



Hilltop First School and Foundation Stage

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Dear Parents

As a school, we have recognised that writing is one of our weaker areas of the curriculum and many schools within the borough are in a similar situation. Our children have wonderful creative ideas and are developing good grammar rules alongside growing vocabularies. However, we have identified that *spelling* is our greatest area of challenge.

Before the Christmas break, we spoke as a staff about how we can best support the children in learning spellings, not just practising them. We are adapting the ways in which spellings are being taught in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.

In Key Stage 1, the children are already introduced to non-phonetic tricky words weekly with a view to recognising and reading them confidently. We will be placing a greater emphasis on the children learning to spell these words in their independent writing. 'Words of the week,' will be displayed in each classroom and children will have opportunities in class to practise writing these words on a daily basis. These 'Words of the week' will be shared with parents in the children's spelling books in addition to their 'spelling wall' words.

In Key Stage 2, the children completed a spelling baseline assessment which identified which spellings were not yet embedded. This allowed us to group the children accordingly. Once a week, the children will go to their new spelling groups for explicit teaching of spelling strategies and to learn and practise irregular words. Lessons will include looking at the words carefully, identifying any silent letters within the words, recalling similar words or letter patterns and learning little memory aiding rhymes. We will also look at ways in which we can embed these words within their writing rather than just learning them for a spellings test. Adults will model spelling words aloud using letter names not phonic sounds. This is what we expect children to be doing confidently from Year 2 onwards.

For all children, there is an expectation that focus words are practised at home. We hope you are able to support us in helping with this as the more the children are able to practise, the more the correct spelling will become embedded in their own writing. Here are ways you can practise at home:

- Read the word together and spell it aloud using the letter names.
- Ask your child to practise the word from memory:
 - Writing in the air using their finger
 - Writing on paper/whiteboard
 - Typing on a digital device
 - Forming the word using magnetic or foam letters
 - Spelling the word verbally using letter names
- It is important that your child checks the word has been spelt correctly and has another go if necessary.

Thank you in advance for helping in our journey to better spelling and better writing across the school. We hope to see a positive impact on the overall quality of writing from the end of the Spring Term.

Thank you for your support

Mrs Romanay-Bhatt

Assistant Headteacher & Writing Subject Lead

