

Spotlight on Reading

“There is an impressive school-wide programme in place to support pupils with their reading. This includes phonics-based support for the weakest readers. High-quality training for staff underpins the programme.”

Ofsted, 2022

At Rossett, we prioritise ensuring all students are making progress in their reading ability. This is because we know that a student’s ability to read well is directly related to their ability to access the curriculum and get the best possible outcomes. This article will explain some of the work that is going on to ensure our students develop in to confident, fluent, and passionate readers and how we are trying to close the ‘reading gap’.

Why is reading so important?

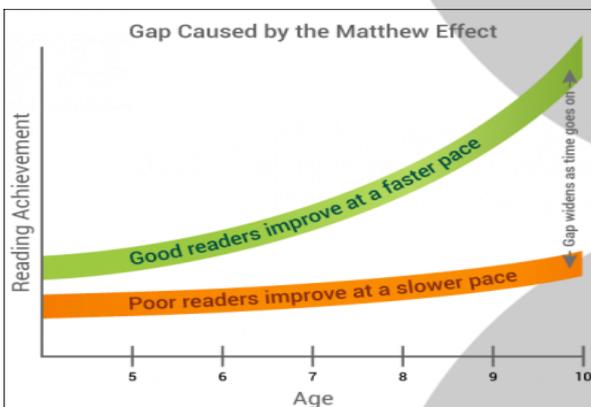
“Reading then becomes the mastery skill of secondary school”

Alex Quigley, The Confident Teacher

A study by GL Assessment in 2020, featuring over 370,000 secondary school pupils in the UK, found a significant correlation between students’ reading ability and their eventual performance across all GCSEs. The match was just as strong with maths and science as it was in the arts and literacy-rich subjects, like English and History. The average reading age of a GCSE exam paper is **15 years and 7 months**, yet a recent study found that only 47% of students in Year 11 nationally have a reading age of 15 years and over. Of course, the benefits of reading extend far beyond exam performance. Reading develops empathy, communication and an awareness of other cultures and traditions and has been proven to promote positive mental health.



The Reading Gap



Nationally, students arrive at secondary school with very different levels of reading ability. This gap only widens if there isn’t significant emphasis on developing reading at home and at school. We start as soon as the first day in September to benchmark students’ reading ages, so we know which students need the greatest level of support with their reading.

The Matthew Effect is the principle that strong readers will continue to access challenging texts and therefore improve more quickly than weaker readers – so the gap in achievement between weak and strong readers continues to grow over time.

Deliberate vocabulary instruction

Reading improves vocabulary and vocabulary improves reading. We know that if we want students to know and remember more words, then we need to make the teaching of new words explicit and return to them over and over until they stick. At Rossett, we use the strategy of deliberate vocabulary instruction to support students to develop the number of words they know, understand, and can use which transforms reading comprehension, writing fluency and creative flair. All teachers at Rossett follow the ‘walkthru’ outlined below which outlines the strategy used to introduce new words.





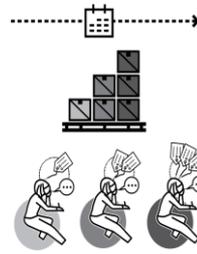
SPECIFY AND DEFINE THE WORDS



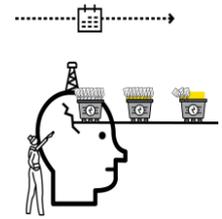
SAY THE WORDS



READ WORDS IN CONTEXT

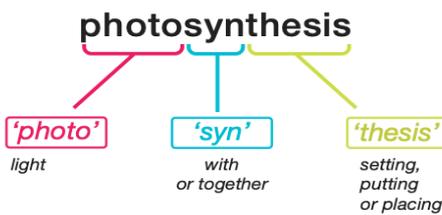


PRACTISE USING THE WORDS VERBALLY AND IN WRITING



TEST PUPILS REGULARLY ON THE WORDS TO HELP THEM REMEMBER THEM

We also use **morphology** to help students decode new words. By teaching students common prefixes and suffixes, we can develop their ability to work out approximate meanings of new words as they arise. Consider the examples below:



Tier 2 words

Often when we think of learning words at school, they are subject specific specialist words like 'photosynthesis', 'wave-cut platform' or 'fractional distillation'. These are what we called **Tier 3** words. It is vital students master as many of these words from the curriculum as possible. However, of equal importance are **Tier 2** words. These are words that are not subject specific but are also not usually used in every day speech. Some examples are **evaluate, analyse, critique, contradict, precede, contrast, variable, predict**. We make sure we explicitly teach these words to our students too so that they don't become a barrier to success. An example of this from Geography: often we see students who understand the complexities of international migration well, but when asked the question:

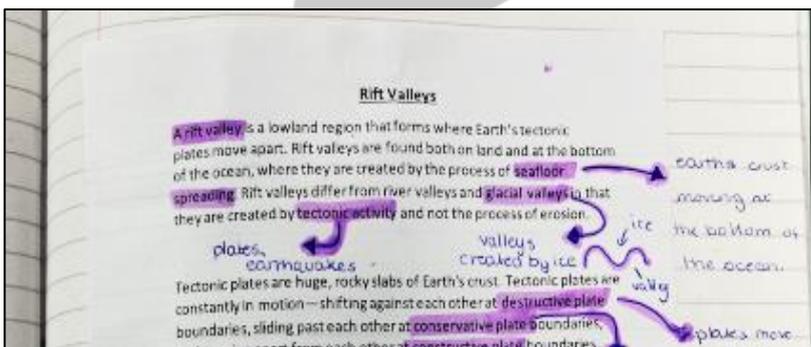
"Assess the extent to which international migration is caused by economic disparities"

They struggle to answer the question because the **Tier 2 language** was not understood and therefore the focus of the question was not clear to them. Thankfully, Tier 2 words are relatively straightforward to teach: The key is to provide a synonym. If you explain that benevolent means kind, few children will struggle to understand kindness as a concept.

Help at Home



Your child has glossary lists in their books. These are the essential words they need to know in each subject. Give them a quick test on what the words mean. At the end of this article is a table with **50 Tier 2 words** and their meanings. Why not start here and help your child to know these words really well. Also, you could do spelling tests at home with the words from the curriculum to support your child with their writing.



Reading routines

In addition to vocabulary development, teachers at Rossett use a variety of strategies to support students with their reading fluency and accuracy. We call these 'whole class reading routines'.

One of the first activities students will do when they get a new, challenging text is **annotate** the text, defining tricky words so that students can then access the meaning of the text as a whole. The teacher may model reading the text to students and **emphasise** and stress certain words or phrases.

The teacher will also help students '**establish the gist**' of the text – i.e., they will help students understand the overall meaning of the text before diving in deeper into the specific details. **Comprehension** of the text is then used to check students understand the key knowledge in the text. Students also get the opportunity to read to each other in pairs, to build their confidence and practise developing their fluency.

Help at Home



"Good readers are made on the lap of the parents." **The Gaudium School**. Reading with your child on a regular basis will transform their confidence, build a wider vocabulary, and hopefully foster a love of reading. If there is one thing you can do to help your child succeed at school it is to read to them, read with them and let them read to you. Encourage them to take out a book from the school library and spend even just a few minutes a day reading with them.

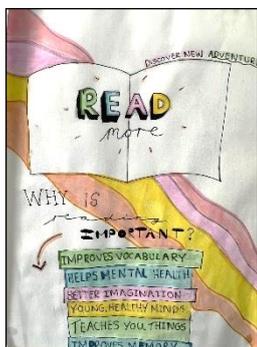
Closing the reading gap

In addition to the whole school approaches to reading, we also run a series of interventions to support students with the largest gap between their reading age and their chronological age. We have a variety of different interventions running depending on the needs of the students. Mr Asker reads with students 1:1 during form time to develop their confidence. Mrs Megginson works with readers who need support with phonics or have English as a second language and Mrs Wood works with students in Year 7 who arrive with particularly low reading ages from primary school. The success of these interventions has been significant. The students who regularly attended Mrs Wood's intervention for example, on average, improved their reading age score by 9 months. Those who attended the most sessions, made the most progress. We look to expand our intervention offer next year so we can support more students in this way.

Help at Home



From September 2023, reports home will include your child's most recent reading age score. Where there is a gap between their real age and their reading age, it is important that you support them to develop their reading at home, using the strategies outlined above.



Developing a love of reading

Reading for pleasure is also very important to us and central to our mission of 'success for everyone'. With so many competing influences on young peoples' attention, it can be difficult for some students to understand the benefits of reading for pleasure. We aim to nurture a love of reading amongst our students in a variety of ways. Our talented and passionate Librarian has an innate skill in matching young people with the right book. Mr Asker has managed to encourage even some of the most reluctant readers to be regular visitors to the Learning Resource Centre to borrow books and find a quiet place to read.

Mr Asker's advice to parents and carers

Parents can play a great role in helping encourage a love of reading in children from Year 7 onwards. Firstly, get **talking** about books with your child. "Book Blether" creates a culture where students see reading as a normal part of everyday life. Ask them what they are enjoying reading in school? What was their favourite part? Is it like the film or TV adaptation? Tell them about **your own reading** be it for pleasure or work and let them see you reading and that you value it. Try to avoid worrying about book choice. **All reading is good for you** and avoid saying things like "You've read enough David Walliams now" but instead "Have you tried David Baddiel or Phil Earle? Their books are really funny too!" Reading about hobbies or sport is a great gateway into reading. Award winning author Tom Palmer said it was reading match reports about Leeds United in the Yorkshire Post that got him hooked into reading. **Create opportunities for book choice** by visiting book shops, libraries etc. Browsing is more than just looking for a book. It is where a young person is exploring the world through reading. **Try not to interfere** but trust their choices and instincts. Young people often love series fiction, they begin to identify with the characters and want to read everything in that world! Please look at 'Harry Potter and the Amazing Reading Culture' to see how a series of books can impact on the world. Similarly young people can become mildly obsessed (in a good way) with key authors like Sarah J Mass who has a huge teenage following. When your children were young you might have heard the phrase "There is no app that replaces your lap, read to your child." Easier to do when they were little of course, and bedtime stories are a much-loved part of family life, but it is still possible to create the same spirit now that they are older. **Make reading positive**, mention it in passing, talk about it for a few minutes every day and *if after sending them to their room to tidy it you find them sprawled on the floor reading instead then quietly walk back downstairs. You might just be winning.*



50 Tier 2 words to master



- ✓ Read each word and its definition and then write one sentence in which you use that word. For example, "The number of trains put on for the football match was **adequate** in coping with the amount of extra passengers."
- ✓ Make some cue cards with the word on one side and the definition on the other and use them to help you learn the words and practise spelling each word

Combine If you combine things, you put them together

Deepen If you deepen your knowledge of something, you learn more about it or strengthen what you already know

Incorporate If you incorporate something, you add it or include it.

Integrate If you integrate something, you combine it with other things to form a complete whole.

Introduce If you introduce something, you present it for the first time.

Collaborate If you collaborate, you work together with other people.

Contribute If you contribute, you give or add something to a situation.

Associate If something is associated with something else, the two are connected or related in some way.

Compare If you compare things, you identify ways that they are the same.

Contrast If you contrast things, you find the differences between them.

Distinguish If you distinguish something, you recognise it for a specific reason.

Initiate If you initiate something, you make it begin.

Publish If you publish something, you prepare and distribute it.

Stimulate If you stimulate something, you encourage it to be more active.

Determine If you determine something, you discover it or decide on it.

Exemplify If you exemplify something, you give examples of it.

Interpret If you interpret something, you figure out what you think it means.

Elaborate If you elaborate on something, you tell more about it.

Enhance If you enhance something, you make it better.

Expand If you expand something, you make it larger.

Assess If you assess something, you estimate its value or quantity.

Critique If you critique something, you look at it carefully to find things that could be improved.

Evaluate If you evaluate something, you decide if it is good or bad or right or wrong.

Judge If you judge something, you form an opinion about it.

Navigate If you navigate something, you find your way through it.

Articulate If you articulate something, you express it clearly.

Clarify If you clarify something, you explain it in a way that makes it easier to understand.

Express When you express something, you show or tell about it.

Summarise If you summarise something, you tell the most important information from it.

Synthesise If you synthesise information, you combine it in a logical way.

Anticipate If you anticipate something, you predict that something will happen and prepare for it.

Predict If you predict something, you say that you think it will happen.

Conclude If you conclude something, you decide whether it is true or correct after considering related information.

Infer If you infer something, you decide that it is true after gathering and considering information about it.

Quantify If you quantify something, you say how much of it there is using numbers.

Justify If you justify something, you explain why it is reasonable or appropriate.

Gauge If you gauge something, you measure it.

Verify If you verify something, you make sure that it is true.

Diagnose If you diagnose something, you figure out what is wrong with it.

Probe If you probe something, you explore or examine it closely.

Acknowledge If you acknowledge something, you show that you agree that it exists.

Acquire If you acquire something, you obtain it or gain it.

Depict If you depict something, you create a picture of it.

Model If you model something, you create a structure or system that illustrates it.

Manipulate If you manipulate something, you control it or move it around for a specific purpose.

Alter If you alter something, you change it.

Evoke If you evoke something else, it brings it to mind.

Differentiate If you differentiate between two things, you show how they are different.