



St Mary's Key Stage 3 Reading Strategy

Vision

At St Mary's Middle School, our vision is for every pupil to leave us as a confident, engaged and capable reader. We believe that reading supports students' achievement across the curriculum, opens up wider life opportunities and fosters curiosity, creativity and empathy. Through high-quality teaching, rich reading experiences and targeted support, we aim to equip students with the skills and behaviours needed to read widely, critically and independently, as well as to develop a genuine appreciation and enjoyment of reading. Our approach to reading at Key Stage 3 is carefully designed to build on the strong foundations formed by the Literacy Tree Reading Leaves curriculum during Years 5 and 6.

Our approach

We aim to achieve our vision through a range of coordinated strategies and practices, including high-quality English lessons, dedicated reading sessions in tutor time, targeted interventions for those who need additional support and access to a well-resourced library.

Our reading provision at Key Stage 3 offers clear progression from Key Stage 2, building on students' existing skills while developing greater fluency, comprehension and critical reading strategies. Students engage with a wider and more diverse range of increasingly challenging texts, developing the ability to read critically across a variety of contexts and genres.

Implementation

English lessons

Students engage in five 1-hour English lessons every week.

English lessons provide structured and engaging opportunities for students to develop the reading skills set out in the Key Stage 3 English programme of study. Students are explicitly taught to analyse and interpret texts, developing critical reading skills such as inference, deduction, evaluation and comparison. They learn to identify language, structure and stylistic choices, considering how these contribute to meaning, purpose and effect. Lessons are designed to encourage discussion, reflection and deeper understanding, supporting students to articulate their responses with clarity and confidence.

Students engage with a wide range of high-quality fiction and non-fiction texts, carefully selected to support the Key Stage 3 programme of study. These include classic and contemporary works, texts from a variety of cultures and authors, and material that spans genres and styles. By exploring this diverse repertoire, students develop not only their comprehension and analytical skills, but also an appreciation for different perspectives, voices and forms of writing.

The curriculum is sequenced to enable students to build on the reading skills developed in Key Stage 2, deepening and extending these into the knowledge and skills needed for increasingly sophisticated analysis throughout Years 7 and 8. In addition, students engage with increasingly complex texts over time, supporting them to apply their developing understanding to more demanding literature and to read with greater independence and insight.

Reading sessions

Students engage in three 20-minute reading sessions every week. These sessions take place in Lesson 6 and are led by the form tutor.

Reading sessions provide an opportunity for students to expand their vocabulary, develop their fluency and enhance their comprehension skills. They also provide an opportunity for students to enjoy a shared journey through a text, engage in thoughtful discussion and reflect on their own interpretations.

Reading sessions have a consistent structure of prepare – read - respond. This mirrors the structure of Key Stage 2 reading lessons, providing continuity and consistency for students' reading development as they progress into Key Stage 3. In the prepare section, the form tutor pre-teaches key vocabulary and provides any contextual knowledge needed to understand the text, such as the time period, the setting or the cultural background. In the read section, the form tutor reads the text aloud to students and provides an opportunity for students to practise their fluency through choral reading, paired reading, echo reading or individual reading aloud. In the respond section, the form tutor poses a question or a discussion prompt and supports students to consider and share their reflections verbally, drawing upon their knowledge of the text in their response.

Texts for reading sessions have been carefully selected and planned over the course of each academic year. This supports progression in reading skills as students engage with increasingly challenging texts over time, both in terms of the level of reading difficulty as well as the depth of concepts and themes within the texts. Texts have also been selected to ensure that students engage with a wide range of genres, styles and forms throughout Years 7 and 8. Texts have been selected to reflect diverse voices, ensuring that students encounter characters and read authors from different backgrounds and that represent a range of cultures and experiences. Students will read texts that include positive and authentic representation of a range of ethnicities and faiths, of disability and neurodivergence, and of the LGBT+ community.

Reading interventions

Students who have been identified as in need of support with reading development engage in the Inference reading intervention and/or IDL literacy. This is specifically designed to support students who need targeted literacy intervention, strengthening reading skills such as fluency, comprehension, vocabulary, and academic language through structured, personalised practice. Students who engage with reading interventions are regularly assessed to monitor their progress and inform adjustments to support where needed.

School library

The school library offers a wide selection of high-quality texts to support both curriculum learning and personal reading for pleasure. A librarian is available to guide students towards suitable choices and promote a love of reading. Students can borrow and return books easily, ensuring ongoing access to new material.