

Dear Parents/Carers,

Next 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.

Phase one is the beginning of the systematic learning of phonics and will take place predominantly in Nursery and Pre-School. It falls primarily within the Communication and Language and Literacy area of learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum. This crucial phase is the exciting first step on every child's early reading journey and forms the bedrock of developing children's early reading. In this phase children will experience a wealth of listening activities, including using their listening skills to hear sounds in the environment, recognise instrumental sounds and use body percussion. Children will enjoy playing with sounds and words as they develop their language skills, spotting rhythm, rhyme and alliteration in songs and stories they hear. They will begin to explore the skill of oral blending and segmenting.

A more structured approach to the teaching of reading will begin in the first few weeks of term 1 in Reception where children will begin 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, 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, phonics continues 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 (letter(s) representing a sound) phoneme (single spoken sound) correspondence recognition and blending and segmenting interventions. The

lowest attaining 20% of pupils are closely monitored to ensure these interventions have an impact.

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

At Verwood C of E First School and Nursery 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. Once children progress beyond decodable texts, they move onto our book scheme so that they can continue to progress in their decoding, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension skills to become avid, expert readers.

Alongside a decodable book to read at home we will be sending a weekly 'reading for pleasure' book home. 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 their school library or classroom book corner 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; for example, world book day, author visits and visits to and from the local library.

Further information will follow in due course, as will details of phonics workshops should you wish to attend them to find out more about 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.

Thank you for your continued support

Lauren Palmer (*Phonics and Early Reading Lead*)