

We are often asked by parents to explain how we teach spelling and why we no longer routinely send spelling lists home for children to learn.

Our approach to the teaching of spelling has changed significantly in recent years, both in response to research evidence and to meet the demands of the new curriculum.

We have found that the practice, of sending lists home, does not impact much beyond a test, as children seldom applied these 'learnt' spellings in their writing, nor does it prepare them for when they encountered words, which had not appeared on their spelling lists, within the SAT. In fact, we actually found that weekly spelling lists and tests often gave children, staff and parents a false impression about children's spelling ability, which only came to light once they got SAT results, showing results that were below expectations.

Instead, we have found it much more beneficial to focus our dedicated weekly spelling lesson on exploring spelling patterns and strategies. If a child is able to work out a rule, through such exploration, they are much more likely to understand it and, therefore, apply it consistently and in the correct context. Once they have explored the spelling rule, they have the opportunity to apply it within the same lesson. If they require further support or practice of a particular rule, staff are able to follow this up within focused interventions.

Traditional tests form a small, but necessary, part of our spelling activities. These tend to be 'unseen' because they provide an opportunity for children to apply skills and spelling rules, which are the focus for most lessons, and because they are useful preparation for the SATs in Years 2 & 6, when they will face an unseen spelling test, which will involve applying a variety of rules.

The children all have access to a 'writing mat', which incorporate the rules that they are expected to know by the end of the year, and are encouraged to refer to it to support spelling, grammar and punctuation skills whilst writing.

Through the marking process, staff identify commonly misspelt word, which are sent home, via Marvellous Me or Class Dojo. Where appropriate, we provide each child with their own personal spelling 'hit list' (on a post-it), encourage them find and correct errors within their writing and transfer the post-it to other books to avoid repeating this same error again when writing in other subjects.

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