

Our mission

First children must learn to read – only then can they read to learn.

At Merridale our aim is to teach all children to read fluently and to develop a passion for reading. Reading is the single most important thing a child will learn to do. Reading develops a child's brain, provides a window into the world around them and helps them to do better in all school subjects.

The school's partnership with parents is vital to ensure that our children are able to become happy and successful readers. We expect parents to hear their children read (and read to) their children for at least twenty minutes per day (our "Reading Challenge"). We send home reading books and reading records to all children and, where appropriate, word packs according to their child's reading ability. As well as reading scheme books, all children are able to borrow engaging books from our school library and take these books home to share with an adult (each class has a timetabled library session each week so that pupils can choose books to enjoy at home). Children intuitively understand that when parents and carers make reading a priority at home, reading is important. One of the most powerful things parents and carers can do is to spend some time every day reading with and to their children – including reading a bedtime story. We also encourage families to regularly visit their local library to enjoy the wide range of books on offer there.

At Merridale Primary School, we teach children to read using synthetic phonics. To do this we follow an inclusive, daily, rigorous literacy programme called Read Write Inc. This is taught with the help of "Fred the Frog" and the programme initially teaches children to learn to read the 44 common sounds in the English language. From this solid foundation of phonetic knowledge, children learn to sound-blend words to read. Children from the Foundation Stage to Year 6 are grouped according to their reading ability which means that teachers can focus on exactly what the children need, challenging and supporting where necessary and ensuring that they become successful and confident readers. When children are fluent readers they are provided with further challenges in the form of English lessons.

During English lessons, pupils are encouraged to become confident, enthusiastic, critical and independent readers. They are given opportunities to experience print produced in a variety of forms and for a variety of purposes and to read for information, interest and enjoyment. Teachers choose high-quality texts linked to topics and the interests of the children. Staff ensure that they are seen as "reading role models" – modelling good reading habits and sharing their reading experiences with pupils regularly. We encourage our parents, carers and families to do the same at home.

All classes have daily story time sessions where they can enjoy a book with a member of staff. Daily story time ensures that all children experience reading as an enjoyable, enriching experience where they can ask questions and talk about what they have understood from their reading. It helps children to develop concentration and attention-span whilst also developing their language and vocabulary. Each week each class also take part in "ERiC" reading sessions (Everyone Reading in Class). This is an opportunity for sustained, silent reading which all adults in school also take part in. Children see adults reading and enjoying books which strengthens their position as reading role models. The school has made a commitment to promoting books and reading through a wide variety of approaches including holding a "Travelling Books" Book Fair twice per year, giving books as prizes during awards assembly each week and as Christmas gifts, holding regular "Book Swap" events where pupils can exchange their books with their peers and giving free books for Pupil Premium children (through vouchers for our book fair),

The school also employs a "Reading Champion" whose role is to promote reading skills and enjoyment across the school by working closely with staff, pupils and families. Through targeted interventions and working closely with children, our Reading Champion is able to overcome barriers to reading and embed our philosophy of reading for pleasure. During the school day and break times, some pupils also take on the role of "Reading buddies" with younger children. These pupils are trained in how they can best support other children to develop their phonic knowledge as well as read for pleasure. Acting as reading role models, our buddies have enormous success in inspiring their younger reading partners to increase their reading skills and read more regularly. As a school, we also encourage reading volunteers to come into school regularly to hear children read. We have established a partnership with Wolverhampton Girls' High School and their students volunteer their time each week to read with our pupils.

Throughout their time at Merridale, all children take part in "Get Reading" lessons where they work in groups with the teacher. During these sessions, children take part in motivating reading activities and learn to develop skills of comprehension and inference using a "reciprocal reading" approach. Reciprocal reading is a group/class reading approach which gives a clear structure for discussing texts and reading. This approach has proved successful in giving pupils the skills and tools to predict, clarify, question and summarise when reading a wide variety of texts. Get Reading lessons are a fantastic opportunity to engage children in a "talk for reading" approach so that, through discussion and questioning, children can gain a deeper understand about what they have read. Each classroom has a dedicated reading area and "Get Reading" display to celebrate reading achievements and provide a space for children to enjoy books.

When children encounter barriers to their reading, the school responds to their needs with a range of interventions during and after school. We also offer Phonic and Literacy workshops for parents who would like additional support in helping their children to become confident readers. Staff are always available to answer any questions or queries parents and carers may have regarding their child's progress in reading.

"The more you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go."
- Dr. Seuss, "I Can Read With My Eyes Shut!"