

## ELMSTEAD PRIMARY SCHOOL

# THE TEACHING OF SPELLING

Dear Parents

As many of you will know, we have been researching the way that we teach spelling throughout the school. We have held a series of staff meetings and workshops to share and analyse the numerous strategies involved in giving the children all that they need to become the best spellers. The key outcome is that we all agree that spelling should be taught on a regular basis within our classes.

### **Essex Reading Programme (E.R.P.)**

In Key Stage 1, we follow the Essex Reading Programme (E.R.P.) which ensures that all the children in Classes R, 1 and 2 receive a daily diet of letter and sound recognition (phonics), together with segmenting and word building skills, leading to quick-fire spelling of words. They also use the look and say approach to learning high frequency words during each session. This approach is very much in keeping with the Rose Report (2008) which highlighted, 'High quality, systematic teaching of decoding and encoding skills, i.e. phonic work, is a key factor in securing children's progress in reading and writing.'

### **Regular Teaching of Spelling**

As well as our daily E.R.P sessions, we devote one lesson a week to the teaching of spelling based on 'Letters and Sounds'. This programme of study is divided into six phases, with each phase building on the skills and knowledge of previous learning. There are no big leaps in learning. Children have time to practise and rapidly expand their ability to read and spell words. They are also taught to read and spell 'tricky words', which are words with spellings that are unusual or that they have not yet been taught.

## **Weekly Spelling Tests**

You will have noticed that in Key Stage 1 we decided to suspend the weekly testing of spelling lists. After analysing the results of sending spellings home, it confirmed that the children who were finding spelling difficult could still not correctly use the spellings that they had learned in their writing. For the children who found spelling easy, there was little or no indication of improvement in their spelling. Undue stress on parents to drill their children on spelling lists and unnecessary pressure on the children; as well as the expectation that every child is to read regularly and at times complete homework during the school week was another reason for us to review our practise.

## **Teaching Spelling in School Together with Your Support from Home**

In Key Stage 1, we will continue with our systematic approach to the teaching of spelling in school, but not in order to test the children on a weekly basis. We would ask you to continue to support your child by working on any relevant spelling patterns or high frequency word lists when they are sent home at certain times throughout the school year. Please continue to read regularly with them, as the children who are encouraged to read and enjoy books on a regular basis will be increasing their spelling success each time that they open a book.

We hope that this explanatory letter has guided you further in your understanding of how we teach spelling in Key Stage 1 and how you can support your child in this area of learning. If you have any questions, please do arrange to meet with your child's teacher. Thank you for the support and commitment that so many parents already give to their children, particularly in the area of literacy.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Pip Higgins (English Subject Leader KS1)