

13<sup>th</sup> November 2023

Dear Parents/ Carers,

As an academy, we are committed to improving our reading provision so we are piloting a new reading programme with Years 7-9: Sparx Reader. We are confident that this reading programme is more sophisticated than the programmes we have previously used and it will use the same sign on as Sparx Maths, making it easier for students to access. Our dedication to improve reading ages derives from the following data and research:

- **1 in 8** disadvantaged children do not own a single book at home.
- Only **31%** of all children are read to at home daily.
- Technology is not helping children with deep and slow (the intentional reduction of reading speed to increase comprehension or pleasure) reading.
- Children struggle more with informational texts than fiction...but they get far less deliberate practice. 90% of reading diet at secondary school is informational!

Therefore, to address this research, we feel that Sparx Reader will support us.

Sparx Reader is an online platform which quizzes students to create a reading age. From this, students will read online books, chosen based on their reading ages; students are tested as they read and earn points reading for thirty minutes.

During this week, students will be introduced to Sparx Reader during their English lessons, given a chance to log on and complete the reading age quiz. The system will automatically generate four books for the students to choose from; students cannot change the book until they have at least read a proportion of that book to help students try books they might have not chosen. As soon as they have had their first lesson, students are expected to read for at least 30 minutes a week or they will have not completed their homework. Initially, there will be no sanction for this but rewards. Students with the highest reading ages will be invited to join regular rewards across the academic year, with the first beginning in December. Please can I ask that you support our work to improve the reading ages, exam results and life chances of your children/ our students by ensuring that your child completes at least 30 minutes reading a week. It is important that your child is aware that the system is clever: it knows the difference between active reading and staring at the screen and will not award your child the points unless reading is completed properly. There are many benefits to this system that will support all children: font sizes and screen colours can be changed to suit students' needs. Since the system chooses books based on your child's reading age, it will mean that 30 minutes reading a week will be achievable for all children; however, they can read as much as they like. To begin with, we need all pupils reading the books on Sparx Reader until pupils who are keen readers earn their Gold Reader Badge and are allowed to read hard copies again.

Any questions, please contact me via telephone or email: [kwalker2@dixonsbk.com](mailto:kwalker2@dixonsbk.com)

Yours faithfully

**Kim Walker**

Assistant Principal: Teaching and Learning

