



READING AT THAMESIDE

“Pupils who do not learn to speak, read and write fluently and confidently are effectively disenfranchised.”

DfE, National Curriculum

“There are many ways to enlarge [a] child’s world. Love of books is the best of all.”

Jacqueline Wilson, Children’s Laureate 2005-07

VISION

At Thameside, we recognise that **reading is the master skill**. Our vision is that every Thameside pupil will become a competent reader so they can achieve well academically, flourish personally and function effectively in the wider world.

INTENT

Thameside staff and pupils value reading highly. ‘Read’ is one of our four curriculum drivers because we recognise that reading for purpose and for pleasure is of fundamental importance, impacting every subject in our curriculum and each pupil’s own wellbeing. Our school culture looks for every opportunity to promote and celebrate reading.

In order to be competent readers, Thameside pupils must:

- decode accurately and with automaticity
- read fluently with prosody, showing understanding of meaning and punctuation
- monitor their own comprehension and self-select from a toolkit of strategies when the meaning is not immediately clear
- use key skills such as retrieval and inference to understand a writer’s message and methods
- read independently and for pleasure

Pupils who struggle with reading receive timely support which is matched to their difficulties. Staff work collaboratively with the SENCo where students have significant barriers to reading.

IMPLEMENTATION: Whole School Culture

Reading Culture and Enrichment

At Thameside, we share high-quality texts with the children at every possible opportunity during the day. Our reading-rich curriculum ensures that children encounter a broad range of fiction and non-fiction texts throughout their time at school and care has been taken to craft a bespoke spine for English which allows the pupils to make links and strengthen their knowledge, while also enjoying fantastic writing from a diverse collection of authors.

Thameside staff share their love of books with the pupils through small daily acts of reading, including hearing children read, recommending texts to individuals and reading aloud a story at the end of the day. Pupils are praised for both attainment and progress, and a 'reader of the week' is chosen from every class, receiving a book prize in the celebration assembly.



Every year, each class chooses a class author and the children enjoy texts by their chosen writer. There are opportunities to engage with writers and literary events, such as author visits, and we shadow the Oxfordshire Book Awards. World Book Day is a big event in our school calendar, with everyone dressing up as a word (to promote vocabulary) and pupils supported to spend their £1 in the local independent bookshop.



Notifications



All

Verified

Mentions



Tom Percival @TomPercivalsays · 15h ...

Replying to @_kate_daniell and @laurb00

That just BLOWS MY MIND! Please say 'hi' to everyone in Percival class!



To promote reading for pleasure, we regularly reflect on the texts on our class bookshelves and displays, ensuring that these are well-matched to the children's needs and interests. The T100 reading challenge, introduced in 2025, has further promoted independent reading of a wide range of authors.

In 2024, we received a generous gift of £500 to create a wellbeing library in the Hive. Staff and children can now easily find texts which support physical/mental health, as well as information and story books which deal with tricky issues such as complex family dynamics, growing up, bereavement, disability and racism.

Future projects include redesigning the library and appointing reading champions who will be helping practically, as well as giving ideas about how to further develop our shared reading areas.

We recognise the essential role that parents and carers have in encouraging children with their reading and aim to support them at the different stages of their child's development. Workshops for EYFS and KS1 parents are well attended. These practical sessions show how to read at home, as well as specific advice on preparing for the phonics screening check. There is a free book box in the reception area, which is very popular and is scaled up on World Book Day when we give out over 150 free books! There are also family events like the Christmas reading café, where parents and carers can enjoy a festive story, browse low-price Christmas books and meet staff from Abingdon library. Finally, families are encouraged to support the school by gifting a book from our bespoke wish list with a local independent bookseller: mostly-books.co.uk/product-category/thameside-primary-school/

Learning to Learn

For many years now, Thameside has started each long term with a 'Learning to Learn' focus. These six attributes of a successful pupil, including collaboration, managing distractions and imagination – are explored in a two-year cycle, supported by some wonderful books to introduce the characteristics. Popular texts have been 'The Most Magnificent Thing', 'Ruby's Worry' and 'Salt in His Shoes' (a biography of Michael Jordan). Other texts in the English spine demonstrate the L2L attributes too, enabling pupils to make links on a conceptual and textual level.

IMPLEMENTATION: Early Reading & Phonics

Promoting a love of reading from the beginning

Promoting a love of literature is the first step in creating lifelong readers. In Nursery, we provide a balance of child-led and adult-led experiences to meet the curriculum expectations for 'Communication and Language' and 'Literacy'. The 'Foundations for Phonics' activities from Little Wandle are used to develop phonological awareness and nursery/action rhymes are planned into each term. High-quality stories and poems develop focused listening and attention. The reading spine for Nursery includes a balance of fiction and non-fiction, with additional books on key topics being added to the book corners each term. There are also traditional tales and firm 'favourites' which are shared throughout the year to build the children's reading confidence through familiar texts.

Phonics

At Thameside, we chose the Little Wandle validated phonics scheme because we value the whole class teaching approach and high-quality decodable readers that accompany it.

In Nursery, the pupils begin their journey of identifying sounds and words in their environment (Phase 1 Phonics) through songs, games and music. Oral blending activities prepare them for the phonics work they will do in reception. From Reception, the children have daily Phonics lessons. They are taught to read and spell words using Phase 2 and 3 GPCs, as well as words with adjacent consonants (Phase 4) with fluency and accuracy. Children in Year 1 review Phase 3 and 4, then learn to read and spell words using Phase 5 GPCs.

In addition to the daily phonics lessons, the children have three reading practice sessions per week. These are taught by a trained adult in groups of 2-8 children, using the Collins 'Big Cats' series. Each session focuses on a specific skill, so as not to overload the children's working memory: decoding, prosody (reading fluently with expression) and comprehension (understanding the text).

Decodable Readers

Once the children are familiar with their decodable reading book through the reading practice sessions, they take them home to share with an adult. Books are changed once a week to promote confidence and fluency.

We use the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised parents' resources to engage our families and share information about phonics, how children learn to blend, the benefits of sharing books, and other aspects of our provision, both online and through workshops. Free resources, including videos of how to pronounce each sound, can be found here: [For parents | Letters and Sounds](#)

IMPLEMENTATION: Reading Independently and for Pleasure

EYFS and KS1 – independent reading choices

As well as decodable readers, we encourage the children to take home books to share with their families from the beginning of their time at Thameside. Books are available in Nursery for parents and carers to swap whenever they would like. In Reception, there is a wide selection of reading for pleasure books from which children can choose every Friday to take home.

There are book corners in each of the KS1 classrooms with a range of fiction and non-fiction books for the children to select. As with the younger year groups, additional books are displayed each term to link with the wider curriculum foci.

Independent Reading and Accelerated Reader

From Year 2 onwards, pupils who have completed the phonics programme move on to use Accelerated Reader. This has two key functions: ensuring that they are reading the optimum level of book to ensure continued reading progress and motivating independent reading through the quizzing function. Four times a year, an online adaptive reading test generates a book level for each child which is matched to coloured stickers on the classroom books. It's very hard to judge the difficulty of a book from the size and cover alone, so this system ensures that the text chosen is neither too easy nor too hard. Each time a pupil finishes a book, they can complete a quiz, providing immediate feedback on how well they've understood the text. The quizzing function can be accessed from home using our school-specific link: [Renaissance Learning Login](#)

The AR system has a number of helpful diagnostic features for staff, as well as a word count for pupils which is very motivating! There is friendly competition between the class as to which can read the most words, as well as the accolade of 'Word Millionaire' for any pupil who hits 1,000,000 words in one academic year. These children receive a shield badge to wear on their uniform.

Thameside 100 (T100) Reading Challenge

In 2025, we selected one hundred fantastic books, from a wide range of authors, which we would love all pupils at Thameside to have read by the time they leave Year 6. There are four challenges – bronze, silver, gold and platinum – with pupils earning each accolade by reading 20/25 books on each list. Families can borrow the Bronze and Silver books from the boxes in our reception area, making it really accessible for all. The older children attempting the Gold and Platinum challenges can borrow texts from the special bookshelf in the Hive.



We have already awarded many certificates and badges for completed challenges and look forward to many more!

IMPLEMENTATION: Whole Class Teaching

Reading Spine

Our reading spine has been carefully curated to include a range of ages of text, genres, text structures and diversity of characters and authors. Fiction texts are selected to be more challenging than the majority of pupils could access independently. The writing must be of high quality supported, where relevant, by similarly high-quality illustrations, and with opportunities for inference. They are also texts that our staff enjoy, as we know that our enthusiasm rubs off on the pupils! Non-fiction texts are included for every year group to teach the skills of reading for information. Many are taken from the UKLA longlist, representing the best and most up-to-date non-fiction texts for young people. Both fiction and non-fiction texts are used to make the process of reading explicit through modelling. Some terms group shorter texts, for example focusing on 'overcoming adversity'. Where appropriate, they link to other areas of the curriculum, reflecting our 'link' driver; we recognise the opportunity that this gives pupils to reinforce and extend their schema.

Whole Class Reading

All pupils from Nursery to Year 6, regardless of their individual ability, take part in whole class reading sessions using high-quality texts from the reading spine. These lessons provide time for enjoyment and rich discussions about books, both fiction and non-fiction. They give an opportunity to develop empathy and explore many elements of the human experience, allowing children to make connections between their own lives and that of others. They are not primarily practice sessions for the KS2 reading paper.

Reading is a complex act which combines many separate skills. At Thameside, we use 'DRICKY' to make core reading skills accessible and more easily understood by the pupils – an adaptation of the popular 'DERIC' acronym. The 'K' for Knowledge replaces the slightly more generic 'explain', as we know that expanding vocabulary, background knowledge and knowledge of text conventions are key priorities for our pupils. The additional 'Y' is in recognition of the fact that reading is about so much more than acquiring some skills to pass a test and be functionally literate: it's about personal engagement and enjoyment of books, so 'You' completes our approach to teaching reading:

D: Decoding (including fluency and comprehension monitoring)

R: Retrieval

I: Interpreting

C: Choice

K: Knowledge

Y: You



Although we use these symbols to breakdown the complex act of reading for the children, the skills are not taught in isolation¹. The skill of 'inference', for example, is always linked to retrieval, vocabulary and background knowledge.

¹ [The reading framework](#), p.116

To ensure that our children have a balanced timetable of reading activities, we have modelled our weekly timetable on the research of Christopher Such, teacher and author of 'Primary Reading Simplified'¹. Each week, the pupils will take part in:

- Fluency – rehearsing and performing a short section of text, following teacher modelling
- Extended Reads (reading breadth) – the teacher reading aloud to the class, with short verbal questions to check understanding. In older year groups, these lessons could also include the children independently reading some of the text.
- Close Reads (text discussions) – I do, we do, you do with some written responses based on a short section of text.

Depending on the cohort, there may also be some phonics and intervention lessons within reading sessions. Our weekly non-fiction sessions allow the children to come across a breadth of interesting information texts, both engaging them with the world and gently preparing them for the unseen element of the KS2 reading paper.

At present, the reading timetable in KS2 is:

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Year 3	Close Read	Fluency & Phonics	Reading for Pleasure & AR	Non-Fiction	Extended Read
Year 4	Close Read	Fluency & Phonics	Reading for Pleasure & AR	Non-Fiction	Extended Read
Year 5	Fluency	Extended Read	Close Read	Reading for Pleasure & AR	Non-Fiction
Year 6	Fluency	Reading for Pleasure & AR	Extended Read	Close Read	Non-Fiction

IMPACT

Phonics Assessment

Those delivering the daily phonics sessions use formative assessment to monitor which pupils have grasped the sounds and which need keep-up support. In particular, the weekly review lesson is used to assess gaps in GPCs, word reading and fluency. Summative assessment is used every three weeks for those on 'keep up' and at the end of each six-week unit to gauge progress. Results are added to the Little Wandle tracker and the resulting heatmaps inform planning for teaching and interventions. In line with the programme, after each assessment, any GPCs or words that are less than 70% are retaught to ensure that gaps are addressed before moving on.

KS1 Statutory Assessment

Children in Year 1 sit the Phonics Screening Check. Any child who does not pass the check re-sits it in Year 2.

KS2 Reading Assessment

We understand that the assessment of reading is a "gathering of multiple...glances" (Prof. Coe) involving a range of formative and summative methods, including hearing pupils read, group/class discussion and written evidence. As a consequence, we employ a range of different techniques to gain the widest

possible understanding of each child's reading ability: Star Tests, reading aloud 1:1, verbal/written responses in whole class reading lessons and a written paper on unseen extracts in Term 3. This holistic approach to assessing reading gives a much fuller picture of a child's achievement levels in reading than a single summative score and equips staff to know how best to support their progress.

KS2 Statutory Assessment

Year 6 pupils sit the KS2 statutory reading paper in May. Prior to this, mock papers are completed in October and January/February. These enable the children to become familiar with the demands of the test, as well as any access arrangements to which they are entitled. In addition, feedback is planned by the Year 6 staff – whether 1:1, group or whole class – to address areas of development from the mocks, enhancing their usefulness as an exercise which informs teaching, not just producing numerical data.

ⁱ [Reading – Primary Colour](#)