



14th January 2022

Dear Parents and Carers,

This week's newsletter is dedicated to providing information about our new phonics scheme; please see below for further information.

Blogs

The team have created wonderful blogs this week so please take a look on the school website.

<https://merryhill.org.uk/our-learning-community/year-group-blogs/>

Phonics

Following an update from the Department for Education around phonics teaching we dedicated time to reviewing our current practice; thinking about our children, context and staff and have chosen to adopt Essential Letters and Sounds as our new systematic synthetic phonics programme.

Why ELS (Essential Letters and Sounds)

- It builds on Letters and Sounds which is the programme we were using, are very familiar with and have been successful in implementing
- It teaches the sounds in the same order that we have previously taught so will make for a smooth transition for the children
- It involves whole class high quality teaching with well-structured daily lesson plans
- It includes consistent resources used across the school to ensure prior learning is accessed easily and built upon
- It allows us to use books that we already have; enabling us to use funding to purchase a wider range of engaging decodable books for our children
- It is engaging for the children and will ensure all children learn to read well, quickly

It is fundamental that we work alongside you whilst implementing this phonics programme to optimise success and ensure all children are taught to read well, quickly. Under normal circumstances, we would invite you in for a meeting and discussion but with the high number of COVID cases at present, we have taken the decision to provide virtual meetings and resources to support our learning community at this time.

Learning Resources

Mrs Ineson has created a parent presentation which will tell you more about the ELS programme and how it is being implemented across the school. See link below:

<https://vimeo.com/665288436/2578a2be97>

Mr Reid has worked with Nathaniel in Year 1 to model how to read a text four times with a different focus for each read (decoding, fluency, comprehension and expression). See link below:

<https://youtu.be/lf1kXIV9FaY>

A Happy Face, A Learning Place, A Growing Space

We are currently updating our school website and adding resources to help you support your child's reading. Once this has gone live we will send out further information with the relevant links.

ELS Lessons

Two of our INSET days have focused on Phonics professional development to ensure the roll out of the phonics programme is successful. All staff will continue to receive targeted support and further training throughout the year as we know high quality teaching benefits all pupils. The children began their ELS lessons last Wednesday and have quickly learnt the routine and structure of the programme. The decodable reading books linked to the programme are on order but have not yet arrived in school. We will keep you posted but hope these books will arrive in school next week. In the meantime, eBooks will be sent home; please see below.

Reading Books

Every **Friday** the children will come home with one decodable text, one shared text and one decodable eBook on the Oxford Owl website. The log in details and instructions will come with your child today. (As stated above the books are on order so it may take a couple of weeks for this to be successfully implemented)

To best support us in teaching your child to read, we ask that you read the decodable text provided by the school **four times** across the week. (See Mr Reid video link) Spending 10 minutes a day reading with your child will hugely support them on their journey to becoming an independent reader.

We will be changing children's books once a week on Fridays. This will allow your child to re-read each text several times, building their confidence and fluency. This is especially important as they begin to learn that the sounds within our language can be spelled in different ways.

For children, re-reading words and sentences that they can decode (sound out) until they are fluent (read with ease and precision) is a key part of learning to read. By reading texts several times, children have the greatest opportunity to achieve this fluency.

The texts sent home are carefully matched to the teaching taking place in school. Your child will be practising what they have been taught in school with you at home. We will only ask children to read books independently when they can decode these by themselves.

Any books that are not yet decodable for the children will be sent home as a **sharing book**. These books will be sent home for you to read with your child, helping us to instil a love of reading from the very beginning of their reading journey. These could be read together *with* your child reading the words they are able to decode or could be read *to* your child.

If you have any further questions or queries, please do not hesitate to contact your child's class teacher or Mrs Ineson and Mr Reid our Assistant Headteachers and Reading Leads.

Kind regards,

Melissa Adams
Headteacher

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