

The Golden Thread Alliance

Reading Strategy



As united as we are different.

 The
Golden Thread
Alliance

Our Trust

The Golden Thread Alliance is a Multi-Academy Trust with nine incredible primary schools under its wing: Culverstone Green Primary School, Fleetdown Primary Academy, Meopham Community Academy, Oakfield Primary Academy, Temple Hill Primary Academy, Riverview Infant School, Riverview Junior School, West Hill Primary Academy and Wrotham Road School.



Our Aims

The Golden Thread Alliance's vision is 'to ensure that every child, in every school will confidently grasp the challenges of tomorrow.'

A fundamental part of this vision is reading. It enables our children to access other areas of the curriculum and to make sense of the world around them. Through our 'Reading by 5' initiative and our focus on teaching phonics, we can ensure that schools are providing children with the skills necessary to become competent readers. Our 'Golden 100' initiative recognises and promotes the importance of reading for pleasure.

To establish high quality phonics provision within our settings that reflect the school's chosen phonics scheme, ensuring pupils are provided with the necessary support to 'keep up, not catch up.'

To support our youngest learners to develop early reading skills in order to be able to 'read by 5', setting them up for future success.

To foster a love of reading in all of our pupils, building their confidence in reading and providing access to a diverse range of texts to suit all ages.

Trust Values

The Reading Strategy is an ideal opportunity to embed our Trust values.



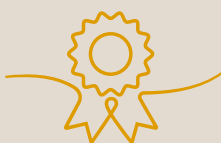
Respect



Equality



Courage



Integrity



Ambition



Kindness



Responsibility

Our Pledges



The Golden Thread Alliance recognises the importance of reading for all of our children and we want them to achieve the best possible outcomes within the reading curriculum throughout their school life.

We understand that reading opens up opportunities and possibilities, enabling learners to 'grasp the challenges of tomorrow'. However, we must ensure that these opportunities are actually for ALL. Our Trust has set out promises to key protected groups, which we refer to as our Pledges.

Across the Golden Thread Alliance schools, we ensure that all of these groups are reflected in the texts that we share with our children as well as considering ways to engage these groups in reading.



Our Pledge for Black Pupils & Families

The Golden Thread Alliance will:

- Celebrate differences in our background and culture.
- Ensure Black families are listened to in all aspects of school life.
- Represent a wide range of ethnicities in our staff and through focused recruitment.
- Acknowledge the contribution of the Black community in the UK and internationally across all areas of learning.
- Fairly include our Black pupils in all aspects of our curriculum including school councils and extracurricular activities.
- Champion EQUALITY and challenge all discrimination towards our Black community without apology.
- Keep Black children safe.

Our Pledge for Children Living in Different Families

The Golden Thread Alliance will:

- Welcome children from all sorts of families.
- Recognise and celebrate all different family types.
- Equally welcome LGBT+ family groups as well as every other family.
- Commit to tackling homophobia in all its forms within our schools.
- Celebrate families and all they contribute to our community.



Our Pledge for Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

The Golden Thread Alliance will:

- Work in partnership with parents and carers to improve opportunities for children with SEND in all aspects of school life.
- Enhance and adapt the curriculum to make it fully accessible to all children.
- Celebrate small steps of achievement and recognise skills and strengths outside of what we might expect.
- Equip all children with the knowledge and understanding to support and include children with SEND.



Our Pledge for Children and Families Who are “Pupil Premium” or Eligible for Free School Meals

The Golden Thread Alliance will:

- Respect confidentiality by not sharing a child’s FSM status.
- Use the “pupil premium” designation as a reason to widen a child’s opportunities – not narrow them.
- Educate all staff about the reasons a child may receive free school meals.
- Prioritise intervention and catch up for those pupils receiving free school meals, who really need it.
- Offer greater challenge to the most able.
- Educate all pupils about the value of a well-balanced, nutritious school lunch.
- Work tirelessly to narrow the gaps in attainment between all groups of children.



Our Pledge for Looked After and Previously Looked After Children

The Golden Thread Alliance will:

- Be open and inviting to children from all sorts of families.
- Respond to the specific needs of children who have experienced trauma.
- Work with you and others who support your family.
- Respect family history.
- Celebrate families in all their forms.

The Research

Research carried out by 'The Book Trust' identifies four key benefits for reading:

- **Children who read are more likely to overcome disadvantage caused by inequality.**

Reading for pleasure has been shown to increase social and educational mobility. Children who grow up in poverty who are read to at the age of 5 are more likely to achieve economic success in their 30s than a child who is not read to. Shared reading at home can have a positive impact on children's academic ability.

Disadvantaged children who achieve highly at the end of primary school are twice as likely to have been read to at home in their early years compared to their peers. Reading for pleasure can impact progress in child's vocabulary, mathematics and spelling later in their educational career. Disadvantaged children aged 11-14 who read in their own time are more likely to achieve three or more A-levels than those not engaging in these activities.

- **Children who read are more likely to be happier, healthier and experience better mental well-being and self-esteem.**

Shared reading in a child's early years supports the development of attachments between child and parent/ carer. Children aged 3-5 who are read to at bedtime tend to sleep longer. Reading can act as a protective factor for those children facing adversity.

- **Children who read are more likely to do better at school and make more progress across the curriculum.**

Stimulation from reading in the early years helps to develop cognitive, emotional, social and physical growth. Children who read have better knowledge about the world and are more ready for learning. Reading helps develop a child's language skills and vocabulary. Children who are read to frequently at the age of 5 are over half a school year ahead in reading performance at the age of 15 compared to those who were not read to frequently or at all. A child who is read to also scores higher in reading, spelling, grammar and numeracy skills at age 8-11. One in four children hasn't reached the expected level of reading by the age of 11 and many of these children will struggle to keep up at secondary school.

- **Children who read are more likely to develop empathy and creativity.**

Children who are read to at age three make greater progress in creative development at the end of Reception than those who are not. Children who read books that offer opportunities to empathise with the characters have increased levels of empathy, especially towards stigmatised groups.

These benefits clearly show why learning to read and experiencing books and stories at a young age is crucial.

Strategy Principles

Whilst each school has autonomy to develop reading in their own way, there are some key strategy principles that are expected to be reflected within each setting.

1. High quality phonics provision reflects the school's chosen phonics scheme. The scheme must be from the DFE's validated phonics list.
2. Staff are trained in the chosen phonics programme.
3. We have a 'Keep up, not catch up' approach to interventions and support.
4. There is a clear plan in place to ensure that children in Reception are able to 'read by 5'.
5. A love of reading is fostered in all settings, through events, resources and text-rich environments.
6. Children have access to good quality texts that include diverse characters, representing our Trust pledge groups.
7. We actively promote and encourage reading of the Golden 100.
8. We promote parental involvement throughout a child's reading journey in school.

1. High quality phonics provision reflects the school's chosen phonics scheme.

Our aim is to ensure that children are equipped with the necessary skills to be able to read independently. This is primarily achieved through the teaching of phonics. Whilst schools are able to select the phonics scheme they use, there is an expectation that this is taught robustly and ensures the following (as set out in the Ofsted framework statements for early reading:

- The chosen phonics scheme is selected from the DFE's validated schemes list. (Where a school does not already have this in place or if improvements need to be made, schools will be expected to adopt Read Write Inc.)
- The chosen phonics scheme must be taught with fidelity.
- Decodable books must match the phonics scheme chosen by the school.
- Phonics leads in each school, with the support of SLT, have release time to monitor provision, coach staff, organise and carry out training and assess children in order to continue to raise standards.

As a Trust, the School Improvement Team will provide continued support for phonics through monitoring alongside the phonics lead, coaching and supporting phonics leads to develop their role and subject, particularly in schools with new phonics leads and/ or schools where phonics outcomes are not meeting national expectations or the expectations of the school's adopted phonics scheme.

As part of our 'Reading by 5' initiative, a budget is identified for decodable books in order to replenish and improve resources in our Reception classes.

2. Staff are trained in the chosen phonics programme.

The Trust expects all staff to have received training in their chosen phonics programme. This could be:

- Through online platforms and videos
- In person training from a trained provider of the chosen scheme.
- Ongoing training sessions from the phonics lead – as a means to refresh NOT to replace the official training.

For new members of staff joining the school, training should form part of their induction as soon after their starting date as possible. This may take the form of coaching from the phonics lead until such time that they are able to access official training.

Whilst some members of staff will not be directly teaching phonics regularly, it is important that they have some training on the fundamentals of phonics and the school's chosen scheme, to enable them to understand the journey their children have taken and to have consistent strategies to use with any children who may need it.

3. We have a 'Keep up not catch up' approach to interventions and support.

At the Golden Thread Alliance, we adopt the 'Keep Up, not Catch Up' philosophy, as set out in the DFE 'Validation to a phonics scheme' document. This means that children who are at risk of falling behind need extra practice to consolidate and master the content of the programme. It is essential that this follows guidance from the school's phonics scheme and is extra to phonics lessons, not instead of.

There is an expectation that senior leaders prioritise reading and these necessary interventions to ensure that all children are able to make progress. We recognise that some children, including those with SEND, will make smaller steps of progress than their peers and therefore will not be able to keep up. However, it is expected that progress, however small, is made.

Phonics should be discussed throughout the year, for example at pupil progress meetings, with particular consideration towards those children who are not meeting the scheme's expectations.

Staff must be trained in carrying out phonics interventions, in line with the selected phonics programme. The Trust will support phonics leads in ensuring that this is in place.

4. There is a clear plan in place to ensure that children in Reception are able to 'read by 5'.

The Golden Thread's 'Reading by 5' initiative sets out the ambitious aim to ensure that all children leave their reception year, being able to read.

This means:

- Say a sound for each letter of the alphabet and at least 10 digraphs.
- Read graphemes from the expected phonics level of the programme (e.g. phase 3 for Little Wandle, Set 1 and 2 sounds for Read Write Inc)
- Blend sounds learnt to read words.
- Read simple sentences and books consistent with their phonic knowledge including some common exception words

Schools should identify how they intend to reach this target, through their School Development Plans, EYFS action plans and phonics action plans. The Golden Thread Alliance will continue to provide support and act as a critical friend to review progress towards this target.

5. A love of reading is fostered in all settings, through events, resources and text-rich environments.

Although teaching the skills of decoding are fundamental in a child's reading journey, it is also important that they develop their own reading for pleasure. Whilst no child can be forced to read for pleasure, schools can inspire pupils and engage them in reading widely, developing a reading culture within their settings.

As set out in the DFE's 'Reading Framework 2023', core strategies to encourage sustained, voluntary reading include:

- adults reading aloud regularly, including in class or form time
- informal book talk, including recommendations from peers and adults
- encouraging library use, including the local public library
- providing time to read
- sociable reading environments, reading together and sharing books.

The Golden Thread Alliance will continue to support schools in promoting and developing reading for pleasure, for example through an injection of books linked to a specific topic in EYFS, storytelling events as part of our 'Reading by 5' initiative and generating ideas and resources for World Book Day and other whole school events.

6. Children have access to good quality texts that include diverse characters, representing our Trust pledge groups.

As mentioned in the CLPE Reflecting Reality Research report "All children deserve to encounter books that provide affirmation by reflecting their realities and broadening their outlook by experiencing realities beyond their own."

The books provided by schools should reflect our settings as well as give children access to characters that are different from them, expanding their knowledge and understanding of the world around them.

The Golden Thread Alliance expects schools to, where possible, include books that represent our Trust pledge groups. Schools should review the books they have and reflect and act upon any noticeable gaps in the titles they can provide.

7. We actively promote and encourage reading of the Golden 100.

All schools in the Golden Thread Alliance, participate in 'The Golden 100'. This is a list of 100 books that staff across the Trust think all children should read, listen to or share with others before they leave Year 6.

The texts cover a variety of themes, genres and characters, ensuring that children have a diverse reading experience.

The Trust will support schools with promotional and organisational materials as well as a set of each title when this is initially set up in a school.

Schools are then expected to promote and encourage participation in reading the 100 titles (25 in each phase).

8. We promote parental involvement throughout a child's reading journey in school.

The Golden Thread Alliance and its individual schools recognise the importance of fostering links between home and school and that parents should be involved as much as possible in their child's reading development. Schools are expected to create opportunities to build these links, through informative based events and resources as well as social occasions involving reading with their child.

In Reception, it is expected that all schools hold a parent workshop to introduce attendees to the school's chosen phonics scheme, how it works, what lessons look like in school and how parents and carers can support their children's reading journey at home. This will also be an opportunity to introduce families to the Reading by 5 initiative. Follow up workshops throughout Key Stage 1 should also be planned for, focusing on expectations in Year 1 and the Phonics Screening Check. Where appropriate in Key Stage 2, there may also be reading workshops for parents, for example on ways to support reading fluency and questioning to develop comprehension.

A Reading by 5 newsletter is produced by the Trust for all new parents and carers in Reception, to explain more about the initiative and how the Trust and school, alongside home can support their child in reaching these reading milestones.

Throughout the year, parents will be informed of how they can support their child at home, for example through video links for children to watch at home to further practise their phonics skills. This must link to the school's chosen phonics scheme and match the child's current phonic ability.

It is expected that parents/ carers are informed if their child is receiving extra intervention with reading at the earliest possible time to ensure that they are given every opportunity to support their child with specific activities at home, given guidance by the class teacher.



West Hill Primary Academy
Dartford Road
Dartford, Kent
DA1 3DZ



01322 296140



www.golden-thread.org