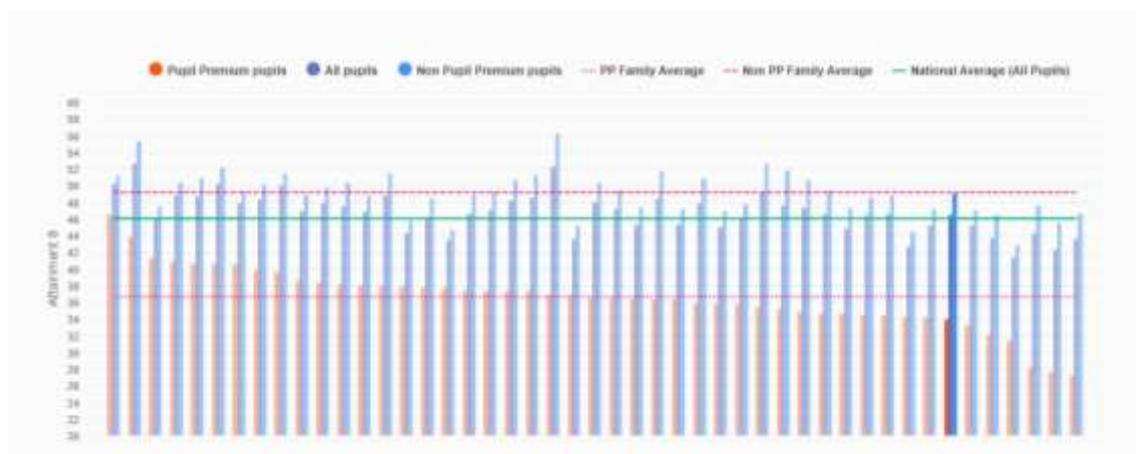


## Developing a Literacy Strategy for secondary School

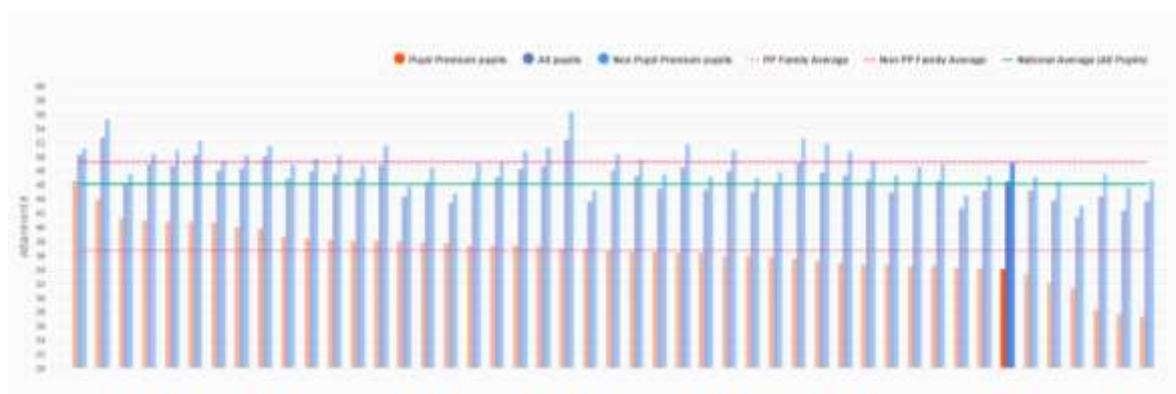
### Rationale

#### Comparator Schools' Data

Fitzharrys EEF Family of Schools



John Mason EEF Family of Schools



### **Background**

In 2018 120,000 disadvantaged students left school below the expected standard for reading. If they perform like previous cohorts, 1 in 10 will achieve passes in English and Maths GCSE. 2 in 100 will achieve the EBacc. 0 will go to Russell Group universities.

Low literacy is one of the main barriers to success in education and particularly hampers the achievement of boys and disadvantaged pupils. In itself low-literacy makes education increasingly difficult to access.

A student at the expected standard for reading at the age of 10 will know at least 20,000 words which will help them to navigate this. They will have strategies for acquiring new vocabulary, piecing together meaning by context and breaking down challenging texts. Once they reach secondary, children are expected to navigate between a series of different disciplines, each with their own

particular language and disciplinary style of communication. The gap grows steadily and dramatically without high quality literacy interventions and teaching.

## **What Does Research Say Effective Literacy Teaching Looks Like?**

### **Interventions**

For those children whose personalised interventions can be highly effective at closing the gap. There is a wide range of these available and the most successful schools target them at students upon entry, with extensive catch-up work in years 7 and 8. Key strategies with strong evidence of impact include (in order of effectiveness):

1. Reading comprehension interventions
2. Writing interventions
3. Summer Schools
4. Oral interventions

Blended literacy interventions have also been shown to be effective but, because of their nature, it is hard to quantify the impact of different elements.

A number of secondary schools have introduced “whole school” interventions in recent years, such as “Drop Everything and Read”. These may have a number of benefits in terms of the schools’ values or student behaviour but the evidence for impact is very limited and there is evidence that they could increase the literacy gap. Silent reading programmes have “shown inconsistent effects on student outcomes and motivation” (EEF, 2019). It is also clear that they do not “transfer” such benefits as they may accrue across subjects.

### **Disciplinary Literacy and Targeted Vocabulary Instruction**

Disciplinary literacy emphasises the importance of subject-specific language and communication and emphasises the need for teachers to specifically teach to build students’ understanding of this.

Beyond this teachers should ensure that they introduce vocabulary with explicit instruction. Quigley’s SEEC (Select, Explain, Explore, Consolidate) model is well-supported. Whilst many teachers “explain” vocabulary, careful selection is more inconsistent. Teachers should be selecting tier 2 and 3 vocabulary not found in every day speech: just 400 words well-taught can open students’ understanding of 40 times that much vocabulary (16,000 words).

Explore and consolidation strategies are not used often or consistently. These include:

- Reviewing etymology and morphology
- Linking word families
- Explaining multiple meanings
- Considering synonyms and antonyms

### **Reading: Ability to Access Complex Academic Texts**

Students need to be exposed to academic texts that reflect specialist disciplinary communication in all subjects. A school-wide focus on teaching reading and the reading techniques appropriate to different disciplines helps all subjects to increase engagement and outcomes.

Reading should require active engagement including drawing on prior knowledge, predicting text content and asking questions. Reading strategies should be explicitly taught, modelled and practiced.

## **Writing**

A model for writing should include the key elements of planning, monitoring and evaluation with teachers modelling each steps to ensure that students become able to reflect successfully on their own written product. Redrafting is an important tool in academic writing that needs to be taught to students and used to develop their written work.

Students need to be taught specific disciplinary approaches to writing including aims, structure, word selection and spelling, grammar and punctuation which affects meaning.

## **Structured Talk**

Different disciplines have different styles of communication that are reflected in speech as well as writing. Teacher modelling and feedback on student talk is essential to teach students how to communicate in different disciplines. Teachers need to be aware of communication conventions in their discipline and ready to apply these to encourage students to sound more like an historian, scientist, mathematician etc.

These conventions need to be taught in debate, discussion and group work as well as teacher-led talk and feedback used to refine students' engagement.

## **Key Questions for Staff to Engage With**

What is unique about your subject discipline in terms of reading, writing, speaking and listening?  
What is common with other subject disciplines?

How do members of this subject discipline use language on a daily basis?

Are there any typical literacy misconceptions held by students, for example, how to write an effective science report?

Are there words and phrases used typically, or uniquely, in the subject discipline?

- How can we support children to write like a [geographer/scientists etc]?
- How can we support children to talk like a [mathematician/psychologist etc.]?
- How can we support children to debate like a [historian/philosopher etc.]?
- How can we support children to read like a [musician/linguist etc.]?

## **What are other schools in our family doing well?**

### **Literacy**

All schools committed money to supporting disadvantaged students in KS4 and providing one-to-one tuition across a range of subjects. However a number of schools had very strong outcomes in EM

and a clear recognition of the importance of addressing literacy, which was recognised as a key barrier to success. High impact strategies included:

- Extensive and **targeted interventions in Key Stage 3** with transition work focused on identifying those students whose literacy levels are behind and support being put in place early in year 7. These schools used interventions to close the gaps effectively in year 7 or by the end of year 8. Accelerated reader was a commonly used tool, but individual mentoring with tutors and older students were also evident in the strategies of all schools showing clear success in this area. These schools included: The Corsham School; Diss High School; The Friary School; the Priory School; William Brookes School and Sixth Form; Teesdale School and Sixth Form.
- Literacy and numeracy **booster classes**, transitioning to in-class support were funded in Diss High School and had a strong impact on pupil progress, with students catching up at least 2 levels of progress in EM during year 7.
- Schools with comprehensive programmes of **cross-curricular skills** have been praised when these have been thoroughly embedded and are evident in classroom teaching and used to support closing the gap. The Priory School has a comprehensive programme of study skills but literacy skills are more commonly noted. The William Brookes School stands out for the **comprehensive literacy programme** clearly impacting upon teaching in all subjects. Schools which have developed their curriculum in this way include: The Priory School; William Brookes School and Sixth Form

Key case study school: William Brookes School and Sixth Form.

### **Moving Forward**

- How confident are we in the clarity of literacy expectations embedded into the intent of each subject's curriculum plan?
- How effectively do teachers teach new vocabulary, or model and teach ways of reading, writing and talking in their subject? Does any auditing of teaching and learning on this level need to take place before we can move forwards?
- Do we have a shared vision for what lessons would look like in ALT were high quality literacy teaching truly embedded?
- Is there a single area of priority on which to focus first?
- **Further foci: PAM boys especially extended writing (from SLB)**

### **Partial Bibliography**

Department for Education (2018), *Literacy and Numeracy Catch-Up Strategies*. Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/739722/literacy\\_and\\_numeracy\\_catch\\_up\\_strategies\\_amended\\_july-2018\\_amended\\_10.09.18.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/739722/literacy_and_numeracy_catch_up_strategies_amended_july-2018_amended_10.09.18.pdf)

EEF (2019) *Improving Literacy in Secondary Schools*. Available at: [https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Publications/Literacy/EEF\\_KS3\\_KS4\\_LITERACY\\_GUIDANCE.pdf](https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Publications/Literacy/EEF_KS3_KS4_LITERACY_GUIDANCE.pdf)

Quigley, A. (2018), *Closing the Vocabulary Gap*

Quigley, A. (2020), *Closing the Reading Gap*