



GEMS Winchester School Dubai



Reading Policy (Whole School)

Person(s) Responsible: Executive Leadership Team

Approved by ELT: August 2026

Date of Next Review: June 2027

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1. Introduction

At GEMS Winchester School Dubai (WSD), we believe that Reading is a fundamental skill that underpins all learning and is essential for personal and academic success. Our reading policy outlines our commitment to developing proficient, enthusiastic, and lifelong readers. We aim to create a stimulating and supportive environment where every student can thrive in their reading journey.

This vision aligns with H.E. Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum's belief that "reading is the gateway to knowledge and the foundation for progress and development", as well as the UAE National Agenda 2021, which emphasises the importance of reading to foster a knowledgeable and innovative society. By promoting a culture of Reading, we contribute to the UAE's vision of cultivating a generation of thinkers, innovators, and engaged citizens.

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2. Definition

Reading is a complex cognitive process that involves decoding written text and comprehending its meaning.

According to the Simple View of Reading (Gough & Tunmer, 1986), effective Reading requires two essential components: word recognition and language comprehension. Word recognition is the ability to decode and recognise words accurately and fluently, while language comprehension involves understanding the meaning of words, sentences, and texts.

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3. Aims & Objectives

At WSD, we strive to ensure that every student achieves excellence in Reading. We do this by using the following objectives:

- To foster a passion for reading, both for educational purposes and pleasure, across different mediums of text, encouraging lifelong reading habits.
- To develop students' reading strategies and skills, ensuring fluency and accuracy in word recognition (decoding) and comprehension of a wide range of text types.
- To ensure that students acquire a wide vocabulary, an understanding of grammar, and knowledge of linguistic conventions for reading, writing, and spoken language, thereby supporting their overall literacy and communication skills.
- To ensure that all students have regular opportunities to engage in reading activities, promoting consistent practice and development of both decoding and comprehension skills.
- To create a strong, embedded reading culture within classrooms and the wider school environment, making reading a fundamental part of school life.
- To implement a structured and consistent whole-school approach to Reading, ensuring coherence and progression in reading instruction across all year groups, emphasising both word recognition and language comprehension.
- To regularly assess students' reading abilities, using formative and summative assessments to inform instruction, track progress, and provide targeted support where needed, ensuring development in both decoding and comprehension.

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4. Teaching of Reading

Reading is integral across WSD's curriculum, from Foundation Stage Literacy to Primary and Secondary English, and embedded in all subjects. This approach enhances language development by developing speaking, listening, writing, and reading skills. Sessions focus on both word recognition and comprehension, following the National Curriculum Programs of Study for Reading. Phonics instruction begins in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) with the Read Write Inc. Program, emphasising sound-letter relationships for decoding. In Primary and Secondary education, emphasis shifts to holistic text understanding, developing skills in skimming, scanning, and contextual comprehension, including social, historical, and cultural contexts within texts.

Early Years Foundation Stage

In the Foundation Stage, Phonics and Reading are taught within a rich, text-based curriculum, incorporating various strategies to help students become independent readers.

In FS1, Reading begins by nurturing a love of books and making reading fun through listening to and retelling familiar stories. Students learn that print has meaning and start to recognise environmental signs, such as the "M" for McDonald's or their own names. They visit the library to choose books and use pictures to narrate stories. Phonics instruction in FS1 focuses on developing speaking and listening skills, introducing oral blending and segmenting to lay the foundations for reading in FS2. Throughout the academic year, students share reading time, listen to stories and improve their language skills. In Term 3, all students are introduced to Read Write Inc., learning the first six sounds and oral blending of basic CVC words.

In FS2, the focus is on developing secure phonics knowledge through the Read Write Inc. (RWI) program, ensuring all students learn to read accurately and fluently. Literacy lessons teach sounds, segmenting, blending, and applying phonics knowledge for Reading. Phonically decodable reading books are sent home weekly for students to read with their parents, and their progress is monitored in a reading passport. Thematic stories enhance vocabulary and speaking skills, while Whole Class Story Time at the end of each day fosters reading literacy and a positive self-concept in reading. Guided reading sessions, led by teachers or teaching assistants, focus on small groups working together or independently. The library setup in FS2 provides easy access to books and highlights the importance of Reading.

Key Stage 1

In Years 1 and 2, students are taught phonics and reading through the RWI Phonics approach for 30 minutes, twice per week. They are streamed based on their phonetic knowledge and read books selected to match their reading ability. Students are taught to read and spell words by blending and segmenting of phonemes. They are also taught to read and spell high-frequency words and tricky words, which cannot be segmented phonetically.

Guided Reading is taught for 30 minutes, four times a week, in Key Stage 1. During these lessons, we use levelled books to develop reading skills. The teacher teaches a different focus group during each session, where children will learn new skills to progress in their Reading. Activities are then carried out to follow up with the text focus and promote the application of skills previously taught. Teachers conduct regular formal and informal assessments of students' reading abilities during this lesson. Further opportunities for students are available in English lessons to develop their love of Reading and their reading skills by evaluating book covers and making predictions and inferences on the plot and characters of key texts. Students are also exposed to a range of non-fiction texts.

School library visits are scheduled fortnightly to support and develop the habit of reading for pleasure. During this time children are having a 'story time' whereby they are able to discuss themes and key features of the story, as well as develop their own opinions of the text.

Key Stage 2

In Years 3 and 4 there are two Guided Reading lessons per week, with one 60-minute lesson in Years 5 and 6. These sessions are delivered through a structured small group approach that ensures every student receives targeted instruction while fostering independence and a love of Reading.

Students are organised into small, ability-based groups to enable focused, personalised teaching. During each session, one group works directly with the teacher on a shared text. This provides an opportunity to:

- Develop comprehension skills
- Model reading fluency, tone & expression
- Explore vocabulary in context, supporting language development for all
- Teach explicit reading strategies such as predicting, summarising, inferring and clarifying.

The teacher uses formative assessment to select texts that match the group's reading level and learning objectives, ensuring an appropriate level of challenge and progress.

While the teacher works with a small group, the remaining students engage in meaningful, reading-focused tasks that promote independence and reinforce skills. These activities include:

- Comprehension tasks
- Vocabulary development activities
- Silent sustained Reading
- Use of online reading platforms

Groups rotate each session so that every student has the opportunity to read with the teacher regularly. Assessment for learning is ongoing, with the teacher tracking progress and adapting instruction to meet emerging needs. This cycle ensures that all students have the opportunity to develop as confident, skilled and motivated readers.

Key Stage 3

In Key Stage 3, students build on Key Stage 2 reading skills with a focus on applying advanced reading strategies across subjects. They learn to derive meaning from complex texts, effectively search, select, and retrieve information, and critically evaluate texts. Reading spans fiction and non-fiction genres for diverse purposes. Teachers employ various methods to enhance reading comprehension and enjoyment. Interactive sessions like Socratic seminars and collaborative activities aligned with WSD 7Cs enrich reading lessons. English classes expose students to a wide array of genres including poetry, fiction, non-fiction, drama, media, and Shakespeare. Additionally, each Key Stage 3 class shares a dedicated 'Reading for Enjoyment' text, fostering a deeper engagement with literature through weekly lessons.

School library visits are scheduled weekly to support and develop the habit of reading for pleasure.

Key Stage 4

In Key Stage 4, reading lessons encourage critical and reflective engagement with texts, expanding students' ability to appreciate and evaluate beyond their immediate experiences. They employ strategies like skimming, scanning, and text-marking to research and assess texts across print, media, and digital formats.

Planned activities include DEAR time, Accelerated Reader, shared read-alouds (especially Shakespearean plays), and interactive narrative engagement through activities such as writing blurbs, blogs, and book reviews. Students actively participate in library events, poetry elocution, digital poet's corner creation, and reading campaigns.

Literature lessons refine analysis, interpretation, and literary critique skills by emphasising language choices and thematic techniques. Students practice reconstructing texts through response writing and genre transformation, while developing inference, deduction, and analytical skills through research projects and reports.

By the end of Key Stage 4, students are equipped to explore diverse knowledge sources, fostering a comprehensive perspective in language studies essential for Post-16 education.

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5. Reading Platforms

At WSD, we utilise various online platforms to enhance reading experiences across different age groups:

- **Pearson Bug Club:** Used extensively in Foundation Stage (FS) and Key Stage 1 (KS1), Pearson Bug Club offers a range of engaging eBooks and activities to support early reading development.
- **Accelerated Reader:** Introduced from Year 3 to Year 6, Accelerated Reader encourages independent Reading by providing personalised reading goals and quizzes to assess comprehension and promote critical thinking.
- **MyOn:** Implemented from Year 3 to Year 6. MyOn offers a digital library of thousands of enhanced digital books, carefully tailored to students' interests and reading levels, fostering a love for reading through access to diverse literary resources.
- **ReadingWise:** Used from Year 2 upwards. ReadingWise is a digital reading intervention programme designed to support reading skills, including decoding, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary. It provides personalised, adaptive lessons that respond to the student's needs, helping to close gaps and build confidence.

These platforms are integrated into our reading curriculum to foster a lifelong love of Reading and to support each student's individual reading journey.

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6. Home Reading

Reading at home is an integral component of our reading policy at WSD, designed to foster a lifelong love of reading beyond the school environment. We encourage all students to engage in regular independent Reading at home, supported by a diverse selection of books tailored to their interests and reading levels. This practice not only reinforces the skills and strategies learned in school but also enhances vocabulary acquisition, comprehension abilities, and fluency.

Parents and caregivers play a crucial role in this process by providing a supportive reading environment, discussing books with their children, and making time for reading together. Through initiatives like reading logs or digital platforms, we track and celebrate students' progress in reading at home, reinforcing the importance of independent reading habits that extend beyond the classroom.

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7. Assessment

At WSD, we employ a variety of assessment tools and methods to monitor and enhance students' reading skills throughout their academic journey:

Teacher Assessment during Lessons: Teachers regularly assess students' reading skills through observation, questioning, and guided reading sessions. This ongoing assessment informs instructional decisions and identifies areas for further development.

Formative Tracker against Objectives: A formative assessment tracker is used to monitor students' progress against specific reading objectives. This tracker helps teachers plan targeted interventions and provide timely feedback to students and parents/guardians.

Phonics Passport: Students in Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 use a Phonics Passport to track their phonics knowledge and progression through different phonetic sounds and blends. This tool helps identify areas where additional support may be needed.

End of Book Band Assessments: Students' progress through book bands is assessed using end-of-band assessments to ensure they are reading at an appropriate level. This assessment helps guide book choices and reading materials tailored to each student's ability.

Bug Club Quizzes: In Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, Pearson Bug Club quizzes are used to assess comprehension and understanding of the texts read. These quizzes also support students in developing critical thinking skills related to the texts they encounter.

Accelerated Reader Star Test: From Year 3 onwards, students take the Accelerated Reader Star Test to establish their initial reading level and subsequent progress. This computer-adaptive assessment provides personalised reading recommendations and monitors comprehension growth.

MyOn Assessments: MyOn offers embedded assessments within its digital library to gauge students' comprehension and engagement with the texts they read. These assessments help personalise the reading experience by recommending appropriate content based on individual reading levels and interests.

NGRT (New Group Reading Test): Used periodically, the NGRT provides a standardised assessment of students' reading skills, including comprehension, vocabulary, and reading age. Results from the NGRT inform broader curriculum planning and intervention strategies.

These assessment tools and methods are integral to our reading curriculum, ensuring that each student receives personalised support to achieve their full potential in reading and literacy skills. Teachers utilise the assessment data gathered by the tools outlined above to inform and enhance the reading journey of each student, understanding their progress, identifying strengths, and pinpointing areas needing additional support or enrichment. This data-driven approach allows teachers to make informed decisions that foster a lifelong love of Reading and support each student's development as a confident, proficient reader.

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8. Monitoring and Evaluation

The overall effectiveness of Reading will be monitored and reviewed by members of the Executive Leadership Team and the leaders in charge of Reading in the Primary and Secondary Phases on a termly basis, to ensure consistency across the school and to monitor the impact on student achievement. There will be an annual review of this policy by Directors, the literacy coordinators and members of the Executive Leadership Team.

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