Hazel Oak School

Reading Spine 2026–27

High-quality texts every pupil experiences, from EYFS to Sixth Form

> **Belong. Believe. Become.**
> **Every pupil known. Every person valued. Every future possible.**

Document control	
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1. Purpose

The Hazel Oak Reading Spine is a carefully sequenced collection of high-quality texts that pupils experience during their time at school. It makes sure every learner experiences rich and meaningful literature, whatever their communication profile, cognition, physical need, sensory profile or reading stage.

The spine sits alongside the Hazel Oak Communication and Reading Framework, which sets out how reading is taught. The spine sets out what pupils read.

The Reading Spine supports:

- communication and language development
- reading for pleasure
- vocabulary
- emotional literacy and wellbeing
- understanding of diversity and belonging
- imagination and creativity
- curriculum knowledge and cultural capital
- preparation for adulthood

2. Accessibility statement

> ***Accessibility is achieved through adaptation and support, not by reducing ambition. Our goal is equity of access, not identical access.***

Pupils access texts in different ways, depending on their communication needs, cognition, language development and reading ability. A text on the spine may be experienced through:

Format	Description
Original text	The full, unabridged edition.
Abridged or adapted version	Shortened or simplified retellings, including published adaptations and selected extracts.
Symbol-supported text	Text supported with Widgit or other symbols.
Sensory story	A retelling with objects of reference, sensory stimuli and repeated language.
Audiobook	Recorded versions, including multimedia and digital resources.
Graphic novel adaptation	Published graphic or illustrated versions.
Shared reading	The text is read aloud by an adult and explored together.
Teacher-created accessible version	Resources made by staff to match pupils' needs.

The aim is not for every pupil to read the same text in the same way. It is for every pupil to experience the themes, vocabulary, characters, concepts and cultural significance of each text at a level that is right for them.

3. Principles of text selection

All texts on the Reading Spine should meet the following principles.

Principle	Texts should…
Reflect our values	Reflect Respect, Creativity, Growth, Wellbeing and Community, and support pupils to Belong, Believe and Become.
Represent diverse experiences	• show disability and neurodiversity positively • include different family structures • include diverse cultures, faiths and ethnicities • show different life experiences and aspirational futures
Support communication	Give opportunities for Makaton, AAC modelling, vocabulary development, conversation, narrative development and emotional expression.
Be accessible	Be adapted where needed through symbols, objects of reference, sensory elements, visual supports, repetition and simpler language.
Promote literary heritage	Include classic and contemporary literature, so all pupils meet significant works through accessible retellings.
Be age-respectful	Match pupils' age and maturity, even where the reading level is adapted.

4. Core reading experiences

Every pupil should have the following reading experiences:

Experience	Frequency
Daily shared story	Daily
Familiar repeated text	Daily
Communication-rich storytelling	Daily
Reading for pleasure session	Weekly
Poetry and rhyme	Weekly
Library experience	Regular
Sensory story	As required
Home–school reading opportunities	Ongoing

Reading is delivered through a Total Communication approach. It may include shared reading, interactive storytelling, sensory stories, story massage, object-supported storytelling, AAC-supported reading, switch-accessible books, Makaton-supported storytelling, guided and independent reading, class novels, and poetry and performance.

5. The Reading Spine by phase

Each phase has core themes linked to our curriculum. Texts may be accessed in any of the formats in Section 2. Where the drafts noted a specific format, it is shown in brackets.

EYFS

Theme	Texts
Belonging and relationships	• Owl Babies • We're Going on a Bear Hunt • Guess How Much I Love You • Hug • The Family Book
Communication and language	• Dear Zoo • Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See? • From Head to Toe • Where's Spot? • That's Not My… series
Emotions and self-regulation	• The Colour Monster • Ruby's Worry • Ravi's Roar • In My Heart
Sensory and repetitive stories	• The Very Hungry Caterpillar • Peace at Last • The Gingerbread Man

Key Stage 1

Theme	Texts
Friendship and community	• Elmer • The Rainbow Fish • Giraffes Can't Dance • Perfectly Norman • Milo's Monster
Understanding difference	• My Brother Charlie • All Are Welcome • The Same But Different Too • This Is Me
Independence and confidence	• Supertato • The Gruffalo • Not Now, Bernard • The Way Back Home • Look Up! (Nathan Bryon)
Traditional tales	• Goldilocks and the Three Bears • The Three Little Pigs • Jack and the Beanstalk • Little Red Riding Hood

Key Stage 2

Theme	Texts
Resilience and growth	• The Invisible • The Koala Who Could • The Lion Inside • Journey
Diversity and inclusion	• Amazing • Can I Join Your Club? • Julian Is a Mermaid • Here We Are • The Proudest Blue
Adventure and imagination	• The Iron Man • Charlotte's Web • Leon and the Place Between • The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane • Anisha, Accidental Detective (Serena Patel)
Understanding the wider world	• The Great Kapok Tree • Somebody Swallowed Stanley • Window • One Plastic Bag
Literary heritage	• The Secret Garden (adapted) • The Jungle Book (adapted) • Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (adapted)

Key Stage 3

Theme	Texts
Identity, belonging and aspiration	• Wonder • The Boy at the Back of the Class • A Different Sort of Normal • The Bubble Boy • A Kind of Spark (original, adapted extracts or audiobook)
Courage and determination	• The Explorer • Holes (original, abridged or adapted) • Skellig • Refugee Boy (original or abridged)
Understanding society	• The Arrival • Kick • The Breadwinner • The Undefeated • Ghost Boys (adapted or selected extracts)
Literary heritage	• Treasure Island (adapted) • Shakespeare stories and retellings • Greek myths and legends

Key Stage 4

Theme	Texts
Preparing for adulthood	• The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time (selected extracts or adapted) • Planet Omar • My Life as an Ice Cream Sandwich
Independence and enterprise	• Street Child • The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind • Hidden Figures (adapted) • Youth biographies
Relationships and community	• The Thing About Jellyfish • We Are All Born Free • Being Me
Identity, citizenship and society	• Of Mice and Men (abridged or adapted) • Stone Cold (original or abridged) • The Hate U Give (selected extracts or adapted) • Touching the Void (adapted) • Current affairs and news texts (adapted as required)
Literary heritage	• Frankenstein (adapted) • A Christmas Carol (adapted) • Dracula (adapted) • The Odyssey (adapted)
Life beyond school	• Workplace texts • Travel guides • Community information • Functional reading materials

Sixth Form

The focus moves from literary study to reading for adult life, alongside selected age-respectful literature in original, adapted or abridged form.

Theme	Texts
Functional reading	• News and current affairs • Employment documents, forms and applications • Travel and timetable information • Health information and appointment letters
Community and next steps	• Community and council information • College prospectuses • Local job adverts • Leisure centre and venue information
Literature	Age-respectful novels, short stories and poetry chosen with students

6. Literary heritage

All pupils should have access to the literary heritage that forms part of our shared culture. Pupils meet adapted, abridged, sensory and accessible versions of classic texts throughout school. These keep the key themes, characters and cultural significance of the original.

Phase	Literary heritage progression
EYFS and KS1	Nursery rhymes and traditional tales
KS2	The Secret Garden, The Jungle Book, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland
KS3	Treasure Island, Shakespeare retellings, Greek myths and legends
KS4	Frankenstein, A Christmas Carol, Dracula, The Odyssey

Other classics, such as The Wizard of Oz, Robin Hood, British folklore and stories from world cultures, may be used where they fit the topic.

7. Our Place, Our Community

Every pupil should meet texts that reflect Solihull, Birmingham, the West Midlands and the diverse communities they live in.

Phase	Local texts and experiences
EYFS and KS1	• Teacher-made, symbol-supported books about Solihull town centre, Touchwood, Shirley, local parks and libraries • Stories linked to local parks, canals and communities
KS2	• Anisha, Accidental Detective (Serena Patel, a Walsall-born author) • Benjamin Zephaniah poetry (a Birmingham-born poet) • Local history texts linked to Cadbury, Boulton, Watt and the Industrial Revolution
KS3 and KS4	• Benjamin Zephaniah poetry and extracts • Texts exploring migration, identity and community • Windrush and Commonwealth stories connected to the Midlands • Local news articles, employer profiles and success stories (adapted)
Sixth Form	• Local bus and train timetables • Solihull Council information • Local job adverts and college prospectuses • Touchwood and leisure centre information

8. Diversity check

Each phase should include texts representing the following. Use this table to check coverage when reviewing the spine.

Representation	Example texts on the spine
Disability	A Kind of Spark; Can Bears Ski?; My Brother Charlie
Autism and neurodiversity	A Kind of Spark; A Different Sort of Normal; The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time
Different families	The Family Book; The Great Big Book of Families
Different cultures and faiths	The Proudest Blue; Anisha, Accidental Detective; Planet Omar
Refugees and migration	The Boy at the Back of the Class; Refugee Boy; The Arrival

Representation	Example texts on the spine
Black British voices	Benjamin Zephaniah; Look Up! (Nathan Bryon)
Gender identity and expression	Julian Is a Mermaid
Local identity	West Midlands authors; community-based texts

9. Sensory Story Spine

For pupils working within early engagement and exploration, these texts are delivered as sensory stories:

Recommended sensory stories	
We're Going on a Bear Hunt	Room on the Broom
The Tiger Who Came to Tea	A Squash and a Squeeze
The Very Hungry Caterpillar	Dear Zoo
Peace at Last	Jack and the Beanstalk
The Gingerbread Man	Owl Babies

Each sensory story should include objects of reference, sensory stimuli, repeated language, communication opportunities, AAC modelling and choice-making.

10. Poetry Spine

Every phase should experience poetry from each strand:

Strand	Examples
Nursery rhymes	Twinkle Twinkle Little Star; Humpty Dumpty; Hickory Dickory Dock
Classic poetry	Michael Rosen; Roger McGough; Allan Ahlberg
Performance poetry	Benjamin Zephaniah; Joseph Coelho
Sensory poetry	Nature, seasonal, and sound and rhythm poetry

11. Reading across the curriculum

Texts support wider learning through the Hazel Oak curriculum drivers:

Curriculum driver	Texts that…
Communication and Reading	promote language, interaction and a love of stories
Independence and Self-Help	explore decision-making, self-help and everyday life
Emotional Wellbeing and Relationships	support emotional literacy, resilience and friendship
Preparation for Adulthood	link to community participation, employment and relationships

12. Expected impact

Through the Reading Spine, pupils will:

- develop a love of stories and reading
- increase their communication, vocabulary and comprehension
- build cultural capital and meet significant literature
- understand themselves and others through diverse, representative texts
- improve engagement, attention and emotional literacy
- gain knowledge that supports independence and adulthood
- experience reading as a meaningful and enjoyable part of everyday life

> ***At Hazel Oak, every pupil is a reader, communicator and storyteller. The Reading Spine ensures all pupils experience the joy, wonder and lifelong value of books in ways that are accessible, engaging and meaningful to them.***

Note: *Texts may be accessed through original editions, abridged versions, adapted texts, audiobooks, symbol-supported resources, sensory stories, graphic novel adaptations or teacher-created materials as appropriate. One Curriculum. Many Starting Points. Every Future Possible.*