



Merley First School

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8th September 2022



Dear Parents

This academic year all First Schools in the Wimborne Academy Trust will be implementing a new Phonics Scheme called Unlocking Letters and Sounds. This scheme is a systematic synthetic phonics programme which was validated by the DfE in December 2021.

Wimborne Academy Trust is committed to creating a thriving reading culture in all schools where every child will learn to read successfully.

The structured approach to the teaching of reading will begin in the first few weeks of term 1 in Reception where children will begin daily lessons to learn sounds and decode words, they will make rapid progress in their reading journey.

Children will learn the main sounds heard in the English Language and how they can be represented, as well as learning 'Common Exception' words for Phases 2, 3 and 4. They will use these sounds to read and write simple words, captions and sentences. Children will leave Reception being able to apply the phonemes taught within Phase 2, 3 and 4.

In Year 1, children will work through Phase 5a, b and c in daily phonic lessons, they will learn any alternative spellings and pronunciations for the graphemes and additional Common Exception Words. By the end of Year 1 children will have mastered using phonics to decode and blend when reading and segment when spelling. Towards the end of Year 1 all children are screened using the national Phonics Screening Check.

In Year 2, daily phonic lessons will continue to be revisited to ensure mastery of the phonetic code and any child who does not meet age related expectations will continue to receive support to close identified gaps.

To ensure no child is left behind at any point in the progression, children are regularly assessed and supported to keep up through bespoke 1-1 interventions. These include grapheme phoneme correspondence recognition and blending and segmenting interventions. If children fall behind we will closely monitor their progress and ensure an appropriate intervention is in place supporting them to keep up.

The phonic provision will continue for those in KS2 who have not completed the programme

At Merley First School we promote a 'phonics first' approach in both our guided reading sessions at school and in the books children take home, texts are very closely matched to a child's current phonics knowledge so that every child can experience real success in their reading. In these crucial early stages of reading we will primarily use books from Ransom Reading Stars Phonics, to ensure complete fidelity to the Unlocking Letters and Sounds progression we follow.

Phonics Reading Books

In all year groups at Merley, Reading books will be changed on a Monday and Thursday starting w/c 12th September 2022.

This will have allowed time for pupils to be assessed and for us to be sure that the correct phonic reading book will be going home which matches their phonic ability.

We have purchased a significant number of new books which are part of the Unlocking Letters and Sounds scheme and this has required completely reorganising and sorting our old and new books. We would ask that you take care with these books and ensure they are returned in the books bags.

In Year Rec, Yr 1 and Yr 2, one phonic book will be given and there is an expectation that each book should be read at home three times before your child has a new book.

The book we send home will have words that your child can decode successfully and read independently, because our assessments show that the book includes words and sounds they know. This is an essential aspect of the scheme which builds on children feeling successful at reading and developing fluency.

Once children progress beyond decodable texts, which may be at some point in Year 2 or above, they move onto our coloured book scheme so that they can continue to progress in their decoding, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension skills to become avid, expert readers.

School reading diaries will allow you to see when your child has read in school. We would also appreciate you recording when your child has read to you at home.

Reading for pleasure Books

Alongside a decodable book to read at home we will be sending a weekly 'reading for pleasure' book home alongside the decodable book. Your child will not necessarily be able to read their 'Reading for Pleasure' book independently. This book is for you both to read and enjoy together. In order to encourage your child to become a lifelong reader, it is important that they learn to read for pleasure. This sharing book will be a book they have chosen from our school library for you to enjoy together. Please remember that you shouldn't expect your child to read this alone. Read it to or with them. Discuss the pictures, enjoy the story, predict what might happen next, use different voices for the characters; explore the facts in a nonfiction book. The main thing is that you have fun!

Alongside the daily phonic lessons and guided reading sessions we will be encouraging a love of reading. Each day children will have a read aloud story time where teachers will carefully select books to read to their class. We will also celebrate the love of reading through specially planned events throughout the school year eg: world book day and author visits.

We would like to invite you to a phonic workshop on **Thursday 29th September 6pm** to find out further information about this phonic scheme and how and how you can support your child at home.

We hope you are as excited as we are to embark on this new journey into Unlocking Letters and Sounds.

Mrs K. Riley Mrs R Baldwin Mrs Anstey