



Hunsley Primary

Policy for the Teaching of Spelling

Version 1.0

“Effective spelling is *taught* not *caught!*”¹

“We don’t teach children words; we teach them *about* words!”

Important: This document can only be considered valid when viewed on the school website. If this document has been printed or saved to another location, you must check that the version number on your copy matches that of the document online.	Lucy Hudson, Head of Hunsley Primary
Name of Responsible Committee/Individual:	Hunsley Primary Local Governing Body
Implementation Date:	Autumn Term 2019
Review Date:	Autumn Term 2021
Target Audience:	All Staff, Parents, Pupils, Community Users, Key Stakeholders

¹ https://www.utas.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/988274/Teaching-Spelling-Strategies.pdf

Policy Contents

Policy Statement

1. Purpose and Scope
2. Roles and Responsibilities
3. Equality and Diversity
4. Vision, Values and Ethos
5. Systems and Processes
6. Monitoring of Compliance with and Effectiveness of This Policy
7. Review

Appendix

Policy Statement

This policy outlines the principles and values underpinning the expectations of Hunsley Primary for the teaching of spelling across the curriculum.

Purpose and Scope

This policy is applicable to all year groups at Hunsley Primary and all members of the teaching team. Its aim is to ensure consistent, precise teaching of spelling based on research-informed practices and agreed best strategies.

Roles and Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the Head and the Senior Leadership team to ensure that all staff are aware of and understand the policy and to monitor and support its application.

It is also the responsibility of the same team to ensure that all staff have appropriate training to enable them to deliver the programme and approach to a high standard.

Equality and Diversity

Hunsley Primary is committed to:

- Eliminating discrimination and promoting equality and diversity in its policies, procedures and guidelines.
- Delivering high quality teaching and services that meet the diverse needs of its pupil population and its workforce, ensuring that no individual or group is disadvantaged.

Vision, Values and Ethos

Vision: Our Commitment

Hunsley Primary is committed to being an innovative, stimulating, forward-thinking free school that makes the most of its freedoms to impact positively on pupils' lives in the community and provide opportunities for all its children to make outstanding progress. Hunsley Primary children are capable, confident and creative thinkers and motivated, resilient, problem-solving learners. In particular, the school is committed to developing pupils as mathematicians and scientists.

Values: Our Children

At Hunsley Primary, we believe that every child is an individual, ready, able and eager to learn, and as such a member of the team. We are a fully inclusive school and we view every child as unique; we believe that all learning activities should be personalised and challenging to meet all pupils' needs and that every child should receive the care, guidance, nurture and robust support they need to overcome disadvantage or barriers to learning. It is our prime aim that all children make their best progress in an enabling learning environment, in the presence of their peers and the security of positive relationships with those around them. Our highly-trained expert classroom practitioners, from teachers, TAs, volunteers to associate Trust staff, ensure that all children have the chance to work, discuss and learn with professionals who are passionate about education.

By ensuring our children become responsible for directing, sustaining and reviewing their own learning, taking responsibility for critiquing their own and each other's work and for setting ambitious challenges, we aim to embed an understanding of the importance of refining work to its best point so that children feel a sense of high achievement as a result of the feedback they receive.

By maximising the benefits of our close relationship with South Hunsley School and Sixth Form College and its subject specialists, we aim to secure a continuum of learning and a depth of conceptual understanding necessary for excellent progress in all curriculum areas, leading to the highest achievement at Key Stage 2, GCSE and A Level and, in due course, access to the most aspirational HE institutions, courses and professions for all children.

Ethos: Our Teaching and Learning Rationale

Engagement, Enjoyment, Discovery, Reflection, Achievement

Our aim is to deliver teaching and learning which meets the needs of every single pupil in school, basing our planning on rigorous assessment and observation, mapping out challenging, supportive next steps. We plan our curriculum activities and our personalised teaching and learning approach to match the following rationale:

- Flexible, personalised timeframes for learning, based on excellent pupil-centred teaching – teachers highly conversant in the complexities and specialisms of their practice
- Real learning themes and deep-thinking investigations, which prepare our pupils for 21st Century living and engage them in learning with enjoyment and passion
- Inspirational and challenging learning activities, which have the principles of scientific enquiry and investigation ('working scientifically') at their core, generating a lifelong love of learning, enquiry and discovery and a systematic means of approaching challenging and new tasks
- A union of partnerships with cross-phase, multi-agency and multi-disciplinary expertise for planning, delivery, monitoring and review, to ensure each child has every opportunity to build successfully on their learning from 4 to 19, removing barriers to engagement and development
- Pupil resilience, independence, confidence and readiness to meet the rigours of education, through to university and beyond, and the demands of living and working in a rapidly-changing technological world
- Innovative, immersive and inclusive learning resources, combining the best of expert input, outdoor, hands-on, experiential learning and digital interfaces, to give pupils every opportunity to aspire to their full potential.

Systems and Processes

What is the teaching of spelling?

The acquisition of understanding with regard to spelling is a developmental process and requires a considered and consistent, precise teaching methodology which is shared across a school.

Peter Westwood² describes the stages through which children pass as they develop as spellers:

- pre-phonetic or pre-communicative spelling (aged 3-5)
- phonetic spelling (aged 6)
- transitional spelling (7-8)
- independent spelling (8+)

Hunsley Primary teachers need to have a sound understanding of the developmental spelling stages, how these apply to each child and how knowledge of the stages can direct planning and teaching.

Spelling is a visual-motor skill; children will therefore need to develop a multi-sensory, visual and physical awareness of the connection between sound, letter and word formation, alongside the knowledge of morphology, in order to spell correctly.

Phonic knowledge alone is not sufficient in teaching children to make the leap from transitional spelling to independent spelling with accuracy and Westwood again states in his text that '*Competent spellers possess a repertoire of ways for learning, storing, recalling and checking the spelling of the words they use*'; therefore, the school approach is to strengthen early reading and writing strategies with a wide range of sensory, morphological and phonological approaches the children will experience to really embed the knowledge and technique needed to become a 'competent speller'.

Why explicitly teach spelling?

The teaching of spelling begins with the teaching of phonics and, through precision learning of key morphological patterns, our aim is to teach pupils to be independent spellers taking responsibility for the accurate application of their learning to writing tasks and the proof-reading of their written work. Early application of phonics to the acquisition of spelling will also enable children to decode words independently when reading and communicate more easily and effectively when writing.

Pupils do not simply learn to spell accurately through repetition, testing and checking, although reading regularly and matching reading texts to the stage of development can help children to develop accurate spelling through word recognition. Children specifically need to be taught the knowledge to become independent spellers; therefore, teachers must ensure children gain firm understanding of the principles underpinning word construction (phonemic, morphemic and etymological). Teachers will place emphasis on the recognition of letter strings, visual patterns, the application of spelling conventions, and the morphology of words. This must also involve a firm understanding of the connection between letter formation and the motor memory of spelling.

Children should learn over time to recognise how these principles apply to each word, in order to learn to spell words.

Teachers must deliver:

- a daily lesson to teach discrete phonics and spelling in Foundation Stage and Year 1.
- the 'Letters and Sounds' phonics programme (Phase 1-4) to teach phonic knowledge and its application in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 (and where necessary in Key Stage 2, where support and intervention are required)
- for Phase 5-6, grouping of graphemes according to sound; teaching to enhance the acquisition of spelling rules and patterns.
- a daily lesson to teach children in all year groups the spelling rules, patterns and structures.

² 'Teaching Spelling: Exploring Commonsense Strategies and Best Practices'; Peter Westwood, Routledge, 2014

- At least twice-weekly, discrete handwriting practice to build on the spellings delivered that week, applying relevant knowledge and to develop sensory awareness of writing for spelling.

Teaching staff must:

- Plan, teach, observe and monitor the progress of children and identify further targets for development.
- Mark spellings and handwriting in all exercise books according to the Assessment, Feedback and Marking Policy.

How do we teach spelling?

Year 2 and Key Stage 2

Daily session of spelling work, learning the spelling rule for the week or the unit of work leading into English.

Year 1

Daily session of phonics and spelling followed by English.

Reception

Daily session of phonics

All teaching of spelling will be planned around the following programme:

Revisit, Reflect and Check

This part will involve reviewing the previous learning and discussing out loud the key points. Quick whiteboard checks from the teacher take place at this point and children are encouraged to use the prior learning in sentences, aloud and in writing. The principles underlying the spelling need to be checked at this point too – e.g. if the class were previously looking at suffixes, then they must demonstrate a very sound grasp of the morphology of words moving from the base morpheme to the base morpheme + suffix.

Define, Teach and Model New Learning

This will be the new learning for the week and will link with the English teaching taking place each day. Building on the week’s unit of learning each day, the teacher will deliver a range of precision activities to enable the children to learn the morphology, rules and categories for that specific spelling pattern.

Explore, Investigate and Trial

This is the part of the session where the children work independently to consolidate and try out their new learning. They cover spelling rules using a range of strategies – visual, morphological, etymological, alphabet code, visual memory, tactile memory, use of manipulatives, metacognition about what helps them learn and what does not.

Apply, Assess and Review

In this part, the teacher needs to revise the learning and check the memory, understanding and knowledge of the children. This might be done through whole class dictation or paired composition work between the teaching staff and the pupils.

What is the programme?

We gradually build pupils' spelling vocabulary and accuracy by introducing patterns or conventions and recalling weekly those already introduced. We explicitly teach word study and spellings must be taught in context; e.g. we do not teach homophones 'where' and 'were' together, as they are not morphologically linked.

We incorporate a daily, regular and systematic approach to spelling.

We use investigative, problem-solving and enquiry-based approaches to teach the children and to promote deeper thinking about spelling and word patterns.

It is expected that pupils assume increased responsibility for identifying their own spelling errors, making reasoned choices about likely alternatives and using a range of resources for making corrections, e.g. dictionaries

Pupils are exposed to words from high and medium frequency word lists during spelling sessions and their knowledge of these words is assessed through daily formative assessment and their application in writing across the full curriculum. The depth of understanding and memory of spelling rules will be assessed using half termly summative assessment measures.

We use flexible groupings (paired, individual, small group, whole class, teacher one-to-one) and encourage the children to share the strategies they find useful.

We will not give pre-set spelling lists without explicit and relevant contextual teaching.

Parents will know the key words for each Key Stage as we include them in the Reading Record book for each class / year group / Key Stage.

Support and Intervention

Where the age-related programme for children is not appropriate for their stage of development, a programme of intervention will be put in place to address the gaps in knowledge or the challenges in application. The school uses online resources, such as Nessie, to support the spelling development of children with dyslexia. Where the motor skills of children prevent the vital connection between physical sensation of writing and the morphology of words, a focus on other sensory techniques, such as mouthing spellings, will take precedence in the support programmes.

Monitoring the Effectiveness and Application of the Policy

The Head of Hunsley Primary and those with delegated leadership responsibility in school, will carry out monitoring and evaluation activities to support teaching staff in their delivery of the approaches agreed in this policy.

Review

This policy will be reviewed within 2 years of the date of implementation.

Appendix (An overview of Theory)

³ Literacy Teaching Toolkit – Spelling

Spelling requires students to draw on a range of knowledge about the English language. This knowledge includes:

- phonological knowledge - knowledge of the sound structure of language
- orthographical knowledge - knowledge of the system of written symbols used to represent spoken language
- morphemic knowledge - knowledge of the smallest parts of words that carry meaning
- etymological knowledge - knowledge of the origins of words (Oakley & Fellowes, 2016, p.6)

Phonological knowledge

Phonological knowledge refers to knowledge about the sounds in language. It is an important part of learning to write (and read). As part of learning to spell, students need to develop phonological awareness, that is, the ability to hear, identify, and manipulate syllables, rhymes and individual sounds (phonemes) in spoken words.

In order to spell words, students use this phonological knowledge to segment each word into smaller units, such as syllables, phonemes or onset and rime, and accurately match these to appropriate letters or letter combinations (graphemes). Another important part of phonological knowledge development is the ability to understand that sentences comprise words, and to hear and identify the separate words in sentences.

Orthographical knowledge

Orthographical knowledge is the awareness of the symbols (letters or groups of letters) used to represent the individual sounds of spoken language in written form. To spell fluently, students also need to know the rules about how written letters are arranged in English. Beginning writers will need to understand the alphabetic principle, that is, that spoken language can be recorded in written language by using alphabet letters (graphemes). The 26 letters of the English language are used to represent the phonemes of words. A grapheme can comprise one or more letters. The main ones include:

- single letter graphemes, b as in banana, c as in cat or city
- double letter graphemes, ee as in feet, oo as in book
- double consonant graphemes, bb as in bubble, ss as in miss
- digraphs – two different letters representing a phoneme, sh as in sheep, ir as in bird
- consonant clusters, gl as in glow, scr as in scratch
- trigraphs – three different letters representing a phoneme, igh as in night, dge as in judge

English orthography follows a highly regular system of patterns. Even though some sounds can be represented by a variety of different letters or letter combinations, these are regular and fixed (Westwood, 2014).

Morphemic knowledge

Morphemes are the smallest parts of words that carry meaning. Morphemic knowledge involves understanding how morphemes can be used to form words. The spelling of longer words requires students to identify and put together the necessary morphemes.

There are two types of morphemes: free morphemes (bases or roots) and bound morphemes (affixes).

Free morphemes are those that can stand alone as separate words (play as in playing, friend as in unfriendly).

Bound morphemes are not words themselves and cannot occur independently. When added to words, bound morphemes can change the meaning of words or create new words. Bound morphemes include prefixes (e.g. re-, dis- trans-) which are added to the beginning of words and suffixes (e.g. -able, -les, -ly) which are added to the end of words. Some suffixes can change the number (singular/plural as in dish/ dishes) or tense (present/past as in play/plays/played) of a word.

Morphological knowledge plays a strong role in determining the spelling of many words in English.

Etymological knowledge

Etymological knowledge refers to how the history and origins of words relates to their meaning and spelling. Many words in modern English come from or have their roots in other languages, particularly Latin and Greek. For example, the Greek word, graph (write) is the root or stem of the family of words such as graphics, autograph, and photography. Knowing about the origin of these words is helpful to students when learning to spell them.

Teaching spelling

One of the key goals of teaching spelling is to support students to develop the knowledges required (see above) as well as flexible and efficient strategies that they can draw upon when learning to spell unfamiliar words. While most students will develop some strategies for themselves, these are often not sufficient to meet all their spelling needs.

The teacher's role, therefore, is to extend the repertoire of strategies students have at their disposal. Some of these other strategies might include: "look, say, cover, write, check", spelling by analogy (for example, knowing how to spell 'ball' facilitates the spelling of fall, call, tall) or using mnemonics (memory aids, for example, the principal is my pal) and other resources such as dictionaries and spell checkers.

The ability to spell does not develop naturally. Like reading and writing, it needs to be taught explicitly. Based on the assessment of children's writing and reading, teachers can build a profile of the knowledge and strategies being used by students. In modelled, shared, interactive and guided writing contexts, then, teachers can demonstrate ways to work out how to spell words, how to use various resources to help with spelling, and how to proofread or check spelling. Students can observe and

listen to the teacher, as a model of a proficient writer, as she uses the knowledge and strategies necessary to problem solve the spelling of familiar and unfamiliar words.

Learning to spell takes time. With many repeated opportunities to write for different purposes and audiences, students will learn more about how words work, what other authors do, and reflect on how the knowledge and strategies they are learning will support their own writing. If spelling knowledge and strategies are taught in isolation, they will not be as useful to students. Students also need many opportunities to see and read print.

A classroom rich in environmental print and being involved in shared, guided and independent reading of a wide range of genres including fiction and non-fiction will allow students to notice, think about and recall what words look like. They will also learn about the possible letter combinations in English, the conventions of books and print, including concepts of word, letter and sentence, and the relationship between letters and sounds.

Good spellers also have a positive attitude to spelling. They display a curiosity about words, attempt unknown words and take care about spelling for publication. A classroom program that encourages risk-taking, promotes investigations of sounds and words, and gives spelling 'real life' significance will be supportive of the spelling development of all students.

Priorities for teaching

Across the different stages of primary school, F-2, 3-4 and 5-6, teaching emphases will change according to the students' stages of spelling development and spelling needs. In the early years, F-2, there is generally a focus on teaching phonic knowledge and visual strategies as this is what young writers try to use as they invent spelling at this stage. As students move through the middle and upper levels of primary school, the focus changes to the teaching and exploration of morphemic and etymological knowledge. This said, attention can be given to all the types of knowledge and the teaching of high frequency words, at each stage, depending on students' needs.

Assessment of students' spelling ability can take many forms. The analysis of students' writing or a dictated writing task contributes to a rich profile of what each student can do, with errors giving insights into which knowledge and strategies students are drawing upon when problem solving an unfamiliar word. Talking with students during writing conferences can also provide further detail about knowledge and strategies being used. While spelling tests can be useful in providing standardised scores and spelling ages, it is vital to move beyond the score to consider the types of errors being made. This richer data will then be useful in designing differentiated learning programs in spelling.

Theory to Practice - Development stage theory

The most influential theory to impact the teaching of spelling is that of developmental stage theory. According to Gentry (1982, 2004), there are five stages of spelling development:

1. pre-communicative/pre-phonetic stage: words are represented using strings of letters and symbols that do not relate to the sounds in words.
2. semi-phonetic stage: students begin to represent some of the sounds in words, more often consonants or whole syllables, with plausible letters or letter combinations. This is usually the start of invented spelling.

3. phonetic stage: every sound in words is represented by letters. Students show awareness of some letter-sound correspondences. Some students may stagnate at this stage if they do not learn to use other strategies beyond phonological knowledge.
4. transitional stage: students begin to pay more attention to orthographical and morphemic knowledge, as well as spelling rules. More words are spelt conventionally.
5. conventional spelling: most words are spelt conventionally. Students control phonological, orthographical and morphemic knowledge needed and use a range of strategies.

This theory helps teachers to understand the typical pathway students will take as they learn to spell. It acknowledges that children's spelling errors are not random but can reveal something about their thinking about spelling. It also encourages teachers to focus on individual student needs and development rather than a one-size-fits-all program.

Overlapping waves theory

Developmental stage theory suggests that students learn to spell in a neat, linear sequence. However, this is not the case. Overlapping waves theory (OWT) (Siegler, 1996), suggests that when learning to spell, students will typically be thinking in different ways and using multiple strategies to solve a problem at the same time. These different ways of thinking can coexist together and the frequency with which the students use different strategies will rise and fall over time. Students will gradually discard those strategies that are no longer useful to them as they learn more efficient and sophisticated strategies to meet their spelling needs (Oakley & Fellowes, 2016, p. 23).

Spelling and school success

Teaching spelling also supports reading and writing, and vice versa (Adoniou, 2016, p.11). Learning how words and language works contributes to vocabulary development. This, in turn, supports reading comprehension and enhances choices made when composing written texts. While it is acknowledged that spelling ability is not related to intelligence, poor spelling can affect performance across all areas of the school curriculum.

References

Adoniou, M. (2016). *Spelling it out*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gentry, J.R. (1982). An analysis of developmental spelling in "GYNS AT WK", *The Reading Teacher*, 36(2), 192-200.

Gentry, J.R. (2004). *The science of spelling: the explicit specifics that make great readers and writers (and spellers)*, Portsmouth, NH.: Heinemann.

Oakley, G. & Fellowes, J. (2016). *A closer look at spelling in the primary classroom*. Newtown, NSW.: PETAA.

Siegler, R.S. (1996). *Emerging minds: the process of change in children's thinking*. NY.: Oxford University Press.

Westwood, P. (2014). *Teaching spelling: exploring common sense strategies and best practices*. Hoboken: Taylor & Francis.