next steps**

To review the impact of Word Aware further and identify pupils moving into Year 7 who require more support, Gildredge House will introduce an end of key stage 2 assessment to identify which pupils are confident with the selected command words and which pupils will require further support.



## Case Study 3: Promoting Academic Vocabulary

- Bexhill Academy is a large secondary with just over 1500 students.
- Approximately 20% of pupils are identified as having literacy skills significantly below age-related expectations.
- Approximate number of SEND: 26%
- The number of pupils eligible for Pupil Premium is 32%

### The context

Pupils needed to broaden their vocabulary and their ability to discuss texts in a more academic and sophisticated way. A particular need was identified to address the vocabulary deficit in a lower ability Year 10 GCSE group of 20 pupils. Five pieces of sophisticated vocabulary were selected, linked to an English topic (An Inspector Calls) which were chosen as a focus for the term:

- capitalist
- socialist
- omnipotent
- moral
- penitent

### Action taken

Lesson starter activities were planned to ensure pupils engaged with the vocabulary recurrently in order to embed it, and their understanding at different points was measured. Here, similarities could be drawn with Paul Nation's approach (Nation, 1990).

Pupils' first encounter with the vocabulary was a mix and match activity, to check whether they could identify the definitions of each word. At this point, no pupils were able to correctly identify the definitions for all five words. Each subsequent, planned encounter with the target vocabulary encouraged pupils to engage with the words in a different way. These terms were also used in the teaching across the period to ensure maximum exposure to the vocabulary.



**Encounter One:** Securing a definition.

**Encounter Two:** Recall linking words back to their definitions.

**Encounter Three:** True or false recapping words and their definitions.

**Encounter Four:** Dual coding – link a word to an image.

**Encounter Five:** Quiz

**Encounter Six:** Does...mean...? Embedding definitions and addressing misconceptions.

**Encounter Seven:** Links to main context. Encouraging pupils to use the vocabulary when discussing the text.

**Encounter Eight:** Links to wider context. Encouraging pupils to use the vocabulary when discussing issues/ideas outside of the immediate context.

See Active Vocabulary Instruction (Appendix 2) for further detail on encounters.

### Impact

After eight encounters, pupils were re-tested on their understanding. 90% of pupils were able to use all the vocabulary correctly and could apply it in their responses to the text. Pupils' said that they felt confident about their understanding of the vocabulary and ability to use it. Whilst they commented on finding the process repetitive, they did see the value of explicit vocabulary work in helping them with learning and retention.

### Next steps

The success of this strategy has led us to consider implementing it across key stages. Identifying key terminology to embed in each unit of work will increase pupils' working vocabulary and enhance the quality and precision of their academic writing.

### Practical recommendations (see also Appendix 2)

#### First steps

Create a word-friendly classroom ethos.

Celebrate words and create live word walls which pupils can add to.

Encourage word play through games and competitive activities such as word association and word ladders (Rasinski, 2022).

Link vocabulary teaching and spelling through word webs, etymology and morphology.

Build vocabulary work in reading and writing lessons.

Promote use of taught vocabulary through sentence stems and oral rehearsal before writing.

Train teachers to identify which words to teach and how.

### **Next steps**

Plan and integrate vocabulary teaching.

Agree common approaches such as pupil-friendly definitions, choral pronunciation and dual coding.

Integrate short and engaging vocabulary activities into the school day.

Provide vocabulary interventions to target pupils who are most vulnerable to falling behind.

Continue to assess teachers' training needs and plan provision accordingly.

Link vocabulary teaching to oracy, reading and writing requirements across the curriculum.

### **Advanced steps**

Strengthen whole-school and inter-school vocabulary teaching.

Agree a common approach to active vocabulary teaching, including planning for multiple encounters with target words.

Create and use rewards which recognise vocabulary progress.

Create a vocabulary index system to promote robust integration of explicit teaching and systematic revisiting of vocabulary.

Agree key academic vocabulary used in the secondary curriculum to be integrated into teaching at primary level.



## A note on reading and vocabulary

Harnessing pupil's reading is fundamental in providing a route to independent vocabulary learning. Often, the pupils in greatest need of language development are the ones who do not engage in wide or personal reading, in particular, literature which includes unfamiliar vocabulary. In this context, developing a school environment which promotes wider reading for all is imperative. Opportunities and expectations for reading at a level which will challenge pupils need to be high (Myatt, 2018).

However, pupils may develop key strategies for deciphering the meaning of new words they encounter in reading, but are not likely to learn the full meaning of these words unless they have multiple encounters with them (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002). Assuming pupils absorb unfamiliar vocabulary by osmosis when reading is foolish. Instead, these words need to be explored in different contexts to enable pupils to fully understand them and be able to use them accurately and independently.

Contextual vocabulary is more likely to be understood and embedded into pupil's learning. As such, a high quality class text is a strong starting point for explicit teaching of new vocabulary. This will provide a meaningful context that learning can be 'hung on', and support integration of new knowledge as different meanings, connotations and situations are explored. Reading aloud – by teachers and pupils – should be a regular feature of classroom practice.

However, if we are to harbour a love for literature and reading for pleasure, it is important that teachers balance the benefits of reading at pace for enjoyment with the interruptions necessary to discuss language. Timing is also important, to ensure engagement with the text is not negatively affected, but that pupils are still able to remember the word and how it was used in the text.

Careful consideration must be given so that interruptions are worthwhile and not too frequent. Which words are pupils more likely to meet again in different contexts? Which words will have a wider impact on knowledge acquisition or help pupils make cross-curricular links?

### Moving forward together

There is no doubt that a smooth transition across Year 6 and 7, characterised by consistent high expectations and challenge, is most likely to support strong vocabulary development. However,

communication between schools is often a barrier to effective transition, with time and workload restraints limiting schools' ability to make collaborative decisions, follow them through and build on them year by year.

The introduction of a local framework, agreed across primary and secondary schools, will provide a shared understanding of the importance of vocabulary and effective strategies to be used in the classroom and across transition. Key points to consider include:

- Use of high quality texts to support the teaching of vocabulary and extend pupils' language acquisition.
- Promoting and maintaining a planned and cohesive approach to vocabulary building across the curriculum.
- Developing a shared primary - secondary approach for embedding new vocabulary.
- Pre-teaching at primary agreed tier 2 academic vocabulary so that pupils are better prepared for the secondary curriculum.

### Further reading on vocabulary

Ashford, K. (2020). *Building Brilliant Vocabulary: 60 lessons to close the word gap in KS3*. Harper Collins.

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## Appendix 1: Strategies to Encourage High-quality Peer-to-peer Exploratory Talk

### All chip in (talk tokens)

Each member of the group has a set number of tokens. In order to share an idea or respond to somebody else in the group, they need to use a token. Expectations are set that a certain number of tokens must be used by each member within the time (e.g. all tokens, three tokens, etc).

If a pupil runs out of tokens, they cannot share further ideas until everybody in the group has used up their tokens. If all tokens are used up then group can reclaim their tokens and repeat.

This encourages pupils to be active listeners as well as share reasoned, detailed ideas.

### Always, sometimes, never

This idea is taken from the Oracy Imperative (Stott & Gaunt, 2018). Provide pupils with a series of statements related to a particular topic. They need to discuss them in pairs or groups and decide whether they are always, sometimes or never true.

### Consensus circle

This idea also comes from the Oracy Imperative. Ask pupils to draw a circle on a large piece of paper. Provide them with a series of statement cards related to a particular topic. Pupils discuss each statement and only those statements which they are able to reach a consensus on (either positive or negative) are placed inside the circle.

Often the statements about which no consensus can be reached are the most interesting to include in a class discussion!

### Decision makers

This activity is a staple in the history classroom. Pupils are given a historical context such as being a commander at the Battle of Hastings or Francis Drake during the Spanish Armada. They are then provided with several scenarios and options for how the historical person could respond to each scenario. Pupils must work in a group or pair to decide what they would do in each case. This provokes often lively discussion as they weigh up the advantages and disadvantages of each option.

## Diamond 9

A useful activity when asking pupils to discuss or come to a consensus about the significance or importance of ideas, sources or information of any kind. In pairs or groups, pupils must place nine cards into a diamond shape to rank the ideas on them.

## Drip-fed-facts

Reveal clues or facts at intervals throughout a lesson. Pupils work together to create hypotheses which develop as more information is gathered.

## Odd one out

Develop critical thinking skills to make a decision, applying well-reasoned answers and justifying through talk. This encourages pupils to be active listeners too, as they respond to points made by others (either to agree, ask for further explanation, or rebut with an idea of their own.)

## Posters and concept cartoons

Provide pupils in pairs or small groups with a written summary which they should work in pairs or groups to transform into a poster with no words or a limited number of words.

## Secret picture

Here, pupils work in pairs with one of the pair able to see an image displayed on the whiteboard while the other can't. The pupil without the board must describe a picture to the other, who has to draw it.

## Taboo

Sometimes called 'Back to the board', Taboo is a talking game. One pupil must get another to say a given word using other associated words or describing it. Play in pairs, teams or with the whole class.

## Talking points

Thought-provoking statements encourage pupils to talk about a specific topic, sharing what they know/understand as well as what they do not know/feel unsure about. The statements help pupils to focus on a topic/concept and compare their point of view with others.



During their group talk, they may reach the limits of their understanding and realise they need to research or learn more. Talking Points can be used at the start of a topic to evaluate current understanding; during a topic to share ideas; at the end of a topic as formative assessment.

Statements can be devised by the teacher or by the pupils themselves.

### Talk roles

Within the group, each pupil has a role which helps them to develop and interact with their own and other's ideas. For instance, the roles could be:

- Point (makes a statement or shares an answer).
- Challenge (in response to the statement).
- Clarify (ask a question or share a response that prompts a clearer idea or clarification).
- Probe (use questioning, facts or further statements to draw more reasoning from the original speaker).



## Appendix 2: Practical Strategies for Enhancing Vocabulary Provision

### Active use of language

Using questions throughout the school day will develop pupils' problem solving skills and help them acquire new language. Questions could include the following:

- Give me an example of...
- Describe a situation where...
- Would it be better to be... or to be...
- Would you rather have... or be...

### Choral pronunciation

In order for a student to understand a word, they need to be able to accurately pronounce it. Choral pronunciation provides opportunities for pupils to orally rehearse and repeat the new vocabulary. This could be in the following format:

- I say...
- We say...
- You say...

Take it a step further:

- I put it in a sentence... You put it in a sentence.
- I say a synonym for the word... You find a different synonym for the word.

### Context generation

This is a good way of allowing pupils to complete a sentence in a way that challenges their thinking. For example:  
What would make someone say...

- I made huge sacrifices. I...
- His speech was highly controversial. He...
- That was real hindrance to me. It...

### Drama

Use drama to act out words using scenario-based prompts to enhance understanding and recall through 'acting and doing'. For example:

- Your friend is **inconsolable**. What might they look like?
- If someone is a **tormentor** what might they do?
- Pretend to **ponder** what you might have for your dinner.

## Dual coding

This encourages pupils to make visual connections to support retention and understanding of new language. Get pupils to initially identify an image which links to the word and then use the image as a signpost/reminder on subsequent encounters.

## Key transition academic vocabulary strategy

As part of a robust vocabulary system (see Vocabulary Index System), the introduction and exploration of key academic vocabulary used regularly across all subjects in secondary school will need to be integrated into vocabulary teaching at primary level. This will support pupils in making a positive transition as the language they encounter is less unfamiliar to them.

Primary and secondary schools should work together to create agreed lists of target academic vocabulary for transition. For example:

- analyse
- assess
- cause
- correlation
- create
- describe
- define
- explain
- evaluate
- factor
- identify
- infer
- influence
- significant
- similar
- state
- summarise

## Pupil friendly definitions

Constructing a child-friendly definition is a fundamental starting point for pupils trying to grasp the meaning of a word. By introducing a word at the time it is encountered in reading, and using a definition matched closely to this context, pupils are better able to engage with it. Further subtleties in meanings can be explored later. Pupils need to be actively using the word at the point of learning and this initial encounter should be referred back to frequently and regularly.



## Rewards

Implement a rewards system for pupils who use the vocabulary without prompting in or outside of the classroom. Word Wizard (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002) is a good example. It is often quite simple to integrate into an existing rewards system.

## Sentence stems

Encourage pupils to make connections between words and their own experiences and allow them to put the language into their own context:

- Think of a time when...
- Think of someone who...
- Think of a situation when...

## True/false

Encourage pupils to think critically about words by providing statements which they have to identify as true or false. Make sure statements provided are pitched to ensure a considered response, helping to elicit understanding and address misconceptions. For example:

### Encounter 3

#### Vocabulary: True or False?

1. If something is very clear to you, then it is **ambiguous**.
2. Getting the students to make lunch for the teachers was clear **exploitation**.
3. Choosing between a margherita pizza and a Hawaiian was a difficult **moral** decision.
4. Elon Musk's plan to put humans on Mars could be considered an act of **colonialism**.
5. Magicians often use **illusion** in their magic tricks.

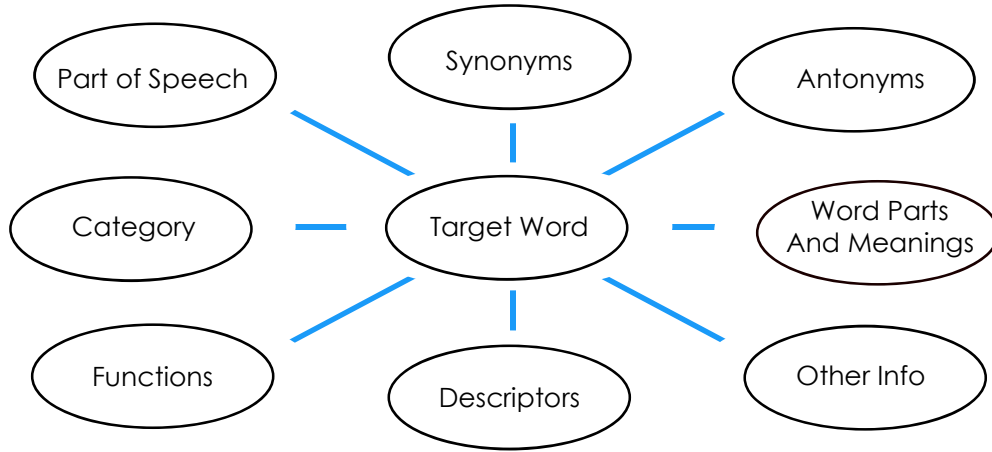
## Word relationships

This encourages pupils to make links between key vocabulary words. Pupils should read and engage with a statement containing target words (for example: 'Someone who is conscientious would not do things in a haphazard way') and then formulate their own response using the words in different contexts.



**Word webs**

Word webs like this one (Clark, 2022) encourage pupils to find a word's connections with other words and phrases. They allow pupils to compare and contrast words and provide examples of word usage in context.



**Word association**

Word association games allow pupils to process meaning and fully understand the complexities of language. Ask: Which word goes with... and why? For example:

- Which word goes with 'lie'? (exaggerate)
- Which word goes with 'cost'? (sacrifice)
- Which word goes with 'guess'? (infer)

Pupils have to explain their reasoning and consider other words that could be used instead.

**Linking to a wider context**

Pose questions to encourage pupils to generate wider contexts around target vocabulary. For example:

**Encounter 6**

**Vocabulary:**

1. Name something that is **ambiguous**.
2. Give me an example of **exploitation**.
3. Tell me something that someone with good **morals** might do.
4. Can you think of a consequence to **colonialism**?
5. When might an **illusion** be used?

## Vocabulary Index System

A Vocabulary Index System promotes robust integration of regular tasks and activities, ensuring that systematic revisiting of vocabulary becomes part of classroom culture. This can increase the rate at which pupils absorb words into their functioning vocabulary.

The index system could either be a set of cards created throughout the year, each card having a newly encountered word on it, or a digital resource, to be shared between primary and secondary schools. Once a word is introduced, studied and explored through explicit teaching, it is added to the index system ready to be randomly re-selected across the school year and used in a variety of follow-up activities. As the academic year moves on, the index becomes a classroom reference resource for use in a variety of ways by pupils and teachers.

A suggested approach is:

- > Primary: 15 words to be introduced across a 2 week period.
- > Year 6 classes to include 1 word from the academic tier 2 vocabulary list (see Key Transition Academic Vocabulary Strategy) to be taught within the 2 week period.
- > Secondary: 10 words per subject to be introduced termly.

Regular systematic reviewing and revisiting of the language will not only aid cognitive load, but ensure expectations remain high as pupils recognise that they are expected to recall prior learning and build on what they know.

The Vocabulary Index System could be established across upper key stage 2 classes in primary, through to lower key stage 3 in secondary, to provide a consistent approach and aid transition, reinforcing expectations and challenge.

Schools can decide on their own name for this approach, such as Vocabulary Vacuum, Valiant Vocabulary, Voluptuous Vocabulary or Vocabulary Vault.

## Appendix 3: Do it Now - Vocabulary and Reading

Two suggestions for immediate action to support literacy through primary to secondary transition.

### 1. Planned and explicit vocabulary teaching

Schools should provide a variety of opportunities to use new vocabulary, explore its various meanings, manipulate the words and, most importantly, revisit them on a regular basis. Research suggests that between 8 and 10 exposures of a new word are necessary for pupils to recognise a word and have a good understanding of its meaning (Nation, 1990).

With teachers grappling with the constraints of an already full curriculum, vocabulary tasks should be short but effective, providing variety and engagement and easily integrated into the school day.

As part of a robust vocabulary system, the introduction and exploration of key academic vocabulary used regularly across all subjects in secondary school will need to be integrated into vocabulary teaching at primary level. The words below have been chosen as they are relevant to many different contexts across the curriculum. Year 6 and 7 teachers should collaborate to adapt the list as needed.

- |               |            |               |
|---------------|------------|---------------|
| • analyse     | • create   | • identify    |
| • assess      | • describe | • infer       |
| • cause       | • define   | • influence   |
| • classify    | • explain  | • significant |
| • compare     | • evaluate | • similar     |
| • concluding  | • factor   | • state       |
| • correlation | • group    | • summarise   |

### 2. Planned and explicit reading opportunities

The Oxford Language Report (OUP, 2021) has exposed the critical word gap that has the potential to damage the progress of pupils at the vulnerable point between primary and secondary. In response, The East Sussex Way will set out some of the ways that pupils can 'master the most crucial of academic tools for our pupils: reading' (Quigley, 2018). In the meantime, it is recommended that schools:

- ✓ Decide who is going to lead and implement strategies to support reading throughout the Year 6/7 transition.
- ✓ Review their reading culture and diet, including progression of reading and the diversity and range of texts used to include fiction, non-fiction across the curriculum and poetry.

- ✓ Carry out a survey that looks at the engagement of reading for pleasure in your school, how it is implemented and identify ways to move forward.
- ✓ Communicate to determine if there is any reading data that could be passed on.
- ✓ Plan a robust and innovative reading for pleasure bridging strategy. Consider: competitions, parental engagement through book talk, building reading communities, and start a staff summer reading club.

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## Authors

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Jane has worked in schools in East Sussex since 1994. Drawing on her experience as teacher, leader, trainer, adviser and governor, she now runs her own educational consultancy. She is an avid enthusiast of children's and YA books, and has worked with over 100 schools to improve outcomes in reading and writing. A self-confessed word and grammar nerd, she is also an experienced Philosophy for Children trainer, and has written numerous student and teacher text books.

### Hannah Hamer

Hannah is Literacy Lead and Deputy Director of English at Bexhill Academy in East Sussex. She has held a number of roles within schools, including head of English, and has gained her National Professional Qualification for Middle Leadership. Hannah believes that literacy is the fundamental keystone in education and is passionate about ensuring every pupil is given the tools they need to succeed.

### Tara Hobson

Tara joined Hailsham Community College in 2017 as a cover supervisor. She has taught in key stages 3 – 5 and gained her National Professional Qualification for Senior Leadership. She is now Assistant Director of Learning for Social Studies and PSHE Lead. Tara has a passion for literacy and a strong belief that everyone has the right to learn to read – and that it is every teacher's duty to ensure this happens and secure success for all pupils.

### Catherine Michica de Oliveira

Catherine has been teaching at Chailey School for ten years where she is now Faculty Leader for Humanities and Curriculum Leader for History. She is currently studying for an MSc in Senior Leadership in Education.

### Ruby Murphy

Ruby has worked at Polegate School for 12 years. An experienced Year 5 and 6 teacher, she is also a specialist in English education and has been English Lead for six years. In 2021, she was recognised as Wellbeing Champion for Wealden and Wellbeing Champion for Sussex in the Sussex Teacher of the Year awards. She believes that an inspiring, challenging English curriculum gives pupils the freedom to explore and experiment whilst developing a meaningful, personal interest in their literacy skills.

## **Kate Paul**

Kate joined Gildredge House in 2014 and has taught in key stage 1 and key stage 2. In 2019, she was appointed as Key Stage 1 Phase Leader and became the maths and English lead within her phase. She is currently implementing Talk for Writing across the primary phase, as well as supporting the development of a mastery approach to teaching mathematics. Kate believes in building strong relationships with pupils to ensure all succeed.

## **Sarah Smith**

Sarah has worked at Manor Primary School for 15 years. She is a Year 6 teacher and Assistant Headteacher with responsibility for key stage 1 and assessment. She has recently achieved the National Professional Qualification for Senior Leadership. Sarah is convinced that strong literacy skills support pupils to make a positive transition from primary to secondary education – better able to build relationships, express themselves and develop into lifelong learners.



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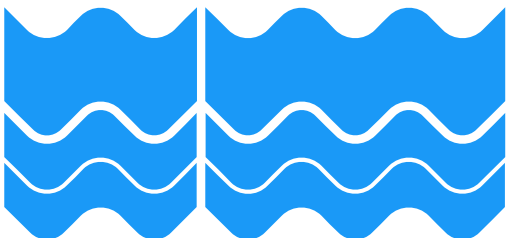
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