

Leigh UTC Dartford- Literacy Policy

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Date Created	September 2025
Review Date	September 2026
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Leigh UTC Dartford Literacy Policy.

What does Literacy mean at Leigh UTC Dartford?

At Leigh UTC Dartford, our intent is to empower every student to thrive both personally and academically through a powerful, STEM-based, IB world curriculum. Literacy underpins this vision by equipping students with the communication, critical thinking, and analytical skills needed to succeed in a fast-paced, knowledge-rich global market. In line with our mission to prepare young STEM professionals for future global markets, we view literacy not just as a subject, but as a gateway to accessing complex ideas, engaging with diverse perspectives, and developing the academic and professional fluency needed for the modern world. Our literacy curriculum is designed to go beyond traditional boundaries, embedding reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills into real-world, work-ready contexts, while remaining grounded in the values and philosophy of the IB learner profile.

What is Disciplinary Literacy?

Disciplinary literacy is the teaching and use of reading, writing, speaking and thinking skills that are specific to each subject or discipline. It recognises that every subject has its own language, methods and ways of communicating, and that students need to learn these in order to fully understand and succeed within each area of study.

For example:

- In science, students need to learn how to read and write scientific reports, interpret graphs, and use precise, objective language.
- In maths, they must understand mathematical notation, follow logical reasoning, and explain problem-solving methods clearly.
- In engineering, they may analyse technical diagrams, write specifications, and present solutions clearly and persuasively.
- In English, they interpret figurative language, analyse tone and structure, and build arguments through essays.

Disciplinary literacy goes beyond general literacy. It is not just about reading and writing well, it is about developing the ability to *think, communicate and behave like a subject expert*. At Leigh UTC Dartford, this approach supports students in becoming work-ready professionals by helping them master the specialised communication skills needed in STEM industries and beyond.

Research:

Why literacy matters (EEF Improving Literacy in Secondary Schools Guidance Report)

“Literacy is fundamental for success in school and later life . Students who cannot read , write and communicate effectively are highly unlikely to access the challenging academic curriculum in secondary school and are more likely to have poor educational outcomes

across all subjects."

EEF Putting Evidence to Work- A School's Guide to Implementation.

"Treat implementation as a process, not an event; plan and execute in stages.

"Word Rich" children are statistically more socially mobile allowing for greater opportunities and allowing them to access the world on a deeper level.

(Research from Quigley's Closing the Vocabulary Gap)

A whole school literacy policy (WSLP) should guide collective understandings of literacy within a school, articulating clear literacy learning goals and detailing how they will be attained. Libraries and their staff should feature in these policies as key literacy resources (EEF).

Leigh UTC Dartford Literacy Policy

1. Introduction

Our belief in the power of language extends beyond mere communication; it's the foundation of our approach to fostering a supportive and equitable learning environment. We understand that consistent language, used uniformly by all staff, creates a shared understanding and minimises the impact of personal barriers.

By adhering to a consistent vocabulary and approach, we shift the focus from the individual to the established expectations.

At Leigh UTC Dartford, we recognise that literacy is the foundation for learning and achievement across the curriculum. As a STEM focused secondary and post-16 academy, it is essential that all students possess the reading, writing, speaking and listening skills needed to engage confidently with academic and technical language. This policy outlines our shared commitment to embedding high quality and consistent literacy practices across all subjects. It places particular emphasis on Quality First Teaching, explicit vocabulary instruction and structured talk.

Leigh UTC Dartford, recognises that literacy is not a general skill but one that is deeply rooted in subject specific practice. Every teacher is a teacher of literacy. Every subject requires students to use language in a particular way. Through this policy, we aim to ensure that all teachers are equipped to teach the literacy skills their subject demands and that all students develop the tools to access and succeed in every area of the curriculum.

2. Aims

Our literacy strategy is designed to equip students with the academic language and communication skills required to thrive in a rigorous, technical and future focused learning environment. It supports our vision as a specialist STEM academy with employer links and a post-16 offer.

We aim to:

- Raise standards in writing, oracy and reading across all key stages by embedding high quality, subject specific literacy teaching within every lesson.
- Embed disciplinary literacy skills into extended writing, academic reading and oral communication tasks across all subject areas, including STEM and vocational pathways.
- Develop confident and effective oral communicators. Students should be able to articulate ideas using appropriate subject specific language in discussions, presentations and professional contexts.

- Increase vocabulary knowledge and use by ensuring explicit vocabulary instruction is embedded into curriculum planning, teaching routines and assessment practices across every subject.
- Foster a lifelong love of reading. This includes reading for academic success, personal development and critical thinking.
- Deliver targeted intervention informed by robust diagnostic tools, such as KS2 fine scores, NGRT results, SEND and EAL profiles.

3. Evidence-Based Foundation

3.1 Reading Comprehension Strategies (EEF)

Research from the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) highlights the impact of explicit strategies for understanding text. "Reading comprehension strategies are high impact on average (+6 months)" and: "It is crucial to support pupils to apply the comprehension strategies independently to other reading tasks, contexts and subjects".

Overview

This evidence supports our inclusion of reading comprehension within disciplinary literacy. Through modelling, scaffolding and independent practice, we ensure all students learn to infer, summarise, question and monitor their understanding across subjects.

3.2 Literacy in Secondary Schools (EEF / Gov.uk)

Guidance from EEF and Gov.uk emphasises the importance of disciplinary literacy and vocabulary instruction. For example, EEF states: "All teachers should be supported to understand how to teach students to read, write and communicate effectively in their subjects".

Gov.uk notes: "Reading is essential to every subject and children who cannot read well will find it difficult to keep up with the demands of secondary school".

Overview

These sources affirm that literacy is not dispensable or confined to English. Our focus on disciplinary literacy, structured talk and vocabulary instruction is directly supported. We recognise reading ability as foundational to accessing subject content and maintaining student motivation.

4. Key Literacy Pillars

4.1 Disciplinary Literacy

Overview

All staff embed literacy within subject disciplines, building students' capacity to read technical texts and craft academic writing relevant to their field. This aligns with EEF guidance, which emphasises training teachers to support reading, writing and communication specific to their subject.

Operational strategies

- Modelling subject-specific language
- Teaching reading strategies from different text types
- Scaffolding analytical writing tasks

4.2 Reading Fluency

Overview

Fluency enhances comprehension and confidence. Gov.uk confirms that fluent reading across subjects is essential: "Reading is essential to every subject and children who cannot read well will find it difficult to keep up...".

Operational strategies

- Live modelling of texts
- Paired and shared reading routines
- Scaffolded practice in all lesson types

4.3 Writing

Overview

At Leigh UTC Dartford, students will be trained to produce high-quality written texts across a range of genres: technical, analytical, explanatory, creative and evaluative. They will be taught to manipulate language to suit complex purposes, audiences and subject contexts, particularly within our STEM and vocational specialisms. Faultless technical accuracy and clarity of expression will be expected across all extended written work, regardless of subject.

All departments will build weekly and termly opportunities into curriculum planning for students to complete extended writing. These tasks will enable students to refine their writing craft, improve subject fluency and build a personal portfolio of excellence that demonstrates progress and ambition.

To support this, teachers will explicitly model and scaffold metacognitive approaches to writing. This will include the use of live writing and live planning, where staff articulate their thought processes aloud, showing how expert writers structure ideas, select vocabulary and edit for impact. By making the writing process visible, students will gain confidence and independence, equipping them with the tools to become skilled writers in both academic and professional settings.

Writing at Leigh UTC Dartford is built on the following principles:

- Subject-specific modelling: Teachers model writing live in lessons to show students how to structure responses, use technical vocabulary and express ideas logically and formally.
- Explicit instruction in the writing process: Students are guided through planning, drafting, redrafting and editing their work to improve precision, coherence and presentation.
- Grammar and sentence-level scaffolding: Students are supported with sentence stems, connectives and grammar prompts that help them express complex ideas clearly.
- Integrated vocabulary development: High-value academic and technical terms are explicitly taught and revisited during writing tasks to promote confident and accurate use.
- Structured feedback: Teachers provide clear, actionable feedback on spelling, punctuation, grammar and structure to develop accuracy and professional presentation across all key stages.

Examples of Disciplinary Writing Structures at Leigh UTC Dartford

Subject	Common Writing Task	Framework or Structure Taught
Science	Practical write-up	Aim → Hypothesis → Method → Results → Conclusion
Engineering	Technical evaluation	Introduction → Specification → Strengths → Improvements
Computer Science	Process explanation	Step-by-step procedure → Purpose → Evaluation of efficiency
Maths	Problem-solving justification	Method → Explanation → Why it works → Link to question
Business	Case study analysis	Context → Application of theory → Justification → Evaluation
English	Analytical essay	What→ How→ Why

These frameworks are embedded into curriculum planning and reinforced through writing mats, classroom displays and digital templates.

Writing Support: Scaffolding and Grammar

To reduce cognitive load and improve fluency, all teachers are expected to provide structured writing support. This includes:

- Sentence stems tailored to subject vocabulary and syntax
- Vocabulary banks with key Tier 2 and 3 terms and definitions
- Cohesive devices for logical progression ("as a result", "a key limitation is...")

By embedding these strategies, students at Leigh UTC Dartford develop into precise, confident and technically accurate writers- fully prepared to meet the demands of further education, employment and the wider world.

4.4 Structured Talk

Overview

Structured talk is essential to the development of literacy, subject knowledge and metacognition. The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) emphasises the importance of speaking and listening in building comprehension and conceptual understanding. As they state:

"Focusing on pupils' speaking and listening skills by encouraging them to read books aloud and have conversations about them can support the development of reading comprehension."

(EEF, 2023)

Talk also plays a central role in supporting metacognitive development. By articulating their thinking aloud, students learn to plan, monitor and evaluate their learning more effectively. Structured talk therefore supports both academic language development and self-regulated learning creating independent learners ready for the future global market.

At Leigh UTC Dartford, we view spoken language as a key component of disciplinary literacy, especially within our STEM subjects where verbal reasoning, explanation and technical precision are crucial.

Implementation at Leigh UTC Dartford

- Turn and Talk routines are embedded into curriculum plans and lesson structures across all subjects. This strategy supports retrieval, reasoning and vocabulary rehearsal. Students are routinely given time to discuss key questions or concepts with a partner before responding to the class. This builds confidence and fluency, particularly for students with emerging literacy needs.
- Talk routines and strategies such as Think-Pair-Share, Say It Again Better, and accountable group discussions are used consistently across departments. These

routines help students to rehearse academic language and engage with ideas at greater depth.

- Talk to write: Teachers use structured talk as a precursor to extended writing. Students articulate and refine their ideas orally before transferring them to written form. This bridges the gap between spoken and written expression.

Impact on Literacy Development

Structured talk is a driver of vocabulary retention, sentence fluency and conceptual clarity. Repeated oral rehearsal with feedback helps students internalise subject-specific language, which in turn improves the accuracy and sophistication of their writing. It also supports the development of listening skills and the respectful, professional communication expected in post-16 and workplace contexts.

4.5 Intervention

Overview

Strong evidence supports tiered reading intervention. EEF notes structured comprehension strategies and phonics deliver average gains of four to six months. Gov.uk's phonics screening and Reading Framework emphasise early identification and SSP delivery for struggling readers.

Operational strategies

- Baseline assessments (Reading Age, NGRT, SEND, EAL)
- Bedrock (YR 7) Sparx Reader (7-10)
- Targeted and Specialist interventions including phonics
- Comprehension and writing groups
- Reading Mentors
- Monitoring and review cycles

5. Implementation

Overview

Quality First Teaching underpins successful literacy development. EEF confirms that integrated comprehension and transcription practice requires teacher training and high quality implementation.

Actions

- CPD on vocabulary, oracy, structured reading and writing
- Regular quality assurance via book looks, observations and student voice

5.1 Marking and Feedback for Literacy

Overview

Effective marking and feedback are crucial for improving students' literacy skills across all subjects. At Leigh UTC Dartford, we expect all staff to provide explicit, focused feedback on basic vocabulary, punctuation and spelling errors, helping students develop accuracy and clarity in their written work. This supports disciplinary literacy and builds students' confidence in communicating complex ideas clearly.

Guidance for Staff

- Focus areas:
 - Basic and subject-specific vocabulary use in extended pieces
 - Punctuation accuracy (capital letters, full stops, commas, question marks etc.)
 - Spelling of common and technical words
- Feedback should be:
 - Clear and concise, highlighting specific errors
 - Actionable, guiding students on how to improve (Whole Class model and individual model)
 - Encouraging, reinforcing correct usage where applicable
 - Consistent across all subject areas
- Student response:
 - Students should be given time to respond to feedback through redrafting, corrections or written reflections
 - Use sentence stems and oracy mats to support accurate vocabulary and punctuation when students revise their work

Marking Code for Literacy Feedback

Code	Meaning	Example
V	Vocabulary – inappropriate or imprecise word	"Use a more subject-specific term here"
P	Punctuation error	"Missing full stop or capital letter"
Sp	Spelling error	"Incorrect spelling of keyword"
//	New paragraph needed	"Break paragraph for clarity"

6. Monitoring and Evaluation

Overview

Evaluation is essential to check that research-informed strategies are having impact. EEF stresses the need for accurate assessment and adaptation.

Mechanisms

- Reading age and writing assessments
- Quality assurance data and pupil feedback
- Literacy lead reports to Senior Leadership Team

7. Staff Development

Overview

Effective literacy teaching requires skilled teachers. EEF emphasises focused CPD in vocabulary, speaking, transcription, comprehension and interventions.

Provision

- Induction training on phonics and comprehension for those staff running targeted interventions
- Regular CPD sessions on explicit vocabulary and structured talk as well as lesson modelling
- Coaching from literacy lead and SLT

8. Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Principal	Prioritise literacy in strategic planning and resource allocation
Literacy Lead	Oversee policy rollout, deliver training and evaluate progress
DoLs	Ensure subject specific literacy is integrated into curriculum and teaching
Teachers	Use literacy strategies; model reading, writing and talk literacy
SEND and EAL staff	Deliver targeted and bespoke interventions
Students	Engage with literacy routines and structured talk across the curriculum
Parents and Carers	Support reading and language development at home

Appendix A: Staff Resource – Sentence Stems and Oracy Mat Guidance

A.1 Sample Sentence Stems for Structured Talk

Purpose	Sentence Stem
Explaining reasoning	"I think this because..." "The evidence suggests..."
Agreeing and adding	"I agree with [name] because..." "In addition to that..."
Challenging ideas	"I see your point, but..." "Could we also consider..."
Clarifying terms	"What I mean by [term] is..." "[Term] refers to..."
Comparing ideas	"This is similar to..." "In contrast, this shows..."
Concluding thoughts	"In summary..." "Overall, this leads me to think..."
Justifying methods	"We used this method because..." "This calculation works as..."

These stems should be embedded into lessons where possible, particularly when students are preparing for extended responses, participating in group discussions, or developing subject-specific written work.