

The Gilbert School

Part of the Alpha Trust



TBA/lsc
September 2026

Dear Parents/Carers

Re: Reading Support and Developing Reading Habits in Years 8 & 9

I hope you and your family have enjoyed a good summer and are refreshed ready for the new school year. I last wrote a few months ago regarding encouraging your child to keep up with their reading over the long break.

As you know, at The Gilbert 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 the University of Cambridge have published more data showing the connection between reading and memory and concentration as well as wellbeing and improved exam results.

Studies show us that:

- Just 6 minutes of reading can reduce stress by up to 68%.
- Students who read for 20 minutes most days are exposed to over 200 times more words than those who don't.
- Neuroscience studies show a link between reading and areas of the brain responsible for executive functions such as focus and attention control.

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?

Between school years 7 and 9 is a point where the reading habit can begin to decline significantly. 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 to keep reading a key part of the day.

- 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.

Headteacher: Mr J Mitchell

Brinkley Lane, Colchester, Essex CO4 9PU

Tel: 01206 842211 Email: admin@gilberd.com Website: www.gilberd.com

Alpha Trust

Registered in England and Wales Company No 07755713

Registered office: Norman Way, Colchester, Essex CO3 3US



The Gilbert School

Part of the Alpha Trust



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

In the meantime, September is always a good time to get into new habits, and to remember that these take time and determination to forge. Once they have, however, the small daily gains add up to a huge long-term benefit.

Yours faithfully

Miss T Bates
Assistant Headteacher, Teaching and Learning
The Gilbert School

Headteacher: Mr J Mitchell
Brinkley Lane, Colchester, Essex CO4 9PU
Tel: 01206 842211 Email: admin@gilberd.com Website: www.gilberd.com

Alpha Trust
Registered in England and Wales Company No 07755713 Registered office: Norman Way, Colchester, Essex CO3 3US

