

October 2023

Dear Families,

I hope this letter finds you well. We continue to have an academy wide focus on reading and literacy at Great Academy and it is my pleasure to write and emphasise the vital importance of reading, writing, oracy and academic language in your child's secondary school experience.

These four fundamental skills—reading, writing, oracy and academic language—are the cornerstones of academic and personal growth. They form the basis of effective communication, critical thinking, and lifelong learning, which are essential for success in school and beyond. Here's why each of these skills is so crucial:

Reading: Reading is not merely about deciphering words on a page; it is the gateway to a world of knowledge and imagination. By reading widely and often, students develop vocabulary, comprehension, and analytical skills. It broadens their horizons, enhances empathy, and fosters a love for learning. To promote reading for pleasure, we continue to update our Library catalogue with books based upon student voice and recommendations. The Library is open every break and lunchtime and everyday after school for a range of clubs. To develop further reading skills, students have access to Reading Plus, Reading plus is an adaptive literacy solution that improves fluency, comprehension, vocabulary, stamina, and motivation. <https://www.readingplus.com/> We would highly recommend that students access their Reading Plus account at home as well as in school. They have had their logins and use Reading Plus in their English lessons. The more reading they can do, the better readers they will become.

Writing: Effective writing skills enable students to articulate their thoughts and ideas clearly and persuasively. Writing assignments across various subjects encourages critical thinking, organisation, and creativity. Strong writing skills are an asset in every career path and help students express themselves with confidence.

Oracy: Oracy refers to the ability to communicate effectively through spoken language. Developing oracy skills equips students with the ability to express themselves confidently, engage in discussions, and present ideas persuasively. These skills are valuable in classroom debates, interviews, and future career opportunities.

Academic Language: Words can be classified into three tiers. High frequency words are tier 1; we use them all the time and students usually have good knowledge of these words. Tier 3 words are subject specific, for example 'meander' a bend in a river, 'evaporation', 'photosynthesis' ... these words are

covered in key words in lessons and as such, students often understand and apply these words with confidence. It is tier 2 words, frequently used in written text but less commonly in speech, these words are proven to provide difficulty for students to understand. We have identified 39 Academic Words that we want every child to know, understand and be able to use by the end of their time at Great Academy Ashton; one for every school week of the year. Students hear these words daily in Morning Mood and Form Time and they are displayed around the school.

At Great Academy, we are committed to nurturing these skills in your child. Our dedicated teachers incorporate reading, writing, oracy and academic language into the curriculum across all subjects, helping students become well-rounded communicators. However, your support at home is equally important. Here are some ways you can help:

- Encourage Reading: Create a reading-friendly environment at home with a variety of books and reading materials. Set aside time for family reading sessions and discuss what you're reading.
- Promote Writing: Encourage your child to write regularly. This could include keeping a journal, writing stories, or composing essays. Provide constructive feedback to help them improve.
- Foster Oracy: Engage in meaningful conversations with your child. Encourage them to express their thoughts and ideas, listen actively, and participate in discussions.
- Enquire using academic language: Actively question your child about the Academic Word of the Week, can they use it in a sentence, explain its meaning and give you both an antonym and a synonym? Doing this will help your child use academic language in their writing and in their speech.

By working together, we can ensure that your child not only excels academically but also becomes a confident and effective communicator. These skills will serve them well throughout their lives, both in their education and in their future careers.

If you ever have questions or need guidance on how to support your child's development in these areas, please don't hesitate to reach out to me.

Yours faithfully,

Mrs C Johnston
Assistant Principal
Reading and Disciplinary Literacy