



Reading and Literacy Policy

The Lodestar Academy

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This policy will be reviewed annually. The Academy reserves the right to amend this policy, following consultation, where appropriate.

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What is this Policy About?

This policy outlines our commitment to developing the reading and communication skills of all learners, ensuring that every student is equipped with the literacy needed to thrive across the curriculum and beyond. It aims to foster a genuine love of reading while building confident, articulate communicators who can engage critically and creatively with texts. Aligned with TSAT's Seven Principles of Teaching and Learning, the policy reinforces the belief that all teachers are teachers of reading and literacy, and that the responsibility for developing learners' language skills is shared across every subject and every classroom.

Leadership in Literacy

Clear Leadership Structure

Lodestar has a dedicated Literacy Lead (and Early Reading Lead where relevant) with the expertise, training, and seniority to influence whole-school practice and drive strategic improvement. They are supported by the curriculum leads for HALE and STEM to monitor, review, and refine literacy provision.

Every Teacher as a Teacher of Literacy

All teachers and leaders at Lodestar recognise their shared responsibility for teaching reading and literacy. Regardless of subject or phase, staff support early reading where needed and model strong literacy practice in their own classrooms.

A Shared, Coherent Approach

We have a clearly articulated whole-school approach to reading and literacy that every member of staff understands and can confidently describe. This ensures consistency across subjects and supports a unified culture around reading.

Understanding Literacy in Context

Teachers and leaders maintain a clear understanding of Lodestar's literacy profile—our cohorts' strengths, needs and how these shift over time. Staff use this knowledge to shape their practice and understand why literacy development matters at all ages and stages.

Who does this policy apply to?

This policy is for AGB, commissioners, local authorities, headteachers, teaching staff, support staff, parents, carers and students.

Policy Requirements

Assessment

At Lodestar, assessment of reading and literacy reflects the reality that many of our learners have experienced significant disruption to their education, resulting in gaps in foundational reading skills, inconsistent exposure to curriculum content, and in some cases, an absence of reliable prior attainment data. Therefore, our approach to assessment is rigorous, routine, and diagnostic, ensuring we rapidly understand each student's starting point and ongoing needs.

Robust Initial Assessment for All Students

Students may arrive at any point in the year and often without dependable prior records, every student completing induction will receive a standardised reading assessment to determine their reading age, literacy strengths, and areas requiring urgent support. This ensures that no learner is missed, including those who join mid-year or who were absent from previous testing opportunities.

Diagnostic Follow-Up and Early Reading Checks

Where assessment indicates barriers linked to early reading we conduct further diagnostic testing, including phonics assessments where appropriate. This allows us to identify whether difficulties stem from gaps in decoding, limited fluency, language development needs, or broader literacy barriers.

Using Data to Inform Support and Intervention

Assessment data is used to triage students into an appropriate level of literacy support, ensuring each student accesses interventions suited to their profile. Our context means this may include rapid-response, short-term interventions, as well as longer-term support for students with entrenched literacy gaps. All interventions will be routinely monitored, with reassessments used to check impact and adapt provision quickly where necessary.

Coverage Across KS3, KS4

Assessment processes will cover all age groups we work with, including KS4 students whose reading needs may have been historically overlooked in other settings. Ensuring current reading data exists for all students is essential as academic histories are often incomplete.

Intervention

At Lodestar, interventions for reading and literacy are designed to meet the complex needs of our cohort, many of whom arrive with significant gaps in learning, disrupted school histories, and inconsistent access to previous literacy support. Our approach utilises waved intervention systems, adapted to ensure rapid, responsive, and high-impact provision for students who need the most support.

A Waved System of Support

We operate a waved intervention model that ensures students receive the right level of support at the right time. Interventions have clear entry and exit criteria, be matched to the assessed needs of each student, and be delivered by staff with appropriate training.

Our students often present with urgent or compounded literacy needs. The waved model includes:

Wave 1: High-quality classroom literacy practice in all subjects.

Wave 2: Short-term, targeted small-group intervention focused on identified gaps.

Wave 3: Intensive 1:1 or highly personalised intervention for students with entrenched or complex difficulties (including those with SEND, language needs, or extremely low reading ages).

Leaders and intervention staff maintain detailed knowledge of the appropriateness and effectiveness of each intervention, monitoring progress closely to ensure students move through waves as required.

Diagnostic-Led Intervention for Struggling Readers

All interventions at Lodestar are informed by the diagnostic assessments conducted on entry and throughout a student's placement.

Where assessments indicate significant reading difficulty, we will use the TSAT expectation that staff are trained in early reading and phonics, particularly for KS3–4 students who may have missed foundational instruction during their disrupted education. We utilise the Read Write Inc. Fresh Start Scheme to support these students.

This means:

- Using phonics-based intervention for students who still require decoding instruction.
- Employing fluency, comprehension or vocabulary interventions for students whose main barriers lie beyond decoding.
- Adapting interventions for students with additional needs, including SEND or EAL.
- Where an intervention is not having impact, staff will swiftly adapt provision, selecting alternative strategies or programmes in line with TSAT expectations.

Recording, Monitoring and Communication

Lodestar staff keep a clear overview of:

- which students are receiving interventions.
- the intervention type, wave, and targeted skills.
- progress made over time.
- when interventions change or conclude.

Intervention information is communicated to all staff, through Provision Maps, enabling teachers to adapt classroom practice in response.

Regular progress checks ensure that interventions remain appropriate and effective, and that students are not left in static or outdated support pathways.

Inclusive Practice

Staff use online and digital accessibility tools to support struggling readers, such as Reading Pens, including those linked to decoding, fluency, comprehension, or SEND-related barriers. This includes knowing when to signpost students to such tools and how to support their use in lessons.

For some students in our context—particularly those with anxiety around reading aloud, processing difficulties, or gaps in foundational knowledge—these tools provide essential access to learning while they continue to develop core reading skills.

There is no expectation that students read aloud in group settings unless they choose to.

Staff adapt resources to meet the needs of students.

Interventions for All Key Stages

Interventions at Lodestar are available to all students who need them, including those in KS4, whose literacy needs may have been overlooked or deprioritised in previous settings.

Given the transient nature of placements at times, interventions may need to be:

- accelerated,
- high-impact,
- flexible,
- and carefully documented for continuity between settings.

Early Reading at Lodestar

Although Lodestar is a secondary, we recognise that a significant number of our students arrive with substantial gaps in early reading knowledge, including weaknesses in phonological awareness, decoding, and fluency. This can stem from disrupted education, periods of non-attendance, exclusion, or minimal prior exposure to systematic early reading instruction. Because of this, early reading is a core component of our literacy strategy at every age and stage.

Identifying Early Reading Needs

Assessments on entry allow us to determine whether a student requires early reading support, including phonics-based intervention. Where a student's reading profile indicates gaps in decoding, phoneme–grapheme correspondence, or fluency, we undertake diagnostic phonics assessments to identify their specific needs.

This ensures that older learners who may not have mastered essential early reading skills are not left behind simply because they are beyond primary age.

Fidelity to a Systematic Early Reading Approach

Early reading is delivered through a validated Systematic Synthetic Phonics (SSP) programme, Fresh Start, with fidelity and consistency. At Lodestar, we apply these principles by:

- Following a structured, research-informed phonics approach for learners who need it.
- Avoiding the mixing of schemes or unplanned adaptations, ensuring consistency across staff.
- Providing opportunities for students to practise blending, segmenting, and reading decodable text at the correct level.

Although we are a secondary setting, maintaining fidelity to systematic phonics for students who require it is essential for closing foundational gaps rapidly and securely.

Staff Development: Using DfE Unlocking Reading

To strengthen staff expertise, Lodestar is actively engaging with the DfE “Unlocking Reading” CPD, which deepens understanding of:

- How early reading develops,
- The critical role of phonics and decoding,
- How to spot breakdowns in reading processes,
- How to support older learners who have missed early instruction.

This CPD supports our commitment to ensuring that all staff—not just English teachers—understand how reading works at its most fundamental level, enabling them to respond confidently to the needs of students whose difficulties originate in early reading.

Planning and Delivering Effective Early Reading Sessions

For students receiving early reading intervention, teaching reflects the a clear structure:

- Review of previously learned phoneme–grapheme correspondences.
- Explicit teaching of new sounds or patterns.
- Blending and segmenting practice.
- Reading of appropriately levelled, decodable texts.
- Opportunities for immediate application and formative assessment.

While the frequency and format will be adapted to a secondary timetable, the principles mirror those of high-quality early reading instruction, ensuring students receive consistent, structured teaching that directly targets their gaps.

Ensuring Expertise in Delivery

Staff supporting early reading have appropriate training and strong subject knowledge. This means:

- Ensuring staff involved in phonics or decoding interventions are trained in the approach we use.
- Using expertise from internal literacy leader, primary partners, or Trust training pathways where needed.
- Ensuring our most vulnerable readers—those with the lowest starting points—are supported by adults with the strongest knowledge of early reading.

This is especially important in our context, where students may have entrenched barriers to reading and require highly skilled, adaptive teaching.

Linking Early Reading to Wider Literacy Development

Early reading is not an isolated strand. For secondary aged students, gaps in decoding often coexist with gaps in vocabulary, comprehension, confidence, and motivation. Therefore:

- Early reading intervention is integrated with vocabulary development, fluency practice, and disciplinary literacy.
- Staff use digital accessibility tools where necessary to support reading while early skills are being rebuilt.
- Our aim is not only to restore the mechanics of reading but to build students' capacity to access the curriculum and experience success across subjects.

Reading and Literacy Across the Curriculum

At Lodestar, every subject area plays a crucial role in developing students' reading and literacy. We continuously develop, identify and implement the strategies that will have the greatest impact on improving literacy across all lessons and phases.

Because our students often have disrupted educational histories and uneven literacy profiles, consistency and clarity across subjects are essential.

A Shared, Whole-School Approach

Lodestar has a clearly defined set of literacy practices that all teachers are expected to use, regardless of subject specialism. Leaders identify the strategies that support literacy development and ensure all staff know what these are and how to use them.

These shared practices ensure that students encounter a consistent literacy experience, building confidence and transferability of skills.

Consistent Approaches to Writing Across Subjects

To support writing development across the curriculum, Lodestar uses shared resources and structures to ensure students understand:

- The purpose of different types of writing (e.g., explain, analyse, describe, argue).
- The features and forms associated with each purpose.
- How these writing purposes appear across different subjects.

This supports aim that students develop strong communication skills across the curriculum and that we provide coherent, consistent models.

By using aligned templates, sentence stems, and subject-appropriate exemplars, we help students overcome gaps created by disrupted learning and develop confidence in writing for different academic purposes.

A Shared Approach to Talking About Reading

All staff at Lodestar use a common language to discuss texts with students. This ensures that students do not need to relearn terminology or approaches when moving between subjects. This shared reading discourse includes:

- Strategies for making predictions, clarifying meaning, questioning, and summarising.

- Consistent use of key vocabulary such as inference, evidence, structure, purpose, and vocabulary choices.
- Routines for activating prior knowledge before reading.

There are clear expectations that strategies to support literacy are used consistently across all lessons, subjects, and phases.

Reciprocal Reading Strategies

To engage students—especially reluctant or struggling readers—we use reciprocal reading approaches across subjects. This includes structured roles such as:

- Predictor
- Clarifier
- Questioner
- Summariser

These strategies build reading resilience and comprehension, while giving students a predictable scaffold for tackling unfamiliar or challenging texts. This provides students opportunities to develop academic and disciplinary reading skills across the curriculum.

Disciplinary Reading and Key Texts

To ensure that students engage in reading aligned to subject-specific thinking, Lodestar ensures that:

- Each subject identifies disciplinary reading skills (e.g., interpreting graphs in science, evaluating sources in humanities).
- Key texts are selected to support learning across subjects.
- Students learn how reading within each discipline differs and what expert readers in that subject do.

This approach helps students access the curriculum, develop critical thinking, and understand how reading supports success in each subject.

Implementation and Consistency

At Lodestar there are identified strategies which are used consistently across all lessons, such as:

- CPD on shared strategies.
- Learning walks and reviews focusing on literacy.
- Subject-level planning that builds in reading and writing routines.
- Collaborative work between subject leads and the Literacy Lead.

By embedding these routines, we reduce cognitive load for students and ensure that literacy development is a predictable, supported part of everyday learning.

Supporting Engagement, Access, and Inclusion

As many Lodestar students have significant gaps in reading, we enhance curricular access by:

- Embedding vocabulary instruction in all subjects
- Using accessible, high-quality texts
- Applying digital accessibility tools where appropriate
- Scaffolding reading with pre-teaching, chunking, and guided reading approaches

This ensures all students can participate meaningfully in subject learning while also developing their literacy.

A Culture of Reading

At Lodestar, we are committed to building a strong, visible, and inclusive culture of reading. We promote reading for enjoyment and ensure that all students understand the benefits and joy of reading. Many of our students have experienced disrupted education and may not have had positive experiences of reading, we take deliberate steps to ensure reading is accessible, valued, and embedded in daily life.

A Reading-Rich Environment

Lodestar provides a physical environment that constantly invites and encourages reading. Throughout the building, students can engage with a wide range of fiction and non-fiction texts, displayed in corridors, social spaces, classrooms, and intervention rooms. These displays reflect our students' diverse interests, backgrounds, and identities, and are regularly updated to maintain engagement.

We also maintain a well-stocked and current library ensuring that all students - particularly those with limited access to books outside of school - can select texts that appeal to them.

To promote book ownership and independent reading, three times a year every student receives a book of their choice. This initiative reinforces the message that reading is valuable, personal, and for everyone.

Daily Opportunities to Read

Lodestar builds structured reading time into every school day. Our daily guided reading sessions allow students to engage with a shared text as a group, supporting:

- Reading fluency.
- Comprehension.
- Confidence reading aloud.
- Shared enjoyment of stories, ideas, and knowledge.

These sessions are carefully scaffolded to ensure that all students—including reluctant or struggling readers—can participate successfully.

Staff Modelling and Book Talk

Lodestar staff demonstrate their reading identities openly, discussing what they are reading, recommending books, and responding to students' interests.

Book talk is intentionally woven into everyday interactions, from morning check-ins to end-of-day conversations. This shows students that reading is a normal, enjoyable part of life and strengthens relationships around shared texts and stories.

Student Voice and Engagement

Students have opportunities to talk about their reading and influence the Academy's approach. Lodestar ensures that learners play an active role in shaping our reading culture.

We gather student voice through:

- Guided reading discussions
- Library sessions
- Surveys and informal feedback
- Conversations during interventions and mentoring
- Student council

Student views directly inform:

- Library stock choices
- Selection of guided reading texts
- Reading displays and reading-rich zones
- Genre variety and the balance of fiction/non-fiction

- Magazine subscriptions

We respond to student feedback and are willing to change and adapt our approach to reading for pleasure. Lodestar regularly adjusts its reading provision based on what students tell us works—and what does not.

Embedding Reading in the School Identity

Together, these routines, structures, and values form a culture where reading is not an add-on, but a defining feature of daily life at Lodestar. Through a consistent, responsive, and student-centred approach, we foster a community where reading is:

- Enjoyed
- Shared
- Talked about
- Accessible
- Valued

Related Policies

Thinking Teaching and Learning
TEP Curriculum and Outcomes Policy
TEP Reading and Literacy Policy
SEND Policy

