



Reading Policy

POLICY FOR	Reading
PERSON RESPONSIBLE	Heads of Teaching, Learning and Assessment
REVIEW DATE	May 2026
REVIEWED BY	TLA Team
APPROVED DATE	June 2026
APPROVED BY	ELT
DATE OF NEXT REVIEW	June 2027
RELATED POLICIES	Teaching and Learning Policy, Home Work Policy, Literacy Policy

Executive Principal / CEO and Brand
Ambassador for GEMS Westminster Schools



1. RATIONALE

The Westminster School, Dubai is a multicultural learning environment, the population of which is made up of students and staff who represent a wide range of linguistic and cultural affiliations.

The language of instruction is English. The school recognizes that language is central to learning therefore we strive to assist students in improving their understanding and usage through suitable reading support programmes. We also encourage students to develop their own mother tongue and provide opportunities for this to happen by providing resources and appropriate support to the students.

UAE National Agenda and 2021 Vision

Reading is of high importance in the UAE National Agenda and 2021 Vision. H.E Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al-Maktoum, the UAE's vice-president and Dubai's ruler, stated: "Our goal is to make reading a daily habit that is deeply ingrained... It is the duty of relevant institutions to make this law a reality." We endeavor to abide by the law and ensure reading is a main priority to enable all pupils to have a lifelong love of reading.

The school will willingly participate in international PIRLS, TIMSS, PISA, and GL tests in order to support the National Agenda.

2. AIMS

The school is committed to developing confident, independent readers and fostering a lifelong love of reading. The aims of this policy are to:

- Equip students with the skills needed for academic success across all subjects.
- Promote a strong reading culture throughout classrooms, libraries, and the wider school community.
- Encourage students to read widely and enjoy texts from diverse genres, formats, and digital or print sources.
- Develop fluency, accuracy, comprehension, and higher-order reading skills such as inference, interpretation, and synthesis.
- Strengthen the links between reading and writing, and enable effective use of language across forms, genres, and contexts.
- Support understanding of how language varies according to purpose, audience, and context, and the ability to apply this knowledge.
- Help students select and apply appropriate reading strategies for different purposes—pleasure, information, or research.
- Build knowledge of linguistic patterns, textual structures, and features across genres.
- Raise awareness that reading and interpretation can be influenced by cultural, social, and personal perspectives.
- Monitor and assess reading progress, providing early intervention and support for students who need it.
- Inspire students to excel in international benchmark assessments, such as PIRLS, PISA, and GL.
- Engage all stakeholders in reading events and activities, fostering a collaborative and evolving reading community.
- Develop critical thinking skills, enabling students to analyse texts and draw evidence-based conclusions.

Read Like a GEM (RLAG):

Reading is the key to unlocking academic success and lifelong opportunities. Our ambition at TWS is for all students to become fluent, confident readers equipped with the skills to navigate increasingly complex texts and engage with the world around them. Proficient readers are better equipped to think critically, engage deeply with content and tackle challenges from multiple perspectives. That's why prioritizing reading skills, especially early on, is key to fostering lifelong learning and success. The Read Like a GEM playbook is part of the wider education strategy and will be used in conjunction with the Teach Like a GEM playbook. Through the recommended strategies, we hope to empower our students to acquire a wide vocabulary, master key reading skills and develop critical thinking abilities. By embedding reading across all subjects and encouraging a culture of reading for pleasure, the school fosters the development of communication skills and a passion for learning that will serve students throughout their lives.

PROCEDURES FOR THE TEACHING AND DEVELOPMENT OF READING:

- a. Teachers at the Westminster School, Dubai use a combination of the following strategies to ensure that our students take up reading.

Strategies	Implementation Across Year Groups
Early Reading	<p>To start reading in the Foundation Stage, students need to acquire a variety of skills. These early reading skills include the awareness of phonics, matching and rhyming. They also include the skills associated with language development such as listening, attention, alliteration and the discrimination of sound. At the end of the Foundation Stage every student is expected to achieve the expected level in the Early Learning Goal for Reading which is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Say a sound for each letter in the alphabet and at least 10 digraphs;• Read words consistent with their phonic knowledge by sound-blending;• Read aloud simple sentences and books that are consistent with their phonic knowledge, including some common exception words.
Floppy's Phonics ORT	<p>The Floppy's Phonics Program provides all the structure and resources needed to Books deliver effective synthetic phonics in the Foundation Stage. Once introduced, students start looking at phonics through circle time, games and within the areas of provision. They begin by learning all the sounds that make up our alphabet and combine these into recognizable words. Once students can blend, they also begin reading books individually and one-to-one to adults. All students continue to learn sounds, digraphs, trigraphs, friendly letters and read through the areas of provision. In FS 1 and 2, students are generally working on phonic phases 1 to 3. Students have opportunities to read Oxford Reading Tree's fiction and non-fiction books.</p> <p>Students engage with their favourite characters as they learn and read. The Phonic books related to sounds are a step-by-step guide to phonics using Biff, Chip and Kipper to keep students engaged.</p> <p>In Year 1, students are generally working on phonic phases 3 to 5 and in Year 2, on phonic phases 4 to 6</p> <p>Students continue with Floppy's phonics programme in KS1, use the software and workbook until they are secure at Phase 6.</p>

<p>Specific teaching of the visual features of print.</p>	<p>In the Foundation Stage, students have opportunities to: Listen and analyze theme related stories from IEYC (International Early Years Curriculum). Explicit demonstration on how to analyse new or unfamiliar words in text. Analyse letters, letter clusters and patterns and the sounds they make.</p>
<p>Daily/Weekly Reading</p>	<p>Providing frequent opportunities to read across all key learning areas. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guided reading lessons in FS classes, • Home Reading Program, Buddy and Group Reading, Silent Reading, DEAR programme and Read Aloud during lessons. • Online Reading programme, ORT books • Students of Years 5 to 13 reading in the library/ Learning Resource center
<p>Language Experience Reading</p>	<p>Language experience is a process that precedes the reading of formal texts and forms the basis for the program for pre-emergent readers. Within class, language experience is a strategy recommended to be used in conjunction with Guided Reading, Library, SOLE time (Self Organized Learning Environment) and language lessons. Language experience through English Literature from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3. English Literature is introduced as an alternate subject from Year 9.</p>
<p>Shared Reading</p>	<p>Across all Year groups Shared Reading involves the students participating in the reading of a text. They are seen as co-readers of the text with the teacher/peer. They observe what a teacher/peer ‘appears’ to do as they read and listen for the signals in the story, chant, rhyme, song, poem or other shared texts being presented. During SOLE - Self Organized Learning Environment students are given opportunities to choose a book from the class library and read. DEAR- Drop Everything and Read Programme during the Core Value Period encourages reading habits amongst students. Read Alouds - Provide students with a shared reading experience that enables them to notice language, infer meaning, and develop the skills needed for independent, purposeful reading.</p>
<p>Guided Reading</p>	<p>‘Guided Reading’ is an approach in FS for focused intervention to support different groups of learners. Strategies for the formative assessment are used and recorded to check the progress of the students.</p>

<p>Reciprocal Reading</p>	<p>Reciprocal reading is a strategy useful for students who are reading fluently and is used from Year 2. It involves research-based dialogue between group members to jointly construct meaning in text. Material is at an instructional level.</p> <p>Reciprocal reading uses four strategies which shift responsibility to the reader-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Predicting 2. Clarifying 3. Question generating 4. Summarising <p>The teacher models the strategies and then becomes a group member monitoring their use. During the group discussions students discuss the text only in small chunks.</p>
<p>Independent Reading</p>	<p>Across all Year groups, every child requires time to read suitable materials independently. In the Early years, as part of the Class model, this is built into the daily reading classes. Similarly, in Years 1-13 independent reading is a daily requirement for English and Arabic. In the Middle and Senior schools, students are required to read at home independently daily. Similarly, students in FS 2 have books selected for them from levelled boxes (Oxford Tree/Collins) in the classrooms. These ‘take-home’ readers are selected by the classroom teachers to be at a level manageable by the child, based on their reading level according to the ‘running records’. The aim of ‘take home’ reading is that of consolidation and confidence. In Years 1 to 6, a list of fiction and non-fiction books and eBooks are shared with parents, to encourage their child to read daily at home.</p> <p>The GEMS Readers Challenge encourages sustained independent reading by providing students across the school with a curated selection of challenging and diverse texts across genres and disciplines. Students are empowered to select and read books at their own pace, fostering reading resilience, broadening perspectives, and promoting discussion, with recognition awarded upon successful completion.</p>
<p>Class Library</p>	<p>Across all Year groups</p> <p>The Class Library collection has books donated by parents and teachers. The selected student volunteers will run the class library as Student Librarians and will maintain the book circulation details. They also can read books from the class library during SOLE and DEAR time. In the FS, students can make choices and read in the specified reading area in the classroom.</p> <p>The focus for the reading is to provide practice, develop reading for pleasure and to develop personal response to texts.</p>
<p>Learning Resource Centres</p>	<p>The school libraries are dedicated Learning Resource Centres for Years 5 and 6, Secondary Boys, and Secondary Girls. These centres serve as the hub of the school’s reading culture, providing access to a wide range of resources that support both reading for pleasure and academic development.</p> <p>Students across Years 5–9 engage in a variety of structured and independent reading activities designed to develop fluency, comprehension, and critical thinking. Targeted support is provided through Guided Reading sessions and intervention programmes such as Reading Wise and Flash Academy, ensuring that students receive appropriate support to strengthen core reading skills.</p>

	<p>Students across Years 10–13 have access to the Learning Resource Centres during free lessons, enabling them to read independently, conduct research, and further develop their academic and personal reading interests.</p> <p>In addition to promoting reading for pleasure, library lessons incorporate curated activities that deepen engagement with texts, encourage discussion, and foster a sustained love for reading, enabling students to grow as confident, independent readers.</p>
Inter-disciplinary reading	<p>Interdisciplinary reading is actively promoted to enable students to apply reading skills across subjects, supporting them in gathering information, analysing content, and drawing informed conclusions. Through GEMS Subject Readers, students engage with texts across disciplines.</p> <p>This approach deepens subject understanding, strengthens comprehension, and enhances academic writing and oracy. By engaging with subject-specific texts and narratives, students build meaningful connections, improve retention, and develop curiosity across the curriculum.</p>
Arabic Online Reading Programme- Kutubee	<p>The online platform is used effectively across all Year groups to raise reading standards in Arabic. The platform gives students opportunities to read online and thus improve their reading in Arabic.</p>
Transition	<p>To ensure progress of reading skills of the students as they enter the different Key Stages, several reading for pleasure projects like the Summer Reading Challenge are integrated into the current transition process. This further helps to arrest the summer slide.</p>
Special Reading events	<p>The school organizes various events to promote the love for reading. These include authors session, book fairs, celebrating author's birthdays, celebration of World Literacy Day and celebration of World Book Day. Students are also encouraged to participate in the Chevron Readers' Cup Reading Challenge and other Inter school competitions.</p> <p>In Years 1 to 6, activities such as 'Book Parade' for KS1 students, special morning assemblies, storytelling competitions, literacy week activities etc are organized within the school to promote reading for pleasure. The students are encouraged to actively participate in the National month of reading in the month of March through various initiatives.</p> <p>In Years 7 to 13, Literacy Week activities provide students with opportunities to engage in a range of reading-focused and creative activities. These experiences are designed to foster imagination, critical thinking, collaboration, and effective communication.</p> <p>Such initiatives encourage a sustained love for reading while enabling students to respond to texts in diverse and meaningful ways. Student effort and achievement are recognised, reinforcing motivation and engagement in literacy development.</p>

<p>Parent Engagement</p>	<p>In the FS Collins Readers (Big Cat Books) are sent home for independent reading or with parent support. Parents are encouraged to read with their students every day and to write in their reading record books.</p> <p><i>The GEMS Readers list of recommended books is shared with parents, along with clear guidance on the GEMS Readers Challenge. Parents are encouraged to support and nurture a culture of reading at home by providing access to these texts and motivating their children to read regularly.</i></p> <p><i>In the younger year groups, parents are further encouraged to read aloud with their children and guide them through structured reading sessions, helping to build fluency, comprehension, and a lifelong love for reading.</i></p>
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a. INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

<p>Support Reading Session</p>	<p>Reading Recovery is an intervention program. Students entering the programme are those students identified with reading, writing and comprehension challenges in Primary school. The program is delivered and monitored by a specifically trained Learning Support Teacher (LSA) from the Inclusion Department. It is designed as a one-to-one or in small group support programme for Student of Determination (SoftD) under level 2 and 3. SofD attends session during their Reading and Library period. The student’s competencies are the starting point, and the programme moves from these competencies towards what the student is trying to do. Each student has an intensive programme of instruction which supplements the regular class reading/writing instruction activities. This Reading program helps students acquire efficient patterns of literacy learning to enable them to work at the average reading level of their classmates and to continue to progress satisfactorily in their classroom instructional program.</p>
<p>Passport and Individual Educational Plan (IEPs)</p>	<p>IEPs/ALPs are formulated for students who are ‘at risk’ of not succeeding through the regular classroom program. These plans are formulated by multi-disciplinary team and monitored by the Head of Inclusion.</p>
<p>Reading support programme / Intervention sessions</p>	<p>Vocabulary development is a key predictor of academic success. To support students in closing vocabulary gaps, the school implements Reading Wise for Years 1–10. This structured literacy intervention accelerates reading age growth and provides repeated, targeted exposure to key words, enabling students to retain and apply vocabulary effectively across all subjects.</p> <p>Pull out sessions for Year 1 students by Teaching Assistants during the Phonic / Reading periods. Need based Phonic sessions are conducted for the students of Year 1 to bridge the gap/ challenge further based on the entry level phonic screening.</p> <p>Intervention sessions for students of Years 1 to 6, with Low Verbal score in CAT 4 and low stanine scores in NGRT assessments are conducted by the Reading intervention teachers during the Reading period.</p> <p>Students of Years 1-10, identified through the SWRT assessment as requiring additional language support, are enrolled in FlashAcademy, a digital language-learning platform designed to strengthen vocabulary, grammar, and reading skills.</p> <p>FlashAcademy is used as a targeted intervention tool to support multilingual learners in developing greater confidence and fluency through regular, structured practices.</p> <p>Teachers monitor student engagement and progress on FlashAcademy to ensure that intervention is effectively supporting reading development and aligned with classroom learning goals.</p> <p>FlashAcademy is embedded into weekly reading intervention lessons to provide students with additional opportunities to practise key reading and language skills.</p>

b. Assessment and Evaluation

At the Westminster School, we use a combination of the following assessment tools to measure and monitor student progress in Reading:

Target Tracker against the Early Learning Goals	- FS 2
Phonics screening check	- Year 1 & 2
Phonics Stage and Band Book tests.	- FS 2; Years 1 & 2
Single Word Reading Test (SWRT) to help teachers identify students who may need additional support with decoding and word recognition, and to guide targeted instructional strategies.	Selected students across Years 2-10
Kutubee Arabic Online Reading Programme	- All Year groups
Reading Comprehension Reinforcement	- Years 1 to 6
Phonics/ Reading sessions	- FS2 and Year 1 to Year 5
Support/Intervention Reading Sessions (SOD)	- All Year groups
Library Activity record	-Years 5 and above
Schonell's Reading & Spelling Test Identification tool	-Yr 1 – 9
Benchmark tests- Progress Test in English (PTE) and The New Group Reading Test (NGRT –Forms A, B and C).	- Years 2 to 9
Benchmark test - CAT 4 (Verbal and Non -verbal scores)	- Year 4, 6, 7,8, 10

c. Recording and monitoring of data

We use the following in order to record data about student progress in reading:

Tracking sheet	- FS 2
Students' achievement data from the Kutubee Arabic Online Reading Record sheets	- All Year groups
Reading Comprehension Mark book	- Year 1 to Year 6 English teachers
Guided Reading Record sheets	- FS 2 & Year 1 to Year 5
Individual Educational Plans (IEPs)	- 'At-risk' Students for all Year groups
Student Progress Reports	- All Year groups
Phoenix Progress Tracker	- All Year groups
Library Activity record	- Years 5 to 9
Differentiation in Action (DIA) document with CAT 4, PTE and NGRT scores	Years 2 to 6
Consolidated Markbook	- Years 7 to 13

Department meetings and Literacy planning sessions are used to monitor student needs and program planning.

THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER

At TWS, teachers are expected to actively foster students' reading development by creating a supportive, language-rich environment and providing targeted guidance.

1. Creating a Language-Rich Environment

- Establish classrooms with meaningful exposure to print and digital media.
- Frequent Read alouds in FS and lower primary classes, using varied literature to broaden experiences.
- Provide access to diverse reading materials across genres and formats.

2. Teaching Reading Skills and Strategies

- Model, discuss, and teach reading strategies to support decoding and comprehension.
- Guide students in monitoring the effectiveness of strategies and applying them independently.
- Encourage critical thinking, reflection, and risk-taking in interpreting texts.
- Facilitate daily independent reading and individual reading conferences.

3. Assessment and Intervention

- Use appropriate assessment tools to monitor reading progress.
- Maintain accurate records of students' reading development.
- Plan and implement targeted programs based on student needs.
- Provide timely interventions for students identified as 'at risk'.

4. Parental Engagement

- Communicate regularly with parents regarding reading progress and ways to support reading at home.

5. Professional Development and Resource Use

- Engage in professional development to strengthen knowledge of reading pedagogy and strategies.
- Utilise school resources, including Kutubee Arabic Online Reading Programmes, to enhance literacy, research skills, and reading habits.

ROLE OF THE STUDENTS

Students at The Westminster School are encouraged to actively participate in reading activities, develop independent reading habits, and engage critically with texts.

1. Engagement and Participation

- Participate in English and Reading/Library lessons.
- Read regularly at home and engage in classroom or library reading activities.
- Borrow books from the class and school libraries (Years 5–13).
- Be self-motivated to read for pleasure or purpose.

2. Developing Reading Skills and Strategies

- Practice and consolidate reading skills through the structured reading activities both in class and libraries.
- Select, monitor, and reflect on reading strategies appropriate for different purposes.
- Use reading to explore worlds beyond personal experience and to gather information.
- Identify the main idea, key information, and structure of different texts.
- Formulate and apply research skills using a range of texts.

3. Critical Thinking and Reflection

- Respond sensitively and perceptively to literature.
- Reflect on and evaluate texts, providing interpretations and multiple points of view.
- Recognise and describe the purpose, structure, and features of different genres.

- Identify personal preferences about authors and texts, justifying opinions.

4. Use of Resources

- Use available resources to build reading habits and research skills.
- Utilise Kutubee Arabic Online Reading Programmes effectively to improve Arabic reading.
- Consider books and eBooks as major sources of information.
- Enjoy reading and recognise that reading should be pleasurable.

ROLE OF PARENTS

Parents at The Westminster School are encouraged to actively support their children’s reading development and foster a love of reading at home.

1. Supporting Reading at Home

- Encourage children to read regularly and borrow books from local or online libraries.
- Read aloud to children in their first language, if preferred, to promote enjoyment and engagement.
- Celebrate and recognise children’s achievements in reading.

2. Collaboration with Teachers

- Provide teachers with insights into children’s reading behaviours, habits, and progress at home.
- Use available resources to support reading skills, research abilities, and the development of independent reading habits.

3. Supporting Arabic Reading

- Utilise Kutubee Arabic Online Reading Programmes effectively to support children in improving Arabic reading skills.

COMMITMENT TO REVIEW

This Policy will be monitored and reviewed annually by the Subject Leaders (languages), Librarians and SLT members at TWS and/or in the light of changes to the National Curriculum requirements and DSIB regulations.