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Dear Parents and Carers,

Early Reading in the infants @StreatleySch

We are writing to you to help you understand the change in books your child will receive for home learning from us.

At Streatley School we have had excellent [phonics](#) practice here for years. This is a result of multiple factors. Good phonics teaching, a good balance of phonics and sight word vocabulary application in the children's books. For a small school we have always had an incredible amount of books available.



Changes in policy are coming: DfE update [June 2022](#)

There is no statutory requirement for schools to choose one of the full Systematic Synthetic Phonics (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, including the most disadvantaged. Please refer to [this blog for more information](#).

Why now are we responding to these changes?

Streatley has always used 'Letters and Sounds' effectively and West Berkshire Council have been building their own scheme in response to the inevitable future changes (DfE make it statutory to have a validated scheme). West Berkshire have produced a resource that builds on Letters and Sounds with planning and delivery support. This September, they released it to a number of West Berkshire schools. Our staff have taken part in the training offer and they have recently audited our books in response to:

- *We highly recommend that schools use a full Systematic Synthetic Phonics programme with decodable texts matching pupils' phonic knowledge. The Ofsted inspection handbook states that the sequence of reading books should show a cumulative progression in phonics knowledge that is matched closely to the school's phonics programme and that children should read and re-read books that match the grapheme-phoneme correspondences they know. [DfE May 21](#)*





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Buying new resources

We do not qualify for funding to buy resources or release staff for training, see the blog linked above. Inspection teams are back out in schools, they are focussing their deep dives on the information released in the [Reading Framework](#) from the DfE. A deep dive is a thorough look in an area. All schools experience a deep dive in Early Reading, usually maths and maybe two other subject areas agreed with the school. An [example here](#) from a private provider of the detail involved in an Early Reading deep dive.

We are confident our teaching and assessment meets the requirements, however you will notice a change in the books coming home and we want you to be fully aware of why. Using the West Berkshire reading book audit for reading materials, we have re-categorised the children's books in line with the guidelines as we are expected to, 'ensure it is fully decodable and only includes sounds pupils have already learnt and with which they are fully secure'.

The first change you may notice is the feel of the books in your child's current reading level as they should now only have books with content in which they are fully secure. The second change is the number of books that they will bring home each week. For the time being, please expect a minimum of two books a week. If we can do more, we will. This is to ensure all children have access to the reduced number of books we have as a result of the audit. Children's reading books now must, 'only includes sounds pupils have already learnt and with which they are fully secure.' We are expecting to purchase more books to allow for this targeted and detailed approach.

As a staff group, we are in discussion about the books that do not fit in with the sequence suggested. These books offer a broad and balanced diet and so we are discussing children having access to these still, without us being penalised for not having fidelity to phonics teaching requested by the Reading Framework. By half term we expect to have thrashed this out, meanwhile some schools with academy funding have bought a validated commercial scheme with books costing £5,000 for a one form entry school. They have put all of their other books in cupboards, if their books are supported by our audit, we will purchase these at a reduced cost.

Please let us know your thoughts here regarding resources, experiences, training and understanding of early reading.

Survey here. <https://forms.gle/dpNYWzaaVWyZUobT7>

Kind regards,

Miss Roberts and the infant team.

Headteacher and teaching staff.

