

Our Spelling Approach at CHI

Beyond “Spelling by rote”, towards “Spelling by reason”

A. Quigley, Closing the Vocabulary Gap, 2018

Intent

Good spelling is an essential skill which allows our pupils to be able to communicate their understanding in all curriculum subjects. At CHI, we want our children to become confident spellers by teaching them a range of strategies, rules and conventions systematically and explicitly. This allows our pupils to focus on the skills of composition, sentence structure and precise word choice within their writing.

It is important that all members of staff are fully aware of, and understand, the way in which spelling is taught, so that our approach is implemented consistently to ensure continuity and progression in children’s learning. It is essential that children apply spelling rules and patterns in their writing rather than just rote learning spellings. As teachers, we need to ensure that spelling is taught using a combination of methods to ensure all children can succeed and feel positive about learning to spell. Successful spelling takes place when children have an opportunity to review and recall their learning. Teachers must provide opportunities to consolidate learning throughout each week. At CHI we:

- Develop a range of effective spelling strategies and teach the children to use them
- Encourage creativity and the use of more ambitious vocabulary in their writing
- Enable children to write independently
- Enhance proofreading and editing skills
- Encourage children to identify patterns in words and spellings
- Investigate vocabulary by exploring morphology and etymology
- Promote a positive and confident attitude towards spelling (Have a go)
- Help children recognise that spelling is a lifelong skill
- Remove barriers for all pupils to achieve success in spelling

Vocabulary in all areas of the curriculum can be examined using morphology and etymology, especially scientific key words. Teachers should select words judiciously, however, unpicking words should become a quick and seamless part of our everyday teaching in all lessons, helping to raise “word consciousness” across the school.

Implementation in Reception and Year 1 - daily spelling sessions

We use the [Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised SSP](#) (LW LS) in Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and Year 1.

Phonics lessons are taught daily and follow the format:-

- Lesson focus
- Revisit and review (words using taught GPCs and tricky words)
- Teach and practise (oral blending, introduce new words, example definitions and sentences - to put words into context)
- Practise and apply (read/write the sentence and spellings). The teacher dictates the sentence to the children.

See the [“Phonics” section in Reading](#) on our website.

Tricky words are taught as part of the discrete phonics lessons. Incidental songs eg [Tricky Words Songs](#) are used throughout the day/week to reinforce learning in the different Phases.

Teachers model sounding out sounds for reading (decoding) spelling (encoding) using whole body movement or spelling/ segmenting fingers to segment sounds in decodable words. Children are supported in spelling common exception words correctly in independent writing as soon as they can read them.

Importance is placed on rhyme, oral blending and segmenting sounds.

[Year 1 spellings](#). Year 1 children build on spellings learned in Reception and begin to learn more than one way of spelling particular sounds. As they have not had enough experience to know which spelling is accurate, the children will use their phonics knowledge to spell words at the alphabetic/phonemic level (LW LS). Many children can detect patterns and regularities from reading. In order to support all children in their learning, we also focus on spelling from an orthographic level:-

- onset and rime patterns - chalk talk walk, c/an m/an p/an (essential for alleviating working memory difficulties)
- syllables eg clapping and counting syllables in a word - fan-tas-tic
- CEW identifying the “tricky” part of the word

This also involves knowing if a word looks right!

morphemic knowledge (meaning of words) :-

- Prefixes, suffixes and root words

This supports the children in their spelling when writing.

They are also taught the Year 1 common exception and decodable words

Phases 2 and 3 - *the put pull full push to into I no go of he she we me be was you they all are my by sure pure*

Phase 4 - *said have like so do some come love were there little one when out what says here today*

Phase 5 - *their people oh, you Mr Mrs Ms could would should house mouse water want any many again who whole where two school call different thought through friend work once laugh because eye busy beautiful pretty hour more improve parents shoe*

In Reception and Year 1, children are supported in their independent writing by phonics visuals and word mats in the classroom (using LW mnemonics and visuals). All children take home Word Sets to support their learning of phonics and spelling. These include high frequency words and words to practise a particular sound. Some of these are decodable and others are tricky words.

Implementation in Year 2 - discrete sessions at least 3 times a week

Year 2 spelling In Year 2, children build on their spelling knowledge from Year 1. Spelling is explicitly taught alongside grammar three times a week to ensure all children progress. During these lessons children use their phonic knowledge, as well as looking at spelling from an orthographic level:-

- onset and rime patterns e.g. /-ar/ park, shark.. (essential for alleviating working memory difficulties)
- syllables: clapping and counting syllables in a word e.g. in-ter-est-ing
- 'Segmenting fingers' to segment sounds.
- CEW identifying the "tricky" part of the word

and using morphemic knowledge:-

- Prefixes, suffixes and root words

These sessions follow The Little Wandle Letters & Sounds Revised lesson format:

- Revisit and review (words using taught GPCs and tricky words)
- Teach and practise (oral blending, introduce new words, example definitions and sentences - to put words into context)
- Practise and apply (read/write the sentence and spellings)

They are also taught the Year 2 homophones and near homophones:-

there/their/they/re, here/hear, quite/quiet, see/sea, bare/bear, one/won, sun/son, to/too/two, be/bee, blue/blew, night/knight

And Phase 5 National Curriculum, year 2 common exception words, which include:-
door, floor, poor, because, find, kind, mind, behind, child, children, wild, climb, most, only, both, old, cold, gold, hold, told, every, everybody, even, great, break, steak, pretty, beautiful, after, fast, last, past, father, class, grass, pass, plant, path, bath, hour, move, prove, improve, sure, sugar, eye, could, should, would, who, whole, any, many, clothes, busy, people, water, again, half, money, Mr, Mrs, Ms, parents, Christmas.*

Spelling is also taught through dictation to allow the children to use and apply their new spellings within writing. Tricky words and frequently used words are also used in the dictation.

Children are supported in their independent writing by phonics visuals and word mats in the classroom, according to the level of support they need.

For children not yet working at the year 2 level, our knowledge of the individual child's next steps allows us to use targeted interventions.

As well as discrete spelling teaching we may also have spelling focus words as one of our early morning settling activities - using rainbow writing, pyramid writing, using the focus word in a silly sentence.

Agreed use of mnemonics at CHI:-

suffix '-ed' use Uncle Ed

'because' we use big elephants can actually understand small elephants

'c/sh/w o-u-l-d' use oh you lucky duck

Plus we take suggestions from the children too - particularly in year 2.

We meet as a staff to discuss new ideas to ensure consistency where necessary.

Using letter names

In decodable words - children use phonemes (sounds) and their "segmenting fingers" or clapping syllables to help them spell words.

In CEW/tricky words - children use letter names to spell words.

Assessment - Marking - Verbal feedback

Formative

Reception & Year 1

- use daily Keep Up and Further Intervention sessions for children who are not making expected progress
- children are encouraged to spot their own mistakes in their independent writing in order to prevent repeated errors

- Writing books and independent writing are reviewed regularly to identify whether spelling plans need adjusting

Year 2

Children's writing samples provide a window into the child's mind and help identify the area of difficulty. These areas can be addressed in the teaching sessions.

- Teachers identify gaps in learning by looking at the children who are experiencing difficulty
- use daily Keep Up and Further Intervention sessions for children who are not making expected progress
- children are encouraged to spot their own mistakes in their independent writing in order to prevent repeated errors
- proofreading is timetabled
- Linked to the spelling focus of the week, or phase words, the children are typically given 6 spellings a week to learn at home, so that they may identify other words that fit the pattern. This is followed up by a dictation exercise on Friday to assess the children's next steps for learning. The children mark this work together and misconceptions are addressed immediately.
- Scaffold working memory by teaching through spelling patterns
- Writing books and independent writing are reviewed regularly to identify whether spelling plans need adjusting
- Use of gemstone stickers to incentivise spelling and other writing skills

Summative

Reception & Year 1

- LW L&S assessments at the end of each half term - this data is analysed by the team and the Assessment Lead to inform next steps teaching and interventions.
- Writing books and independent writing are reviewed by year group teams and SLT

Year 2

- Weekly dictation scores are monitored so that appropriate challenge/support can be provided
- Writing books and independent writing are reviewed by year group teams and SLT

Research Review Series - English

Spelling

When young children are taught phonics, they learn the alphabetic code for spelling (encoding) as well as for reading (decoding). This is why spelling and decoding have been referred to as ‘reversible processes’.^[footnote 65] Reading involves blending the individual sounds of a word to say the whole word, while spelling requires the writer to segment a whole word into its individual sounds (phonemes) and to identify what they are.

As well as the skill of segmenting, children need to know which graphemes can represent the separate phonemes they have identified in the word they want to spell. They also need to know how to spell what the national curriculum refers to as ‘common exception words’, so called because their GPCs are unusual or have not yet been taught.^[footnote 66]

Knowing how to spell a word ‘makes the representation of it sturdy and accessible for fluent reading’.^[footnote 67] This is because spelling and reading call on the same representation – that is, the order of the letters that make up the word.

The Department for Education’s non-statutory curriculum guidance for the early years, ‘Development matters’, suggests that teachers of Reception-age children should dictate sentences for children to write that contain only the taught letter-to-sound correspondences.^[footnote 68] Similarly, the Year 1 national curriculum programme of study requires pupils to write down dictated sentences using ‘the GPCs and common exception words taught so far’.^[footnote 69]

Dictation gives children opportunities to practise and apply their spelling knowledge and segmenting skills, without having to compose sentences by themselves. It requires them to distinguish between the sounds they hear in order to choose the correct graphemes to represent the sounds and to form the letters correctly. They also have to understand what they are hearing to distinguish between homophones (for example, ‘to’/‘two’ and ‘meat’/‘meet’).

The Reading Framework

Encoding (spelling) To encode words, children are taught to identify the phonemes in spoken words first. This is also referred to as 'segmenting' spoken words. Then they write the graphemes that represent the phonemes.

Children:

1. hear the spoken word 'dog'
2. say 'dog' – /d/ /o/ /g/
3. write the three corresponding graphemes 'd', 'o', 'g' to spell the word 'dog'.

Children:

1. hear the spoken word 'goat'
2. say 'goat' – /g/ /oe/ /t/
3. write the three corresponding graphemes, 'g', 'oa', 't' to spell the word 'goat'.

It is more difficult for children to spell 'goat' than 'dog', because the sound /oe/ has different common spellings from which they must choose.

Children learn to read more quickly than they learn to spell correctly. This is why their progress in reading must not be held back by whether or not they can spell accurately. The national curriculum also says that reading and spelling should be taught alongside one another, 'so that pupils understand that they can read back words they have spelt'.

The more graphemes children learn to read and write, the more words they will be able to read and spell, and, as they decode unfamiliar words, they encounter new vocabulary. Young readers encounter words that they have not seen before much more frequently than experienced readers do, and they may not know the meaning of some of these. Practice at reading such words by sounding and blending can provide opportunities not only for pupils to develop confidence in their decoding skills, but also for teachers to explain the meaning and thus develop pupils' vocabulary.

Phonics continues to play an important role in spelling, even after key stage 1, because 'teachers should still draw pupils' attention to GPCs that do and do not fit in with what has been taught so far' in terms of spelling.

As they are taught to spell, children have opportunities to practise writing the letters they have been shown how to form.