

SPELLING

Introduction

The importance of spelling to the curriculum

Spelling is an integral part of the writing process. Pupils who spell with ease are able to concentrate on the content of their writing and the making of meaning. While it is important to remember that spelling is not the most important aspect of writing, confidence in spelling often has a profound effect on the writer's self-image. Accurate spelling implies consideration for the reader and also recognises the deeply embedded notions about correctness which we hold as a society about spelling.

Strategy for implementation

Entitlement and curriculum provision

Spelling is taught as part of a planned programme, following the requirements of the National Literacy Strategy Framework. In addition handwriting lessons and shared and guided reading and writing sessions afford many opportunities for talking 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 the Literacy Hour.

Teaching and Learning

The teaching of spelling aims to develop pupils as independent spellers who take an active part in their own learning. Pupils are taught the knowledge and skills they need to become independent spellers. Routines and structures are provided to enable pupils to apply what they learn about spelling independently.

Teaching aims to show pupils how to become natural and accurate spellers. The programme approaches this in three ways. Firstly, by using a structured approach as outlined in the National Literacy Strategy. Secondly, by ensuring that pupils learn and practise those words which they most frequently misspell as individuals. Thirdly, by increasing their spelling vocabulary by learning how to spell and by using the technical and subject-specific words which occur across the curriculum.

The role of the teacher is to:

- follow the school policy to help each child develop as a confident and independent speller;
- provide direct teaching and accurate modelling;
- provide resources and an environment which promotes good spelling;
- observe pupils, monitor progress and determine targets for development.

Continuity and Progression

Foundation Stage

The emphasis at this stage is multi-sensory linking the teaching and practising of letter shapes and patterns with the development of pupils' ability to listen to, and discriminate between, the constituent sounds which make up a word. Much of this occurs through games and activities which encourage focused listening in music, dance and physical education, as well as literacy activities where there is a focus on rhyme, rhythm and alliteration. Pupils learn at an early stage how to discriminate and make connections between letter sounds used in reading and letter names used in spelling.

Developmental writing is encouraged to give pupils confidence; it is crucial that pupils at this stage in their development as writers do not become over-concerned with spelling accuracy. Support is given to spelling by providing writers with aids such as letter charts, simple word banks and picture dictionaries to stimulate interest in, and enthusiasm for, words.

Key Stage 1

The Progression in Phonics programme will continue to be taught on a daily basis. Most pupils will have completed the programme (Step 7) by the end of Year 2. For spelling purposes, the emphasis is on the pupils' ability to segment words into phonemes and then match the most likely letter or letters to each sound by accessing the alphabetic code.

In addition, the pupils learn how to spell a number of sight words, high frequency words and common irregular words as listed in the National Literacy Strategy Framework to enable them to write fluently (see Folio 39). They investigate and learn to use common spelling patterns, and frequently used prefixes and inflectional endings in their own writing.

Pupils become increasingly independent. They identify reasons for misspellings in their own work and are taught how to use a simple dictionary, a range of word banks (including those on computers) and their knowledge of word families. The 'Say-Look-Cover-Write-Check' routine is established and risk-taking in the spelling of unknown words is encouraged through the use of 'have-a-go' pads. Pupils should know what their responsibilities are in terms of spelling and when they may seek assistance from an adult.

Key Stage 2

At Key Stage 2 there is an emphasis on the recognition of letter strings, visual patterns and analogies, the application of spelling conventions, the use of a range of word resources and the morphology of words. Nevertheless, it is recognised that some pupils will need to consolidate the phonic knowledge and skills from Key Stage 1.

Within the Literacy Hour there is a gradual shift from teaching at word level to teaching at sentence level.

An investigative approach is taken to the teaching of spelling, which is supported by the activities contained in the Spelling Bank (DfEE 1999) and the National Literacy Strategy Activity Resource Sheets (DfEE 1998). The National Literacy Strategy details the National Curriculum programme of teaching, but teachers will use their professional judgement in order to pitch the teaching at the appropriate developmental level.

Building on the approaches introduced in Key Stage 1, there is an emphasis on developing confidence and independence. It is expected that pupils assume increased responsibility by identifying their own spelling errors, making reasoned choices about likely alternatives and using a range of resources (including spellcheckers and a variety of dictionaries and word banks) for making corrections.

Inclusion

Where pupils have made limited progress in their ability to segment words for spelling, a targeted programme is required. The Additional Literacy Support materials (DfEE 1999) intended for pupils in Years 3 and 4 are used. Usually, a learning support assistant is deployed to support pupils who are underachieving in their spelling. Those children who need even more support can usefully work through the programme at a slower pace, although a lot of consolidation will be necessary.

Individual programmes for teaching and support are drawn up as appropriate by the teacher in consultation with the SEN co-ordinator and parents.

The learning environment

Teachers provide a rich and lively learning environment supported by well chosen word resources and interactive displays to enhance pupils' independence as spellers.

The role of parents and carers

Parents and carers are introduced to the school's spelling policy through written information in the school handbook and invitations to attend spelling workshops. The nursery/reception teacher, in particular, is responsible for communicating the school's policy about the place of spelling in the writing process.

At parents' meetings, formal and informal, teachers emphasise that it is important for parents not to confuse advancement in writing with spelling competence. This restricts development as a writer through unrealistic expectations and a misplaced emphasis on spelling. At a later stage parents are shown why it is inappropriate to correct every spelling error which a child has made.

Where appropriate, spelling investigations are carried out as homework activities, which, on occasions, are reinforced by learning at home those words which the pupils are likely to use in their own writing. From time to time, pupils learn words listed in their spelling journal.

Assessment and recording

Testing is used as a diagnostic tool and targets are set for pupils following a developmental model. Assessment is built into the medium-term plan against key learning objectives and is also carried out on a more informal basis as a part of daily teaching.

Individual or group spelling targets are addressed during the guided part of the hour when the teacher is able to respond to individual needs. Whenever possible spelling errors are tackled with pupils present. Teachers are expected to use their professional judgement as to the number of errors corrected in any single piece of writing and to be mindful of the developmental needs of pupils. Where appropriate, spelling targets are set and agreed with pupils; progress is monitored and the targets updated on a regular basis. Teachers give explicit feedback regarding the successful strategies used and knowledge employed.

Spelling tests are used from time to time but they are used sparingly and are not regarded as the main means by which spelling is taught.

Teachers pay particular attention to pupils with IEPs which relate to spelling.