



ST. MARY'S *Catholic High School, Dubai*

READING LITERACY POLICY

2026-2027



Intent

Our school is committed to developing confident, fluent and critically engaged readers who read for meaning, enjoyment and purpose across languages and subjects. Reading underpins academic success, wellbeing and lifelong learning, and is central to achieving national and international educational expectations.

Implementation

Reading is taught through a structured, progressive curriculum aligned to the UK National Curriculum and international benchmarks (PIRLS, PISA). Teaching includes guided reading, phonics, fluency and comprehension strategies, cross-curricular reading opportunities, targeted interventions, and a strong reading-for-pleasure culture supported by the library and enrichment activities.

Impact

Students make sustained progress in reading attainment and confidence, apply reading skills independently across the curriculum, demonstrate proficient reading comprehension and critical thinking, and develop a lifelong love of reading in both English and Arabic.

MISSION:

To empower students to become independent, innovative and critically thinking readers, equipped with the skills to succeed in an ever-changing world and contribute positively to their communities.

VISION:

To cultivate a community of readers who:

- read with fluency, accuracy, understanding and enjoyment
- are confident applying reading skills across the curriculum
- engage with a wide, representative range of texts
- demonstrate enriched vocabulary, secure phonics and strong spelling
- think critically, reflectively and imaginatively about texts
- digitally, media and information literate
- achieve national and international expectations for reading attainment and progress



PHILOSOPHY:

Read, challenge, engage

'The more you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go.' (Dr.Seuss)

Reading provides a source of pleasure, enjoyment and enrichment as well as a means to participate in a range of activities in school, in public, multicultural and working life. Children bring with them to school a wide range of attitudes towards understanding of and experiences with reading. We recognise this diversity of experiences, skills and understanding and work with them, and their families to develop each individual as an able and enthusiastic reader.

Reading Curriculum and Progression

Reading is delivered through a structured, progressive curriculum aligned to the UK National Curriculum.

Progression is clearly sequenced from:

- Early phonics, decoding and grapheme–phoneme correspondence
- Fluency, vocabulary development and literal comprehension
- Higher-order reading skills: **inference, evaluation, synthesis and comparison**
- Independent reading, research, referencing and extended academic reading (Years 7–13)

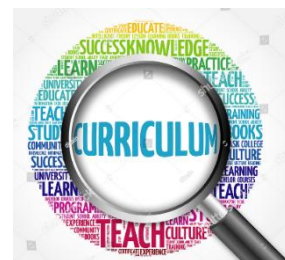
Teaching approaches include **guided reading (small groups)**, **whole-class reading**, explicit instruction in comprehension strategies, and regular opportunities for reading aloud and silent reading.

Reading Across the Curriculum

Reading literacy is embedded systematically across subjects, ensuring students apply reading skills in a wide range of academic and real-world contexts.

English

Students engage with a broad range of literary and non-literary texts, including fiction, non-fiction, poetry, media and digital texts. Teaching emphasises structured discussion, close reading, and text-based justification of ideas. Students produce extended written responses that demonstrate comprehension, inference, evaluation, and synthesis, progressively building towards independent critical analysis and research.



Arabic

Arabic reading literacy is developed through a coherent, structured programme aligned with English reading provision. This includes Guided Reading in Years 2–4, the Abjadiyat digital platform (Years 1–5) to strengthen phonics, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension, and the use of ALEF and MOE platforms alongside Oxford University Press levelled books. Students’ progress through reading levels is systematically monitored against clear benchmarks, and targeted support is provided where needed.

Mathematical literacy focuses on students' ability to interpret and respond accurately to written problems, including multi-step word problems. Students read and analyse tables, charts and graphs, develop precise mathematical vocabulary, and communicate reasoning using appropriate language, symbols and representations, strengthening comprehension alongside problem-solving skills.

Students regularly read age-appropriate scientific texts, journals, articles and research materials. Reading activities focus on locating evidence, interpreting data representations (graphs, diagrams, tables and models), developing academic scientific vocabulary, and critically evaluating information. Students apply reading skills to investigations, fieldwork and research tasks, communicating findings through structured written and oral outcomes.

Information literacy is explicitly taught through research-based learning, including Model United Nations (MUN), debate, public speaking and extended projects. Students learn to evaluate sources critically, distinguish between reliable and questionable information, reference sources accurately, and synthesise information from multiple texts to support informed argument and presentation.

Across all subjects, reading passages are purposefully included in both formative and summative assessments, ensuring that students' ability to comprehend, interpret and evaluate written information is consistently developed and assessed throughout the curriculum.



Targeted Support, Intervention and Inclusion

Students requiring additional reading support are identified through a combination of baseline assessments, ongoing formative assessment, teacher observation and standardised assessments, including the New Group Reading Test (NGRT).

Provision is carefully matched to identified need and includes:

- Differentiated classroom instruction, where teachers adapt texts, tasks and success criteria to scaffold access and provide appropriate challenge.
- Small-group and individual reading interventions, delivered within lessons or as targeted support, focusing on specific skill gaps such as decoding accuracy, fluency, vocabulary development, inference and comprehension strategies.
- SEND and EAL support, planned collaboratively with the Student Support Services Department, ensuring reasonable adjustments, Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and clearly defined reading targets.
- The Head Start Reading Programme, which establishes early reading baselines for incoming Year 1 students, new admissions (Years 2–4) and identified ESL learners, enabling timely and systematic intervention.

Students' progress is tracked systematically using guided reading records, intervention logs and assessment data. Interventions are reviewed regularly and refined where progress is not yet secure, ensuring sustained improvement over time.

Assessment, Monitoring and Benchmarking

Reading progress is monitored through a **robust and triangulated assessment framework**, which includes:

- **Observation**, guided reading records and structured professional dialogue with students to evaluate reading behaviours, fluency and comprehension.
- **Formative assessment**, including questioning, discussion and feedback, to inform immediate next steps in teaching and learning.
- **Summative assessment**, capturing attainment at key points to evaluate progress over time.
- **Standardised assessments**, including NGRT, GL Progress Tests and CAT4, to provide objective measures of reading attainment and progress.
- **External international benchmarks**, including Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) and Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), enabling comparison against international expectations.



Assessment evidence is used purposefully to inform lesson planning, design targeted interventions, review curriculum effectiveness, and set whole-school improvement priorities in reading.

Roles and Responsibilities for the Implementation of the Reading Policy

Senior Leadership Team (SLT)

- Provide strategic leadership and oversight for the implementation of the Reading Policy, ensuring alignment with KHDA expectations, national curriculum requirements, and international benchmarks.
- Ensure that reading attainment and progress, including outcomes from internal and international benchmark assessments, are prioritised within the School Improvement Plan.
- Allocate appropriate staffing, time, and resources to support targeted reading interventions, professional development, and reading initiatives.
- Monitor the impact of reading provision through regular review of assessment data, Subject Leader reports, and evaluation of intervention outcomes.
- Promote a whole-school culture of reading, wellbeing, and inclusion, ensuring reading development is embedded across all phases and subjects.

Subject Leaders (English / Literacy / Arabic)

- Lead the design, implementation, and review of the reading curriculum to ensure clear progression from early phonics and fluency to higher-order comprehension, inference, evaluation, and independent research.
- Track attainment and progress in reading across the school, analysing internal and external assessment data to identify trends, gaps, and priorities for improvement.
- Coordinate, monitor, and evaluate the quality of reading teaching and interventions, using lesson observations, learning walks, work scrutiny, and professional dialogue.
- Support teachers with assessment literacy, moderation, and data analysis to ensure consistency and accuracy in judgements.
- Provide targeted professional development to strengthen reading pedagogy, including differentiation, feedback, and intervention strategies.
- Report regularly to SLT on impact, strengths, and areas for further development in reading provision.

Teachers

- Plan and deliver high-quality reading instruction aligned with curriculum expectations and informed by assessment evidence.
- Identify students who are below or well below age-related expectations and implement targeted, differentiated classroom strategies and interventions.
- Use formative assessment and focused feedback to support students' application of reading strategies and to inform next steps in learning.
- Track and record students' progress using agreed systems, including the Learning Ladder, and adapt planning accordingly.
- Embed reading strategies across subjects, ensuring students apply literacy skills in a range of curricular contexts.
- Communicate clearly with parents regarding reading progress, targets, and strategies for support at home.

Students

- Engage actively in reading lessons, interventions, and enrichment activities, demonstrating increasing independence and responsibility for their reading development.
- Apply taught reading strategies (e.g. inference, summarising, evaluation) across subjects and in unfamiliar texts.
- Reflect on feedback and assessment outcomes to identify personal reading targets and areas for improvement.
- Participate positively in reading-for-pleasure initiatives, demonstrating growing motivation, stamina, and confidence as readers.

Parents

- Support the school's reading priorities by encouraging regular reading at home and fostering positive reading habits.
- Take part in relevant reading initiatives, such as Storytelling and Book Character Day, to name a few.
- Engage with feedback provided through assessments, reports, and the Learning Ladder to understand their child's strengths and next steps in reading.
- Communicate with teachers regarding reading progress or concerns and work collaboratively to support intervention targets.
- Encourage participation in school reading initiatives, library use, and enrichment activities that promote reading for pleasure and purpose.

Reading Culture and Enrichment

A strong and inclusive culture of reading is promoted through a wide range of **planned enrichment opportunities** that complement classroom instruction, including:

- **Well-resourced libraries and reading corners** across primary and secondary phases, providing access to age-appropriate fiction, non-fiction and digital texts.
- **Reading Corner and Library books** are reviewed to ensure they are age-appropriate and in compliance with KHDA guidelines and UAE cultural values.
- **Reading-for-pleasure initiatives**, such as Reading Bingo, Book Week celebrations, Book Swaps, **Story Telling, Book Conference** and themed reading displays.
- **Competitions, author visits, drama and debate activities**, including Emirates Literature Festival events, public speaking, MUN participation and creative performance opportunities that deepen engagement with texts.
- **Student voice initiatives**, including school newsletters, reading walls and displays that celebrate reading achievement and choice.
- **Book Fair, ELF Carvan and Library visits.**

These initiatives strengthen **motivation, engagement, reading stamina and enjoyment**, supporting sustained improvement in reading outcomes.

Impact, Review and Evaluation



As a result of the consistent implementation of this policy:

- Students demonstrate measurable improvement in reading attainment, confidence and independence.
- Reading strategies are applied effectively across subjects and in unfamiliar contexts, including non-English disciplines.
- Targeted interventions reduce gaps for students who are below or well below age-related expectations.
- Reading outcomes show increasing alignment with international reading literacy benchmarks, including PIRLS and PISA.

The Reading Policy is reviewed annually, using assessment data, monitoring evidence and stakeholder feedback to ensure continued relevance, effectiveness and impact.



Review Date :	September 2026
Next Review Date:	August 2027

APPENDIX 1

Type of reading	Provides opportunities to:
Year 1, 2 and 3 –Guided reading in small groups – a structured reading programme, Bug Club Reading Programme.	Develop knowledge/familiarity with a range of fiction and non-fiction books. Relate world of texts to own experiences. Develop co-operative skills. Develop key reading skills- use of phonic/ graphic/ at word level and sentence level/ vocabulary and language techniques. Consolidate and extend phonics, grapheme–phoneme correspondence, vocabulary and sentence-level understanding. Consider the characteristics and features of different kinds of texts. Develop skills in reading aloud. Develop the ability to talk about characters, events and language in texts. Evaluate the texts, read and refer to relevant passages to support opinions. Attempt texts which may be too difficult to read independently. -Explore the meanings of words using context clues.
Year 1to13 –Whole class reading	Develop knowledge of and familiarity with a range of fiction and non-fiction texts. Relate the world of texts to their own experiences. Develop cooperative skills. Develop key reading skills, including the use of phonic, graphic, and contextual cues; word and sentence structure; vocabulary; and language techniques. Consider the characteristics and features of different kinds of texts. Develop skills in reading aloud and reading silently. Explore the meanings of words using context clues. Develop the ability to talk about characters, events, and language in texts. Evaluate texts read and refer to relevant passages to support opinions. Synthesise and compare different texts. Discuss their own reading development in terms of skills, knowledge, understanding, and attitude. Talk in a meaningful and purposeful way and offer critical opinion on the text read.

APPENDIX 2

Focus of Assessment of Reading

To get a comprehensive picture of a child's reading abilities, we assess a range of skills, knowledge and attitudes to reading. Assessment of reading is aligned with the UK National Curriculum Programmes of Study for Reading in Key Stage 1, Key Stage 2, Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4, Key Stage 5.

The assessment of reading focuses on Range, Key Skills, Standard English and Language Study.

<i>Range</i>	<i>KeySkills</i>	<i>Standard English and Language Study</i>
- Listen to literature being read aloud and read themselves, from a wide range of genres. - Read information in printed texts and digital texts on screen. - Use a range of sources of information, including information texts, dictionaries, newspapers, magazines, business journals, science journals, blogs, podcasts, researches and reports. - Read or have read to them, texts written by key children's authors (past and present), stories from a range of cultures, classic poetry, myths and legends). - Read classic and contemporary novels; classic and contemporary poetry. - Read literary and non literary non-fiction texts.	- Read with fluency, accuracy, enjoyment and understanding. - Use a range of knowledge, understanding and skills when reading, e.g. phonic knowledge, graphic knowledge (letter patterns), word recognition (sight vocabulary), grammatical knowledge (use word order and structure of sentence to check meaning), contextual understanding (meaning derived from the text as a whole). - Talk about character, plot, language used in the text. - Predict about events, characters, and outcomes using clues from the text, illustrations, and prior knowledge. - Re-tell stories in sequence, summarizing key events accurately while demonstrating clear understanding of plot, characters, and main ideas. - Skim and scan texts to retrieve relevant information. - Use inference and deduction-interpretation and integration of complexide as/ information within and across texts. - Evaluate what they have read. - Use the text to support their opinions. - Use reference materials and their organizational devices. - Use research skills to retrieve, tabulate, interpret and evaluate information. - Compare and contrast poetry and prose texts.	- Discuss the characteristics, language and text features of different kinds of texts - Use varied and relevant vocabulary in order to aid discussion, e.g. author, setting, etc. - Use knowledge gained from reading to develop their understanding of the structure, vocabulary and grammar of Standard English. - Understand how language varies according to context purpose and audience. - Know when it is appropriate to use informal and formal talk and begin to use Standard English in formal situations. - Recognise similarities and differences between written and spoken forms of standard English.

APPENDIX 3

Reading-related Initiatives

1. Primary and Secondary students enrolled in the Chevron Reader's Cup as part of the Emirates Literature Festival for both Arabic and English.
2. Encouraged students' active participate on in various competitions as part of the Emirates Literature Festival, like Reader's Cup, TedEx Talks, ENBD Poetry for All (including 2 students from the SEN Department), Short Story Writing and Letter Writing in both Arabic and English.
3. Reading Corners in Year 1 to Year 4 classes.
4. Reading Corners in Year 10 and 11 classes (Arabic Books included for 10E, 10F, 11E, 11F).
5. Reading Corner for Primary Islamic students.
6. Relevant reading initiatives such as Tre(e)adding (Years 1-3), Book in a Box (Years 1-6), drama and debate projects, one-minute acts, five-minute acts, plot-twist performances and stand-up comedy that animate texts and strengthen oracy (Years 7-11).
7. Reading Days (Year 1) that feature book swaps, dress-up as a book character etc.
8. Drama Performance in Talent Show.
9. Debate and Public Speaking for Secondary in MUN.
10. Poetry Project Presentation and Formal Discussion for Years 7 to 10.
11. Extensive research work on various authors and literary theories for Years 12 and 13.
12. Library memberships for Years 9-13.
13. Book Week Celebration
 - a) Book Swap
 - b) Dressup as your Favourite Book Character Event
 - c) Literary Quiz
 - d) Guess that Book One-Minute Act
14. Book Art Competitions
 - a) Book-Colourful
 - b) Book-tastic-My Favourite Book
 - c) Pageto Palette: The Art of Wellbeing
15. Author Visits
 - a) **Onjali Q Rauf** visited the school and addressed the students from years 4-7; spoke about the refugee crisis and her new book, Hope on the Horizon.
 - b) Sandra Piesik, Architect and Author visited the school and spoke to students from Years 10-12 about sustainable housing and about her book "Habitat" which explores the same theme. She also conducted a workshop for a group of 40 students.
 - c) Oceanographer and physicist Helen Czerski spoke passionately about conservation to the

students. She emphasized the significance of preserving marine ecosystems and described how daily human activities are intimately linked to the oceans.

16. Primary and Secondary students involvement in the publication of the school's Newsletter
 - a) Primary and Secondary students are invited to send in their original work for the first edition of the school Newsletter in Arabic and English. Artworks are also welcomed.
 - b) A panel of senior secondary students is responsible for writing formal articles on a range of school events and activities involving the school community and its students.
17. Various library-related tasks in Library lessons for Years 4 to 9.
18. The Senior Library has a dedicated wall space where students can recommend new reads to their peers, share quotes that inspired them in a book they read, along with a word of the week section.
19. Senior Library also has a space where books specifically curated for a selected theme are displayed to keep students interested in new releases and new genres. The themes for this term are wellbeing, inclusivity and overcoming fears.
20. Additional enrichment such as DC Book Fair.
21. Reading Bingo for Years 1-10.
22. Various participations in Emirates Literature Foundation Competitions.
23. Morning Book Chats for Years 1-4.
24. Story Telling for Year 1 and Year 2.
25. Book conference for other cohorts.

Suggested Initiatives:

1. Book Club
2. Interclass Competition in Reading Arabic storybooks
3. Reading buddy in all cohorts

APPENDIX 4

ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL, READING RUBRIC FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL (Extracted from PIRLS)

Advanced Level (Above 83%/A*)

When reading relatively complex literary texts, students can:

Interpret story events and character actions to provide reasons, motivations, feelings, and character traits with full text-based support.

Begin to evaluate the effect on the reader of the author's language and style choices.

When reading information texts, students can:

Distinguish and interpret complex information from different parts of the text and provide full text-based support.

Integrate information across a text to explain relationships and sequence activities.

Begin to evaluate visual and textual elements to consider the author's point of view.

High Level (From 59% - 83%/B-A)

When reading relatively complex literary texts, students can:

Locate and distinguish significant actions and details embedded across the text.

Make inferences to explain relationships between intentions, actions, events, and feelings, and give text-based support.

Interpret and integrate story events and character actions and traits from different parts of the text.

Evaluate the significance of events and actions across the entire story.

Recognize the use of some language features (e.g., metaphor, tone, imagery).

When reading relatively complex information texts, students can:

Locate and distinguish relevant information within a dense text or a complex table.

Make inferences about logical connections to provide explanations and reasons.

Integrate textual and visual information to interpret the relationship between ideas.

Evaluate and make generalizations about content and textual elements.

Intermediate Level (From 29% to 58%/C-E)

When reading a mix of simpler and relatively complex literary texts, students can:

Independently locate, recognize, and reproduce explicitly stated actions, events, and feelings.

Make straightforward inferences about the attributes, feelings, and motivations of main characters.

Interpret obvious reasons and causes and give simple explanations.

Begin to recognize language features and style.

When reading relatively complex information texts, students can:

Locate and reproduce two or three pieces of information from within the text.

Make straightforward inferences to provide factual explanations.

Begin to interpret and integrate information to order events.

Low Level (below29%/U-F)

When reading relatively complex literary texts, students can:

Locate and retrieve explicitly stated information, actions, or ideas.

Make straightforward inferences about events and reasons for actions.

Begin to interpret story events and central ideas.

When reading relatively complex information texts, students can:

Locate and reproduce explicitly stated information from text and other formats (e.g., charts, diagrams).

Begin to make straightforward inferences about explanations, actions, and descriptions.



APPENDIX 5

ST. MARYS' CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL DUBAI, READING LEVEL DESCRIPTOR FOR SECONDARY READING. (Extracted from PISA Report)

Level 6 - (Above 84%/A*)

At **Level 6**, tasks typically require the reader to make multiple inferences, comparisons, and contrasts that are both detailed and precise. They require demonstration of a full and detailed understanding of one or more texts and may involve integrating information from more than one text. Tasks may require the reader to deal with unfamiliar ideas in the presence of prominent competing information, and to generate abstract categories for interpretation.

Reflect and evaluate tasks may require the reader to hypothesize about or critically evaluate a complex text on an unfamiliar topic, considering multiple criteria or perspectives, and applying sophisticated understandings from beyond the text.

Level 5-(59% - 83%/B-A)

At **Level 5**, tasks that involve retrieving information require the reader to locate and organize several pieces of deeply embedded information, inferring which information in the text is relevant.

Reflective tasks require critical evaluation or hypothesis, drawing on specialized knowledge. Both interpretative and reflective tasks require a full and detailed understanding of a text whose content or form is unfamiliar.

For all aspects of reading, tasks at this level typically involve dealing with concepts that are contrary to expectations.

Level 4- (48%-58%/C)

At level 4, tasks that involve retrieving information require the reader to locate and organize several pieces of embedded information. Some tasks at this level require interpreting the meaning of nuances of language in a section of text by considering the text.

Other interpretative tasks require understanding and applying categories in an unfamiliar context. Reflective tasks at this level require readers to use formal or public knowledge to hypothesize about or critically evaluate a text.

Level 3-(29%-47%/E-D)

At **Level 3**, tasks require the reader to locate, and in some cases recognize the relationship between, several pieces of information that must meet multiple conditions.

Interpretative tasks at this level require the reader to integrate several parts of a text to identify a main idea, understand a relationship, or construe the meaning of a word or phrase. They need to consider many features when comparing, contrasting, or categorizing.

Level 2-(20%-28%/F)

At **Level 2**, some tasks require the reader to locate one or more pieces of information, which may need to be inferred and may need to meet several conditions.

Other tasks require recognizing the main idea in a text, understanding relationships, or construing meaning within a limited part of the text when the information is not prominent, and the reader must make low-level inferences.

Tasks at this level may involve comparisons or contrasts based on a single feature in the text.

Level 1-(10%-19%/G)

At **Level 1**, tasks require the reader to locate one or more independent pieces of explicitly stated information; to recognize the main theme or author's purpose in a text about a familiar topic; or to make a simple connection between information in the text and common, everyday knowledge.

Typically, the required information in the text is prominent and there is little, if any, competing information.

Below Level 1-(less than10%/U)

Students **below Level 1** tasks require the reader to locate a single piece of explicitly stated information in a prominent position in a short, syntactically simple text with a familiar context and text type.

