

Monkseaton High School newsletter January 2019



New GCSE and BTEC courses have now been launched. In all subjects, students need to have strong reading and writing skills to be successful, whether it is PE, history, science, maths or geography. We are working with the National Literacy Trust to support students in school. They also offer advice and tips for parents and carers so that you are able to help at home. We have collected the information for you in this special literacy edition of our newsletter.



How to help your child master the literacy demands of new GCSE and BTEC courses

Whether students are studying PE, science, history or geography, they will need to get to grips with the literacy requirements of the new GCSE specifications. They place greater demands on students' reading and writing skills, giving marks for the quality of their written communication, as well as extra marks for their spelling, punctuation and grammar.

The new literacy demands come under four categories:

1. Key text types and their typical language features
2. Specific reading requirements, including command words in exam questions
3. Specific writing requirements, including grammar and punctuation
4. Subject specific vocabulary

Many literacy requirements run across the majority of GCSE subjects, such as being able to read and write discussion, explanation and evaluation text types.

Here are some practical tips to help you get started in supporting your child

Read yourself! Show a good example by talking about the reading you do at work and at home. Let your child know that reading is an important part of your life.

Keep books safe. Make your child their own special place to keep their books in their bedroom.

Visit your library – it's free to join! As well as taking out story books, use visits to the library as a time to find books and CD ROMs about your child's hobbies and interests.

Make time to read. Set aside a time for reading for the family – after school or before bedtime.

Encourage independent reading or read together.

Don't just read books. Encourage your child to read newspapers, TV guides, comics and magazines. Ask your child to find out information from the Yellow Pages, the Internet, cookery books, etc.

Let your child read with younger children. Encourage them to read to other members of the family.

Keep in touch with school. Make sure your child swaps their home reading books regularly try to make a regular time slot of about 10 minutes to hear them read.

If English is not your family's first language: You can buy dual language books. You can talk about books and stories in any language.

Be positive! Praise your child for trying hard at their reading. Let them know it's all right to make mistakes.

Give them time. Let them make a guess before you tell them the word. Let them read to the end of the line before correcting their mistakes. It doesn't matter if you have to tell them the word sometimes.

Spot words inside words. Help them to spot words they know within larger more complicated words.

Let them read their favourites. Don't worry if they only read one kind of book. If they are really stuck, ask the librarian or teacher to suggest something else they might like.

Make the story come to life. Encourage your child to read with expression. This will help them read more fluently.

Ask lots of questions about the story. What would you have done if you were.....? Does this book remind you of any thing that has happened to you? Can you guess what is going to happen next?

Use a dictionary. Buy a simple dictionary and use it to check the meanings of new words.



Literacy has benefits for mental wellbeing

Did you know that reading and writing can be beneficial to your child's wellbeing, and help them have a happy and healthy outlook on life?

National Literacy Trust research shows that children who enjoy reading are three times more likely to have good mental wellbeing than children who don't enjoy reading.

Reading and wellbeing

· If your child is facing a particular problem, reading a book that covers the subject could help. It can help them make sense of what they are going through, and feel that they are not alone. Your local library is free and a good place to search for books that cover a wide range of issues that your child can relate to.

· You don't have to be a great reader yourself.

Audio books are a great way to enjoy stories and still gain all the benefits associated.

· Picture books can be a great way of talking about difficult topics with children. They can even work well for older kids.

· Getting lost in a good book can be a great way for a child to forget about stress and worry. It's also a great way for a child to develop empathy skills and understand other points of view.

· Reading a funny book could make your child laugh and feel happier. Reading books together is a great way to share a positive experience with your child.

· Reading before bedtime is a great way to switch off from the day. A relaxing read before bedtime could help your child prepare for a good night's sleep and wake up refreshed.

· Find our wellbeing book list for book recommendations for different ages on www.wordsforlife.org.uk in our Wellbeing theme.

Writing like experts

To get the best GCSE grades, students must learn to write like subject experts. In addition to helping them improve their reading skills, you can also support with writing skills. You can show your son/daughter examples of high-quality writing when you are reading. We will be teaching them useful sentence starters, specific language features and appropriate academic language to help them express what they know more clearly and confidently in exams. You can highlight these in things you are reading or look for them being used in your son/daughter's homework. Examples of these include:

· **Discourse markers:** using conjunctions such as "however" and "moreover" and adverbials such as "probably" and "perhaps" will enable students to construct more sophisticated, complex sentences

· **Passive voice:** describing actions in a passive way can create a more formal, academic style, for example, "the king was assassinated" or "the rainforests were destroyed"

· **Active verbs:** strengthen analytical and evaluative writing with words such as "implies", "clarifies" and "signifies" (though make sure students know the difference!)

Students must also be taught that when certain command words are used in exam questions, their answers must include particular keywords or language. For example, the command word **discuss** means that students should use modal verbs, such as might, could and should, to show alternative arguments; and the command word **explain** suggests the need for causal discourse markers such as therefore, because or as a result.

Analyse: separated information into components and identify their characteristics

Deduce: Draw conclusions from the information provided

Evaluate: make a judgement based on the evidence available

A failure to master these literacy requirements will hold students back in every subject, whilst those with the very best literacy skills will be at an immediate advantage. Helping your son/daughter read, write and speak like a subject expert has never been more important!