

Spelling Matters

Spelling is an essential skill for life. Good spelling instruction must eventually give you the power to spell words that you have never seen before.

This begins in the early years with the teaching of phonics, where children learn letter sounds (phonemes); letter shapes (graphemes) and letter names.

Children learn to blend and segment and a world of reading and writing opens up for them.



As children progress through the school they learn 'tricky' words – words that have to be learnt because they need to be sounded out, specific spelling rules and spelling strategies.

Does Spelling Matter?

Being able to spell helps a child focus upon what they need to say rather than the mechanics of writing. It continues to be a skill valued by employers and academic institutions.

In our current educational climate being able to spell is considered important in terms of accessing whether a child has reached the expected standard in writing.

The national curriculum publishes a long list of spelling requirements and guidance for key stage 1 and 2.

This includes spelling patterns that children are expected to be familiar with and common exception words they are expected to know. These can be found in the National Curriculum in England: English programmes of study – key stages 1 and 2, www.gov.uk

At the end of each Key Stage the ability to spell the published words and word patterns is considered in terms of assessing whether a child has met the expected standard or not.

The ability to spell is tested formally at the end of year 6.

Spelling in a child's writing is assessed and children need to show that they can spell words from each phase accurately and independently in their own writing.

Spelling also forms a significant element of the Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling test. Here children are tested on their spelling of unknown words in a formal spelling test. In addition to this spelling errors made throughout the test mean that an answer will be marked as incorrect.

Current Research

Unfortunately educational research suggests that there are no magic formulas when it comes to the teaching of spelling (O'Sullivan and Thomas). Those who are able to spell well tend to be those with a good visual memory, are able to recognise rhyme and rhythm, distinguish sounds around them, link letters to sounds and learn and apply rules. They are often but not exclusively attentive readers who see text as a source of learning spelling and vocabulary.

Those who struggle may have a poor visual memory, they don't form connections between words which help them spell, rather they see the spelling system as arbitrary – words are disconnected, individual units. They often remain dependent on a phonological approach.



'Learning to spell involves the integration of several skills including phonological representations, grammatical and semantic knowledge, learning rules and conventions and making links' (Lennox and Siegel)

Spelling and your Child

Being able to spell involves different strategies and at Barns Green it is agreed that the best way to help a child become a better speller is to give them just that, a range of different strategies and



approaches to help them acquire the skills needed to improve their spelling.

It is recognised that it is not enough to learn spellings solely for the purpose of a test and that children need to use and apply spelling rules and learnt spellings in their own writing.

Throughout their time at Barns Green the children will become familiar with a range of strategies and teaching approaches which are included overleaf:



Ideas to try at home

Strategies taught tend to fall within three key areas, visual, auditory and kinaesthetic

- Using mnemonics – making up silly sayings.
e.g. said – silly ants in dresses
because – baby elephants can add up sums easily
- Looking for words within words
e.g. a word they can spell within an unfamiliar word.
e.g. separate – a –rat
- Saying a word as it sounds e.g
business – bus – l – ness
- Going on a word hunt –hiding words around the home
- Investigating – finding patterns and rules

- Practice and applying – writing, saying, counting phonemes, using sound buttons
- Investigating synonyms, antonyms changes in tense, suffixes and prefixes
- Spotting naughty letters (unexpected) letters can be circles – written in a different colour
- Saying letters aloud to a rhythm
- Writing words in a pyramid shape
- Say it – hear it – use of audio recording – child records themselves saying a word, spelling the word – play it back – write it – did they write it correctly?
- Tracing around very large words
- Repeating copying in different sizes, fonts, colours with a different range of materials
- Model words with play- dough

This is only a sample of the range of possibilities available. We ask that you support your child with spelling at home and that you value spelling in all writing and not just spelling for a spelling test.

- Build spelling practice into your daily routine

- Create a quiet, relaxing environment in which to practice
- Discuss spellings, words and strategies with your child
- Focus on positivity – you cannot spell it -yet.

At school we also focus upon a child improving their spelling as part of the writing process and this is equally valid. Children are taught to identify words they are uncertain of and to use a range of classroom resources available in which to check these spellings. Such resources may include spellings on display throughout the classroom, using word cards and dictionaries.

The older a child becomes the more important it is for them to have a range of strategies up their sleeve – that they value writing a word correctly and see the importance of spelling within the writing process.

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www.primaryhomeworkhelp.co.uk/literacyzone

www.crickweb.co.uk/literacy