



Area of Excellence

Ridgeway High School, Noctorum Avenue, Prenton, CH43 9EB

Headteacher – Gavin Sterry

Reading progress and enrichment

Quality Assurance Review Date: 18th November 2024

Why has this area been identified as a strength? What actions has school taken to establish expertise in this area?

There is an intensive focus on reading throughout the school. Leaders promote reading as a priority to build cultural capital and enable full access to its curriculum offer. They have established a vibrant reading culture and implement a highly effective intervention strategy. Many students enter the school with low reading ages. In 2024, 30% of year 7 had a reading age of 9 years or below. The wider context of a school population consisting of over 55% disadvantaged students has also entailed emphasising reading as a key life skill. Opportunities are provided to ensure maximum exposure of students to a wide range of texts.

A key component of the strategy is a bespoke programme known as “reading routes”. This enables every student to embark on a reading journey. Corridor walls display the “reading routes” map itself, a graphic representation of genre “routes”, punctuated by stops along the way consisting of pre-selected texts and authors. The selection of texts is adapted for different interests and introduces students to a wider range of engaging reading matter. Students experience nine genres, including the classics, comedy, sport and gothic horror. The curriculum provides for one Key Stage 3 lesson every week of reading for pleasure. Class discussion of texts heightens levels of engagement and oracy. Personal development themes such as differences of gender, faith, sexual orientation and ethnicity are addressed, supporting the school’s wider mission to broaden students’ spiritual and cultural horizons. Finally, a reading “nook” affords a quiet space for students to read daily, while form time is planned so that tutors can deliver reading for knowledge.

The reading intervention programme has produced consistent and continuous improvement in overall standards amongst students who struggle with their reading. In the last cycle of intervention, 79% of students improved their reading age. Thirteen of these students’ reading ages improved by four years or more. Over 90% of the previous cohort improved their reading age, with sixteen students improving by four years or more.

What evidence is there of the impact on pupils’ outcomes?

At GCSE, significantly improved outcomes are attributed to the reading strategy. Progress in English language results have improved markedly from well below to at least average outcomes (-0.74 in 2019 to +0.02 in 2024). In literature, it is a similar picture with progress improving from below to at least equal to the national average (-0.59 in 2019 to +0.11 in 2024). Through question level analysis and in-house GCSE examiner feedback, leaders have ascertained that in 2024, students’ performance in reading questions was equal to or above the national average. Progress for all students in 2024 was positive in English, proving that students’ ability to access and analyse complex texts had improved.

At Key Stage 3, over the course of recent cycles of intervention, the number of students in year 8 who have a reading age of 13 and above increased by 40 students. The gap between national averages for reading and the year 9 standard age score (SAS) has also improved significantly.