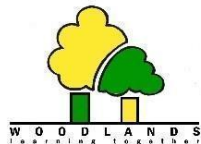


Woodlands Secondary School	Reading Policy	
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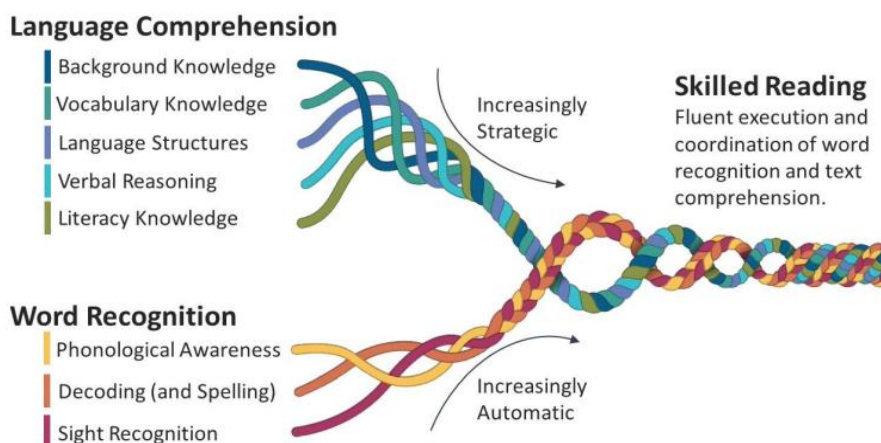
Date	Review Date	Author	Nominated Governors
February 2026	February 2028	Caroline Lowry Jay Honey	N/A
Website	Statutory Policy	Source	Ratification Date
Yes	No	N/A	February 2026

1. Introduction

At Woodlands, reading is defined as ‘The cognitive process of understanding language expressed in text, symbols or photographs’. Reading is important because this skill, in the context of their cognitive abilities, enables a student to respond to information and requests or instructions; develop other learning and find pleasure in reading. Developing reading skills to the best of their cognitive abilities will contribute to a student’s success in adult life.

We acknowledge that not all students are at a cognitive level where text or symbols are meaningful but for those students, we still aim to provide a range of relevant and meaningful literary experiences e.g. hearing changes of voices and tone while being read to, participating in sensory stories and having the opportunity to visit the school and community library.

We recognise that learning to read is a complex cognitive process. Our approach to early reading is informed by Scarborough’s Reading Rope Model. This model illustrates the variety of cognitive skills required to become a skilled reader and recognises the importance of language comprehension alongside word decoding and recognition skills.



Scarborough, H. 2001. Connecting early language and literacy to later reading (dis)abilities: Evidence, theory, and practice. Pp. 97-110 in S. B. Neuman & D. K. Dickinson (Eds.) Handbook of Early Literacy. NY: Guilford Press.

2. Roles and responsibilities

2.1 Senior Leadership Team

The SLT is responsible for:

- Monitoring the implementation of this policy
- Regularly reviewing this policy

2.2 Department Leaders

The Department Leaders are responsible for:

- Ensuring staff are familiar with the Reading Policy document.
- Monitoring the teaching and learning of reading, providing support for staff where necessary.
- Ensuring continuity and progression from year group to year group.
- Encouraging staff to provide effective learning opportunities for students.
- Alongside SLT, evaluating assessment data and setting new priorities for the development of reading in subsequent years.
- Organising special events that promote reading such as World Book Day.
- Ensuring students have access to a wide range of high-quality texts in their classrooms and in shared areas

2.3 Phonics and Reading Lead

The Reading Lead (Jay Honey) is responsible for:

- Implementing and overseeing the school's synthetic systematic phonics (SSP) Read Write Inc. (RWI) with support from the Deputy Headteacher.
- Ensuring all students (working at equivalent of average 4 year old or above) are screened for phonics or whole word reading (as appropriate) and comprehension, in the first half term of entering Year 7.
- Delivering training in Read Write Inc. (RWI) to teachers and teaching assistants in the SLD department on a regular basis throughout the year.
- Overseeing and monitoring the teaching of phonics, providing support for staff where necessary.
- Overseeing and monitoring assessments in phonics on a termly basis (along with other trained members of staff)
- Evaluating assessment data and setting new priorities for the development of phonics in subsequent years alongside SLT.
- Co-ordinating ongoing continual professional development (CPD) in early reading, phonics, and English alongside the Deputy Headteacher.

2.4 Class teachers

The classroom teachers are responsible for:

- Acting in accordance with this policy.
- Ensuring progression of students' reading skills.
- Planning lessons effectively, ensuring a range of teaching methods are used.
- Carefully assessing the progress of every student in phonics / whole word reading and comprehension, identifying the needs of any student not meeting expectations and putting appropriate support in place to enable them to make progress
- Delivering Read Write Inc. and working to a clear programme of phonics.
- Delivering as appropriate, a whole word reading programme and comprehension programme.
- Knowing how to support readers across the curriculum, ensuring that their needs are met in an age-appropriate way
- Building on student's prior knowledge and seeking to incorporate family literacy into student's learning, including experiences of their own language, songs, and print
- Linking reading to other areas of the curriculum and looking for incidental opportunities across the school day to promote reading

3.0 Resources

- Reading resources, such as books and magazines, are displayed in classrooms (where appropriate) and are accessible to students.
- Reading equipment and resources are easily accessible to students during lessons.

- The school library contains an array of resources to support students' learning.
- The Department leaders will review reading resources, linked to their curriculums, on an annual basis and liaise with the Deputy Head to purchase further resources.
- Read Write Inc. resources are available for teachers to use. This includes the Fresh Start resources.
- RWI reading scheme,
- Phonics resources,
- Colourful semantics (e.g., WHO/WHAT DOING record sheets),
- WWR (e.g., precision teaching grids)
- Digital resources such as laptops and iPads

4.0 Reading approaches

4.1 Reading approaches in the SLD Department, PD classes and LOFT 1

We recognise that there are different routes to reading. These are:

- Phonics (matching sounds to letters or groups of letters)
- Whole word reading (where students do not demonstrate phonic skills but can read whole words / read words by sight)
- Symbol reading (symbols represent concepts rather than words)

The basic skill of reading is to be able to recognise a single word or picture, and to understand that this word or picture has a particular meaning. This begins with the nouns and common verbs most relevant to them and, as the student progresses to reading sentences, can progress to adjectives, adverbs and other grammatical elements including punctuation.

For those students who are not at the cognitive level to understand the meaning of text, the meaning of symbols, photographs and other pictures is taught by exposure to the symbol alongside the meaningful object or experience. This may occur in an English lesson activity such as matching symbols to familiar objects but also alongside everyday activities.

From the information received from their previous school, and observation within the first half term, students that are able to make functional use of text are identified. With some exceptions, to make functional progress using the phonics route, students will have been assessed as working at the age equivalence of approximately four years old; the age that phonics is generally introduced in mainstream school. Woodlands uses Read Write Inc. a nationally recognised phonics package, to guide the development of phonic skills with teachers being conscious of ensuring that this skill is combined with understanding of the concept. Training is provided for teachers to deliver learning opportunities using this package.

We use the Read Write Inc. reading scheme that accompanies the RWI phonics package. Students that have been assessed for phonics have been given reading books appropriate to their phonics level - the books only include letters the students have learnt at each level. Students will undergo re assessment in autumn 2 and will then be assigned their new reading books that they will then take home to share with parents/carers.

Parents can access further information on Read Write Inc. phonics by clicking on the link below.

<https://home.oxfordowl.co.uk/reading/reading-schemes-oxford-levels/read-write-inc-phonics-guide/>

For some students, particularly those with a good visual memory, or with a significant hearing impairment, a whole word reading approach may be a more suitable route to develop reading skills and may include some students whose assessed working level is below that of an average 4 year old. These students often show a spontaneous interest in text and demonstrate self-taught functional skills, for example, when using the computer they can select their favourite music video from a drop down box or they may be drawn to books with text even though they do not appear to understand the story. In addition, students who are not able to make rapid progress in phonics can sometimes disengage with this teaching method because they do not perceive the benefit of learning phonic skills. These students may also benefit from a whole word reading approach. In English lessons these students are supported to use and develop their skills by the provision of symbolised text and activities such as word to picture matching and 'flashcards'

For all forms of reading, cross curricular reading links are available throughout the day. Examples would include reading symbols in a communication book at choice time following symbolised recipes in cookery, reading words or symbols in relation to position in maths, following shopping lists or lists of short instructions in work experience.

Whether the student is a symbol or text reader, English lessons are also an opportunity to foster an interest in literature. Not all students are motivated by books and stories but may still enjoy magazines relating to preferred topics, the interaction of reading a story with others, listening to a poem or becoming involved in a play. Students are encouraged to engage in a variety of literacy experiences to give them the opportunity to develop their interest in a positive way outside and beyond school.

4.2 Reading approaches in the WISERR Department, LOFT 2 and BASE

Students following the Wiserr curriculum are generally assessed as working at the age equivalent level of 12-18 months. They have particular difficulty in genuinely attending to and engaging with directed activities unless they are practical and motivating. Their early developmental level and learning style means that phonics as an approach is not suitable for students following the Wiserr curriculum to learn to read. Some students do enjoy word and sound play and, for those who do, these would be incorporated into relevant activities and interactions with staff. If a student at a higher cognitive level following the curriculum had engaged in early phonics activities and remained motivated to do so, this learning approach would continue.

However, some students following the Wiserr curriculum have some cognitive abilities in some areas that are higher than their general developmental level of 12 – 18 months. These students can develop their understanding and use of text through whole word reading approaches. Students who show an interest in text are supported to develop their reading vocabulary by exposing them to relevant words during activities and in situations that are meaningful. For example, they may use text on the front of their schedules and they are exposed to text below symbols on a daily basis. Some students may also be supported to use their whole word reading skills when using ICT equipment e.g. to find a favourite song from a drop down list. Students' whole word reading abilities can be assessed during 1:1 activities during jobs. Following simple text instructions such as collecting items on a list can also be transferred to activities outside and beyond school for example being an active participant in a shopping trip.

4.3 Reading approaches in the PMLD Department

In the PMLD Department, reading refers to the ability to take/make meaning from people, objects, symbols, words, sounds, photographs and the surrounding environment.

In order to interact and 'read' the environment, students need to have the ability to attend/anticipate/respond and interact- all students will manage this at their own pace and this may also vary from day to day; it is holistic.

Access to communication systems in PMLD can be through:

- Objects of Reference, touch cues, signs and photographs/symbols and the incorporation of a 'Total Communication' environment.
- Daily opportunities and experiences aim to ensure that staff respond to all communication, allowing the students time to engage and respond.
- OWL- Observe, wait and listen.

Reading must be motivating- and there must be a reason to *want* to read.

- Input Stage- Multi sensory, repetition, immersive environments (sensory stories, story massage, etc.)
- Integration Stage- Adding meaning (taste, touch, smell, etc.), repeat and repeat consistently
- Memory Stage- Start to anticipate what happens next.....
- Output Stage- get the information of others- through speech, sign, AAC, Engagement

(Flo Longhorn, Literacy for very special people, 2001)

This will be seen through:

Sensory stories. For our students with students with PMLD, working memory is a huge hurdle. Stories need to be repeated over time in order that students can learn to anticipate the order of events, recognise and respond to associated sensory stimuli. Such stories are delivered in a consistent way, with consistent use of multi-sensory resources. Resources used should give meaning to the spoken word.

Students should ALL have the opportunity to explore and interact with resources without having to wait for extended periods of time, although at the same time allowing for turn taking and developing the exciting sense of anticipation.

Choice making/Using AAC (in line with students' individual communication preferences)

Building upon student ability, learning needs and motivators, staff should provide opportunities for the consistent use of communication systems in different settings in order to support students to generalise and transfer skills across environments.

5.0 Assessment of reading and phonics in the SLD Department (KS3, KS4 and LOFT 1)

Assessment tools and frameworks used

The assessment tools that we use to assess reading and comprehension where appropriate are:

- Looking at Learning
- Phonics Read Write Inc.
- 100 & 200 High frequency word lists
- National Curriculum spelling word lists - Year 3&4 and Year 5&6
- Informal reading comprehension assessments based on the above – these are split into concrete and abstract
- Woodlands Universal Communication Offer

The assessment tools listed above may also be relevant for use with some students in the Wiserr Department / LOFT 2 that have been assessed at the equivalent level of an average 4 year old, or above.

Reading

The main framework for assessment is the reading strand of English within 'Looking at Learning'. This assessment is used throughout Woodlands. The assessment process begins in the first half term of entry to obtain a baseline. The main areas for assessment are the development of understanding concrete and abstract concepts in the form that is appropriate to the students' cognitive abilities, sensory needs and learning style.

Teachers assess by observing a student's response to reading challenges in group activities and in 1:1 situations. Activities are designed so that success can only be attributed to the students' reading skills as some students' reading difficulties are masked by their other skills, particularly their memory for routines and frequently used resources. For example, a student may appear to be reading from a book but are in fact recalling what they have heard, or they may appear to be reading a shopping list but are remembering what they are usually asked to buy.

Many students will have a specific reading target identified on their EHCP. Progress towards an annual target is reviewed on a termly basis with progress on the annual target being reported at their review meeting

Phonics

Year 7 students or students new to the school assessed at working at the level of an average 4 year old, or above will undergo a RWInc. phonics assessment. This is carried out by the Reading Lead and/or additional trained staff.

6.0 Reading experiences across the school

A respect for, and love of books, is encouraged for all students.

- They are offered experience of a wide range of texts through the school and classroom environments, the curriculum, and special events.
- Classrooms have designated reading areas or book boxes (appropriate to the class)

Reading experiences are provided for all students. These include, but are not limited to):

- provision of a range and breadth of high-quality literature which allows children to see themselves reflected in the language, pictures, characters and events allowing for deeper engagement and empowerment as readers
- encountering texts which provide both 'mirrors' and 'windows'. Mirror stories reflect their own culture and helps to build their identity (e.g., contains a main character who looks like them, or a theme or language that is familiar to their life). Window stories offer a view into someone else's experience (e.g., a main character who is different from them or a setting that is far away in time or space)
- sharing high-quality stories, poems, and non-fiction texts
- learning a range of rhymes and songs, where appropriate
- following a range of written/symbolised instructions to complete a task e.g. a recipe
- library visits (school library and the local library)
- a range of special events such as World Book Day.

7.0 Monitoring

This policy will be reviewed by the Deputy Head and the Reading Lead every year.