

Disciplinary Literacy at KS3 and KS4

At our school, we recognise that literacy is fundamental to success across all subjects and beyond. Disciplinary literacy focuses on how reading, writing and communication operate differently in each subject and how we explicitly teach students to engage with these subject-specific demands.

Across both KS3 and KS4, this approach is particularly important in our SEMH setting. Many of our students arrive with gaps in literacy and disrupted educational experiences. Developing confidence with language is therefore central—not only to academic achievement but also to supporting self-expression, emotional regulation and positive engagement with learning.

Our Approach

We take a structured, consistent approach to disciplinary literacy across all subjects and key stages. This includes:

- **Explicit vocabulary instruction**

Key subject vocabulary is carefully selected, taught and revisited to support understanding and long-term retention.

- **Reading for understanding**

Students are supported to access increasingly complex texts through modelling, guided reading and strategies that break down challenging material.

- **Writing with purpose and precision**

Students are taught how to write effectively in different subject

disciplines—developing from supported responses at KS3 to more independent, exam-focused writing at KS4.

Shared language across the writing curriculum:

“Think it → Say it → Write it → Check it → Share it”

- **Oracy and structured talk**

Opportunities for discussion are embedded to help students organise their thinking, rehearse ideas and communicate with clarity and confidence.

Consistency and Progression

Consistency is key to supporting our learners. Across KS3 and KS4, staff use shared approaches to reduce cognitive load and build familiarity, including:

- Modelling high-quality responses
- Using scaffolds that are gradually removed over time
- Pre-teaching and revisiting vocabulary
- Providing clear frameworks for reading, writing and oracy

At KS3, the focus is on building foundational literacy skills and confidence. At KS4, this develops into greater independence and accuracy whilst promoting positive end of KS4 pupil outcomes.

Supporting Our Learners

We recognise that literacy development is closely linked to confidence, engagement and behaviour. Our approach is underpinned by:

- High expectations for all students
- Adaptive teaching to meet a range of needs
- Clear routines and predictable structures
- A focus on small steps of success to build independence over time

Preparation for Adulthood

By embedding disciplinary literacy across KS3 and KS4, we aim to ensure that all students can:

- Access the full curriculum and succeed in qualifications
- Communicate effectively in a range of contexts
- Develop the literacy skills needed for further education, employment and everyday life

Our goal is to equip students not only to achieve in our curriculum subject areas but to leave school with the confidence and capability to use language as a tool for success in the wider world.