

MENTOR HANDBOOK

S7 | SUBJECT: DEVELOPING PUPILS' LITERACY

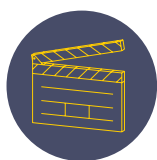
STUDY

KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR THIS MODULE

Your teacher can promote deep thinking by:

- > Identifying literacy goals for a topic, such as vocabulary to use, challenging texts to read, and forms of writing to practise
- > Sharing and breaking down models of the reading and writing they hope pupils will master.
- > Planning opportunities for high-quality talk, which use key vocabulary to articulate crucial ideas.

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SUMMARY BELOW:**

TEACHING CHALLENGE

Mr Jones is increasingly successful in developing pupils' mental models and helping them to grasp crucial ideas. However, he has become concerned that their written work is not keeping pace with their understanding. He notices pupils struggling to master and use technical vocabulary, and to articulate key ideas clearly. How can Mr Jones improve pupils' literacy within his subject, and more generally?

KEY IDEA

Teachers can improve pupils' literacy – in general and specific to their subject – through explicit teaching, modelling and carefully-planning reading, writing and speaking activities.

EVERY LESSON IS A CHANCE TO IMPROVE PUPILS' LITERACY

To understand a text, pupils must both recognise the words (by decoding what sounds the letters make in this combination) and comprehend their meaning (EEF, 2018). English and literacy lessons support pupils to improve in both.

However, Mr Jones sees every lesson as a chance to improve pupils' literacy. Partly, this is because every lesson is a chance to reinforce and build upon what pupils learn in English and literacy lessons. Pupils benefit from additional opportunities to increase their vocabulary, to read and to practise articulating their thoughts; this may also help them to grasp the underlying principles better. In particular, additional opportunities to read are one of the most powerful ways to encounter new knowledge and to increase their vocabulary (Willingham, 2009).

Moreover, English and literacy lessons do not teach the technical terms and styles of writing specific to different subjects (Scott et al., 2018): each teacher must teach the vocabulary and writing structures specific to their subject.

DEVELOPING PUPILS' VOCABULARY

Mr Jones plans to improve pupils' vocabulary in the same way he plans other aspects of the lesson. He identifies critical words – high frequency words that pupils will use often and high utility words that are particularly important in his subject – and introduces them explicitly. He finds it useful to distinguish between:

- > **Tier 1 vocabulary:** Everyday words, which might need to be taught explicitly, such as 'good', 'child' or 'Sunday'.
- > **Tier 2 vocabulary:** Words which appear across the curriculum but less commonly in everyday speech, such as 'examine', 'deceive' or 'forthright'.
- > **Tier 3 vocabulary:** Words which are specific to a subject: for example, in science, pupils need to grasp the scientific meaning of terms such as 'evaporation' (Beck et al., 2002; EEF, 2018).

His focus is on teaching Tier 2 words – which pupils are unlikely to pick up without teaching – and Tier 3 words, which they are unlikely to encounter outside his lessons.

MODELLING READING AND WRITING

Models are a powerful way to show pupils how to articulate key ideas. Models help pupils understand new processes and ideas by making them more concrete and accessible (Willingham, 2009). For any written task, pupils need to see an example – or ideally more than one – and break it into its constituent parts: this may mean examining examples of coherent sentences, clear reports or well-structured essays. Pupils can use these as models to guide their own writing. Likewise, teachers can model the process of reading and writing: for example,

articulating their own thinking such as the questions and predictions they are making, or showing pupils how expert readers comprehend texts (EEF, 2016).

TALKING IS PREPARATION FOR WRITING

Classroom dialogue is an opportunity for pupils to practise articulating ideas clearly: this is both valuable for its own sake and to consolidate pupils' understanding in preparation for their writing. Promoting better talk practices in classrooms directly improves pupils' outcomes in core subjects and appears to improve their confidence and participation (Jay et al., 2017). For example, Mr Jones might model accurate use of terminology and the language structures he hopes pupils will use. He could also invite pupils to articulate their ideas fully and accurately in speech. Doing so is an opportunity for them to practise and refine how they express ideas, making subsequent writing easier.

NUANCES AND CAVEATS

While literacy development can be a feature of every lesson, some will lend themselves to this better than others. All subjects have specialist vocabulary which pupils should be taught to use accurately; likewise, all subjects can promote high-quality talk during discussion.

However, if the key learning goal is practical – learning to pass a football correctly, shade accurately or master times tables – teachers should not feel that they are expected to create written activities solely to promote generic literacy.

Promoting literacy might also look different at different ages. For example, for younger pupils, a priority is reading fluently and writing fluently and legibly, whereas once pupils have mastered this they may benefit from improving their reading comprehension skills, or from more time planning, drafting and editing their writing (EEF, 2018).

Promoting reading for pleasure, by using a range of whole class reading approaches and regularly exposing pupils to high quality texts, can also support literacy development (EEF, 2016).

SELECT

Before you observe, first select a **DEVELOPMENT AREA** to focus on. Next, familiarise yourself with the **FOCUSED DEVELOPMENT AREAS**, as you will zoom in on one of these during your observation. Finally, craft a **PRECISE TARGET** when you observe your teacher (examples are provided below).

DEVELOPMENT AREA	FOCUSED DEVELOPMENT AREA	EXAMPLE PRECISE TARGETS
Identifying and teaching important vocabulary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Teacher, with the support of a colleague, identifies and plans when to introduce unfamiliar high-frequency words (that pupils will use often) and high-utility words (that are particularly important in the subject) so that they are manageable for pupils. > Teacher explicitly teaches unfamiliar high-frequency and high-utility words. > Teacher repeatedly models unfamiliar vocabulary to support pupils to understand how these words are used. > Teacher ensures pupils practise using the vocabulary, providing scaffolds at first and gradually removing them when pupils are increasingly successful. > Teacher is alert to pupils using vocabulary incorrectly and addresses this at the appropriate time and in the appropriate level of depth to support them to use it correctly in future. > Teacher pre-empts misconceptions when explaining and giving examples of how to use the vocabulary. 	<p>If your teacher is...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Not doing it at all: Explicitly teach pupils an unfamiliar high-frequency and/or high-utility word by explaining what it means using words pupils are familiar with. > Doing it but needs some improvement: Explicitly teach pupils an unfamiliar high-frequency and/or high-utility word by explaining what it means using words pupils are familiar with and then providing concrete examples to model how the word is used in sentences. > Doing it well, but needs some stretch: Once you have defined an unfamiliar high-frequency and/or high-utility word and provided concrete examples of its usage, ask pupils to practise using the word themselves in sentences they create. Check they are using the word correctly and provide feedback to support them to do so.
Oral literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Teacher models the usage of high-quality oral language, particularly demonstrating how to use unfamiliar high frequency and high-utility language. > Teacher uses whole-group rehearsal to support pupils to pronounce language correctly. > Teacher uses paired talk tasks to give pupils the opportunity to rehearse their ideas and practise using vocabulary in order to support their reading and writing. > Teacher ensures pupils use high-quality oral language and grammar correctly. 	
Reading and writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Teacher models reading by using their voice effectively to convey meaning. > Teacher prepares and supports pupils to access texts they will be reading. > Teacher models reading comprehension by asking questions, making predictions and summarising. > Teacher supports pupils to consider the way written texts in their subject have been crafted so that pupils understand and can begin to use these features and processes in their writing. > Teacher models and explains the importance of the writing process: planning, drafting and editing, keeping the end goal in mind. 	

RECORD YOUR THINKING HERE

DEVELOPMENT AREA	FOCUSED DEVELOPMENT AREA	EXAMPLE PRECISE TARGETS
(select before observing)	(select whilst observing)	(select/write whilst observing)

OBSERVE

Consider the following questions based on a short (approximately 15 minute) observation of your teacher.

What was your teacher's **previous** target? Are they meeting it? How do you know?

For the **DEVELOPMENT AREA** you are focussing on for this observation, what is your teacher already doing well?

Next, go to the previous page and select a **FOCUSED DEVELOPMENT AREA** to further zoom in on. Then select (from the examples) or write one **PRECISE TARGET** (bite-sized action) to coach your teacher on. You can choose to stick with the previous target if your teacher have not made enough progress yet.

How will you model the target to your teacher to show them what good looks like? What questions will you ask to check your teacher understands the model? For example, 'How it is different from your current practice?', 'What impact might it have on your practice and pupils?', 'What links can you see between the model and the module principles (below)?'

Reminder: Your model should help your teacher develop their ability in some of the following:

- > Teach unfamiliar vocabulary explicitly and plan for pupils to be repeatedly exposed to high-utility and high-frequency vocabulary in what is taught.
- > Model reading comprehension by asking questions, making predictions and summarising when reading.
- > Model and require high-quality oral language, recognising that spoken language underpins the development of reading and writing (e.g. requiring pupils to respond to questions in full sentences, making use of relevant technical vocabulary).
- > Teach different forms of writing by modelling planning, drafting and editing, narrating thought processes to make explicit how experts think.
- > Provide scaffolds for pupil talk to increase the focus and rigour of dialogue.

Next, meet with your teacher to work through the 'Feedback' stage of instructional coaching. See the guidance on the feedback stage in the appendices of the Mentor Handbook for support.

REFERENCES

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