

Spelling Policy

St Matthew's Catholic Primary School



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Vision and Aims

At St Matthew's, we believe that all children can become fluent, confident and competent spellers. Good spelling supports children to communicate their ideas clearly and accurately, and enables them to write with confidence, fluency and enjoyment. When children are secure in spelling, they are more able to concentrate on vocabulary, sentence construction and the content of their writing.

Rooted in our Catholic mission, we maintain high expectations for all pupils, including pupils with SEND, pupils learning English and those facing disadvantage. We want children to be adventurous with language, write creatively and for pleasure, and develop the independence to identify, learn and apply spelling patterns and conventions.

Spelling is an essential skill which allows children to communicate their understanding in writing across the curriculum. Our spelling provision therefore combines systematic teaching, repeated practice, application in writing and responsive support.

Progression in Spelling

By the end of Year 6, pupils should have secure knowledge of phonics, spelling patterns, rules, morphology and etymology, and should be able to apply a range of strategies to spell accurately. Our curriculum follows the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework in Reception and the National Curriculum for England in Years 1 to 6, with particular attention to the explicit teaching and application of spelling knowledge.

The journey begins in Reception with children learning to segment words for spelling through the school's systematic synthetic phonics programme, Read, Write, Inc., using Fred Fingers. Alongside phonics, children learn an increasing number of common exception or 'red words'. Years 1 and 2 continue to use Read, Write, Inc. and Fred Fingers to support the spelling of phonemes taught.

As pupils move through the school, teaching develops from phonics into more complex phonics code, spelling patterns, rules, morphology and etymology. Ready Steady Spell provides a structured progression through Years 2 to 6, revisiting objectives within and across year groups so that learning is embedded over time.

The progression document systematically develops children's morphological and phonological spelling knowledge and rules, as appropriate to their stage of learning. It builds on prior knowledge in an incremental and structured manner and provides engaging and interactive strategies to support recall and embed spellings into long-term memory.

Curriculum Design and Planning

Spelling is planned using the Ready Steady Spell programme as the school's systematic spelling resource. The programme covers the National Curriculum expectations in a cyclical and structured way and clearly sets out what is to be taught and when. Teachers remain responsible for the spelling taught and for ensuring that teaching responds to the needs of their pupils.

Ready Steady Spell includes common exception words in Key Stage 1 and Statutory Word List words in Key Stage 2, alongside explicit teaching of spelling strategies, rules and application. Objectives are returned to within and across year groups three times to support retention and consolidation.

Planning and teaching should make clear links between spelling and writing. Pupils are given opportunities to apply newly taught words and strategies in meaningful contexts, including their independent writing, so that spelling becomes an active part of the writing process rather than a separate skill.

In Year 6, Ready Steady Spell supports transition by encouraging pupils to identify their own misspellings, use spelling journals and develop editing skills. This helps pupils take increasing ownership of their spelling and apply strategies independently.

Strong Foundations in Spelling

In Reception and Key Stage 1, phonics plays a vital role in children's ability to spell. Phonics sessions take place daily and are tailored to children's needs and abilities, with the approaches detailed in the school's phonics policy. Children use Fred Fingers to segment words for spelling and develop their understanding of the relationship between phonemes and graphemes.

Children learn common exception or 'red words' throughout Reception, Year 1 and Year 2. These words are revisited regularly and are supported through home learning. Where applicable, phonics teaching continues into Key Stage 2 so that pupils receive additional support with the complex phonics code before moving towards increasingly explicit teaching of spelling patterns, rules, morphology and etymology.

Adults model accurate spelling and language, provide opportunities for oral rehearsal and encourage children to explain the strategies they are using. Spelling should be taught explicitly and pupils should have extensive opportunities to practise and apply what they have learned.

Daily Spelling and Ready Steady Spell

From Year 2, spelling is taught explicitly through Ready Steady Spell, with the frequency set out below.

Year 2

- Spelling is taught daily for 20 minutes, beginning in the first week of the Spring term.
- Lessons follow a clear four-part sequence: Revisit/Revise, Teach, Practise and Apply.
- Teaching includes common exception words, strategies to support remembering spellings, rules where appropriate and application in writing.
- The programme includes a weekly review session, ongoing formative assessment and dedicated assessment weeks to monitor progress and identify further teaching needed.
- A weekly spelling test is used to review words that have already been taught. Children are not asked to spell words they have not previously been taught and exposed to.
- Weekly parent sheets provide the words being learned and tested so that families can support practice at home.

Years 3–6

- Spelling is taught three times per week, beginning in the first week of the Autumn term.
- Lessons follow a clear four-part sequence: Revisit/Revise, Teach, Practise and Apply.
- Teaching includes Statutory Word List words, strategies to support remembering spellings, rules where appropriate and application in writing.
- The programme includes a weekly review session, ongoing formative assessment and dedicated assessment weeks.
- Revision weeks are built into Ready Steady Spell: Summer 2 in Year 4, and Spring 1, Spring 2 and Summer 1 in Year 6. These link directly to end-of-Key-Stage-2 content domains.

- In Year 6 Summer 2, Ready Steady Spell supports transition through spelling journals, identifying personal misspellings and explicit editing of writing.
- A weekly spelling test is used to review words that have already been taught and Statutory Word List words from the previous week.
- Weekly spellings are sent home to support learning and are tested the following week to check that learning has been consolidated.

Teaching and Learning the St Matthew's Way

Spelling lessons are explicit, structured and purposeful. Teachers establish what pupils already know, revisit prior learning, introduce the spelling pattern, rule or strategy, model accurate application, provide guided and independent practice, and use assessment to determine the next teaching step.

The four-part Ready Steady Spell sequence of Revisit/Revise, Teach, Practise and Apply supports pupils to retrieve previous learning, understand new knowledge, practise accurately and apply spelling in context. Teachers provide repeated opportunities to rehearse words and strategies so that spelling knowledge becomes increasingly automatic.

Teachers encourage pupils to think about how words are constructed and to use appropriate strategies, including phonological knowledge, morphology, spelling rules and patterns, word families and etymology where appropriate. Pupils are encouraged to identify and correct errors and to take increasing responsibility for editing their writing.

Inclusion and Adaptation

The same ambitious spelling curriculum is made accessible through responsive teaching. Teachers adapt the pace, amount of practice, presentation and support in response to pupils' needs while maintaining the intended learning.

Pupils who need additional support may receive further phonics teaching, additional rehearsal, targeted adult support or individual spelling practice. Teachers should use pupils' spelling errors to identify whether the difficulty relates to phonics, a spelling pattern, a rule, morphology, memory or application, and select an appropriate strategy.

Pupils learning English benefit from explicit teaching of vocabulary, oral rehearsal and opportunities to hear, say, read and write words in context. Pupils with SEND may benefit from reduced cognitive load, repeated practice, visual or multisensory strategies, additional processing time and carefully selected words for independent practice.

Support if Needed

Any child identified as struggling with spelling lessons may be placed on the Spelling Tutor programme. The programme works at each individual child's pace and uses repeated testing with increasingly longer gaps between tests to support the transfer of spellings from short-term to long-term memory.

Spelling Tutor focuses on frequently used words and covers words pupils are expected to learn from Year 1 to Year 6. It dictates words and sentences for children to write, after which pupils mark their own work. This reinforces correct spelling and encourages ownership of learning.

Spelling Tutor provides a list of words that the child needs to continue to practise. Teachers use this information to identify appropriate strategies and provide further support.

Assessment and Responsive Teaching

Assessment is used to improve teaching and learning rather than to create unnecessary evidence. Teachers use ongoing formative assessment to identify gaps in spelling knowledge and adapt examples, grouping, pace and practice accordingly.

Ready Steady Spell includes formative assessment within the teaching sequence. Weekly Friday test sessions provide an opportunity to review learning and identify gaps. Teachers also observe pupils during spelling lessons and consider how securely pupils apply spelling knowledge and strategies in their wider writing.

Regular five- or six-weekly assessments take place as identified in the Ready Steady Spell progression document. These assessment weeks are used to assess progress and identify pupils who need further group or individual support.

Assessment information is shared with the English Lead, Assessment Lead and SLT so that attainment gaps between different groups of children can be monitored, with a particular focus on the bottom 20%.

Personal Development and Building the Kingdom

Spelling contributes to pupils' personal development by helping them communicate their thoughts, ideas and understanding clearly and confidently. Through careful teaching, practice and editing, pupils develop perseverance, independence and pride in the quality of their work.

In keeping with our Catholic mission, pupils are encouraged to use language thoughtfully and respectfully. Spelling is taught as part of the wider development of children as confident communicators who can participate positively in the life of the school and wider community.

Why Spelling is Important

At St Matthew's, we recognise that good spelling supports children's enjoyment, confidence and accuracy in writing. When children are constantly stopping to think about how words are spelled, this can interrupt the flow of their ideas and reduce their capacity to focus on vocabulary and sentence construction. Secure spelling therefore supports children to make adventurous vocabulary choices and communicate precisely.

The Education Endowment Foundation's Improving Literacy guidance emphasises the importance of explicitly teaching spelling and providing pupils with extensive opportunities to practise. It also highlights the value of considering the types of spelling errors pupils make so that teachers can identify appropriate strategies for improvement.

Leadership Monitoring and Review

Class teachers plan, teach, adapt and assess spelling and communicate concerns about progress with the spelling subject lead. Teachers are responsible for ensuring that pupils receive the planned spelling curriculum and that assessment information is used to inform subsequent teaching.

We recognise the importance of strong subject leadership at St Matthew's. Allocated subject leadership time enables the spelling lead to undertake learning walks, review planning, monitor books and standards, and provide coaching or team teaching where useful. Subject leaders share effective practice and support staff with the consistent implementation of Ready Steady Spell, phonics, assessment and intervention.

Monitoring focuses on how well pupils understand and retain spelling knowledge, the consistency of spelling strategies and vocabulary, the quality of application in writing, and the effectiveness of

adaptations and additional support. Findings from monitoring and assessment inform action plans, staff development and curriculum planning.

Working with Families

Year group spelling information is shared with parents and carers, including the words pupils are learning and opportunities to practise at home. Teachers communicate individual progress and support with families as needed.

Weekly spelling lists and parent sheets help families understand the words and patterns being taught and provide a clear opportunity for practice before the following week's spelling test. The school encourages families to support spelling through regular, short practice and by encouraging children to apply new spellings in their reading and writing.

Homework

Weekly spelling words are sent home to support learning and consolidation. Homework should reinforce spellings and strategies already taught in school rather than introduce unfamiliar words. Teachers use the outcomes of spelling tests and ongoing assessment to identify where further classroom practice or targeted support is required.

Related Guidance

Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework; National Curriculum in England English programmes of study; Read, Write, Inc. phonics programme; Ready Steady Spell progression document and teaching resources; Education Endowment Foundation Improving Literacy guidance; school Phonics Policy; school English Policy; school Assessment and SEND policies.