The Gilberd School

Part of the Alpha Trust

TBA/lsc
September 2026

Dear Parents/Carers

Re: Reading Support and Developing Reading Habits in Year 7

We hope your child has started to settle in with us. Whilst this is an exciting time, we recognise that it is also a significant change and adjustment for both students and their families.

I last wrote to you to pass on information about our Optional Reading Challenge for students starting with us in September. We have been so pleased to hear about their reading choices and to see the personal responses they have made.

At The Gilberd School, we passionately believe in the power of reading to enrich lives, whilst recognising that it is not without its challenges or obstacles. Reading confidence and stamina are essential for success at school, but they also play a key role in long-term wellbeing and engagement beyond the classroom. Only this week, more research has been published by the University of Cambridge demonstrating the link between reading and better memory and concentration, as well as improved exam results.

We work hard to support all our students to maintain healthy reading habits, particularly those who find it the most challenging. Whilst we would like all students reading a wide range of texts with confidence and engagement, the most important thing is that they can read with understanding and fluency at a level that helps them access this new stage of their education.

In the coming weeks we will be assessing students' reading confidence, skills and preferences, as well as identifying where additional support may be needed. This is nothing to worry about and nothing that can be "revised" for.

So, what can parents and carers do?

The transition between Year 6 and 7 is one of the first points of "risk" for our young people to stop reading. The result of which can provoke a downward trend that can be universal in its impact.
As a parent myself, I felt that the move to secondary school was the point at which it was appropriate to stop listening to my now 'grown-up' child read and instead trust them to read independently. However, as an education professional, I now realise that this is precisely the time when keeping reading a regular and valued part of the day becomes more important than ever.

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- Encourage your child to read at least 4 – 5 times a week. Aim for at least 30 minutes but start smaller if required. Be present for this or ensure that it takes place in a space where you have visibility and can offer encouragement and support if needed.
- Ask your child to read aloud to you. This will help you see how confident they are. Ask questions about what they are reading to see how much they understand.
- Finally, read aloud together taking turns; this is useful as a shared activity when your child is less confident or more reluctant.

I will be in touch with more information in the coming weeks including more strategies to support reading at home.

In the meantime, all our Year 7 students have already, or are about to have their first Library lesson where they will be supported in borrowing a book. Our Librarian and AccessIt system are both brilliant ways to get ideas and help on what to choose!
Please ask them if they have done this and encourage them to show you what they chose.

Yours faithfully

Miss T Bates
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