

NORTHGATE SCHOOL ACADEMY TRUST

Reading, Literacy and Communication Handbook

2026-2027

Foreword

At Northgate School Academy Trust, reading is the gateway to learning, communication, independence and future success. We recognise that literacy is not simply a curriculum subject. It is the foundation upon which pupils access learning, develop relationships, participate in their communities and prepare for adulthood.

This handbook establishes a coherent whole-school approach to Reading, Literacy and Communication. It draws together our curriculum, interventions, assessment systems, reading culture, communication approaches and staff expectations into a single strategic framework.

The handbook is informed by:

- The Department for Education Reading Framework. [gov.uk], [assets.pub...ice.gov.uk]
- The National Curriculum for English. [gov.uk], [assets.pub...ice.gov.uk]
- Education Endowment Foundation Literacy Guidance Reports. [educatione...ion.org.uk], [d2tic4wvo1...dfront.net]
- SEND Code of Practice.
- Birmingham Language and Literacy Toolkit.
- Current research into reading fluency, vocabulary acquisition and language development. [educatione...ion.org.uk], [assets.pub...ice.gov.uk]
- Ofsted's State-Funded School Inspection Toolkit. [gov.uk], [assets.pub...ice.gov.uk]

THE NORTHGATE READING OFFER AT A GLANCE

Our Vision

Every Pupil Becomes:



A Reader



A Communicator



A Writer



An Independent Learner



Prepared for Adulthood

The Northgate Reading Model

Reading Vision

Every pupil will become a confident reader, communicator and learner, prepared for adulthood.



Daily Reading/Literacy Hour (60 Minutes)

Part 1: Direct Reading Instruction (30 mins)	Part 2: Personalised Literacy (30 mins)
Read Write Inc. Phonics	SPaG
Fresh Start	Writing
Reading Fluency	Communication Targets
Reading behaviours (Early Reading)	EHCP Outcomes (personalisation)
Reciprocal Reading	Functional Literacy
Reading Comprehension (Oxford Reading Buddy, Paired Reading)	Preparation for Adulthood Literacy (KS4)



Whole-School Reading Entitlement

Reading Provision	Purpose
Phonics & Fresh Start	Decoding and word reading
Fluency Teaching	Accuracy, automaticity and prosody
Oxford Reading Buddy	Language development and comprehension
Reciprocal Reading	Comprehension and critical thinking
Reading for Pleasure	Motivation and positive reading habits
Library and SORA Provisions	Access to high-quality texts, and supporting the development of positive, independent reading habits.
Home Reading	Reading practice beyond school, parent/carers engagement.
Disciplinary Literacy	Reading across all curriculum subjects
Substantive Literacy	The core literacy knowledge, vocabulary and skills that underpin reading, writing, speaking and communication.



Assessment and Identification

- NGRT, NGST, PTE, Ruth Miskin Assessment portal
- Birmingham Language and Literacy Toolkit
- Reading Fluency Assessment
- Reading Records

- EHCP Outcomes
- Teacher Assessment
- Specialist Assessment (where required)



Impact

- ✓ Fluent Readers
- ✓ Confident Communicators
- ✓ Successful Writers
- ✓ Greater Curriculum Access
- ✓ Improved Independence
- ✓ Preparation for Adulthood

The Five Focuses of Reading at Northgate

Focus	What This Looks Like
1. Learn to Read	Read Write Inc. and Fresh Start
2. Read Fluently	Daily fluency practice and repeated reading through Guided and modelled reading, Fresh Start Modules
3. Understand What We Read	Vocabulary, Fresh Start Modules Oxford Reading Buddy and Reciprocal Reading
4. Love Reading	Library time, Reading for Pleasure, staff modelling of positive reading behaviours, visiting readers, regular home reading and reading to adults in school. Positive praise and certificates to celebrate success.
5. Read to Learn	Disciplinary and Substantive literacy across the curriculum

Underpinning Everything

- Communication and Oracy
- SEND and Adaptive Practice
- Assessment and Intervention (The Graduated Response)
- Reading/Literacy Hour (Quality First Teaching)

The Outcome:

Confident Readers → Successful Learners → Prepared for Adulthood

1. Reading Vision and Intent

Reading is the school's highest curriculum priority.

At Northgate School Academy Trust we believe that every pupil, regardless of need, starting point or prior educational experience, has the right to become the most effective reader, communicator and writer they can be.

We understand that reading is fundamental to educational success and that pupils who struggle to read are likely to experience difficulties across the curriculum because reading is both a subject in its own right and the primary means through which knowledge is acquired. [gov.uk], [assets.pub...ice.gov.uk]

Our reading strategy is built upon four core ambitions:

We want pupils to:

- Read accurately and fluently.
- Understand increasingly complex texts.
- Develop rich and ambitious vocabulary.
- Read independently and for pleasure.
- Communicate confidently in formal and informal contexts.
- Write accurately for different purposes and audiences.
- Access the full curriculum.
- Develop independence and preparation for adulthood outcomes.

Reading is therefore the responsibility of all staff and is embedded across every curriculum area.

2. Why Reading Matters at Northgate

Many of our pupils experience barriers to reading, language and communication. These barriers may arise from:

- Speech, Language and Communication Needs.
- Autism and associated co-occurring needs
- Learning difficulties and associated co-occurring needs.
- Literacy difficulties (including reading anxiety from historical systemic 'failure' within reading and Literacy learning environments.
- Processing difficulties.
- Interrupted literacy experiences.
- Dyslexia and specific learning difficulties.

- Complex SEND profiles.

Reading is therefore not simply an academic priority.

Reading enables pupils to:

- Access learning.
- Develop vocabulary and knowledge.
- Communicate effectively.
- Build confidence.
- Develop independence.
- Access employment opportunities.
- Participate in their communities.
- Prepare for adult life.

The Reading Framework identifies reading as fundamental to education and emphasises that proficiency in reading, writing and spoken language is vital for pupils' success both in school and beyond. [gov.uk], [assets.pub...ice.gov.uk]

3. The Evidence Base Behind Our Reading Strategy

The Simple View of Reading

Northgate's reading strategy is informed by the Simple View of Reading.

This model recognises reading as the combination of:

Word Recognition

- Decoding
- Phonics
- Accuracy
- Automaticity
- Fluency

Language Comprehension

- Vocabulary
- Language knowledge
- Background knowledge
- Inference
- Understanding

Skilled reading develops when both dimensions are taught systematically and explicitly. [assets.pub...ice.gov.uk], [gov.uk]

Reading Framework Alignment

The DfE Reading Framework identifies the following as essential elements of effective reading provision:

- Fidelity to systematic synthetic phonics.
- Reading fluency development.
- Language and vocabulary development.
- Reading comprehension instruction.
- Reading for pleasure.
- Reading across the curriculum.
- Leadership and management of reading.
- Early identification of pupils requiring support. [gov.uk], [assets.pub...ice.gov.uk]

These principles are explicitly reflected throughout Northgate's strategy.

Education Endowment Foundation Alignment

Northgate's approach is closely aligned with EEF recommendations, particularly:

- Develop pupils' language capabilities.
- Support fluent reading development.
- Explicitly teach reading comprehension.
- Use modelling and guided practice.
- Develop writing through explicit instruction.
- Use robust assessment to identify need.
- Implement high-quality interventions where required. [educatione...ion.org.uk], [d2tic4wvo1...dfront.net]

Ofsted Alignment

The school's reading strategy supports key themes within the Ofsted School Inspection Toolkit:

- Curriculum quality.
- Inclusion.
- Achievement.
- Leadership.
- Continuous improvement.
- Support for vulnerable learners.
- Assessment-informed practice. [gov.uk], [assets.pub...ice.gov.uk]

4. Rationale for the Reading/Literacy Hour

Why We Introduced a Reading/Literacy Hour

The DfE Reading Framework highlights the importance of sufficient curriculum time for decoding, fluency, comprehension, vocabulary acquisition and reading for pleasure. The Framework also identifies fluency as a critical bridge between decoding and comprehension. [assets.pub...ice.gov.uk], [gov.uk]

The EEF similarly identifies fluent reading, language development and effective intervention as key factors in successful literacy outcomes. [educatione...ion.org.uk], [d2tic4wvo1...dfront.net]

Northgate introduced a protected Reading Hour to ensure:

- Reading remains the school's highest curriculum priority.
- All pupils receive a daily literacy entitlement.
- Reading intervention is implemented consistently.
- Reading development is not left to chance.
- Assessment information is translated into teaching.
- Pupils with SEND receive sufficient repetition and practice.
- Vocabulary and comprehension are systematically developed.

Structure of the Reading/Literacy Hour

Part One: Direct Reading Instruction (30 Minutes)

Depending on need, pupils may access:

- Read Write Inc.
- Fresh Start.
- Reciprocal Reading.
- Oxford Reading Buddy
- Reading Fluency Instruction.
- Guided Reading.
- Vocabulary Instruction.
- Reading Comprehension.

Part Two: Personalised Literacy Development (30 Minutes)

Including:

- SPaG.
- Writing.
- EHCP Targets.
- Communication Targets.
- Functional Literacy.
- Preparation for Adulthood Literacy.

- Birmingham Language and Literacy Toolkit targets.

5. Reading Curriculum

Reading Curriculum Principles

Reading instruction is:

- Sequential.
- Explicit.
- Ambitious.
- Inclusive.
- Evidence-informed.
- Age respectful.
- Assessment-led.
- Communication rich.

Phonics

Read Write Inc.

Pupils who are not yet fluent readers receive systematic synthetic phonics instruction.

Read Write Inc. develops:

- Decoding.
- Blending.
- Segmenting.
- Phonemic awareness.
- Reading accuracy.
- Spelling.

Implementation follows programme fidelity expectations in line with Reading Framework recommendations. [gov.uk], [global.oup.com]

Fresh Start

Fresh Start provides accelerated intervention for older pupils requiring catch-up support.

The programme develops:

- Reading accuracy.
- Reading confidence.
- Fluency.
- Vocabulary.

- Comprehension.
- Independence.

Reading Fluency

Reading fluency is recognised as a strategic priority.

Research increasingly identifies fluency as the bridge between decoding and comprehension.
[educatione...ion.org.uk], [assets.pub...ice.gov.uk]

Fluency consists of:

Accuracy

Reading words correctly.

Automaticity

Reading words effortlessly.

Prosody

Reading with appropriate expression and phrasing.

Fluency strategies include:

- Modelled Reading.
- Echo Reading.
- Repeated Reading.
- Assisted Reading.
- Partner Reading.
- Reading Aloud.

Vocabulary Development

Vocabulary is one of the strongest predictors of educational success.

At Northgate, vocabulary instruction is a whole-school responsibility.

Teaching includes:

- Explicit instruction.
- Word Aware approaches.
- Pre-teaching vocabulary.
- Tier 2 vocabulary.

- Tier 3 disciplinary vocabulary.
- Morphology.
- Etymology.
- Retrieval practice.

Reciprocal Reading

Reciprocal Reading is used to explicitly teach comprehension through:

- Predicting.
- Clarifying.
- Questioning.
- Summarising.

Comprehension is taught through modelling, structured discussion and guided practice.
[educatione...ion.org.uk], [d2tic4wvo1...dfront.net]

Oxford Reading Buddy

- Reading for pleasure.
- Retrieval practice, recall and reading stamina
- Independent reading.
- Home-school reading.
- Reading comprehension.
- Reading fluency.

Reading for Pleasure

A strong culture of reading for pleasure is actively promoted because the Reading Framework identifies reading enjoyment as essential to long-term reading success.
[assets.pub...ice.gov.uk], [gov.uk]

All pupils are entitled to:

- Daily reading opportunities.
- Library access.
- Adult read-aloud experiences.
- Audiobooks and E-books via SORA
- High-quality fiction.
- High-quality non-fiction.
- Reading recommendations.
- Reading celebrations.

6. Reading Platforms and Digital Resources

Oxford Reading Buddy

Oxford Reading Buddy supports:

- Reading for pleasure.
- Retrieval practice, recall and reading stamina
- Independent reading.
- Home-school reading.
- Reading comprehension.
- Reading fluency.

SORA Digital Library

SORA provides:

- E-books.
- Audiobooks.
- Accessible reading formats.
- Independent reading opportunities.
- Reading for pleasure.

Reading Cloud

Reading Cloud supports:

- Library management.
- Reading engagement.
- Reading tracking.
- Pupil librarian programmes.
- Reading incentives.

Emile

- Online platform that supports spelling, vocabulary, grammar and maths through interactive games.
- Encourages independent practice and reinforces key literacy skills.
- Uses quizzes and rewards to increase engagement and motivation.

Letter-join

- Online handwriting platform that develops letter formation, joins, presentation and handwriting fluency.
- Provides structured handwriting lessons and resources.

- Supports pupils in developing clear and legible handwriting.

Grammarsaurus

- Provides resources to support **grammar, punctuation, spelling and writing**.
- Used to reinforce literacy teaching and practice.

Word Aware

- Vocabulary programme designed to develop understanding and use of new words.
- Supports communication, language and literacy development.

BBC Bitesize

- Online learning platform with literacy, reading and writing resources.
- Provides accessible activities, videos and revision materials.

National Literacy Trust Resources

- Reading, vocabulary and literacy resources that promote positive reading habits.
- Encourages reading for pleasure and family engagement with reading.

Staff training and Development:

Ruth Miskin Portal:

The portal provides access to:

- Read Write Inc. training materials
- Fresh Start resources
- Training videos
- Virtual Classroom resources
- Online Assessment tools for Phonics and Fresh Start

The Write Stuff: Jane Considine

- A structured approach to teaching writing through modelling, sentence stacking and explicit instruction in ideas, grammar and writing techniques.

7. Communication and Oracy

Reading success begins with strong language development.

Consistent with both the Reading Framework and EEF literacy guidance, communication and vocabulary development are taught explicitly throughout the curriculum.
[assets.pub...ice.gov.uk], [educatione...ion.org.uk]

Teaching strategies include:

- Structured discussion.
- Talk for learning.
- Debate.
- Presentation.
- Vocabulary instruction.
- Oral rehearsal.

Specialist approaches include:

- Colourful Semantics.
- Communication Matters resources.
- AAC.
- Widgit.
- SALT recommendations.

8. Writing and SPaG

Northgate follows the principle:

MODEL → TALK → WRITE

Writing instruction includes:

- Sentence construction.
- Grammar.
- Punctuation.
- Spelling.
- Vocabulary development.
- Editing.
- Composition.

Whole-school expectations include:

- Full sentences where appropriate.
- Accurate vocabulary.
- High standards of presentation.
- Explicit modelling.

9. Disciplinary Literacy Across the Curriculum

Reading should not be confined to English lessons.

The Reading Framework identifies reading across the curriculum as essential to pupil success.
[assets.pub...ice.gov.uk], [gov.uk]

Every subject therefore teaches:

- Disciplinary vocabulary.
- Subject-specific reading.
- Subject-specific writing.
- Structured talk.
- Vocabulary retrieval.

10. SEND and Adaptive Practice

All pupils are entitled to ambitious literacy provision.

Provision may include:

- Quality First Teaching.
- The Graduated Response (Assess-Plan-Do- Review)
- Birmingham Language and Literacy Toolkit.
- Visual supports.
- Widgit.
- Communication supports.
- Assistive technology.
- AAC systems.
- Specialist assessment.
- Personalised interventions.

A lack of engagement with reading is viewed as a barrier requiring support rather than a deficit within the learner.

11. Assessment and Progression

Reading

- NGRT.
- Read Write Inc. Assessments.
- Fresh Start Assessments.
- Oxford Reading Buddy Assessments.
- Reading Fluency Assessments.
- Reading Conferences.
- Reading Records.

Literacy

- NGST, PTE
- Teacher Assessment.
- Moderation.

- Writing Assessment.
- SPaG Assessment.

SEND

- Birmingham Language and Literacy Toolkit.
- Dyslexia Screeners.
- Lexplore.
- EHCP Outcomes.

Assessment information drives planning, intervention and curriculum adaptation.

12. Library and Reading Culture

The library is central to the school's literacy strategy.

The school promotes:

- Reading for Pleasure.
- Library Membership.
- Home Reading.
- Reading Ambassadors.
- Reading Awards.
- Book Clubs.
- World Book Day.
- Reading Challenges.
- Staff Reading Role Models.

Every adult is expected to actively promote reading.

13. Literacy Resources and Professional Tools

Core Resources and Links: (usernames and passwords will be/have been provided for staff)

Resource	Purpose	Link
Read Write Inc.	Systematic synthetic phonics programme for early and developing readers.	https://www.oxfordowl.co.uk/ [oxfordowl.co.uk]

Fresh Start	Reading intervention programme for older pupils who need support with decoding, fluency and comprehension .	https://www.oxfordowl.co.uk/welcome-back/for-school-back/tar/rwi-fresh-start-menu [oxfordowl.co.uk], [global.oup.com]
Ruth Miskin Online Portal	A one-stop platform for all Read Write Inc. and Fresh Start training, assessment, teaching and management	Login - Ruth Miskin School Portal
Oxford Reading Buddy	Digital reading platform supporting fluency, comprehension and independent reading.	https://www.oxfordreadingbuddy.com/ [oxfordread...gbuddy.com]
SORA	Digital library providing access to eBooks and audiobooks.	https://soraapp.com
Reading Cloud	Library management and reading engagement platform.	https://readingcloud.net
Reciprocal Reading	Reading comprehension approach based on Predict, Clarify, Question and Summarise.	https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk

Birmingham Language and Literacy Toolkit	Assessment and intervention resource for communication, language and literacy development.	https://www.birmingham.gov.uk
Word Aware	Vocabulary development programme and intervention framework.	https://www.wordaware.org
Colourful Semantics	Structured language programme to support sentence building and communication.	https://www.integratedtreatmentservices.co.uk/colourful-semantics
The Write Stuff (Jane Considine)	A structured approach to teaching writing through modelling, sentence stacking and explicit instruction in ideas, grammar and writing techniques.	https://www.janeconsidine.com
Emile	SPaG, vocabulary and literacy learning platform.	https://emile-education.com
Widgit	Symbol-supported communication and literacy resources.	https://www.widgitonline.com

Communication Matters	Resources and guidance for communication and AAC needs.	https://www.communicationmatters.org.uk
Letter-join	Handwriting and presentation programme.	https://www.letterjoin.co.uk
Grammarsaurus	Teaching resources for grammar, reading and literacy.	https://grammarsaurus.co.uk
Oxford Reading Buddy	Digital reading platform supporting fluency, comprehension and independent reading.	https://www.oxfordreadingbuddy.com/ [oxfordread...gbuddy.com]
National College Resources	CPD, teaching resources and professional development materials.	https://thenationalcollege.co.uk

14. Literacy Non-Negotiables

Every member of staff is a teacher of literacy.

Staff will:

- ✓ Promote reading.
- ✓ Model Standard English.
- ✓ Teach vocabulary explicitly.
- ✓ Embed disciplinary literacy.
- ✓ Use literacy assessment information.
- ✓ Implement agreed interventions with fidelity.

- ✓ Promote reading for pleasure.
- ✓ Maintain ambitious expectations.

15. Roles and Responsibilities

Governors and Trustees

Provide challenge, scrutiny and strategic oversight.

Senior Leaders

Prioritise reading and monitor impact.

Literacy Lead(s)

Lead implementation, assessment and CPD.

Teachers

Deliver high-quality literacy instruction.

Support Staff

Deliver and reinforce interventions. Reinforce expectations and support engagement.

Parents and Carers

Support reading at home.

Pupils

Actively participate in reading and literacy development.

16. Monitoring, Evaluation and Impact

Impact will be evaluated through:

- Reading attainment.
- Reading ages.
- NGRT outcomes.
- NGST outcomes.
- PTE outcomes.
- Fluency measures.
- Writing outcomes.

- Birmingham Toolkit outcomes.
- EHCP progress.
- Walktrhus and mentoring/coaching
- Pupil voice.
- Parent/carer voice.
- Staff voice.

17. Reading Framework and Ofsted Compliance Matrix

National Expectation	Northgate Response
Reading prioritised	Daily Reading/Literacy Hour
Systematic phonics	Read Write Inc.
Catch-up intervention	Fresh Start
Reading fluency	Explicit Fluency Strategy
Language development	Vocabulary and Oracy prioritisation
Reading comprehension	Reciprocal Reading, Oxford Reading Buddy, paired and echoed reading
Reading across curriculum	Disciplinary Literacy Model
Reading for pleasure	Library, SORA, Oxford Reading Buddy
Assessment	NGRT, NGST, PTE, Toolkit, Ruth Miskin Portal, Reading Records
SEND inclusion	Personalised adaptive provision
Leadership of reading	Literacy/Reading Leader, external scrutiny via links and professional liaison with stakeholders, staff training and a clear QA and Assessment cycle

18. Glossary

AAC – Augmentative and Alternative Communication

Disciplinary Literacy – The specialist reading, vocabulary and writing of each subject

Fluency – Accuracy, automaticity and prosody

NGRT – New Group Reading Test

NGST – New Group Spelling Test

Oracy – Spoken language skills

Reciprocal Reading – Predicting, clarifying, questioning and summarising

SORA – Digital library platform

SPaG – Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar

SSP – Systematic Synthetic Phonics

Substantive Literacy -

The core reading, writing, vocabulary, spelling, grammar and communication knowledge that pupils are expected to learn.

Tier 2 Vocabulary – High-frequency academic vocabulary

Tier 3 Vocabulary – Subject-specific vocabulary

Word Aware – Vocabulary teaching framework

Professional Reading and Statutory References

All staff should engage with:

- DfE Reading Framework. [gov.uk], [assets.pub...ice.gov.uk]
- National Curriculum for English. [gov.uk], [assets.pub...ice.gov.uk]
- Education Endowment Foundation Literacy Guidance Reports. [educatione...ion.org.uk], [d2tic4wvo1...dfront.net]
- Ofsted State-Funded Schools Inspection Toolkit. [gov.uk], [assets.pub...ice.gov.uk]
- Alex Quigley: *Closing the Reading Gap*.
- Alex Quigley: *Closing the Vocabulary Gap*.
- Sir Jim Rose: *Identifying and Teaching Children and Young People with Dyslexia and Literacy Difficulties*.
- Daniel Willingham: *Why Don't Students Like School?*
- Hirsch: *Why Knowledge Matters*.
- Hendrick & Kirschner: *How Learning Happens*.

Final Statement

Reading is the gateway to learning, communication, independence and future success. Through our Reading/Literacy Hour, evidence-informed curriculum, ambitious reading culture, robust assessment systems, specialist interventions and unwavering commitment to inclusion, Northgate School Academy Trust ensures that every pupil is supported to become the most fluent reader they can be; a confident communicator, successful learner and active participant in adult life.