



Mind the Literacy Gap:

Literacy Skills Assessment Toolkit for Secondary Schools

LexiaUK®
LITERACY FOR ALL

Welcome from LexiaUK

At LexiaUK, we know that every student's literacy journey is unique and that by secondary school, reading ability can make or break a learner's access to the curriculum. Identifying and addressing gaps early in Key Stage 3 is essential for ensuring all students can progress confidently towards GCSE success and beyond.

This Literacy Assessment Toolkit has been created to help you and your staff quickly pinpoint where students are struggling, uncover the underlying causes, and take informed, strategic action to accelerate progress.

Why now?

Despite the dedication of secondary educators, recent data highlights a continuing need for targeted literacy intervention. Too many students enter Year 7 already behind in reading and without swift, sustained support, these gaps widen as the curriculum becomes more text-heavy and complex.

In 2025, 25% of pupils left primary school without meeting the expected standard in reading, meaning many start secondary at a disadvantage. For disadvantaged students, the challenge is even greater, with persistent attainment gaps that remain wider than before the pandemic (Department for Education, 2025).

The Department for Education's 2024 report '[Now the Whole School is Reading](#)' stresses that every teacher has a role in supporting struggling readers and that schools must have robust, systematic approaches to catch-up and keep-up. It highlights the need for diagnostic assessment, targeted intervention, and regular monitoring to ensure students can fully access the curriculum and achieve strong outcomes.

At LexiaUK, we recognise the urgency. Our Literacy Assessment Toolkit is designed to help secondary leaders and teachers act quickly — diagnosing reading issues, understanding their causes, and implementing evidence-based interventions. By focusing on targeted support, we aim to help all students, especially those most at risk, reach the reading proficiency needed for success across the curriculum and in exams.

Who this toolkit is for

This resource has been designed for:

- **Senior Leadership Teams** to guide literacy strategy, track impact, and align interventions with whole-school improvement priorities.
- **Literacy Coordinators** to ensure a consistent, data-driven approach to reading assessment and support across departments.
- **SENCOs** to identify and address the needs of students with specific or complex literacy challenges.

Inside you'll find:

1. **Gap Identification Checklist:** A ready-to-use, grid-based tool for evaluating mastery across the three key strands of literacy, with space for notes and practical tips on spotting barriers to progress.
2. **Intervention Planning Grid:** A clear framework for turning assessment data into targeted, trackable actions that support rapid improvement.
3. **SLT Rapid Reading Catch-Up Guide:** Strategic, evidence-based advice for school leaders on closing literacy gaps quickly and effectively.
4. **How Lexia PowerUp Builds Every Strand of Literacy:** A visual overview of how PowerUp supports reading comprehension, word study, and grammar, underpinned by adaptive, research-based practice designed for older students.
5. **Next Steps & Further Support:** Ways to access more resources, training, and advice from Lexia's education team.

Take the next step

The best way to see how Lexia PowerUp Literacy can work alongside your school's current provision is to book a consultation with our education team. We'll explore your priorities, discuss the challenges your students are facing, and show you how targeted, assessment-led intervention can accelerate literacy progress and close the gap more quickly.

You can also start a free 30-day trial to experience PowerUp in action and see the impact for yourself.

[Contact Our Team](#)

Literacy Skills Gap Identification Checklist

The Simple View of Reading shows that reading comprehension depends on two key components: decoding (recognising and reading words accurately and fluently) and language comprehension (understanding and interpreting the meaning of spoken and written language).

For many secondary students, gaps in these areas can remain hidden, particularly for those who can read words aloud but struggle to fully understand them.



Lexia PowerUp Literacy is designed to address these challenges by targeting three interlinked strands:

- **Word Study** – strengthening decoding, spelling, and word recognition skills.
- **Grammar** – building understanding of sentence structure and word function to support accurate reading and writing.
- **Comprehension** – developing the ability to make meaning from a wide range of texts, including narrative, informational, and persuasive writing.

The following checklists allow you to identify which skills your students have mastered and which require targeted support, ensuring progress towards the literacy expectations for their Key Stage.

Student Name: _____

Word Study

Skill Gap Level	Skill	Secure	Emerging	At Risk	Notes
KS1	Identifies and manipulates individual phonemes (e.g. /b/, /sh/).	☐	☐	☐	
KS1	Blends and segments phonemes to read and spell short words.	☐	☐	☐	
KS1	Recognises high-frequency words such as 'the', 'there' and 'what'.	☐	☐	☐	
KS1	Able to recognise common letter patterns. (e.g. '-le')	☐	☐	☐	
KS1	Decodes words with simple vowel patterns (e.g. 'ee', 'ai').	☐	☐	☐	
KS2	Reads and spells words with complex vowel patterns and syllable structures.	☐	☐	☐	
KS2	Applies prefixes, suffixes, and root words to determine meaning.	☐	☐	☐	
KS2	Decodes multisyllabic words accurately and fluently.	☐	☐	☐	
KS2	Applies common spelling rules (e.g. doubling, dropping 'e').	☐	☐	☐	
KS3	Uses advanced morphology to understand academic vocabulary.	☐	☐	☐	
KS3	Analyses word parts for nuanced meanings in context.	☐	☐	☐	
KS3	Recognises irregular spelling patterns and exceptions.	☐	☐	☐	

Student Name: _____

Grammar

Skill Gap Level	Skill	Secure	Emerging	At Risk	Notes
KS1	Identifies basic word classes (nouns, adjectives, verbs, articles).	☐	☐	☐	
KS1	Recognises simple subject and predicate in a sentence.	☐	☐	☐	
KS1	Uses capital letters at sentence start and full stop/question mark at end.	☐	☐	☐	
KS1	Arranges words to form a complete sentence.	☐	☐	☐	
KS2	Identifies wider word classes (prepositions, adverbs).	☐	☐	☐	
KS2	Recognises and uses prepositional phrases to show where/when.	☐	☐	☐	
KS2	Maintains subject-verb agreement in simple sentences.	☐	☐	☐	
KS2	Identifies and corrects run-on sentences.	☐	☐	☐	
KS2	Uses pronouns appropriately (demonstrative, possessive).	☐	☐	☐	
KS2	Arranges compound sentences or those with dependent clauses.	☐	☐	☐	
KS3	Identifies complex word classes (subordinating conjunctions, participles, gerunds, infinitives).	☐	☐	☐	
KS3	Analyses and constructs sentences using relative clauses, progressive tenses.	☐	☐	☐	

Student Name: _____

Grammar (cont.)

Skill Gap Level	Skill	Secure	Emerging	At Risk	Notes
KS3	Corrects errors with antecedents and pronouns (including reflexive).	☐	☐	☐	
KS3	Classifies and composes different sentence types (declarative, interrogative, imperative).	☐	☐	☐	
KS3	Combines multiple ideas into accurate compound-complex sentences.	☐	☐	☐	

Early Warning Sign:

Weak grammar knowledge can lead to unclear sentence construction and limit written expression across subjects.

Comprehension

Skill Gap Level	Skill	Secure	Emerging	At Risk	Notes
KS1	Listens to short passages and answers questions on subject, main idea, details.	☐	☐	☐	
KS1	Makes basic inferences from spoken or simple written texts.	☐	☐	☐	
KS1	Understands basic vocabulary in context.	☐	☐	☐	
KS2	Reads and understands informational and narrative texts independently.	☐	☐	☐	

Student Name: _____

Comprehension (cont.)

Skill Gap Level	Skill	Secure	Emerging	At Risk	Notes
KS2	Identifies subject, main idea, supporting ideas, and details.	☐	☐	☐	
KS2	Determines author's purpose.	☐	☐	☐	
KS2	Analyses character, setting, plot, and endings.	☐	☐	☐	
KS2	Recognises cause & effect and compares/contrasts information.	☐	☐	☐	
KS2	Interprets figurative language, tone, and mood.	☐	☐	☐	
KS2	Identifies theme of a text.	☐	☐	☐	
KS3	Analyses persuasive texts for claim, reason, evidence, call to action.	☐	☐	☐	
KS3	Evaluates counterclaims and appeals to emotion.	☐	☐	☐	
KS3	Interprets complex conflicts, sensory language, irony, internal conflict.	☐	☐	☐	
KS3	Compares and synthesises information from multiple texts.	☐	☐	☐	
KS3	Critically assesses argument structure and supporting details.	☐	☐	☐	

Early Warning Sign:

Students who can decode fluently but consistently score low in comprehension tasks may require explicit instruction in vocabulary, inference, and text analysis.

Intervention Planning Grid

Identifying literacy gaps is just the first step. For secondary pupils, turning those insights into structured, skill-focused interventions is key to meaningful progress. This Intervention Planning Grid helps translate assessment data into tailored actions that address each pupil's specific challenges.

Lexia's approach emphasises targeted, evidence-based intervention, recognising that literacy development in older pupils often involves bridging gaps from earlier stages, while simultaneously expanding vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency. By focusing on specific strands, such as decoding, reading fluency, vocabulary, or comprehension, you can deliver timely, personalised support that builds confidence and competence step-by-step. This method accelerates progress and ensures interventions are both measurable and sustainable.

How to use this grid:

Pupil Name: Record the student's full name or initials for your intervention records.

Identified Gaps: Note specific reading strands where the pupil shows challenges, based on your assessment checklist or teacher observations.

Priority: Assign a priority level (High, Medium, or Low) based on urgency and the likely impact of addressing the gap.

Targets: Define clear, measurable, and time-bound goals that is realistic for the pupil (e.g., "Read age-appropriate texts fluently with 90% accuracy by end of term").

Strategy: Specify the intervention type most likely to close the gap, considering the student's needs and evidence-based approaches. Consider:

- **Guided or paired reading** focused on comprehension, fluency, and critical analysis.
- **Vocabulary-building sessions** linked to subject-specific texts.
- **Targeted writing and grammar exercises** to support reading comprehension.
- **Adaptive digital programmes** (e.g. PowerUp Literacy) that adjust to pupil performance.

Resources: List any materials, programmes, or tools that will support the intervention effectively (e.g., decodable texts, flashcards, digital platforms, training for staff).

Timeframe: Establish a review schedule, such as every 2-4 weeks, to track progress, adjust interventions and celebrate achievements.

Monitoring & Review: Ensure continuous evaluation through check-ins, digital assessment and reporting tools (e.g. myLexia™) and regular updates to staff and parents. Include strategies to maintain pupil engagement and motivation, particularly for secondary learners who may struggle with confidence or independence in reading..

Intervention Planning Grid

Student Name	Identified Gaps	Priority	Targets	Strategy	Resources	Timeframe
e.g. Sophie (Y8)	Comprehension, Vocabulary, Fluency	High	Read and understand GCSE-style texts independently. Improve reading fluency to 140 WCPM	Guided reading with targeted inference and vocabulary questions; small-group discussion on text analysis. PowerUp Comprehension Strand focus.	PowerUp Literacy Programme, guided reading texts, vocabulary skill builders, teacher-led discussion tasks.	10 weeks – progress review every 2 weeks

Intervention Planning Grid

Pupil Name	Identified Gaps	Priority	Targets	Strategy	Resources	Timeframe

Next Steps: Turning Assessment into Action

Supporting student with low literacy in secondary schools requires a strategic, evidence-based approach. Assessment alone is not enough, leaders must translate data into interventions that help students access the curriculum, close skill gaps, and engage with reading as part of their wider learning.

Analyse Assessment Data to Identify Specific Skills Gaps

Review the results to pinpoint precise reading challenges: decoding, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, or application of reading skills across subjects. Understanding these gaps allows staff to plan interventions that are individualised and high-impact.

Actionable tip: Create a skills-gap matrix by year group or class to quickly highlight patterns, enabling staff to focus on the areas of greatest need without assuming a one-size-fits-all approach.

Prioritise Targeted, Skill-Specific Interventions

Encourage teaching staff to develop and implement interventions that focus on one or two specific reading skills at a time. Evidence shows that targeted work is more effective and builds pupil confidence, particularly for students struggling with secondary-level texts.

Actionable tip: Use short, focused intervention sessions (15–20 minutes daily or several times per week) rather than longer, less frequent sessions to maintain focus, motivation, and engagement.



Organise Flexible Small-Group or Individual Support

Use assessment data to group pupils by shared skill needs for small-group sessions or provide one-to-one support for those with more significant literacy gaps. Ensure staff delivering these interventions receive ongoing guidance and training.

Actionable tip: Rotate pupils in and out of intervention groups as they make progress, ensuring that support remains responsive and avoids gaps widening.

Establish Robust Progress Monitoring Systems

Regular, structured monitoring allows leaders and teachers to track progress, evaluate intervention impact, and adjust strategies quickly. Celebrating incremental improvements also helps maintain pupil motivation.

Actionable tip: Set measurable, short-term targets (e.g., improve reading fluency by 20 WCPM in 6 weeks) and review progress every 3–4 weeks.

Foster Engagement and Reading Confidence

For secondary pupils, engagement is key. Struggling readers need experiences that make reading meaningful and relevant to their learning. Encourage use of texts linked to curriculum topics, personal interests, and real-world contexts to boost motivation and persistence.

Actionable tip: Introduce high-interest, accessible texts, digital programmes like PowerUp Literacy, and opportunities for discussion or peer reading to build confidence and enjoyment alongside skill development.

Build Strong Partnerships with Parents and Carers

Keep families informed in clear, supportive language, sharing practical strategies to reinforce reading at home. This creates a consistent support network around pupils and helps sustain progress.

Actionable tip: Provide short guides, video demos, or workshops to show parents how to support reading development without making it feel like homework.

Apply Reading Skills Across the Curriculum

Encourage pupils to transfer reading strategies into all subjects. Comprehension, decoding, and vocabulary skills are essential for success in science, history, geography, and even mathematics. Cross-curricular reinforcement ensures literacy interventions directly support academic access.

Actionable tip: Coordinate with subject teachers to identify reading opportunities within lessons and encourage pupils to practice skills like decoding new vocabulary or summarising texts in science, history, or geography.

Provide Ongoing Staff Training and Resources

Ensure that staff involved in delivering targeted literacy support have access to high-quality training and effective resources. Building teacher confidence and expertise in delivering skill-specific interventions maximises the impact of your investment in literacy improvement.

Actionable tip: Schedule regular professional development sessions focused on specific literacy challenges and create a shared resource hub for lesson plans, intervention ideas, and progress monitoring tools.

How Lexia® PowerUp® Builds Every Strand of Literacy

Lexia® PowerUp Literacy® develops literacy across three interconnected strands, aligned with the Simple View of Reading (Decoding × Language Comprehension = Reading Comprehension) and evidence-based guidance from the EEF.



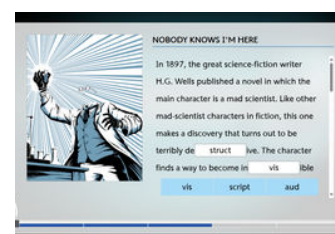
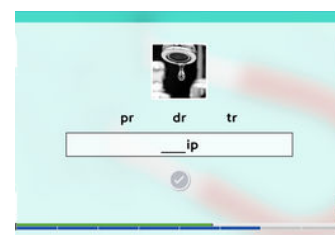
Word Study: Building Fluent, Accurate Reading

Word Study develops the decoding skills learners need to read accurately and efficiently.

This strand includes:

- **Decoding and Spelling:** PowerUp strengthens recognition of phonics patterns, word families, and multisyllabic words, supporting fluent, automatic reading.
- **Morphology and Word Analysis:** Instruction on prefixes, suffixes, and roots helps learners understand unfamiliar words and improve spelling.
- **Fluency Practice:** Short, scaffolded exercises build reading speed and accuracy, promoting confidence and engagement.

Together, these elements ensure pupils can decode text automatically, freeing cognitive capacity to focus on comprehension.



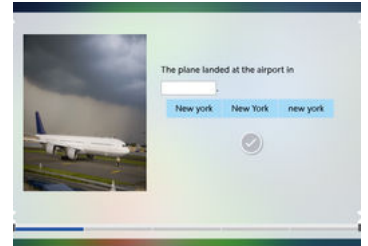
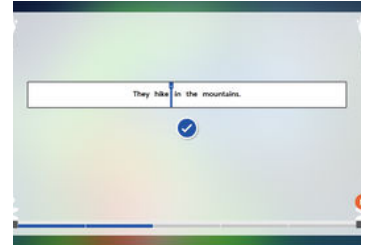
Grammar: Developing Language Comprehension

Grammar instruction develops pupils' understanding of language structure, supporting reading comprehension and effective writing.

This strand includes:

- **Sentence Structure and Syntax:** Pupils learn how sentences convey meaning, improving both comprehension and written expression.
- **Punctuation and Conventions:** Targeted practice reinforces standard conventions, aiding clarity and understanding.
- **Contextual Grammar:** Instruction is embedded in meaningful, age-appropriate texts, helping pupils apply grammatical knowledge in reading and writing.

By explicitly teaching grammar in context, PowerUp strengthens pupils' language comprehension, particularly for those with literacy gaps.



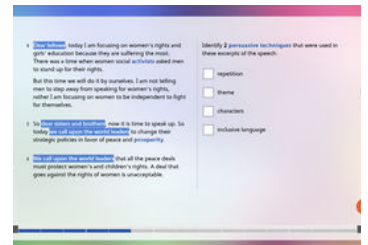
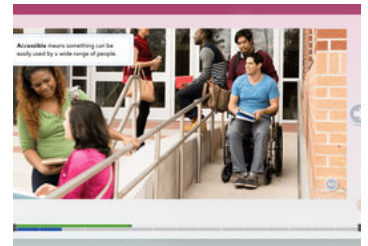
Comprehension: Unlocking Meaning and Understanding

Comprehension integrates decoding and language skills to ensure pupils understand, analyse, and respond to text.

This strand includes:

- **Literal and Inferential Understanding:** Activities develop skills for summarising, predicting, and making inferences.
- **Vocabulary in Context:** Pupils learn academic and subject-specific vocabulary, linking new words to prior knowledge.
- **Critical Thinking and Analysis:** Higher-order skills, such as evaluating arguments or recognising author intent, prepare learners for GCSE demands

Text choice is age-appropriate, relevant, and engaging, with adaptive scaffolding to support all learners.

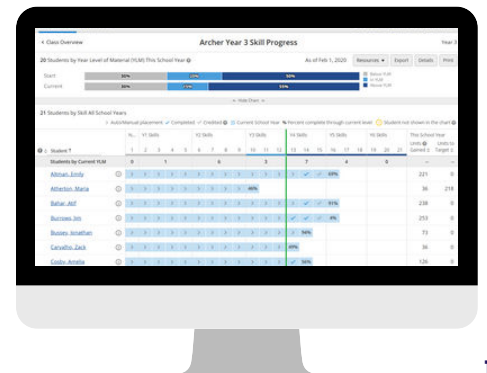


Progress Monitoring with myLexia™

PowerUp's progress monitoring is streamlined and powerful through the myLexia platform. Educators gain real-time insights into each pupil's performance across all skill areas, enabling timely identification of strengths and challenges.

With detailed reports and easy-to-use dashboards, myLexia supports data-driven instruction and helps teachers tailor interventions to ensure every learner continues to make steady, measurable progress.

Additionally, myLexia provides a wealth of supplemental resources, including lesson plans, printable activities, and targeted intervention materials, to support and extend instruction both in the classroom and at home.



A Cohesive, Research-Based Reading Solution

By building up the key skills surrounding word recognition and language comprehension, PowerUp reflects the interdependence of skills needed to access GCSE curriculum text. It meets learners where they are and personalises instruction to build breadth, precision, and fluency in reading, preparing all students, including those who struggle or have diverse learning needs, to access the full curriculum with confidence.

What Makes Lexia Different?

Evidence-Based Impact: Lexia is backed by strong evidence, including recognition from the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) for its effectiveness in accelerating literacy skills and narrowing achievement gaps. This research-proven program supports measurable improvements in reading outcomes for a wide range of learners.

Inclusive & Flexible Implementation: Adaptive instruction supports KS3 catch-up, SEND pupils, and disadvantaged students, ensuring equitable access to literacy development. Lexia's seamless implementation makes it easy for schools to integrate into their existing literacy plans without additional strain on staff.

Engaging & Motivating for Pupils: With interactive challenges, personalised learning paths, and meaningful progress tracking, PowerUp challenges and motivates learners without patronising them, fostering confidence and ownership.

Ready to See PowerUp in Action?

Experience firsthand how Lexia PowerUp Literacy can transform your learners' literacy journeys. Sign up today for a **30-day free trial** and explore the full range of adaptive lessons, progress monitoring tools, and teacher resources, completely risk-free.

Empower your school to deliver personalised, effective literacy intervention that drives real results.



[Request a Trial](#)

Next Steps and Further Support

Taking the next step towards improving literacy is simple. Lexia PowerUp provides flexible, evidence-based support for every secondary school learner.

How to Get Started

- **Book a Free Trial:** Experience PowerUp firsthand with a 30-day trial tailored to your school's needs.
- **Access a Video Walkthrough:** Explore the platform's features, adaptive learning pathways, and teacher dashboards at your own pace.
- **Talk to a Lexia Consultant:** Speak with a literacy expert to discuss your school's specific challenges and how PowerUp can support your learners.

[Request a Trial](#)

[Watch Walkthrough](#)

[Contact Our Team](#)

What Schools Are Saying

"Lexia has been a seismic change in terms of how we support students with literacy needs. Students are very positive about it."

–Headteacher, Theale Green School, Reading

Further Reading and Guidance

- **Guide:** [Tackling Literacy Gaps in Secondary Schools](#) – Practical strategies for literacy support, including approaches for SEND, disadvantaged students, and those eligible for Pupil Premium.
- **Blog:** [Selecting the Right Literacy Intervention Programme for Your School](#) – Advice on selecting an effective programme, evaluating evidence, and ensuring it meets the diverse needs of your learners.