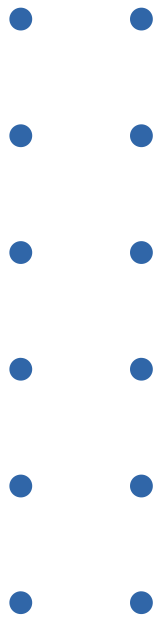




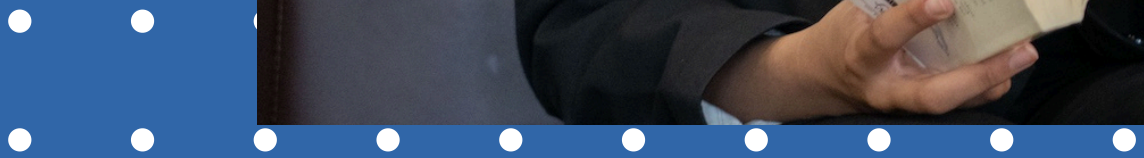
Matrix
Academy Trust
EDUCATION WITHOUT EXCEPTION



Universal RISE Offer

Literacy: Unlocking Potential, Raising Achievement

CASE STUDY



OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT

'Literacy: Unlocking Potential, Raising Achievement' was a professional development programme designed to strengthen reading, oracy and writing as a trifecta of foundational knowledge that underpins success across the curriculum. Bringing together research evidence, practical implementation strategies and leadership insights, the programme aimed to improve educational outcomes for all pupils, particularly those facing disadvantage and barriers to achievement through a targeted and focused approach to literacy provision within and across the curriculum at KS3 and KS4.

The programme was built around the principles of collaboration, evidence-informed practice and the central role of high-quality teaching in ensuring equitable access to the curriculum. Recognising the significant challenges facing literacy outcomes across the region, the project sought to support schools in developing coherent, sustainable approaches to literacy that could be implemented efficiently and effectively, embedded within everyday classroom practice rather than bolted on to the curriculum.

Working in partnership with schools and Trusts across the West Midlands, the programme combined ongoing professional development with access to a rich bank of resources, research summaries and contributions from leading specialists, excellent practitioners and school leaders with a background in improving and driving literacy across the curriculum. A strong emphasis is placed on sustainability and transformational leadership in this area ensured that improvements would become embedded within school systems, curriculum design and classroom routines.

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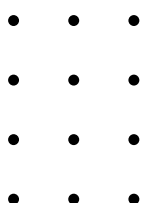


STANDOUT FEATURES



Whilst the impact and reach of the project was wide and multi-faceted, this comprehensive suite of CPD has created a programme that has moved beyond discrete episodes of professional development alone, effectively creating a school improvement model for literacy to equip leaders with both the vision and the practical tools required to embed lasting change in the way teachers impart foundational knowledge. Notable features include:

- a relentless focus on sustainable implementation rather than superficial awareness;
- a combination of research, practical strategies and live classroom practice;
- a universal framework with bespoke contextual support;
- a strong emphasis on sustainable leadership development;
- a flexible and responsive approach to professional learning through conferences, webinars and a digital platform;
- a potential for endemic impact across schools, Trusts and local authorities across the West Midlands impacting the educational diet of approximately 50,000 pupils.



PROJECT AIMS

Through a shared language, common approaches and an unwavering focus on foundational knowledge, the programme aimed to support schools in creating coherent literacy-rich environments where every pupil can read, speak and write with confidence and success with the following intended impacts:

- **Improved Pupil Outcomes** - accelerated progress in reading and writing across all phases, with a particular focus on disadvantaged pupils.
- **Enhanced Teacher Expertise** - increased teacher confidence and skill in delivering evidence-based English teaching.
- **Sustainable School Improvement** - schools equipped with tools, resources, and knowledge to sustain high standards in literacy beyond the life of the project.

PROGRAMME INTENTION

The programme offered universal support, suitable for all schools, as well as a bespoke element to ensure that leaders were equipped with the knowledge and skill to drive this priority in the face of their own diverse and varied contextual barriers.

UNIVERSAL OFFER

All participants benefited from the sharing of a common approach to reading that could be adapted to suit individual school context. This demonstrated to leaders how to implement and review their offer in three areas:

- **Intervention:** targeted, data-informed interventions implemented to close the reading gap.
- **Curriculum:** a common approach to reading that can be adapted for each discipline so pupils confidently read, write and think like a specialist. This scaffolds how to approach an academic text.
- **Culture:** reading is prioritised, pupils have the opportunity to read high-quality texts and develop a love reading.

BESPOKE OFFER

All leaders were supported with the implementation of a reading common approach in their own specific school context, reflecting the EEF model and approach to effecting change in education, through these five strands:

- **Explore:** Diagnose and reflect on reading in the context of the school .
- **Prepare:** Support action-planning for next steps, with adaptation as needed.
- **Deliver:** Implement new and refine current practices, using data to inform action, through CPD, modelling and coaching.
- **Sustain** and embed whole school strategy, through timely review.
- **Review** impact at identified points.

PROGRAMME DESIGN & APPROACH

The design of the programme was intentionally threefold, including a combination of in-person conferences, observation of best-practice in secondary settings, supported by targeted webinars which allowed for the opportunity to explore core principles on a deeper level. The structure of the programme supported literacy leaders and teachers to design their own bespoke literacy CPD package.

Not only were leaders able to design their own pathway, but they also had the option to select a school, when observing best practice, that best reflected their own context.

The three distinct elements of the package were as follows:

1. Live Literacy Development Conferences

Taking each element of Literacy and Foundational Knowledge in turn, with an opportunity to undertake live classroom observations from expert practitioners, delegates were given the opportunity to receive high-quality training, sharing the latest research and pedagogy in this field. Delegates also had the opportunity to action-plan with literacy specialists, tailoring implementation objectives to meet the needs of the many and diverse settings represented.

The conference series was delivered across two distinct cycles:

Conference	Overview
Reading Conference 1: A whole school approach to reading	An introduction to a whole-school common approach to reading (including reading across the curriculum, interventions and a reading culture) that can be adapted to suit individual school contexts.
Reading Conference 2: Implementing an impactful reading offer within the curriculum	Exploring how reading should be prioritised in the curriculum as part of a broad literacy offer, and how practical strategies can be implemented across different subject disciplines.
Writing Conference 1: Foundations of writing across the curriculum	An introduction to the fundamental concepts that underpin the teaching of writing e.g. sentence construction and how to strategically approach this across the curriculum.
Reading Conference 3: Literacy Live and In-Action	An opportunity to see the effective implementation of the reading, oracy and writing common approach, across the curriculum.

2. Targeted Webinar Series

Suiting the needs and pace of the 21st century educational workforce, a suite of webinars was offered to allow delegates to drill into specific areas of research and pedagogy, unpicking and unfolding niche areas of literacy development, to complement and strengthen the extensive literacy area covered in the conferences. These webinars could also be experienced as standalone CPD episodes, to drive and support staff and leadership development in this area.

The webinar series was as follows:

Webinar	Overview
Writing Webinar 1: Knowledge vs skill	Exploring how a knowledge-led approach to the teaching of writing develops and sustains this as a transferable and cohesive skill.
Writing Webinar 2: Composite to component knowledge	Exploring how to breakdown long and medium-term learning goals into granular, specific knowledge end points that build through multiple learning episodes, across the curriculum.
Reading Webinar 1: How to select academic texts	A methodological approach to selecting high quality academic texts across the curriculum.
Reading Webinar 2: Using reading as a vehicle	An introduction to how reading can be used as a vehicle to look at wider societal issues, with a focus on personal development.
Reading Webinar 3: Explicit teaching of vocabulary	A strategic approach to develop both language and vocabulary development across the curriculum.
Reading Webinar 4: Reading and inclusion	An inclusive approach to driving reading across the whole school to ensure we meet the needs of all pupils.
Reading Webinar 5: Creating a reading culture	An insight into how to develop, drive and sustain a reading culture across the whole school.
Writing Webinar 3: Grammar through writing	Exploring how a formulaic approach to the teaching of writing, threading and sequencing the knowledge of grammar strengthens writing proficiency.
Writing Webinar 4: The power of live modelling and marking	Exploring how live modelling can be used to scaffold the writing process and how live marking can be used to give granular and specific feedback.
Writing Webinar 5: Deliberate Practice	An insight into how a strategic approach to embedding opportunities through a range of deliberate practice models sustains a proficient skill and builds writing fluency.

3. Comprehensive Digital Platform

Alongside the professional development programme, our dedicated digital implementation hub was designed to support ongoing improvement and collaboration. The platform houses a comprehensive library of resources, including recorded CPD sessions, webinars, research summaries, classroom exemplification, implementation guides and literacy audits.

Schools are able to access practical tools to support the implementation of reading, oracy and writing strategies, alongside case studies showcasing effective practice. By providing flexible, on-demand access to high-quality professional learning and implementation materials, the platform enables leaders and teachers to revisit key content, share successful approaches and sustain improvement over time. The hub will serve as both a professional learning space and an online compendium of evidence-informed practice, helping schools to embed a robust and coherent literacy offer that delivers lasting impact for pupils.

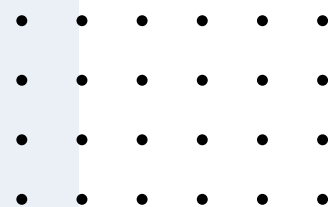
The link to our digital platform can be found here:

[Literacy Platform – Matrix Academy Trust](#)

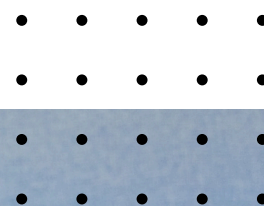
A Collaborative Approach to Professional Development

Literacy priorities were intentionally positioned within school improvement plans to ensure coherence and longevity. A consistent focus on high expectations and inclusive practice reinforced the principle that high-quality teaching benefits all pupils, particularly those facing disadvantage. The programme deliberately positioned teachers and leaders as the key mechanism for change, strengthening professional knowledge, confidence and ownership so that improvements in literacy teaching and outcomes could be sustained beyond the programme period.

A strong emphasis was placed on collaboration, leadership development and sustainability throughout the programme. Professional collaboration within and across schools was actively encouraged, creating opportunities for shared learning, honest reflection and collective problem-solving. Alongside this, the programme focused on building confident literacy leadership at all levels, supporting leaders to embed shared expectations, articulate clear priorities and align literacy improvement with wider school development.



RESEARCH AND EVIDENCE BASE FOR THE PROJECT



In the West Midlands, writing remains the lowest-performing subject at Key Stage 2, significantly reducing the percentage of pupils achieving the expected standard in Reading, Writing, and Maths (RWM) combined. This underperformance directly impacts secondary readiness, with fewer pupils entering Key Stage 3 equipped to succeed.

To address this, Literacy development must be prioritised at Key Stages 3 and 4, where attainment in reading and writing continues to lag behind national averages. By embedding a coherent, cross-phase approach to reading and writing improvement the project aims to close persistent gaps, raise attainment, and ensure more pupils are equipped for success at every stage of their education. Pupils who are significantly below their chronological reading by age 15 are linked to low attainment at GCSE and are at a significant disadvantage (GL Assessment). KS3 and 4 curricula place increasing demands on reading comprehension and pupils who struggle with this often do not catch up.

Average Attainment 8 in 2024/25 was still 0.8 lower than pre-pandemic levels for all children and the gap between those with an SEND need is widening. When pupils began KS3, only 72% of all children were at expected standard for writing (the lowest of R/W/M). This speaks to the notion that the teaching of writing is still unevenly implemented, as identified by the DfE, back in 2012. With ever-more rigorous and demanding curricula across KS3 and KS4, building writing stamina and developing this as a skill is integral to terminal KS4 success.

RESEARCH-GROUNDED DELIVERY

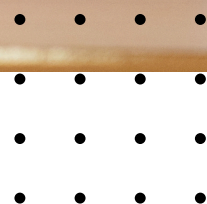
Delivery was structured around the EEF's key strands for improving literacy, ensuring consistency across all elements: spoken language development, fluent reading, reading comprehension, purposeful writing, and secure transcription and sentence construction. These strands were revisited throughout the programme, reinforcing a coherent, research-informed framework that schools could embed over time.

This was complemented by explicit teaching of reading and writing through modelling and guided practice. The framework also prioritised writing as intentional communication, supporting pupils to write for purpose and audience, while developing transcription, grammar and sentence construction through extensive, granular practice.



IMPORTANCE OF LITERACY AS FOUNDATIONAL KNOWLEDGE

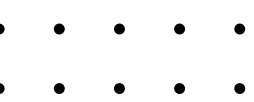
Research continues to highlight literacy as the gateway to learning, with reading, oracy and writing functioning as interconnected forms of foundational knowledge. The latest evidence suggests that pupils who develop secure language, reading and writing knowledge early are better equipped to access the wider curriculum, think critically and succeed academically. The EEF identifies spoken language as the foundation of learning, arguing that vocabulary, discussion and high-quality classroom talk underpin reading comprehension and writing development. Oral language interventions consistently demonstrate positive impacts on literacy outcomes, particularly for disadvantaged pupils.



Reading remains the strongest predictor of academic success across the curriculum. Ofsted's recent English subject report describes reading, writing and spoken language as the essential foundation for future learning and highlights the importance of developing automaticity, fluency and vocabulary knowledge. Once decoding becomes secure, pupils require explicit teaching of fluency, comprehension and disciplinary reading to access increasingly complex texts across subjects.

Research on writing increasingly emphasises the importance of treating writing as a body of knowledge rather than a generic skill. Effective writing instruction develops transcription, sentence construction, vocabulary and text structures through carefully sequenced practice. The Department for Education's Writing Framework highlights that talk, language development and reading all contribute directly to writing quality, with oral composition and practice acting as a bridge between thinking and writing.

Overall, a coherent literacy model in which reading, oracy and writing are divorced as separate skills but interlinked forms of foundational knowledge ensures optimum impact on pupil attainment. Explicit teaching through robust progressive and developmental practice in these disciplines positions practitioners to drive attainment, close disadvantage gaps and promotes equitable pupils access to the whole curriculum.



CONTINUAL FEEDBACK AND RESPONDING TO THE NEEDS OF PARTICIPANTS

Feedback was ongoing and solicited at every opportunity, in order to strengthen the programme offer and to ensure consistent fulfilment of delegate needs.

Delegates were asked to evaluate the conferences across five key domains:

1. **Organisation and logistics**, including booking processes, parking, hospitality and refreshments
2. **Quality of provision**, including overall experience, content, delivery and resources
3. **Professional relevance and impact**, particularly applicability to classroom and school improvement
4. **Future professional development needs**
5. **Open qualitative feedback**, including strengths and areas for improvement

This approach enabled both measurable satisfaction ratings and detailed qualitative insight.

STRENGTHS OF DELIVERY

Delegates particularly valued:

- Training led by current, experienced practitioners
- A strong emphasis on practical application, rather than theory alone
- High-quality, adaptable resources to support implementation in schools.
- Time to action-plan with specialists in the appropriate area
- Sharing and interpreting the latest pedagogy around Literacy and Communication and a focus on the symbiotic relationship between Reading, Writing and Oracy.
- Practical common approaches to breathe life into the three strands of Literacy.

PROFESSIONAL IMPACT

Feedback indicates that the conferences:

- Increased delegate confidence and professional motivation
- Supported immediate and medium-term school improvement planning
- Encouraged whole-school dissemination of learning, including at senior leadership level

Delegates consistently reported leaving feeling equipped to make meaningful changes to practice.

VERBATIM FEEDBACK

- *"Brilliant delivery and content – hugely appreciated and highly recommended. Thank you so much!"*
- *"Wonderful information, resources and presenters thank you. I am taking away lots of ideas to begin preparing and implementing when the time is right!"*
- *"A massive thank you to the presenters for the session. It was great to see research combined with practical steps that can be taken."*
- *"The conference was really insightful and helpful. The content was so helpful, logical and backed by research."*
- *"This was so informative and useful – thank you!"*
- *"Highly relevant to what teachers are facing right now."*
- *"I found it incredibly useful and look forward (feeling slightly overwhelmed) to where we need to start with writing across the curriculum."*

A RESPONSIVE APPROACH TO PROGRAMME DELIVERY

Earlier on in the process, there was a strong desire to see strategies in practice. The most common request was for real-world examples - classroom videos and seeing it in action.

There was interest in application to specific contexts. Delegates wanted more guidance on applying strategies for learners with additional needs.

Delegates also expressed the desire for follow-up sessions: *"So much good information – maybe split into two sessions"* and *"could have used a follow up to dive deeper."*

The comments and requests around seeing more classroom practice early on during the package were already scheduled to be addressed in forthcoming events (Conference 3). A focus on children with additional needs was not separate, as it was emphasised that the universal offer for literacy should be robust for the benefit of all learners.

Where delegates wanted more information on a specific area or wanted further examples, this tended to be where they had not signed up for (or attended) the full complement of the specific cycle, which would have filled their gap in learning.



OVERALL PROJECT ENGAGEMENT

Throughout the project, **over 50 schools engaged with 15 events and over 65 hours of professional development on offer**, from across the West Midlands. Each had their own specific need, bespoke to their own setting. In the main, schools had some awareness that reading should be prioritised, but participants were not always secure with regard to how they might enact or implement a fully-formed and cohesive strategy that would realise impact across the whole school. Most had an awareness of literacy in the broadest terms, commonalities were found whereby leaders are unsure of where oracy might fit within their current programme, and the mapping of writing is sporadic in different and varying subject curricula.

IMPACT OF CONFERENCES

Beginning with the whole school reading strategy provided a **holistic approach to reading, underpinned by the EEF Literacy Guidance**. This session centred around supporting leaders in planning for change: prioritising literacy across disciplines; targeted intervention strategies and a positive reading culture. Leaders commented that this allowed them to see the overarching aims and wider strategy, of which reading should be a part, in order to be successful.

Reading Conference 2 provided the actions needed for successful implementation of the approach, again using EEF research of the implementation cycle. This focused on the trifecta of reading, oracy and writing; curriculum design for literacy; the relationship between reading and oracy; and the latest pedagogy and classroom strategies. Leaders commented that they welcomed the sharing of a common approach, appreciating how reading, writing and oracy intersect, as well as understanding how robust quality assurance leads to the successful embedding of approaches.

This was then supported by Conference 3 where leaders were able to see this enacted live in schools within the region, through targeted, narrated learning walks from identified leaders and specialists. Leaders commented that seeing approaches in action was useful in allowing them to think more specifically about how they might implement this in their contexts and adapt their own approach to reading interventions. It allowed the previous theoretical sessions to come to life.



OVERALL EVALUATION & SATISFACTION

Across the full suite of CPD (8 conferences and 10 webinars), 48 delegates were in attendance. 217 responses were received from evaluations during each event. 100% of responses were positive; 71% strongly agreed with statements around the quality of provision, standard of resources and research shared, and the impact on their professional learning.

Delegate comments have consistently highlighted the value of the programme, particularly the combination of research and practical classroom application. Participants described the sessions as insightful, highly relevant and immediately useful, with many leaving with a clearer picture in respect of implementing this within their own settings.

To improve secondary engagement rates further, conference sessions may have been even more successful had these run as webinars, allowing more to attend without impacting on their own schools.

PROJECT FINAL REACH

The reach of the project extended significantly beyond those who directly participated in the programme. Within the secondary phase, 68 delegates signed up to engage with conferences and webinars, recognising that attendance figures were sometimes affected by school staffing constraints. Across the programme, 82 delegates attended 10 webinars and 58 delegates participated in 8 conferences, resulting in a total of 140 attendances across 18 events. The most successful conference attracted 20 delegates to observe live classroom practice, while a dedicated group committed to the full conference programme.

The project's influence was amplified through dissemination within schools, trusts and local partnerships. Based on conservative estimates, **the programme had the potential to reach approximately 3,150 classroom teachers in secondary schools**. The programme engaged 51 schools across 39 trusts, with four Trust leaders participating directly in webinars and conferences, helping to support wider strategic implementation.

Assuming effective dissemination and implementation within participating organisations, the programme had the potential to influence literacy practice for approximately 50,000 secondary-aged pupils. This figure highlights not only the scale of direct engagement but also the substantial capacity of the programme to strengthen literacy provision, improve classroom practice and enhance outcomes for pupils through sustainable school and trust-wide implementation.

To facilitate a lasting change in teaching practice and literacy outcomes there would need to be further, ongoing support with delegates to continually strengthen the implementation and quality assurance of the offer in schools.



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