

12/09/2022

Dear Parent/Carer,

At Loose Primary School, we welcome a parent partnership within which we foster enriching continuous provision for our children and their learning journey. This is important across the entirety of a child's school life but is essential for our earliest learners in our Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), particularly in relation to phonics provision. Phonics is an integral part of teaching children the fundamental skills, knowledge and concepts underpinning early reading and writing. For this reason, we place significant emphasis on phonics within our curriculum.

Please continue reading for an insight into how phonics is taught at Loose including a detailed breakdown of the Sounds Write programme, use of decodable reading texts, our approach to handwriting and how you can support your child's learning at home.

Sounds Write

In EYFS our children receive daily phonics provision following "Sounds Write," a government recognised Systematic Synthetic Phonics (SSP) programme, to teach early reading, spelling and writing. It is a highly structured, incremental and code-oriented approach that teaches in simple steps how the sounds of our language are represented by the writing system. The code is broken down into three developmentally appropriate stages;

- Initial Code (EYFS)
- Extended Code (Years 1-2)
- Polysyllabic Words (Key Stage 2)

At each stage, children are taught the three essential skills of segmenting, blending and phoneme manipulation, which they progressively apply with the ultimate aim of becoming fluent and successful readers.

In EYFS, all children are introduced to every single letter-sound correspondence within our alphabet code, such as "a," "n" and "s," with additional opportunities for rehearsal and consolidation towards the end of the year. They will also become familiar with some common consonant digraphs (two letters making one sound), such as "sh," and "ch," in preparation for the Extended Code.

Decodable Texts

The code knowledge that children are taught in their phonics lessons is supported at every stage through the use of “decodable” texts. Decodables are reading books specifically designed to match and include the target sounds that are taught at each stage of the code. Children are, therefore, able to practice segmenting and blending target sounds in the context of whole-word reading from the very beginning of their learning journey. This provides all children with ample opportunities to rehearse and retrieve the knowledge they have learnt in the classroom.

Reading books will be changed a minimum of once a week to ensure that your child’s decodable text contains relevant code knowledge linked to their current phonics learning. Within this period, children should read and re-read their allocated book to ensure they are given multiple opportunities to practice recognising target sounds alongside rehearsing the skills of segmenting and blending to decode. This process of re-reading texts is invaluable and highly effective in supporting reader’s development and should not be underestimated!

Should you feel obliged, we do of course support you in supplementing your child’s reading diet with age-appropriate texts from your home libraries at any stage of their learning journey. We are very happy to provide recommendations of high quality additional literature to support your child’s reading experience.

Handwriting

As previously noted, the Sounds Write programme not only delivers your child’s phonics learning but is also highly effective in supporting children’s early writing or “encoding” skills. Through the programme, children are encouraged to form print letters as soon as they are able to make links between the written code and their respective sounds. Simple print lettering is taught first to all young learners and is only replaced by a joined or “cursive” handwriting style when children are older and their knowledge of the code is more embedded.

You will find documents attached with examples of how all the target sounds taught within the Initial Code should be represented in written code. The directional arrows indicate the way in which your children should be forming each letter following the print style.

Supporting Your Child’s Learning at Home

Wherever possible, we encourage parents and carers to support their child’s learning journey at home. Carefully selected supporting resources will be routinely sent home to ensure continuous phonics provision for our Early Years learners. These can be broken down into the following:

- Decodable Texts (changed min. 1x per week)
- Initial Code Flashcards (progressively added to in line with incremental delivery of the code)
- Alphabet Code Print Lettering Sheets (attached with this email)

Both the decodable texts and flashcards will travel to and from school with your child in their own personal A4 zip bag and will be changed or added to by the class teacher in accordance with any developments to your child's phonics learning.

As well as familiarising yourselves with the above, please do also feel free to explore the further information available at each of the hyperlinks below. The first details engaging activities directly linked to the Initial Code that can be used at home to supplement your child's classroom-based learning. The second demonstrates the precise pronunciation of each target sound included in the Initial Code; a really worthwhile watch for those of us encountering phonics for the first time as well as a reminder for all other parents! The final link is a parent leaflet made available directly from Sounds Write, which sets out the specific code knowledge taught within EYFS.

Initial Code Sounds Write Activity Book

<https://www.sounds-write.co.uk/sites/soundswrite/uploads/files/71-activity-book-1-7-printables-2020.pdf>

Initial Code Phonetic Pronunciation

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a8ZMfYjdN-s>

Initial Code Sounds Write Parent Leaflet

https://www.sounds-write.co.uk/sites/soundswrite/uploads/files/47-sounds_write_leaflet_for_yr_parents.pdf

We sincerely hope that the information included above is useful in providing you with an overview of what your child's first year of phonics learning at Loose Primary School will look like. In due course, a Phonics Workshop for EYFS parents will be held to provide a forum in which further discussion about our phonics programme and delivery can take place. In the meantime, should you have any questions about your child's phonics learning please do feel free to contact us.

Kind Regards,

The EYFS and English Team