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Dear Year R Parents,

Please find an overview of some of the things we are learning about this half term.

As mentioned in our Autumn 1 letter, we have placed great emphasis on helping the children feel settled and secure in school, developing their independence skills and motivation to learn so that they feel ready and able to move onto the next stage of learning.

So, what are we doing this half term?

Phonics

We will continue to teach our 'Little Wandle, Revised Letters and Sounds' programme which teaches children to recognise the shape of the letters (the **grapheme**) and know the sound that represents them (the **phoneme**). As children learn these phonemes, they are taught to **blend** them together for reading and **segment** them for spelling.

We will continue to use 'cued articulation' to support us in teaching the letter sounds. We will also continue to upload a video of the actions so that you can have a go at home.

Our weekly email will inform you about which letters and words we are learning each week so that you can support at home. Please do practice reading words, using the letter cards we send home.

Reading

Some children will start bringing home books with words. Your child will have read this three times in school, once for blending, once to look at expression and once for comprehension. The intention is that your child should be able to easily read the book to you.

Once we have taught the tricky words for the week, your child will also bring these home to aid them in learning to read. Tricky words are not to be blended but are to be learnt at 'whole' words.

We also know there are lots of books that we send home which can be very confusing. We hope the visual reminder, we sent home last half term, is a helpful tool.

Writing

"Reading and writing float on a sea of talk" (James Britton, English Educator).

We will continue to support children to develop their communication and language skills through their play experiences. This is a vital part of learning to write as it helps children to formulate ideas. We will also continue to develop children's gross and fine motor skills through a range of 'funky finger' activities. This supports children to develop good pencil control. We will also be teaching children to form the letter shapes that we teach in phonics. This is first taught in a multi-sensory approach e.g., tracing letters in sand, making letter shapes with playdough, tracing the letters in the air etc... This then leads onto forming letters using pencils and we teach children to write in print so that they are confident with forming the letters correctly.

Mathematics

We will be having daily mental maths sessions which will mostly focus on counting and number recognition. There are two types of counting: **Rote counting** is the simplest number concept that children develop and consists of **saying** numbers sequentially. **One-to-one correspondence** is being able to use this knowledge to skillfully count an actual number of objects. A child that understands one-to-one correspondence knows that 2 cookies = 2 or that 5 raisins = 5. It is important not to underestimate the skill of one-to-one correspondence as it forms the basis for all other mathematics. Without one-to-one correspondence, children will struggle with addition and subtraction further on in their development. Please find any opportunity to count with one-to-one correspondence at home or when you are out and about!

You may also hear the children talk about 'subitising'. This is also an important mathematical skill that we will continue to develop over this half term. It is the skill of being able to instantly recognise how many items there are, without counting, for example, when you look at dice.

Mathematical language also forms a big part of mathematical development e.g. more, less, greater, smaller etc... and we place great emphasis on supporting children to use mathematical language within their play.

Don't forget, we don't teach all the above in one go! Our weekly learning letter will give you an outline of what we are covering on a weekly basis, including the other curriculum areas that we teach.

Other things that are happening in Year R...

In Year R we have a mixture of adult initiated activities such as the maths and phonics, balanced with child-initiated activities (COOL Time) where children practice and apply the skills they have been taught in the directed times. It is during this time that we follow the children's interests.

The lead up to Christmas will involve Christmas cards and Christmas activities. More information to follow on this. As the children lead up to Christmas, they do get very tired so be prepared!

Friendships

Now that the children have settled into school, they are beginning to formulate new friendships and are learning how to get along with each other. The children are learning that it's ok to not agree with their friends and we support the children to understand that concept. As the year develops, children learn to manage this well and accept that we have different opinions. However, please do talk to us if your child is having any issues with friendship groups. We also talk about listening to one another in COOL Time and sharing their ideas, thoughts and feelings.

Language groups

We are currently screening children on a programme called Speechlink where children are asked to play some games on an iPad, with a teacher. The programme identifies if a child is 'at risk of delay' in their communication and language. Any child who is identified as being 'at risk' will take part in a language group with other children. This involves lots of listening games and activities which will be led by the Learning Support Assistants in Year R. You will receive an additional letter if your child is to take part in a language group. Please do not hesitate to talk to your child's teacher if you have any concerns about this. We find that all children enjoy being part of a language group so there may be times when a child joins a language group for the odd session, so they do not feel they are missing out.

Seesaw

We hope you are enjoying Seesaw. If you haven't done so already, please do download the app. Once you are familiar with Seesaw, please do send some photos of some the fun things your child gets up to at home as it is a lovely way of finding out more about them. Now that the children are more aware of Seesaw, we may start to show them how to use it. However, for those children that this is too much, we will still do it for them. Next term, we will teach everyone to do it. In Year R, we use Seesaw as a way of showing you some of the things we get up to in school. Our priority as teachers is to interact with the children and join them in their activities. Therefore, we will only be adding a few photos onto Seesaw so that it does not take us away from the children.

P.E

We have now started P.E lessons which will take place every Thursday. Each class will have one P.E session a week and we ask that your child comes into school wearing their P.E kit.

Polite request

With the change in the weather, please can you ensure your child comes to school with a coat as we are outside all the time, in all weathers. If it is raining, please send your child to school in a waterproof coat/jacket otherwise they are unable to access the outdoor area.

Phew! We think that is enough information for now. We try our best to keep you updated with what we are doing in school, but we sometimes forget that what is regular to us is often new to many of you so please keep asking us questions.

Thank you, as always, for your continued support,

The Early Years Team