

Aylesford School

Literacy Policy

DRAFT SUBJECT TO APPROVAL BY THE COMMITTEE

Ratified/Reviewed by...	Date	Date to be reviewed
Curriculum, Achievement, Teaching and Learning and SEND Committee	October 2026	October 2026

1. Purpose and scope

This policy sets out how Aylesford School develops reading, writing, handwriting, vocabulary and spoken language across the curriculum. It applies to all staff, pupils, governors and other adults working with pupils.

The policy covers universal classroom practice, curriculum planning, tutor and library provision, targeted intervention, adaptive practice for pupils with SEND and other barriers to learning, and arrangements for monitoring and review.

Principle: literacy is a shared responsibility. Every subject teaches pupils how to read, write, speak and think within that discipline.

2. Policy intent

At Aylesford, we want every pupil to become a confident reader, an effective speaker and listener, and a writer who can communicate clearly, accurately and purposefully across subjects and beyond school.

We aim to build a strong culture of reading for pleasure and academic reading; to develop pupils' command of academic and subject-specific vocabulary; to support pupils to write with increasing control, stamina and independence; and to ensure that literacy opens up the full curriculum to every learner.

We also want pupils to take pride in the presentation of their work. Handwriting is valued not as a cosmetic extra but as part of fluent written communication. Where handwriting is a barrier, the school will respond through teaching, adaptation and, where needed, assistive technology.

3. Definition of literacy at Aylesford

For the purpose of this policy, literacy includes: reading, vocabulary, writing, handwriting, spelling, sentence control, communication, and oracy.

In a secondary setting, literacy is both general and subject-specific. Pupils must learn the shared foundations of communication and also the particular ways in which historians, scientists, mathematicians, artists, geographers and other subject specialists read, write and talk.

4. Whole-school principles

The curriculum will be ambitious and inclusive, with literacy identified as a gateway to curriculum access, achievement and later life chances.

Teachers will teach the literacy demands of their subject explicitly, rather than assuming that pupils can transfer reading, writing and vocabulary skills automatically from English.

Assessment information, including reading-age data, classroom assessment, book scrutiny and teacher observation, will be used to identify needs early and to guide support.

The school will prioritise keeping pupils up through timely support, rather than relying solely on later catch-up.

Leaders will maintain high expectations for all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, pupils with SEND, and pupils who face other barriers to learning.

Literacy provision will be reviewed regularly through quality assurance, staff training, pupil voice and outcomes data.

5. Reading, writing, vocabulary and oracy across the curriculum

Reading: Pupils will read widely and often in school. In subjects, staff will teach pupils how to approach complex texts and use guided reading, including pre-teaching vocabulary, activating prior knowledge, modelling annotation, questioning, summarising and checking understanding.

Writing: Teachers will break down complex writing tasks into manageable steps. Modelling, exemplars, sentence support, paragraph structures, planning frameworks and opportunities for redrafting will be used where they improve quality and independence.

Vocabulary: Departments will identify and teach priority Tier 2 and Tier 3 vocabulary as part of curriculum planning. Teaching should include meaning, pronunciation and etymology where helpful, and repeated application in speech, reading and writing.

Oracy: Structured talk will be planned in lessons, including paired rehearsal, discussion, debate, explanation, presentation and accountable talk routines. Pupils will be explicitly taught how to articulate ideas, justify responses and listen respectfully.

6. Handwriting and presentation

Students need their handwriting to be legible, sufficiently fluent for the task, and appropriate to context. Pupils should be able to produce clear notes, accurate diagrams and well-presented final pieces. Teachers will make clear the difference between draft-note quality and polished final presentation, while ensuring that both remain readable.

Handwriting will be reinforced across subjects, not confined to English. Staff will challenge handwriting that is consistently illegible or prevents pupils from communicating meaning.

Where pupils struggle, staff will consider the barriers and support will then be matched to need.

The school recognises that technology can support pupils where transcription is a barrier to composition. However, the use of a laptop or other device does not remove the need for appropriate handwriting teaching and practice unless a formal arrangement or specific need dictates otherwise.

Appendix 1 contains the detailed handwriting and presentation goals.

7. Reading culture and enrichment

The Learning Resource Centre promotes reading for pleasure and reading for knowledge through timetabled access, high-quality stock, displays, reading recommendations, competitions, visiting authors, celebration events and digital platforms.

Tutor or mentor reading, library lessons, guided reading, reading logs and independent reading opportunities are planned so that pupils encounter a broad range of fiction, non-fiction and other text types.

Departments will support reading beyond the English curriculum through initiatives such as Pages with Purpose or equivalent subject reading tasks that build knowledge and disciplinary literacy.

8. Assessment, identification and intervention

Reading attainment and wider literacy needs are assessed through a combination of standardised reading data, classroom assessment and teacher observation. Information is shared with staff so that teaching can be adapted intelligently.

Pupils with weak literacy on entry, or whose progress suggests emerging difficulty, are identified early. In KS3 especially, leaders act quickly where gaps in reading, handwriting, spelling or written expression limit access to the curriculum in order to prevent these issues growing as they progress through the school.

Students with a SATs entry score below 100, as well as those identified through reading age data and teacher identification receive intervention in year 7 using Literacy Gold (systematic synthetic phonics).

Where this does not have the desired impact (improved reading age at chronological age) students are referred to AEN for further intervention including the Language for behaviour and emotions programme.

Wave 1: high-quality classroom teaching, explicit literacy instruction, routine scaffolds and adaptive teaching.

Wave 2: targeted support such as guided reading, vocabulary support, handwriting practice, spelling intervention, small-group tuition or structured writing support.

Wave 3: specialist input and/or assistive technology where barriers are significant, including work with the AEN/SEND team, external specialists or examination access arrangements where appropriate.

Interventions are planned, recorded, monitored and evaluated for impact.

9. Roles and responsibilities

Governing body: monitors the effectiveness of the policy and receives assurance that literacy remains a strategic priority.

Headteacher and senior leaders: set the vision, allocate resources, monitor implementation and ensure that literacy improvement is part of school development planning.

Literacy Lead: coordinates whole-school literacy, supports departments, analyses strengths and needs, leads training and monitors impact.

Subject leaders: identify the disciplinary literacy demands of their subject and ensure that curriculum plans, teaching resources and assessment support pupils to read, write, speak and use vocabulary successfully within the discipline.

Teachers: teach literacy explicitly where relevant, model high standards, use assessment information, provide feedback and adapt teaching for pupils who need more support.

Tutors/mentors: reinforce reading and lead the mentor reading programme at KS3, enforce equipment and presentation expectations, and help sustain reading culture and literacy routines.

LRC Manager / librarian: supports reading provision, year 7 reading intervention, access to texts, reading promotion and reading-related intervention or enrichment.

SENCO/AEN team: advises on adaptation, assesses pupils needs, provides intervention for year 8-11, provides further intervention when prior action has not worked, equipment and technology for pupils whose literacy development is affected by SEND or other barriers.

Pupils: engage with reading, complete Sparx reading homework in year 7-9, partake in writing and discussion, bring the correct equipment, take pride in presentation and respond to feedback.

Parents/carers: support reading habits, encourage completion of reading and literacy tasks, and work with the school when additional support is needed.

10. Professional development and quality assurance

Staff training will include disciplinary literacy, reading strategies, vocabulary instruction, writing instruction, oracy routines, adaptive practice and handwriting expectations where appropriate.

In 2026 we are taking part in Unlocking reading providing all teachers and TAs modules on: Introduction to Unlocking Reading, The Science of Reading, Meeting diverse reading needs, Decoding, Comprehension and Vocabulary.

Monitoring may include lesson visits, book scrutiny, pupil voice, staff voice, intervention evaluation and governor monitoring.

Leaders will review whether literacy practice is consistent, whether identified pupils receive timely support, and whether strategies are improving pupils' access, confidence and outcomes.

11. Monitoring impact

The school will evaluate impact using a range of indicators, including reading-age and reading-comprehension data where used, internal assessment, rates of participation in reading, intervention entry and exit information, attendance at intervention.

Success will be seen when pupils read more confidently, use vocabulary with greater precision, communicate more effectively, produce better-quality writing, and access the curriculum more securely across subjects.

12. Equality, inclusion and reasonable adjustment

This policy will be implemented in line with the school's duties under the Equality Act 2010 and SEND legislation. High expectations apply to all pupils, but implementation will recognise that some pupils require adaptation, scaffolding, adjusted equipment, alternative recording methods or specialist support.

No pupil should be denied access to composition, thinking or curriculum challenge because transcription is difficult. Where handwriting remains a significant barrier, the school will use proportionate support, including assistive technology where appropriate, while continuing to develop the pupil's independence as far as possible.

13. Review arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if national guidance, curriculum requirements or school priorities change.

The review will consider updated evidence, inspection expectations, staff and pupil feedback, and the impact of current practice.

Appendix 1: Handwriting and presentation expectations

Whole-school expectations for pupils

- Write in blue or black pen unless the teacher directs otherwise.
- Use pencil for diagrams, graphs and drawings.
- Present work clearly, including date and title where required.
- Cross out errors with a single line so that work remains visible.
- Avoid graffiti, doodling over work, torn pages or deliberate damage to books and folders.
- Ensure handwriting is legible and spaced clearly enough for the reader.
- Use a ruler for underlining.

Classroom expectations for staff

- Reinforce expectations for letter formation, spacing, size and organisation where presentation or handwriting hinders communication.
- Model neat, legible handwriting when writing live for pupils, whether on the board, on a visualiser or in written exemplars.
- Give adequate time for pupils to complete substantial writing to an appropriate standard.
- Intervene when handwriting is persistently illegible and record concerns where patterns emerge.
- Work with the SENCO/AEN team when handwriting difficulty appears linked to motor, processing or wider SEND needs.

Support and intervention

- Short, focused practice to address specific difficulties such as letter formation, spacing, joins, grip or writing stamina.
- Use of lined guides, adapted pens or grips, seating changes, paper positioning and explicit modelling.
- Specific guidance for left-handed pupils, including seating, paper angle and grip adjustments.
- Additional time, reduced copying demand or scaffolded note-taking where appropriate.
- Use of laptops, tablets, word processing, dictation or other assistive technology where handwriting significantly limits composition or access.

Reference points used in this Policy

- Ofsted. State-funded schools inspection toolkit, version 1.1 (5 November 2025).
- Department for Education. The writing framework (published 8 July 2025; updated 10 July 2025).
- National Handwriting Association. Developing a Handwriting Policy: A Practical Guide for Schools (updated edition, 2025).
- National Handwriting Association. Handwriting in the Secondary School – summary article; Handwriting in the National Curriculum; Help for Teachers resources.
- Education Endowment Foundation. Improving Literacy in Secondary Schools guidance and summary recommendations.