



14 March 2022

Dear Parents

We would like to inform you about a change in the way that our early reading programme will be structured from September 2022.

As detailed in the 'Reading Narrative' on our school website, we currently teach the highly structured LCP phonics sequence, based upon Letters and Sounds, which provides clear expectations for the teaching of phonics and outlines term by term progression from the beginning of EYFS to the end of Year 2. The reading books used to match current learning and to enable children to embed and consolidate previous learning are part of the Oxford Reading Tree scheme.

Our self-evaluation of practice reveals expert practitioners, engaging lessons and consistent individual small- step progress and whole class progress, resulting in Reading SATs results consistently above national average by the end of Key Stage 2.

As we seek further improvement, our aim is to facilitate all adults to become reading experts and access training to effectively implement a whole school phonics programme. As some children in Key Stage 2 (Years 3-6) need further support with phonics, this change will enable whole school consistency.

Phonics and early reading is the safeguarding of learning and therefore must be seen as the responsibility of every adult within school. Furthermore, it would further enhance the invaluable contribution provided by a number of adult reading volunteers for our daily morning sessions. Although our current approach reveals sound practice, our aim is to future-proof pupils' reading entitlement as one of the most essential elements of education.

The DfE has spent much time and effort to bring phonics teaching to the forefront of practice. The following excerpts may prove useful for context.

*By ensuring high-quality phonics teaching the government wants to improve literacy levels to:*

- give all children a solid base upon which to build as they progress through school*
- help children to develop the habit of reading widely and often, for both pleasure and information.*

*A number of publishers have completed a self-assessment process based on these criteria, which were then reviewed by independent evaluators.*

*There is no statutory requirement for schools to choose one of the SSP programmes on the validated list. Ofsted does not have a preferred programme or approach. What's important is that schools take an approach that is rigorous, systematic, used with fidelity (any resources used should exactly match the Grapheme Phoneme Correspondence (GPC) progression of their chosen SSP approach), and achieves strong results for all pupils.*

*However, validation status indicates that a programme has been self-assessed by its publisher and judged by a small panel with relevant expertise and that both consider it to meet all of the Department for Education (DfE) criteria for an effective systematic synthetic phonics programme.*



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School  
Cartworth Road • Holmfirth • HD9 2RG  
Tel 01484 687565

Email [office@holmfirthjinschool.net](mailto:office@holmfirthjinschool.net)

Website [www.holmfirthjinschool.net](http://www.holmfirthjinschool.net)

Twitter @HolmfirthJINSch



*A complete systematic synthetic phonics (SSP) programme is one that provides:*

- all that is essential to teach SSP to children in reception and key stage 1 years of mainstream primary schools*
- sufficient support for children in reception and key stage 1 to become fluent readers*
- a structured route for most children to meet or exceed the expected standard in the year one phonics screening check*
- all national curriculum expectations for word reading through decoding by the end of key stage 1.*

In order for the LCP programme to be validated by the DfE, the programme would need to provide the additional resources identified previously, rather than rely on the professionalism of school adults to source their own training and align reading books to phonics stage. Whilst we feel that that the current system is fit for purpose, it does not guarantee a whole school consistent approach. I have spoken with the LCP team, who state that they have no intention to apply for accreditation from the DfE.

Two key factors have been at play over the last few months. The first has been the decision on which pathway to take. Staff members have attended webinars, discussion has taken place between Holme Valley Pyramid schools and guidance has been sought from Local Authority specialists. Predictably, there is no 'one size fits all' approach, with positive and negative reviews from leaders and class practitioners alike being heard about a range of currently validated schemes. The second has been the financial implication of the implementation of any such change. We have held back from any significant outlay until sufficient funds had been amassed and our own research had been completed.

Following such a process, which has also played a key part for the Governing Body Teaching and Learning Committee, we have decided to adopt the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised systematic and synthetic phonics programme (SSP). SSP is an approach which teaches children to recognise letters (graphemes) and their associated sounds (phonemes). It is also known as alphabetic phonics and involves breaking the word down into the smallest units of sound.

To supplement the Little Wandle phonics programme, we will be purchasing new books, which will enable pupils to practise and apply the phonics that they have been taught. Staff will receive training over the next few months, ready to implement the new reading programme from September 2022.

We will be providing parents with more information over the coming months.

Kind regards

*J Rose*

J Rose  
Headteacher