



St Christopher's

Reading and Literacy Bulletin

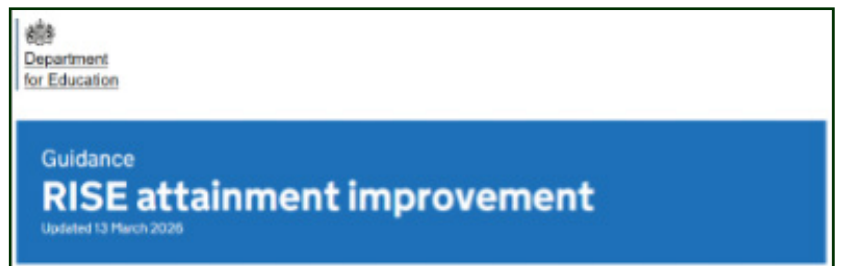
Term 3 | June 2026

'As someone whose love of reading was sparked in childhood, I know just how powerful books can be in shaping young lives. Reading holds the keys to so much of children's education, so the decline in reading for pleasure among young people should sound alarm bells loud and clear.

This can't be just a government mission. It needs to be a national one. So, it's time for all of us to play our part, put our phones down and pick up a book.'

Bridget Phillipson, speaking at the announcement of the National Year of Reading 2026, July 2025

The government has recently launched the 'RISE Alliance' aimed at improving outcomes, especially in subjects that rest heavily on foundational skills.



The new leadership of the government group behind this was announced in May 2026, with aiming to encourage innovation and build the evidence base for what works to improve key stage 3. It will support schools to develop excellence with a particular focus on:

- increasing engagement and belonging
- improving literacy and numeracy
- strengthening assessment and data coherence
- embedding skills and pathways to adult life

Whilst we are unlikely to be as RISE school (due to these being identified through Ofsted inspection), we will be able to access new teaching hubs, resources and CPD. The government website already has links to the following which might prove useful to us:

The writing framework outlines a common approach to teaching writing based on evidence and existing good practice. The Department for Education (DfE) hosted a webinar about the writing framework on 30 September 2025. [Writing Framework Webinar for Leaders](#) is a recording of this webinar.

Choosing a phonics teaching programme helps schools analyse and select validated programmes for teaching reading using systematic synthetic phonics.

Supporting all readers in secondary school is a short course for secondary school staff and leaders to develop techniques to support readers at all levels.

One area that is really getting some attention, although not part of our usual bulletin is **Maths** where the **Five Big Ideas in Teaching for Mastery** underpin all National Centre for Excellence in the Teaching of Mathematics (NCETM) and Maths Hubs work. This is informed by research evidence and classroom experience. [NCETM's 'In the classroom' resources](#).



The Challenge of Transition and the KS3 'Jump'

In the summer term we begin our transition process for prospective Y7 for 2026 with various primary visits and our taster day in June. However, we rarely consider the changes to curriculum that our Y7 face on arrival from their primary setting in September, not least the enormous vocabulary demands of the jump to KS3. This table from Denigan and Jones shows precisely that:

	Maths	Science	English	History	Geography	Total
KS2	175,000	223,000	378,000	104,000	136,000	1,016,000
KS3	261,000	404,000	306,000	234,000	124,000	1,329,000
Total	436,000	627,000	684,000	338,000	260,000	2,345,000

Total tokens, rounded to the nearest 1,000

[Linguistic Challenges of the Transition from Primary to Secondary School.pdf](#)

Recently you will have seen 'spelling lists' appear outside department areas to emphasise the importance of key vocabulary in each subject, but in a KS2-3 context there are some key terms we may not have considered which are often alien to our new students. Next time you review your SOL perhaps it is worthwhile reviewing this example list to investigate how effectively you teach the acquisition of tier 3 vocabulary to Y7 & 8:

Maths	Science	English	History	Geography
Angles	Acid	Analyse	Agree	Climate
Corresponding	Atom	Annotate	Change	Development
Decrease	Compound	Create	Contribute	Environment
Enlargement	Element	Discuss	Control	Effect
Factorise	Mass	Effect	Evidence	Location
Multiplier	Objective	Evidence	Relatively	Natural
Probability	Participate	Explore	Rival	Population
Sample	Pressure	Reader	Revolutionise	Physical
Significant	State	Theme	Significant	Scale
Substitute	Transfer	Writer	Sources	Sparse

In a world where teen students prefer TikTok to Tolkien, their ability to access the secondary school curriculum becomes acutely sensitive to effective and explicit teaching of academic language.

But it is all too common for secondary school teachers to be undertrained to address language demands. A geography teacher may assume pupils can interpret dense explanatory prose. A biology teacher may expect students to decode abstract scientific terminology, as they push through topics to get to the next assessment.

Alex Quigley
 Literacy and Key Stage
 Three Success
 May 2026

The Challenge of Polysemy

'Polysemy is the capacity for words to have multiple meanings. The process that we have just described, of identifying new words, cannot tell us about the meaning of words.' So says the same report by Denigan and Jones, highlighting several examples from Science on the problematic nature of subject versus everyday language use:

Store

- Your body's chemical store of energy decreases. (KS3 Science, year 8 teacher talk)
- Does anyone know of an Apple store nearby? (Everyday use)

Reaction

- No atoms are lost or made during a chemical reaction, so the mass of the result equals the mass of the reactants. (KS3 Science, year 7 presentation)
- ... they kind of looked at me for a reaction. (Everyday use)

Forces

- The regular pattern of particles and strong forces explain why solids keep their shape and cannot flow. (KS3 Science, year 7 presentation)
- armed forces/ special forces / join forces (Everyday language)

KS3 Science also uses words in a very precise, specific sense, where the everyday use is more abstract, sometimes metaphorical.



Speak for Change

Oracy is reciprocal - we pick up on words from the environment and emulate them in our own speech. In this way, possibly more so than vocabulary, teachers play a crucial role in carving out opportunities for structured talk, yet the average UK learner only contributes four words per lesson says [Ellie Ashton](#).

Building on Mr Allen's excellent CPD this term on Oracy and its place at the heart of every lesson, take time to familiarise yourself again with oracy strategies you can use in any lesson. Ellie Ashton has some top tips:

- Allow adequate wait time after learners respond, allowing them to reflect and elaborate on their answer
- Ask open-ended questions that encourage discussion
- Respond to learners by encouraging further reflection
- Link current discussions to past discussions
- Provide learners with sentence stems to provoke discussion - I used these in the webinar itself and the response from attendees was fantastic!
- Model educated ways of using language
- Give appropriate verbal feedback - it should be specific, focused on their strengths, precise and productive



Further Reading:

[Literacy and Key Stage Three success forms](#) the basis of a lot of what is contained in this bulletin, with reference to some other areas of teaching development such as [Five Big Ideas in Teaching for Mastery | NCETM](#) and retrieval of older ideas we have touched on before such as [The Disciplinary Literacy Tree](#). You may wish to read more on Oracy from a document previously posted [Future-of-Oracy-v23-web-13.pdf](#).

Check Out Our Library Resources:

[Recommended Reading for KS3](#) | [Challenging Reading for KS3](#) | [A Guide to Support Reading at Home for Parents](#)