

July 2025

Dear Parents and Carers,

We would like to share our whole-school literacy strategy at The Castle School, and how you can support your child's reading at home.

At The Castle School, we believe that literacy is fundamental to acquiring knowledge. Strong literacy skills empower students to know more, understand more, and do more. Literacy also enables students to express their learning - whether through writing or speaking - which is why it lies at the heart of our mission to support every student's success.

We believe that developing literacy is a shared responsibility across all subjects - not just English - and that it should be embedded throughout the curriculum, not led by one individual, or treated as an add-on. Our whole-school approach ensures that every student benefits from consistent, high-quality literacy support.

Our key priorities: promoting reading in and out of school to ensure every child becomes a reader; prioritising disciplinary literacy across the curriculum; supporting early-stage readers and numeracy learners to build fluency and confidence.

How You Can Support Reading at Home

- Talk to your child about what they are reading - ask about their Sparx book and class leaderboard.
- Listen to them read aloud regularly and encourage them to read to younger siblings or friends.
- Let them see you reading - modelling positive reading behaviour is powerful.
- Encourage a wide range of reading materials: novels, newspapers, blogs, biographies - anything that sparks their interest.
- Remind them that reading is a joyful, exciting experience. It can transport them to new worlds, introduce them to fresh ideas, and help them understand the world around them.
- Join your local library.
- Help them see that reading is one of the best ways to learn something new.

Tutor Time Reading

Throughout their time at The Castle School, all students read up to three novels per year as a tutor group. These books are carefully selected to develop vocabulary, comprehension, and cultural capital by exploring diverse cultures, countries, and challenging topics in a safe and supportive environment. Tutors model fluent reading aloud, followed by choral or echo reading by students, to build confidence and oral fluency.

Sparx Reader

Sparx Reader is our online reading platform, used for regular reading homework. It helps students build comprehension and fluency - vital skills for academic success and lifelong learning. Students are expected to read for 30 minutes each week as homework. For every page read and comprehension question answered, they earn points which contribute to the House Trophy. Achievements are also celebrated in assemblies throughout the year.

Library

Our well-stocked library is open from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm before school, at break and lunchtime and after school. It is a welcoming space for reading, homework, and independent study.

Homework

In Years 7 and 8, students receive a reading article every Wednesday linked to the school's weekly theme. These articles are designed to promote equity, coherence, and cultural capital. Each article includes a QR code linking to a video of a teacher modelling fluent reading - especially helpful for early-stage readers.

Literacy in Lessons

Literacy is embedded across all subjects at The Castle School. We focus on disciplinary literacy, which includes teaching subject-specific vocabulary and reading strategies. Students develop literacy skills through exploring word roots, syllables, morphology, and etymology of key words, oracy with the key words in the lesson and using the reading fluency sequence of strategies.

If you have any questions or would like further support with reading at home, please do not hesitate to get in touch. Here is the link to our website for further information: <https://www.castleschool.co.uk/school-info/reading-and-literacy.htm>

Yours sincerely,

Mr George, Associate Assistant Headteacher and Miss Ford, Reading Lead