

## **Down High School**

### **Literacy Policy**

#### **Rationale**

We in Down High School believe that the effective use of language underpins and enriches learning and teaching throughout the entire curriculum and that each area of learning has a significant contribution to make. Equipping pupils to become more competent readers, writers, speakers and listeners is the shared responsibility of all teachers. Developing our pupils' skills in language and literacy enhances their learning experience and helps prepare them for the challenges and demands of the modern world.

#### **Aims**

- To develop our pupils' confidence as users of language.
- To improve the standard of spoken and written English throughout the school.
- To encourage all teachers to see themselves as teachers of language.
- To develop more classroom opportunities that raise pupils' confidence and competence in reading, writing, talking and listening.
- To promote reading for both information and pleasure.
- To harness more effectively the potential of both the Margaret Curry Library and the school's ICT resources in the further development of language across the curriculum.
- To work with the SENCO in identifying and assisting pupils with particular literacy needs.
- To develop interventionist strategies to help pupils who need additional Literacy support (as identified by generated data) and to stretch highly literate pupils.

## **Reading**

We want pupils to enjoy reading and to harness their reading to become more independent and effective learners. We aim to encourage pupils to:

- Read for both information and pleasure
- Read with greater fluency, accuracy and understanding
- Read to become independent and critical learners
- Read widely, selecting and deploying information from a broad range of printed word, moving image and ICT texts
- Read smartly - scanning texts and extracting the most important information.

Reading is not a passive process for learners. The responsibilities of teachers include:

- Acting as role models to promote reading for information and reading for pleasure.
- Developing subject specialist glossaries which help pupils to construct meaning from the texts they are using.
- Furnishing classes with focused reading lists and appropriate websites to encourage more independent research.
- Providing clear instructions when setting homework with a reading focus, ensuring that these instructions are accurately recorded in Homework Diaries.
- Setting research tasks or projects that require wider reading and that push pupils beyond the confines of subject textbooks.
- Teaching pupils, where appropriate, smart reading techniques including skim, scan and close read.
- Exploring more opportunities to take classes to the Margaret Curry Library.
- Building collaborative departmental libraries and advising the librarian on updating the library stock within the Margaret Curry Library.
- Ensuring that there is some additional support for pupils who struggle with the specialist language common to texts within your subject area.
- Providing the most able pupils with a wide variety of more challenging and open-ended reading tasks.

## **Writing**

We want pupils to develop increasing confidence in writing so that they are able to:

- Pay closer attention to their standard of written English, employing more accuracy in punctuation, spelling, grammar and syntax
- Write in a variety of forms for different audiences and purposes
- Communicate effectively using wide-ranging and subject specialist vocabulary
- Improve the presentation of their work
- Apply relevant word processing skills to improve their use of language

The responsibilities of teachers include:

- Using Common Marking Symbols as an active tool to improve the quality of our pupils' writing. (Teachers may be more selective in relation to marking the work of pupils with special needs or who exhibit poor secretarial skills. The extent of the correction should be in direct proportion to the confidence and competence of the writer.)
- Highlighting the importance of Quality Written Communication on internal exam papers and when providing feedback on exam performance. Incentives to reward effective QWC should be evident within Mark Schemes.
- Providing pupils with consistent messages on how written work should be presented. (Pupils should pay attention to their handwriting; they should use stationery in an appropriate fashion; and they should be encouraged to organise extended written work using headings, sub-headings, paragraphs and other useful conventions.)
- Disseminating good practice in writing by reading out pupils' work or photocopying exemplar answers.
- Providing examples (where relevant) of the different types of written answer required (formal, discursive etc.) and paying close attention to the purpose of the task and the target audience.
- Utilising word processing to promote and facilitate the crafting and editing of writing.
- Teaching pupils how to be more discriminating in their use of the internet and the conventions of authoring multi-media text.
- Providing pupils with subject specialist definitions.
- Encouraging pupils to proof their work and to use dictionaries and encyclopaedias whenever necessary.

In short, a teacher's primary response to a piece of writing should be about how to improve what is being presented by the writer.

### **Speaking and Listening**

We want pupils to develop increasing confidence and competence in speaking and listening, prerequisites to success in our modern and multifaceted communication age. We want pupils to be able to:

- Become more confident and articulate in expressing themselves in different contexts
- Become more active listeners - able to identify, discuss and/or record the main points from a talk or presentation
- Value the importance of listening to the views of others
- Use specialized and varied vocabulary across the curriculum
- Adapt their speech to their audience and the purpose of the task in hand

The responsibilities of teachers include:

- Promoting the importance of speaking and listening in school and in the world beyond school.
- Creating an environment of trust and respect within the classroom, where the views of pupils are valued.
- Encouraging pupils to work collaboratively - be it in pairs, groups or as a whole class.

- Developing a range of strategies to encourage speaking and listening skills. These may include different types of questioning, *each one teach one*, peer assessment, PowerPoint presentations, debates, drama, *hot-seating* and memory games.
- Structuring speaking and listening activities so that pupils become less passive and more actively involved in their own learning.
- Being sensitive to the different needs of our pupils, including the more able, those lacking in confidence, those with special educational needs and those who are speakers of English as a second language.

The Modern Languages Department may also play a useful role here in terms of sharing good practice with other departments.

### **Specific Roles and Responsibilities**

In addition to the responsibilities outlined above which apply to all teaching staff, some teachers have a more specific role.

#### **The Senior Leadership Team should:**

- Promote the development of Literacy at whole school level through the School Development Planning process.
- Promote learning and teaching in ways that encourage the development of pupils' reading, writing, speaking and listening.
- Use generated data to track progress in literacy at class, school and system level.

#### **The Literacy Co-ordinator should:**

- Support departments and teachers in the implementation of the school's Literacy Policy.
- Raise staff awareness of Literacy strategies through working party discussions, INSET and the dissemination of good practice.
- Work closely with the Vice Principal for Learning and Teaching and the SLT to formulate priorities and procedures in relation to Literacy.
- Establish procedures for monitoring and evaluating Literacy across the whole school.
- Keep up to date with recent initiatives, research and innovation and advise colleagues appropriately.
- Liaise with outside agencies, the Librarian, SENCO, the ICT Co-ordinator, the Head of Careers and other stakeholders who have a specific interest in addressing Literacy related issues.
- Develop interventionist strategies to help those pupils who require additional Literacy support and to challenge more able pupils.
- Lead the Literacy Team, nurturing and utilising the creative energies and specialist knowledge of its members.
- Liaise with feeder primary schools to try to ensure greater continuity

**The English department should:**

- Develop its specialised role in devising strategies to improve language and literacy in the English classroom.
- Continue to allocate one period each week in the junior school in which the learning intentions are clearly focused upon raising standards in literacy.
- Where appropriate, share good practice in relation to improving standards in language and literacy.
- Help to identify pupils who require additional support in reading and writing.
- Administer a *Progress in English* Reading Test for Year 8 pupils and instruct classroom assistants how to mark these tests.

**The Head of Department should:**

- Ensure that strategies to improve Literacy are clearly identified in Departmental Reports and Schemes of Work, and discussed (and minuted) in some departmental meetings.
- Build a QWC weighting (where appropriate) into internal exams and Mark Schemes with clear incentives to encourage pupils to improve their writing. Try to ensure progression in internal exams, building up both the rigour and degree of extended writing expected.
- Monitor the work of your department in relation to applying Down High's Common Marking Policy; promote a subject specialist vocabulary; and harness the effective use of the Homework Diary when setting homework with a reading or writing focus.
- Liaise with the Literacy Co-ordinator to discuss good practice.
- Liaise with the Librarian in relation to updating stock.
- Explore ways of enriching the language environment by inviting specialist speakers into school.

**The Literacy Committee should:**

- Continue to meet regularly and evaluate progress in whole-school Literacy.
- Periodically monitor samples of pupils' written work to encourage the effective use of Common Marking Symbols and to help to disseminate good practice.
- Explore interventionist strategies to assist pupils who require additional Literacy support.

**The Teacher with oversight and Pupil Librarians should:**

- Provide appropriate resources to support the curriculum.
- Support staff in teaching pupils how to research independently.
- Liaise with Heads of Department in relation to updating stock.
- Work with the Literacy Co-ordinator and the Literacy Team to promote reading for information and pleasure.

**The SENCO should:**

- Liaise with the Literacy Co-ordinator about SEN pupils who require additional Literacy support.
- Communicate to all teaching staff information on SEN pupils with specific Literacy needs.
- Monitor SEN pupils who experience Literacy difficulties through IEPs and review meetings.

**Monitoring and Evaluation**

- The Literacy Policy will have been read by Senior Leaders, Heads of Department and the teaching staff.
- The Literacy Policy will be ratified by the school's Board of Governors.
- The Literacy Committee will review the implementation of the Literacy Policy.