

Literacy Policy

All students should be enabled to develop to their full potential and have opportunities to evolve their understanding and functionality of the English language in all forms. This may include using a range of methods which enable the learners to communicate effectively, and at an appropriate level. Communication is the key to gaining independence, life skills and accessing other parts of the curriculum, and becoming a member of a community.

Aims and Objectives:

This policy reflects statutory guidance from the Department for Education on phonics and literacy for pupils with SEND and aligns with The Reading Framework (DfE, 2023), The Writing Framework (DfE, 2025) and the SEND Code of Practice (DfE / DHSC, 2015). These documents can be viewed here:

[SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years - GOV.UK](#)

[The reading framework - GOV.UK](#)

[The writing framework - GOV.UK](#)

Intent:

Students at St. Piers have a diverse range of abilities and needs and use various, mainstream and bespoke methods of communication. Literacy comes under the heading of *My Communication, Interaction and Language* in the school curriculum. We use the term '*total communication approach*' at St. Piers, to reflect and encompass all forms of communication utilised as part of our student's daily, educational diet. We recognise that students who are unable to communicate through speech may require other means to express themselves. Such means may be 'no-tech', 'low tech' or 'high tech' forms of communication. Our curriculum therefore incorporates all effective means of communication through our '*total communication approach*'. These methods include:

- Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC) which supplement spoken and written words (Grid Explorer)
- Songs of reference
- Objects of reference
- Touch cues
- Symbols
- Signing (Makaton / BSL) or gesture
- Switches
- Eye gaze
- Electronic forms of AAC.

A personalised approach is taken to the teaching of Speaking and Listening, Reading, and Writing and the curriculum delivery is adapted to ensure that it is accessible and engaging for all students on whichever learner journey they are following (*Learning for Life, Skills for Life, and Specialist Skills*). Staff will use a range of methods and resources which challenge and extend pupil's skills and give positive reinforcement of their efforts by praise/reward of participation in activities. Feedback and marking are done in response to individual needs, with the aim of informing students of what went well and what their next steps will be (see Feedback and Marking Guidelines). We aim to help students develop the ability to respond, to listen and to understand, so that they can be actively engaged in their learning journey and are given opportunities for their voice to be heard, through decisions, choices and creativity. Literacy is taught both discretely (e.g., phonics sessions) and through cross-curricular approaches to ensure generalisation of skills. Cross-curricular and experiential pedagogies, in addition to discrete teaching, provide our students with opportunities for gaining an understanding of the world around them and their place in it.

Implementation

Teaching and Learning Intentions:

The teaching and learning intentions set by teachers are based on those in the School Curriculum, Engagement Model, Development Matters and the National Curriculum, and are differentiated and adapted as appropriate and according to individual needs. Students will use and build upon learning through a 3-tiered curriculum model following 'Learner Journeys' as they grow through the phases from EYFS to Primary, and Secondary to the 16-19 Provision. This curriculum takes account of the three areas of the National Curriculum that form the foundations of Communication, Interaction and Language:

- Speaking & Listening (oracy)
- Reading
- Writing

It uses adaptations of these areas to ensure full coverage at the appropriate level within each phase and learner journey.

At St. Piers, we follow an outcome led approach to learning. To enable our students to achieve, we build structured language acquisition into everyday functional situations. Most students need daily repetition to acquire and maintain these skills and determine good levels of progress and development.

Reading and Writing are concerned with knowledge and understanding of language and the ability to convey meaning through various media. First and foremost, students are taught early reading skills through our Systematic Synthetic Phonics (SSP) programme. Currently at St. Piers, this is through the Twinkl Phonics programme. We are transitioning to the Little Wandle SSP programme to strengthen early reading provision and to reflect our student's changing needs and areas for development. This will be rolled out from January 2026.

Whilst we recognise that this is the most effective and primary method for teaching our young people to read, it is complemented and enhanced through other bespoke methods, such as sight recognition. Students at St. Piers are encouraged to develop and extend their awareness that information can be carried through a wide variety of published resources, for example photographs, pictures, symbols and words. Additionally, multi-sensory and environmental resources are used, such as tactile / sound books, and using ICT, to give students appropriate, realistic and targeted access to reading. Students are enabled to develop an awareness of print and script in a multitude of contexts - for example: stories; poems; non-fiction texts; messages; instructions; and print found in their communities and environments.

Learning Intentions for each student are both structured and flexible, and incorporates their targets set in EHCP meetings and Annual Reviews. The school curriculum enables students to use both verbal and non-verbal methods to develop their expressive and receptive communication. Students have opportunities to use language both functionally and creatively through our transdisciplinary education model.

Planning:

My Communication, Interaction & Language is taught both discretely and through an integrated, cross-curricular approach. It is incorporated into every area of the school curriculum and supported by our transdisciplinary education model. Appropriate planning and provision are made for students who need adaptation to the curriculum to access it. Due to the diverse nature of our students, our planning is adapted through appropriate differentiation within the class, lesson, and timetabling. Students are taught as a whole class, in small groups, or individually.

Medium term planning for My Communication, Interaction and Language is based on the school curriculum written by subject leaders at St. Piers, in conjunction with the wider teaching group and the SLT. The Curriculum is reviewed annually and considers the needs of our ever-changing cohorts of students.

Students are encouraged to participate in sensory stories, shared reading and interactive music sessions (for example), to develop their listening and collaborative skills. Staff ensure that where appropriate, an intensive interaction approach is adopted and that key vocabulary is modelled through signs, symbols and objects in addition to conversational modelling. Staff are expected to use dynamic assessment to move students on and develop further learning opportunities throughout their lesson and beyond. Our iASEND assessment programme has been designed for teachers to monitor student progress, and even the smallest of steps are recognised and celebrated.

Speaking and Listening

Our goal for many of our students will be to develop vocalisations and to widen their range of functional communication so that they can express their needs and wants appropriately and meaningfully, to understand social communication presented to them by adults and peers, and respond intentionally and respectfully in a range of situations and contexts. Teaching this across phases includes participation in social routines, using or interpreting non-verbal cues such as facial expressions, body language and gesture and developing more formal oral motor and verbal skills.

For other students, our intention will be to continue to build on the social skills they have already acquired and to widen their vocabulary with meaning and understanding. Vocabulary will be presented through pre-teaching in the lead up to a new topic (for example) and as part of the student's daily, vocabulary rich, classroom and outdoor learning opportunities.

Through our inclusive Creative Arts department, our students will also have many opportunities to utilise, rehearse and develop their speaking and listening skills through school performances and weekly music and drama lessons with specialist teachers.

Reading

For students with complex learning needs, reading can be interpreted as any activity that derives meaning from visual or tactile means. Students will begin by developing the ability to locate and track sounds and begin to recognise that these may relate to people or objects. We refer to this stage as the 'Pre-phonics' stage. To discriminate between sounds, words and pictures, we work with items that our students find most motivating. When students are ready, they will then be taught daily phonics through our adopted SSP programme (Little Wandle Letters and Sounds from January 2026).

"The curriculum remains the same, but the pedagogy might be different. Some pupils with SEND will need a lot more practice to secure important phonic knowledge. This does not mean phonics is not working—it means we need to think carefully about how best to help pupils secure this knowledge."

(DfE/Ofsted blog, 2023)

We recognise that most of our students at St. Piers will be unable to access a phonics programme with the same timescales assigned for mainstream pupils. However, we do also recognise that children need to learn the alphabetic code to be able to decode and read word effectively. Therefore, when ready developmentally, all pupils will be taught daily phonics and progress will be tracked and monitored systematically through our iASEND system. During every student's phonics journey, they will have access to a range of reading materials that aim to:

- be in line with their stage of phonetic development and be phonetically decodable.
- be ambitious and expose them to a wider range of more complex vocabulary to challenge their thinking and comprehension skills.
- promote a love for reading and encourage reading for pleasure – these texts may not be accessible for them to decode and read themselves but aimed more at having shared reading opportunities at home and school with an appropriate adult.

In addition to phonics, children are also encouraged to gain an understanding of rhythm, rhyme, and syllables which is promoted through regular story times, and all pupils have individual log ins to access the Lexia programme, which is aimed at enhancing the overall development of pupil's reading, and encourages engagement through digital media.

When students have successfully completed our SSP programme and are 'competent' decoders, they have access to a range of reading materials to enable them to develop their reading skills such as fluency, speed, prosody and comprehension. The carefully selected books for this stage are designed to provide an opportunity for learners to make independent choices about the books they read and are staged / banded to ensure steady progression is achieved on a supported and clear scale. At this stage of development, the focus for reading development will be mainly around aspects of comprehension such as vocabulary development; inference; predictions; explanation; retrieval of information; and summarising text.

Literacy is fundamentally about finding meaning in spoken, visual and symbolic language. We teach this by putting reading and pre-reading tasks into every day, relevant, and functional situations. We use a range of reading schemes which are grouped collectively to enable teachers to guide their students to make appropriate, independent choices for their reading texts, and students have access to a range of fiction and non-fiction texts as well as poetry, newspapers and magazines. Students are encouraged to participate in shared reading activities and, where appropriate, to engage in 1:1 or private reading time. Student's reading in school is recorded by the class team and a log of books read are kept. This enables to teachers to ensure texts are appropriate for the stage of development, to track progress and areas of need through comments made and ensure no unnecessary repetition of texts is offered. All students have access to the school library and are either encouraged to take a reading book home on a weekly basis or are offered access to online phonics activities/ebooks for home learning.

Writing

Fine and gross motor skills are practiced through all the phases and learner journeys to develop muscle tone, coordination and control. Students are encouraged to produce writing, symbols, or marks with a sense of purpose - to communicate news, greetings, thoughts, or information. Therefore, writing is taught across the school using a variety of methods and with a wide range of resources. For example, pre-writing skills including mark making and messy play, the use of laptop computers and iPads and through active sessions such as Write Dance, Teach Active and iMoves, in addition to more traditional methods of mark making and pencil work. Our Occupational Therapists support this area of the curriculum in a variety of ways for example providing adapted/assistive writing equipment and seating etc.

Our teaching reflects the importance of providing students with the tools to compose work, record events or reflect personal interests and to record for different purposes such as shopping lists; invites; form filling; stories; letters; postcards; menus; instructions etc.

Further, since special emphasis is given to phonics as a means of gaining reading skills, the formation of letters is taught where it is considered appropriate and relevant, and a range of writing materials and activities are available. Writing opportunities at St. Piers are mainly driven by our carefully guided and selected literacy spine. Each book has been chosen for its appropriateness to each cohort and learning pathway. Books are selected with student's age, stage, and areas of interest in mind. Teachers will then plan engaging and appropriate lessons for their class, using the book as a hook and as a platform to deliver high quality, appropriate English lessons to all students, regardless of their age or stage.

Assessment, Recording and Reporting:

Assessment, reporting, and recording are in line with St Piers Assessment, Feedback and Marking Policy. All students will be assessed according to the school's bespoke frameworks for Literacy and EHCP's on the iSEND as previously mentioned. Where appropriate, the GL Assessment YARK reading tests are also carried out annually to monitor progress in reading age, speed and comprehension. Other online subscriptions such as Lexia, also provide diagnostic tools that inform our Assessment for Learning (AfL) process. Success is measured by:

- Progress tracked through iSEND and Engagement Model criterion
- Evidence from pupil EHCP targets
- Reading fluency and functional communication improvements
- Writing development and moderation across the school

Impact

Monitoring and Evaluation:

The My Communication and Interaction, and Language Team carry out learning walks and peer reviews where they observe how Literacy is taught throughout the school. The English Leader (with overall responsibility for Communication, Interaction and Language) along with the deputy headteacher, and headteacher holds meetings with teachers to review assessment and planning. The English Lead is responsible for ensuring that there is an action plan in place for the subject, to ensure needs are highlighted and / or met for students and practitioners alike. The observations and termly review, inform the basis of feedback to school staff through CPD sessions, to the Head and governors and will form part of the School Action Plan.

The policy will be updated every two years.

Written by Helen LeRoy

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Version Table			
Version history	Leader	Role	Approved by
1. December 2025	Helen LeRoy	English Lead	Clare Lewis (Deputy headteacher)

