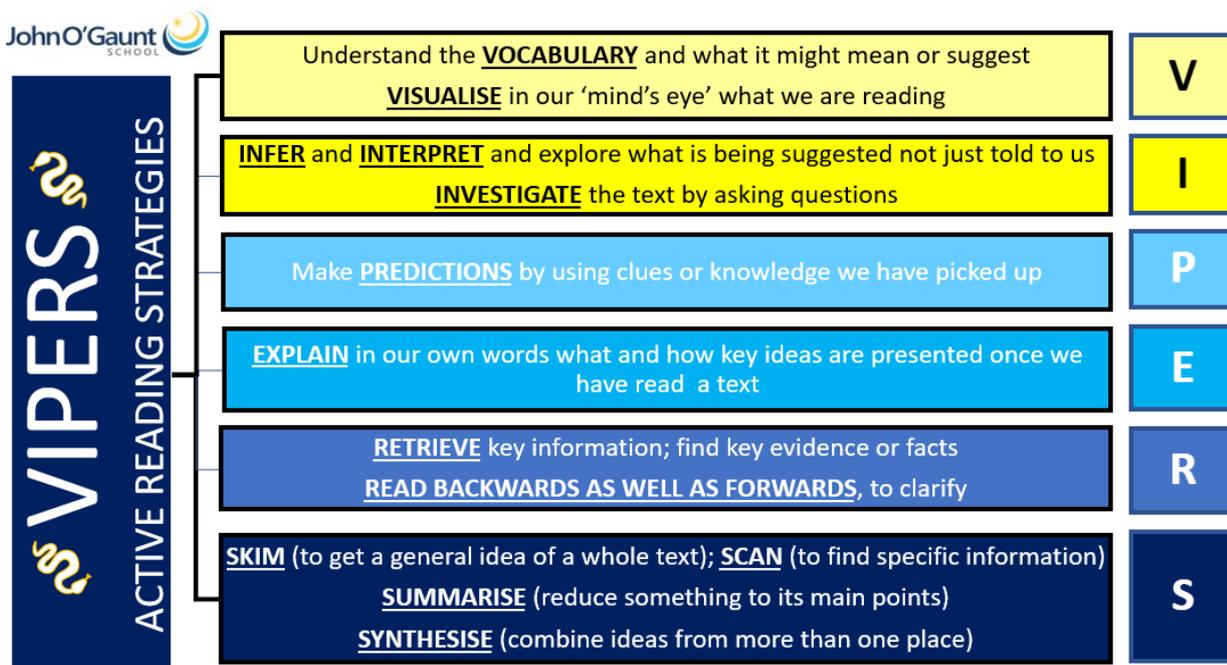


September 2021

Dear Parents/Guardians,

At John O'Gaunt we are committed to supporting our students to be effective communicators who have the literacy skills to voice their opinion clearly and understand the complexities of the world around them. Everyone, whatever the starting point, is encouraged to keep developing and broadening their skill, use and enjoyment of reading, word knowledge, writing and is encouraged to hone their speaking (and listening!) skills. All subjects support our whole school approaches to literacy, in order to establish a common language regarding things like active reading strategies and to show students that this is not just something that relates to English. All KS3 classes in all subjects are explicitly taught pre-selected topic based key words using the same approach; all teachers use VIPERS as a way of shining a spotlight on effective active reading strategies. All tutors foster and model a love of reading by reading aloud to their TG a shared book, twice a week.

As a reminder here is our VIPERS approach:



Beyond these whole school shared approaches, we work hard within subject teaching to show students that the reading, writing and speaking experience in different disciplines can vary enormously. We are keen to help students understand the nuances of what it means to specifically write like a Scientist compared to a Historian for example or, what it means to read like a Designer compared to a Geographer.

As a starting point this year, students at KS3 will be issued with a copy of the Term 1 word list for their year group. You can find a copy attached to this letter.

Research suggests that on average, a typical **successful** secondary school student, leaves school knowing 50,000 words. Having a broad vocabulary on which to draw is vital for students to communicate effectively and to express their ideas. In fact, vocabulary is a bit like velcro; the more words you know, the more hooks you have for others. Beyond this, having word knowledge improves students' world knowledge too – it helps to broaden their horizons and build their awareness of the world around them so that they are an active participant in it. Therefore, we feel it is important to have a far more active approach to teaching vocabulary across the curriculum in order to foster this word awareness and curiosity. This builds on our use of VIPERS active reading strategies, one strand of which is vocabulary, which helps students to decode and engage with what they are reading for themselves.

Your child will be receiving a copy of the designated words for each subject that will be explicitly taught by teachers, via Classcharts. Tier 2 words are more sophisticated, precise, academic words that help us to communicate more effectively across all subjects and all aspects of our lives. Tier 3 words are subject specific words. It would be really helpful if your children could be encouraged to use this vocabulary at home with you. Please explore these words with them, look at definitions, use these words yourself where appropriate and encourage them to use these words as well.

We have also invested in a new vocabulary online tool that will support students' understanding and application of new words called 'Bedrock Vocabulary'. Students in Years 7 and 8 will use this approach during one English lesson per week, alongside some rotational small group reading focused on the joy of reading and helping students to be good readers who use a range of VIPERS strategies to become even better.

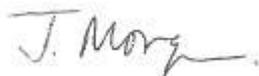
Further to this, we continue with our Tutorial Reading Programme specifically focused on the shared enjoyment of a whole class book, where the teacher reads aloud to the Tutor Group. And there is plenty going on in the library in terms of writing and reading clubs with Mrs Chester, as well as our new online library 'Reading Cloud' (ensuring that our students have access to high quality reading material whatever our learning situation) which we will be launching formally this year. All students have access to 'The Day' as well which is an excellent online newspaper specifically aimed at Secondary students.

If you would like a more specific explanation, alongside some handy resources, for all of these JOG approaches please head to our Literacy and Communication webpage: <http://www.johnogauntschool.co.uk/241-literacy-and-communication.html>

Further information on access to Bedrock, Reading Cloud and clubs will follow in due course.

Your support with this is of course vital. Encouraging daily reading at home (perhaps using Reading Cloud) and actively supporting the use of the word lists are two great ways that you can help us to help your child even more.

Yours faithfully,



**Mrs J Morgan**  
**AVP Teaching and Learning**