

Spelling Policy and Practice – Meadgate Primary School



Our Statement of Intent:

The systematic teaching of phonics and spelling is vital as spelling enables pupils to become more effective and fluent writers: the less thought children have to put into spelling, the more thought they can put into the content of what they write.

Learning to spell is not just learning lists of words; it is a developmental process of learning to apply different strategies appropriately.

Aims:

We aim to:

- guide each child towards becoming an effective speller;
- encourage children to see learning to spell as an integral part of the developmental process of learning to write;
- encourage children to explore vocabulary;
- teach children to apply spelling strategies;
- encourage independence and self-evaluation as part of their spelling development;
- ensure children understand the principles underpinning word construction.

These principles are:

Phonemic Knowledge- the correspondence between letters (graphemes) and sounds (phonemes). This includes:

- i. phonics (e.g. knowledge about letter and sound correspondence, differences between long and short vowels, the identification, segmentation and blending of phonemes in speech and how these influence spelling);
- ii. spelling patterns and conventions (e.g. how the consonant doubles after a short vowel);
- iii. homophones (e.g. words with common pronunciations but different spelling: to, two, too).
- iv. Phonological knowledge. This relates to syllables, rhyme and analogy.

Visual Knowledge- knowledge of the way words and letter combinations look.

Morphemic Knowledge- the spelling of grammatical units within words (e.g. horse = 1 morpheme, horses = 2 morphemes). It includes knowledge about:

- i. root words – contain one morpheme and cannot be broken down into smaller grammatical units (e.g. elephant, table, girl, day) and are sometimes referred to as the stem or base form;
- ii. compound words – two root words combined to make a word (e.g. playground, football);
- iii. suffixes – added after root words, changing the meaning and often the spelling of a word (e.g. beauty – beautiful, happy – happiness). Some suffixes, called inflectional suffixes (or inflections), modify words to indicate, for example, plurals (e.g. boy – boys, fox – foxes) or verb tenses (e.g. walk – walks – walking – walked);
- iv. prefixes – added before a root word, and change the meaning but rarely affect the spelling of a word (e.g. replace, mistake).

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Etymological Knowledge- knowledge of word origins. Words in the English language come from a range of sources; understanding the origin of words helps pupils' spelling (e.g. audi relates to hearing – audible, audience, audition).

Spelling at school: Continuity and Progression

Spelling is taught as part of a planned programme, following the requirements of the National Curriculum. Across all Key Stages, the teaching of spelling strategies, high-frequency and cross-curricular technical words are built into each half-term's work, in addition to phonemic, phonological, morphological and etymological knowledge.

In addition, handwriting lessons, shared and guided reading and writing sessions afford many opportunities for discussions about spelling and revisiting and practising strategies. The teaching of spelling of subject-specific vocabulary occurs in all subjects and opportunities are made in these lessons to reinforce spelling work undertaken in literacy lessons. Spellings taught will be taken from the programme for spelling in the National Curriculum (Programme of study Years 1-6, Appendix 1).

Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1

At Meadgate Primary, Essential Letters and Sounds (ELS) is our chosen phonics policy. In every lesson, children are asked to apply their GPC knowledge to review spellings using known GPCs and to spell new words. Harder to Read and Spell words (HRS) are taught within ELS lessons from the very first week of teaching Phase 2. In each instance, the tricky aspect of the spelling is explained. ELS mnemonics and rhymes provide opportunities for teaching vocabulary as well as supporting spelling and letter formation.

Children are taught:

- the grapheme/phoneme correspondence in a clearly defined sequence.
- the skill of segmenting words into their constituent phonemes to spell.
- that blending and segmenting are reversible processes.

Each phonics lesson follows this structure:

Review known sounds using games.

Teach new sound in words

Practice reinforce new sound with oral or written games or Phonics/Spelling Bug

Apply new sound by reading and/or writing captions

Teachers and LSAs model spellings using letter names rather than short vowel sounds as soon as children begin learning about digraphs (two letters making one sound, for example, consonant digraph ch or vowel digraph ai).

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Overview of ELS Phases 1-5

Phase 1 supports the development of speaking and listening and being able to hear the sounds in words.

Phase 2 marks the start of systematic phonic work. Grapheme-Phoneme Correspondence (GPC) is introduced. The process of segmenting whole words and selecting letters to represent those phonemes is taught either writing the letters or using magnetic letters or letter tiles to encode words.

Phase 3 completes the teaching of the alphabet and then moves on to sounds represented by more than one letter, learning one representation for each of the 42 phonemes. Just one spelling is given at this stage for each phoneme.

Phase 4 marks the start of reading and spelling words containing adjacent consonants. No new phonemes are introduced at this phase.

Phase 5 teaches the alternative spellings for some phonemes.

Key teaching features	
Spelling sequence	Encourage children to follow the sequence:
	• Say the word 
	• Stretch the word 
	• Segment the word 
	• Blend the word 
	• Count the sounds within the word 
	• Say the whole word 
This sequence can be used for any word where the children have been taught the GPCs within the word.	

This spelling sequence is used from Phase 2 to help children identify the sounds they can hear. Children are supported by the use of GPC displays and mats to help find the sound they need and to represent it in a spelling.

By the end of Year 1, the National Expectation is that most children will be secure at phase 5, though further work will be required in Year 2, term 1 to ensure they have secure knowledge and understanding of alternative spellings for each phoneme.

Phase 6 overlaps with the material in the Spellings Programme of Study in the National Curriculum: spelling of words with prefixes and suffixes, doubling and dropping letters where necessary and the accurate spelling of words containing unusual GPCs e.g. laughs, two. This is taught in Year 2.

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Key Stage 2

A systematic and investigative approach is used to teach spelling. Where necessary, pupils will consolidate the phonic knowledge and skills from Key Stage 1 and for some children it will be necessary to continue with regular ELS phonic interventions whilst in KS2. The teaching and learning of phonics and the correspondence between letters and their sounds underpins all of the spelling strategies taught across the school.

Each unit of spelling will be taught using the following teaching sequence supplemented by opportunities to make teaching points during shared and guided reading and writing. Where possible, spellings are reinforced during handwriting lessons.

Spelling lessons follow this structure:

Revisit, Explain, Use

- What do we already know?
- (Previously learnt letter/sound correspondence, prefix, suffix...)
- Oral/ white board activities to confirm prior knowledge
- Explain the purpose of this learning, use vocabulary orally in context.

Teach, Model, Define

- How the pattern/rule/structure works
- Model spelling examples and define the rules, pattern and conventions
- Whole class/ individual whiteboard application and spelling practice

Practise, Explore, Investigate

- A range of interactive activities for children to practise the new learning
- We use Rising Stars Skills Builders text books to practise these skills where appropriate.

Apply, Assess, Reflect

- Revise new learning and apply in writing. This can be through dictation
- Spelling test.

Children will develop different strategies for memorising high-frequency or topic words. Examples of spelling strategies taught:

- Recognise root/base words and how these are changed by the addition of affixes. To learn my word, I can find its root word (e.g. Smiling – base: smile +ing)
- Syllables: break it into smaller parts (e.g. Sep-tem-ber, ba-by)
- Rhyme and Analogy. To learn my word, I can use words that I already know to help me (e.g. could: would, should)
- Mnemonics. To learn my word, I can make up a sentence to help me remember it (e.g. could – O U Lucky Duck; people – people eat orange peel like elephants)

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The Spelling Environment

The spelling environment should support and challenge children to take an active role in learning to spell accurately, develop a wide vocabulary of known words and take risks when spelling a word for the first time, using a variety of strategies. This environment should include:

- GPC friezes in YR – Y3 and in the Sunshine Room (interventions) to support all children when spelling.
- Subject specific vocabulary, technical terms and mathematical language displayed on walls, knowledge organisers and/or on word mats.
- Spelling strategies displayed to prompt children before asking an adult.
- Common high frequency words arranged according to the needs of the children - alphabetical, word families etc.
- Weekly 'challenge words' to try and include in writing.
- Easy access to age-appropriate dictionaries, spell checkers and thesauri.

Spelling at home

The school has developed an individualised spelling homework scheme. Each child is given the sheet appropriate to their ability with the correct level of challenge. These provide parents and carers with first sounds, HRS words from phases 2-5 then the next 200 high frequency words and then vocabulary from the Year 3/4 and Year 5/6 wordlists. When a child has learnt these at home they are then tested in school, rewarded with house points and given the next sheet of spellings.

Marking

Children's work will be sensitively marked to enable all aspects of their creative writing to be assessed, particularly the use of interesting vocabulary. Teachers should recognise worthy attempts made by children to spell adventurous words by ticking letters in pink which are accurate but will also correct them selectively and sensitively. Correction of yet-to-be taught spelling rules is best avoided with most children. Attention will be drawn to the misspelling of high-frequency words, those most recently studied or words with a known spelling rule by the teacher putting a blue wiggly line under a word for children to correct.

A few spellings per week will be identified, written by the teacher correctly in blue for the children to then practise using LOOK, SAY, COVER, WRITE, CHECK. Left-handed children should be encouraged to write spellings from the right hand side of the page so that they can cover them up with their right hand when using LSCWC strategy. Any spellings that are frequently misspelt must be the focus of attention so that the correct spelling is learned.

It is important that we do not discourage children from trying to use more adventurous vocabulary by over-correcting spellings. Children are reminded not to 'dodge' a word just because they are unsure of a spelling; they use the method of putting a wiggly line underneath a word when they are unsure of a spelling.

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Assessment

Teachers respond to the spelling ability of the children in their class to ensure progression takes place, using the assessment sessions to do so. Spelling assessments will take a range of forms including dictation, diagnostic tests and application of skills during independent writing. Assessment is an integral part of the teaching and learning process and is used to:

- provide the children with clear and regular feedback;
- assist the children and teachers in planning their next steps;
- evaluate the effectiveness of teaching.

In YR and Y1, achievements and areas of concern are recorded on ELS phonics tracker and HRS record keeping sheets (see Appendix). There is ongoing informal assessment of HRS words several times a week using workbooks, exercise books and whiteboards. The fifth week of each half term is an assessment week, leaving a week for review and consolidation.

Teachers in Yrs 1-5 use Quantum Academy evidence gathering grid to assess, with specific spelling non-negotiables which pupils are assessed against. Across the school, pupils' ability to spell high frequency words is tracked until they can spell them all. Pupils in Y6 currently have annotated copies of the statutory Key Stage 2 Teacher Assessment Framework (TAF) for English writing inside their writing books to track their transcription skills.

At the end of Year 1, all children will take the Phonics Screening Check as part of the government statutory requirements. Those who do not meet the required standard will continue to receive additional support in Year 2 (for example, the three ELS interventions) and will have their progress closely monitored by their class teacher and English subject leader.

Twice yearly, staff carry out the SWST (Single Word Spelling Test) at KS2 to provide the children's spelling ages and to measure progress.

Inclusion and Equal Opportunities

The ability to spell is fundamental to children's development as independent learners. We believe that all children are entitled to high quality teaching and learning and we embrace the philosophy of inclusion.

Intervention groups to support children on the SEND register are planned for as necessary and detailed on their Individual Provision Maps and a variety of teaching methods, based around those which are Dyslexia-friendly, are used to support the learning styles of different children. In this way, no child will be excluded from participating in writing activities.

Monitoring and Review

The English subject leader, in consultation with the SLT, monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of the teaching and learning of spelling. In discussion with the governors, areas for development and resource needs are identified. Spelling throughout the school and how it reflects this policy will be reviewed in the following ways:

- SLT/subject leader book scrutinies;
- EYFS/KS2 external moderation;

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- Internal moderation of all year groups across the MAT;
- Y6 SATs;
- learning walks and observations.

This policy is due to be reviewed Summer 2028.