

Literacy at Netherhall



Here at Netherhall, we understand that good literacy skills underpin effective learning for our students. These skills support effective communication, and equip students for achievement and success within education, life in the wider community and the world of work. **This is why literacy is at the forefront of all classroom lessons across the curriculum.**

Reading & Spelling tests

To assess the progress of our students and to help identify their intervention needs, we regularly test individuals in years 7, 8 and 9. Each term students complete online reading and spelling tests provided by GL assessments. These help to generate an accurate and up-to-date reading and spelling age for each student; information which is shared with teachers to allow them to plan accessible subject reading material. From September 2022, this information will also be shared with parents as part of our *parent pledge* to keep parents and carers informed about their children's progress. The school also subscribes to *Accelerated Reader* and students in years 7, 8 and 9 have a timetabled library lesson once a week in which they can sit and read quietly before completing STAR reader tests. Successful scores on these tests result in students being rewarded with a personalised book cover of the text they have finished reading, with the author's name substituted for their own.

Effective intervention

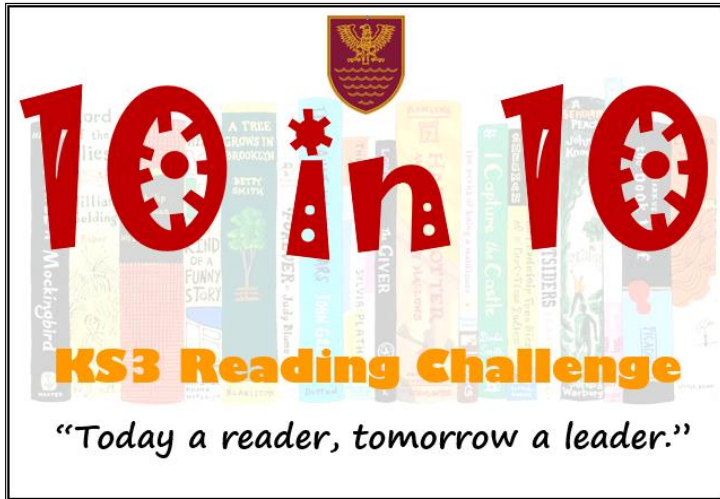
We use the data from the GL assessments to inform our plans for intervention. Students who require extra help with their reading and/or spelling are assigned to small guided and corrective reading groups, which usually consist of between 6-8 students led by a literacy-trained specialist. These extra sessions provide the one-to-one support students need to progress. Here at Netherhall, we also employ our fantastic Sixth Form students as reading mentors. These ambassadors meet with their lower-school peers in the library every Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday morning and are there to listen to the children read aloud, helping them when they stumble or trip over a word. The paired reading programme (pictured) is a fabulous intervention strategy and affords our students another opportunity to improve their reading skills.



Reading for pleasure

At Netherhall, we encourage all students to read for pleasure. All students in years 7, 8 and 9 have their own age-appropriate recommended reading lists and are invited to complete the *10-in-10 reading challenge*. This asks them to read the ten nominated fiction texts over the course of ten months. All chosen texts are modern-day books featuring a wide-range of contemporary issues. Students are encouraged to read as many of the books as possible, with participants being entered for a grand prize draw at the end of the academic year. We also see the value in welcoming external speakers into the school and to celebrate National Poetry Day last year, we were joined by Mancunian poet Mike Garry (pictured). Mike is the long-time support act for John Cooper-Clarke – whose poetry has been used in songs by the Arctic Monkeys – and is fantastically passionate about reading and writing. In October 2021, his infectious enthusiasm left our students inspired and we hope to invite Mike back for a return visit this year.

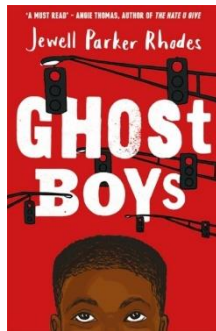




YEAR 7: Reading is vitally important. Not only does it equip you with the necessary weaponry to master the English language, it helps you to access the whole school curriculum. To quote former US President Barack Obama, reading truly is “the gateway for children that makes all other learning possible.”

‘10 in 10’ is a challenge to all students in years 7, 8 and 9 to read

10 books in 10 months. Your recommended reading is displayed here, so consider covers, browse blurbs and decide which is first on your list.



Ghost Boys by Jewell Parker Rhodes

In Chicago, a white police officer shoots and kills black 12-year-old Jerome, mistaking a toy gun the child is playing with for a real one. As a ghost, young Jerome witnesses the aftermath of his death, including scenes with his family, the police and the media.

Jerome goes on to meet another ghost, that of the real-life figure Emmett Till: a black boy whom himself was murdered in 1955. Till shows Jerome that hundreds of other "ghost boys" just like them are left to roam the streets of America. The story also follows other characters, including Sarah, the daughter of the white officer who killed Jerome, Jerome's friend Carlos, whose toy gun Jerome was playing with, and Jerome's younger sister Kim.

Rhodes achieves a lot in this relatively short book, dealing with grief, history, the idea of biases (both conscious and unconscious) and the fight for justice. This is a beautiful and tragic book that is unfortunately very necessary right now.

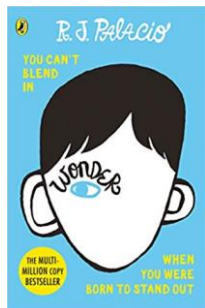
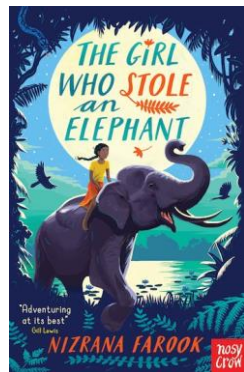
The Girl Who Stole An Elephant by Nizrana Farook

Chaya is a thief. But does that mean she is a bad person? She certainly doesn't think so as she steals pointless trinkets from rich and privileged people in order to buy the bare essentials for the most needy in her community.

With hindsight, breaking into the palace and taking precious jewels from the Queen's bedside table might not be her best decision. She has unwittingly put her closest friends and family in the most serious danger and has no idea how to put things right. Could stealing an elephant really be the answer?

An exotic setting and hypnotic storytelling make Chaya's story impossible to put down. The young characters all have their flaws but are all driven by an underlying desire for a better, fairer way of living.

With themes of morality, friendship, teamwork and loyalty, this book will have wide appeal to middle grade readers as it incorporates tension and jeopardy in an exciting coming-of-age adventure.



Wonder by R.J. Palacio

Like most ten-year olds, August ('Auggie') Pullman just wants to be accepted at his new school, especially as he's been previously home-schooled. However, Auggie can't help but stand out - he was born with a severe facial deformity. Most people react with horror to his appearance and don't take the time to meet the smart, funny, Star Wars-loving boy underneath.

Written in the first person, *Wonder* follows Auggie as he experiences more than the usual ups-and-downs of friendships, family and school. The story is also told from the perspective of other characters, providing glimpses into their own behaviour and exploring the impact our actions can have on others.

Thought-provoking, engaging and uplifting, this is a wonderful read with a powerful message - we can all choose to be kind.

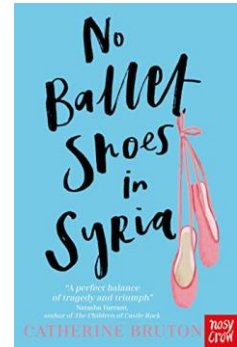
No Ballet Shoes in Syria by Catherine Bruton

Aya is a Syrian asylum seeker, looking after her mother and baby brother in the cold, unfamiliar city of Manchester – but she is also a talented ballet dancer.

A part of her life that seemed lost forever when she fled her home comes back to her when she encounters a ballet class led by the elegant Miss Helena. As the book unfolds, she finds new friends and learns to depend on "the kindness of strangers".

Children who love stories of performance and friendship will enjoy this book. The story humanises Aya, showing her as much more than just her circumstances. The reality of her history never overwhelms the essential romance of the story.

The book is ideal for readers who enjoy shedding a cathartic tear, but need an optimistic ending. Fans of Noel Streatfield will find much that is familiar and fun.



Windrush Child by Benjamin Zephaniah

This is the story of Leonard, who at 10 years old makes the journey with his mother from Jamaica to join his father in England. Leonard is part of the Windrush generation, one of thousands of people and families who were persuaded by the government to help rebuild England after the Second World War and make a better life for themselves.

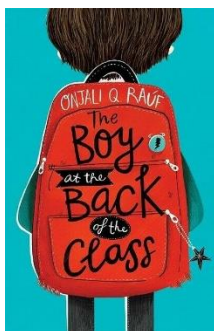
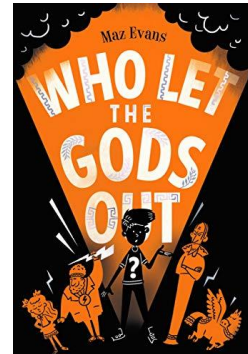
In addition to his meticulous research of the period, Benjamin Zephaniah draws on his own experience of growing up in Britain in the 1960s to describe the difficulties Leonard and his family face: the freezing English weather, the awful food, the extremely unwelcoming people. The story begins by focusing on Leonard's childhood, but follows him all the way to 2018 when he is denied citizenship in the country he has lived in all his life - a tragic example of the Windrush scandal.

This is a brilliant and important book from one of the UK's greatest poets and writers. He gets under Leonard's skin as he illustrates his life from a young boy to a devastated man in his 70s, and shows us that history is a continuum - it's about real people who in this case are still feeling the impact of the scandal. We're all part of the story. A book to make children and adults alike think hard about our history, about racism and the Black Lives Matter movement, about fairness, about politics - and also about bravery and unsung heroes.

Who Let The Gods Out? by Maz Evans

Elliot has so far succeeded in keeping his mum's illness a secret but now the money is running out and things are getting desperate. When a young Zodiac goddess, Virgo, lands in his back garden, Elliot thinks he might see a way to resolve some of his difficulties but, instead, the pair manage to accidentally release Thanatos - the immortal death-daemon - from centuries of imprisonment. With a wicked megalomaniac on the loose, Elliot and Virgo are out of their depth so must call on the help of Zeus and other long-retired gods to recapture the fugitive. But can they get to Thanatos before he gets to take over the world?

Funny, witty, inspired and utterly contemporary, this fantasy thriller/adventure is a magical blend of ancient and modern, with brilliant characterisation and a truly human story at its heart.



The Boy at the Back of the Class by Onjali Q. Rauf

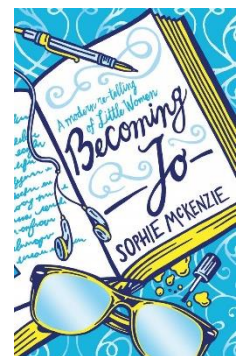
This is the story about how one ordinary nine-year-old child and three classmates are full of empathy for Ahmet, a boy that comes to their school as a refugee from Syria (he is the boy at the back of the class). Through their sensitivity, curiosity, ingenuity, bravery and innocent niceness, they make a massive impact on Ahmet's life, friends, class, school, community and wider world. There's a lovely lack of stereotyping on gender and backstory for the narrator, which adds to the message of not judging people before you know them.

An inspiring and sweet tale that will help children think about what it is to be a good person whatever your circumstances (the narrator is from a poor background with a single parent mum who struggles to make ends meet), and challenge prejudice and push for fairness, whenever possible. This is a beautiful, open-hearted debut from Onjali Q Rauf that should help children be the best they can be and realise the power of kindness.

Becoming Jo by Sophie McKenzie

Jo has always wanted to be a writer. She'll happily spend hours squirreled away working on her masterpieces, but with three sisters to contend with, a new friend who's just moved in to her street and a father who's in Syria working as a humanist minister, there is a *lot* going on.

Becoming Jo is a marvellous modern retelling of *Little Women* from *Girl, Missing* author Sophie McKenzie, which proves how relevant Louisa May Alcott's novel still is today, 150 years after its publication. McKenzie has expertly captured the personalities of each of the sisters, and fans of the original will enjoy her clever little callbacks – from how Amy destroys Jo's manuscript this time around to the transformation from Laurie to Lateef. It's a joy to see how she puts a twist on the tale and makes it work in an up-to-date setting (and in the UK, too). But there's also plenty to enjoy for those new to the Marches, with McKenzie's tale covering themes of identity, making plans for the future, family relationships, romance, bullying and health. *Becoming Jo* might pack a lot in, but it does it with style.



The Girl of Ink & Stars by Kiran Millwood Hargrave

Forbidden to leave her island, Isabella Riosse dreams of the faraway lands her father once mapped. When her closest friend disappears into the island's Forgotten Territories, she volunteers to guide the search. Following her map, her heart and an ancient myth, Isabella discovers the true end of her journey: to save the island itself. For beneath the dry rivers and smoky mountains, a fiery legend is stirring from its sleep... *The Girl of Ink and Stars* is a stunning debut, full of myth, magic and mapmaking. Hargrave has created an utterly original world, complete with political intrigue and fascinating myths and beliefs.

Isabella is a fantastic heroine: brave, loyal and curious. At the heart of the adventure is the wonderful and authentic friendship between her and her missing friend, Lupe. *The Girl of Ink and Stars* is completely fresh but has the feel of a classic children's book.

Children of Blood and Bone by Tomi Adeyemi

Magic has gone from the world, vanished when Zelig's mother was violently murdered by the King's men. Now the Maji clans, marked out by their silver hair, live in constant fear. Zelig longs to rebel, but her chance doesn't come until she finds herself having to protect a runaway princess, Amari, who is carrying a scroll that can bring magic back to the world.

The girls should be on opposite sides of this bitter war, driven by Amari's father and brother, but instead they join forces in a desperate race to get the scroll to its rightful place, and restore magic to the world. Adeyemi has created a thrilling rollercoaster ride of a book, set in a fantasy world based in African tradition. This book is likely to appeal to readers who enjoyed *Eragon*, *Devil's Kiss* or the successful film *Black Panther*.

