

Teaching and Learning Monthly Newsletter

SHARPLES
SCHOOL



March 2025



Issue 7 Already!

When I sat down to write the next instalment of the newsletter, it shocked me to realise we are now on issue 7!

Yet still, I have more to say and more to write about!

The focus of the newsletter this month is on Guided Reading and Literacy as a whole.

I know as a school, the work every department has done has been fantastic on developing literacy to meet the needs of our students.

It's proof how fantastic our departments are when other schools want to visit and see the approach we are taking. I know the National Literacy Trust was so impressed by the work done in Maths, she recommended a visit from another school to come and see the great work being done!

As World Book Day has just passed, I also wanted to say thank you for all the hard work that was done during World Book Week.

The number of activities that were completed out of the classroom; the decorations around school and the effort from classroom teachers when dressing up was amazing.

Just in case you missed it - picture below!



In this newsletter you can expect:

Article on Guided Reading

Sharples Shoutouts and Celebrations!

National College Recommendations

CPD Book Recommendations

X / Twitter Shoutouts

ECT Corner

All things Literacy!

For a number of years now at Sharples, there has been a cultural shift in the teaching of Literacy. All staff recognise that it isn't the sole responsibility of the English department, in fact it is a whole school priority that can help students succeed in all subjects.

Reading is crucial. Every child and young person must leave school able to read proficiently, for both pleasure and purpose. With the impact of COVID-19 still weighing heavy on younger pupils, it's important that as a school we recognise the importance of reading, writing, speaking and comprehension.

“Young people who leave school without good literacy skills are held back at every stage of life. Their outcomes are poorer on almost every measure, from health and wellbeing, to employment and finance. The most recent estimates suggest that low levels of literacy cost the UK economy at least £20 billion a year.”
(EEF, 2021)



There is no doubt that the curriculum at Sharples has been designed to be challenging, yet accessible and as students progress through their years here, they will be exposed to more challenging vocabulary and will need to be trained to access academic language and the demands of different subjects.



Predict 

Question 

Clarify 

Summarise



The picture for reading is concerning, particularly at secondary level. England's average score in reading for PISA 2022 was significantly below the average score in 2018. Research from the National Literacy Trust has shown that less than 35% of children and young people aged 8 to 18 said that they enjoyed reading in their free time in 2024, that's a decrease of 8.8 points in a single year. From an adult perspective, The Reading Agency's State of the Nation's Adult Reading report showed that in 2024, half of all adults did not read for pleasure, with over 1 in 10 people (around 5.9 million people) finding reading difficult. (One Education, 2025)

Although the focus of this week is on using Guided Reading strategies, it's important to realise that teaching Literacy needs to be done through vocabulary, reading, writing and speaking and building on this lesson after lesson will have beneficial outcomes.

To engage in comprehension activities, students need to engage with what they are reading, drawing on what they already know and making new inferences to learn more and understand more. In addition to this, students need to make inferences that go beyond the literal words in sentences and draw upon their knowledge of their subject as a whole. Effective readers of informational texts continually draw upon a complex wealth of prior knowledge about the world and language, as well as their awareness of subject specific genres and vocabulary.



Therefore, it's important to acknowledge the role of cultural capital within the classroom, students from a disadvantaged background won't always have the prior knowledge that many of the non-disadvantaged students have. I know the fantastic work done by all staff at Sharples and Sophie with the tracking on AE has made a huge difference to a vast number of pupils. The amount of trips, extracurricular activities and clubs that we offer makes a huge difference to our pupils. However, within the classroom, we need to ensure when we are teaching new concepts that require additional contextual knowledge we are expert enough as classroom teachers to bridge this gap and support students with the foundational knowledge they need.

Our whole school strategy for approaching reading is broken down into: Predict; Question; Clarify; Summarise.

This strategy has been developed from the Reciprocal Reading strategy and more detail on each stage is outlined below:

1. Predict

There are two parts to "predicting" a text. The first involves predicting what is going to happen overall in a reading; the other involves predicting what is going to happen *next* in a section or chapter. They sound similar but both have different processes.

- **Part 1** — Predict what will happen throughout a text by using the title, imagery (such as cover art), or even a brief summary. Then use those clues to make your prediction of what happens in the entire piece.
- **Part 2** — Skim the next bit of text you've been assigned to read, and pick out certain words, sentences, or images. From that quick overview make a prediction as to what is going to happen next in the text.

We want students to avoid broad predictions that don't give any real insight into what a reading is about. Predictions should state **what** the reader thinks the author's purpose is in a text and give evidence as to **why** the reader has come to such conclusions. Encourage your class to phrase their answers with evidence, for example: "I think 'X' because of 'Y'".



2. Question

Admitting you don't understand something is a crucial part of the learning process. You want your students to take the time to pause and write down questions they have as they read through a portion of a text.

You also want students to question why certain things are important within the reading. However, asking questions can be hard and many students don't know where to start. The easiest way is to ask:

- Who?
- What?
- When?
- Where?
- Why?
- How?

Asking, discussing, and answering questions gets students involved with the reading, ensures they're paying attention to important details and helps them use metacognitive strategies to make sense of a text.



3. Clarifying

Clarifying is used to make sure students continue to understand what they're reading throughout the entire process. This could be as simple as identifying unknown words to something more complicated such as explaining the key concepts of a particular passage.

Clarifying is a two-step process where students:

1. Identify that they are confused by an idea or word
2. Take steps to resolve the confusion and better understand the text

Students can often feel overwhelmed by complicated texts, however, it's important to keep these high expectations for all pupils. To overcome this, we need to teach decoding strategies. We need to teach them resilience so that they reread the passage and break down the more complicated aspects of the text. Building the motivation, resilience and determination within students is also a vitally important skill for classroom teachers to acknowledge.

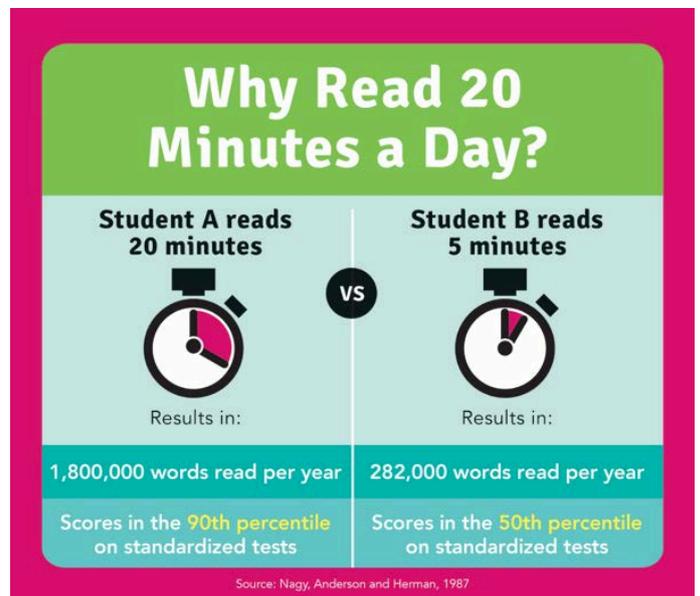
4. Summarizing

Summarizing involves condensing a reading to its most important points in both written and verbal forms. This can be a complicated task, but when done correctly, summarizing can greatly improve a student's understanding of a reading.

Encourage students to stop often throughout a reading to make summative notes on the text, this can be done on mini whiteboards or even through an oracy task. It's important that students begin to paraphrase and summarise in their own words as this will aid comprehension, retrieval and hopefully academic success in the future.

As always, modelling and showcasing excellence is always part of the teaching process and this is just as important when it comes to reading. Don't suddenly start to ask students to do all 4 stages of guided reading in 30 seconds, take it slowly and carefully first and train students into the routines of reading in your subject.

I hope you see the benefits of prioritising reading and literacy throughout your subject and see how you are also a vital part of working together to see the benefits of literacy and reading for all our students.



Predict



Question



Clarify



Summarise



SHARPLES CELEBRATES!



Each month we want to shout out teachers who want to share excellent practice! The first 3 teachers to email n.ayub@sharplesschool.co.uk with an example of brilliant practice will receive a box of celebrations delivered to their classroom!



Aamina Amdavadi

Aamina has great presence in the classroom and uses varying intonation and pitch to garner the interests of all students.

Aamina always checks in for understanding and explains difficult concepts in an easier way to support students' understanding.



Hersh Patel

Hersh creates a wonderful environment in her classroom wherein all the pupils feel they can thrive.

Her explanations and excellent subject knowledge supports students to understand difficult ideas and make progress constantly.



Breanna Barley

Breanna makes use of formative assessment constantly through questioning, mini whiteboard checks, active listening checks and more to ensure all her students are paying attention and are focused.

The pace of the questioning is excellent and no student is allowed to opt out.

National College Recommendations

Reviews

I found the recap of Best Practice very useful. When under pressure to cover a lot of content quickly, this type of information can be forgotten too easily - and the students to whom it applies can be left behind - and this webinar was, again, a helpful refresher.

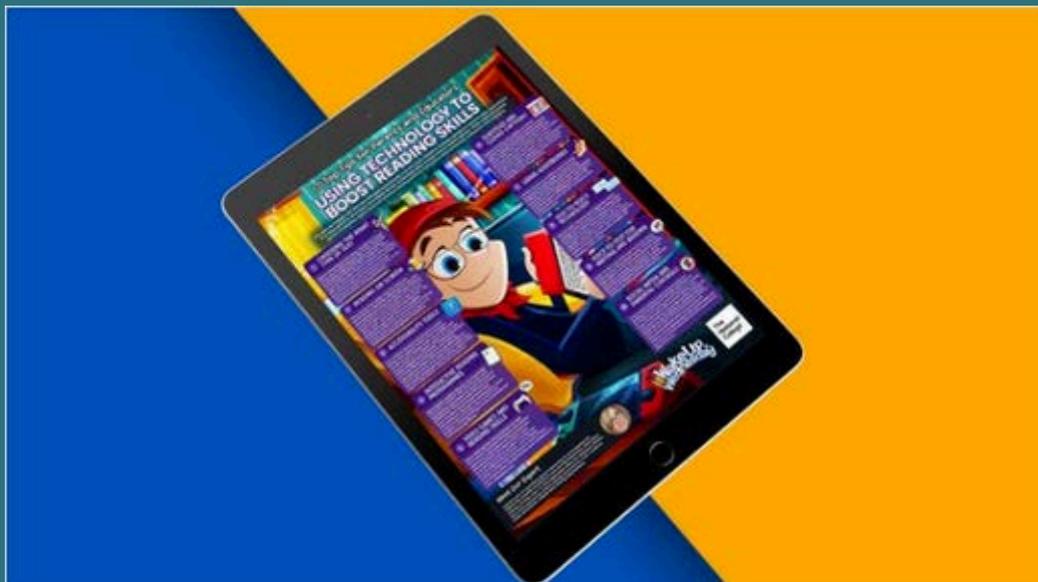


Secondary Reading: Support Pupils Unable to Read

This webinar provides practical guidance on implementing measures in the classroom to support secondary age-pupils who are unable or struggle to read.

 nationalcollege.com

CLICK HERE 



Tips for Using Technology to Boost Reading Skills | Free Guide

This free guide offers advice on the digital tools available to enhance literacy by making reading more interactive and accessible.

 nationalcollege.com

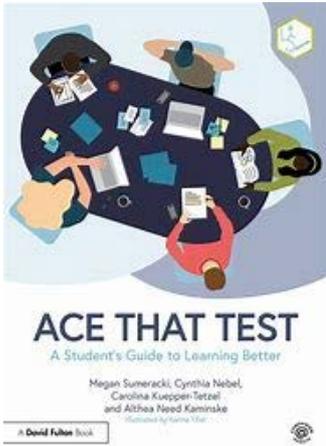
CLICK HERE 

This fits in great with the work we have done on AI!

Book and Twitter (X) Recommendations



Ace That Test

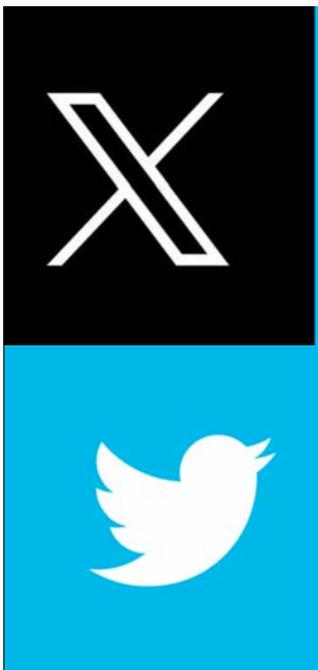
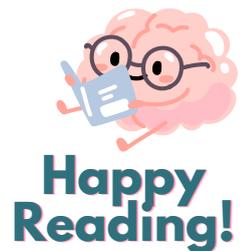


We know students have more to learn than ever before and there is a lot of pressure to perform well on tests, demonstrating superior learning. However, common study strategies such as cramming, highlighting text, and repeated reading have little impact in the longer-term. This exciting new book reveals the effective study strategies that will help you to use your time more efficiently, ace your tests, and retain information over time.

Please email n.ayub@sharplesschool.co.uk if you would like to borrow!

A really great link to a video on developing fluency and accuracy when reading.

[Click here to view!](#)



MEMORY RETRIEVAL IN THE CONTEXT OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

Do your students *struggle* to recall key knowledge?

Think of memory like your bedroom wardrobe—well-organised knowledge is easier to retrieve, while cluttered information is quickly forgotten.

Why memory works like a wardrobe

This short webinar explores memory retrieval – as a **wardrobe metaphor** – and how it can help teachers understand memory storage and retrieval in classrooms with students. Learning is a process much richer than regurgitating facts!

Just like a well-organised wardrobe allows for quick access to clothes, a structured memory system makes it easier to recall information when needed. If knowledge is crammed in without order, students struggle to retrieve key concepts.

Memory works like a wardrobe: information needs to be stored in a structured way to be retrieved efficiently.

- A well-organised wardrobe = structured knowledge, retrieval practice, and clear mental links between concepts.
- A messy wardrobe = cognitive overload, rote memorisation, and unstructured learning, making recall difficult.

When students learn in a way that organises knowledge into meaningful categories, retrieval becomes more efficient. If they cram information with no structure, their brain struggles to “find” the knowledge when they need it. Students forget information because their brains haven’t stored it effectively. Without clear mental “folders” to categorise concepts, recall is slow or unsuccessful.

How memory retrieval can help students organise their knowledge

Teachers can help by:

1. Sort the wardrobe: Encourage students to categorise new knowledge instead of memorising isolated facts.
2. Declutter: Avoid cognitive overload by breaking content into smaller, structured chunks.
3. Rearrange frequently: Use spaced retrieval to revisit topics, keeping knowledge accessible.
4. Use storage tricks: Teach mnemonics, schema-building, and dual coding to strengthen recall.



MEMORY RETRIEVAL IN THE CONTEXT OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

CPD questions for teachers:

- How do you support students to structure their knowledge in lessons?
- Are students encouraged to make connections between topics?
- How could retrieval practice be used more effectively?
- How does cognitive overload impact recall in different subjects?
- How do you support knowledge retention for SEND students?
- Are students using effective organisation strategies for revision?
- How can teachers integrate schema-building into their lesson planning?
- What changes could be made to improve retrieval-based learning?
- How does executive function impact students' ability to organise knowledge?
- What professional development opportunities could help teachers?

Memory is strengthened when information is meaningfully structured. Teaching students to organise knowledge like a wardrobe, or a spiderweb, improves long-term retention and learning outcomes.

