Spelling with your child at home

A guide to spelling

At Garway School we believe that learning to spell is a key part of becoming a successful writer and an essential lifelong skill.

In Key Stage 1, the emphasis is on learning to read and spell sounds, then putting these together to make words. Children are encouraged to have a go, sounding out words as they write using their 'Fred Talk' strategies, as well as learning high frequency 'tricky' words.

In Key Stage 2, we continue to encourage children to 'have a go' and use their phonic strategies. However, we also teach spelling rules and patterns. We encourage children to use a wider range of strategies to spell words including:

- Breaking words down into syllabic chunks
- Using a dictionary to help
- Learning and recalling rules such as *'I before e except after c'*
- Using mnemonics such *as 'Big Elephants Can Always Understand Small Elephants'*

Research shows that spellings should not be learned at home in isolation for weekly spelling tests as children find it difficult to embed these spellings in their daily writing. Instead we want to encourage children to understand and learn spelling rules and then apply them consistently when spelling words in a range of contexts.

This hand-out is designed to help you to understand how spellings are taught in school and how to support your child with their spelling at home.

In school we use the ***Shakespeare Spelling Scheme***, which has wordlists of key word patterns and word families, as well as exception / tricky words to learn.

The differentiated wordlists are sent home **every half term** for you to share with your child on a regular basis. One suggestion is for you to look at a word pattern or rule each week. The children will not be tested on these spellings until the end of the half term when we feel they will have been using these words regularly and are confident in what the words mean and how to use them.

We have adopted the Shakespeare Scheme as it provides teachers, parents and children, with a wide range of activities tailored to individual needs and interest. Activities to support the scheme can be used as homework, taught, collaborative or independent tasks.

To support the word lists the children will be given further activities and games to help practise these words such as:

Writing sentences: The children are encouraged to write their own sentences for each word to ensure they understand the meaning of the words.

Alphabetical order: Where children sort words into alphabetical order.

Word searches: A familiar favourite of children. The words in these go in five directions – horizontal (forwards and backwards), vertical (forwards and backwards) and diagonal (forwards).

Definitions: Only by understanding the word, can children use these spellings in their written work. For this task the children need to research the meaning themselves.

Word Jumbles: The letters of each spelling word have been scrambled up. Word lists are provided for the children to order them.

Using Dictionaries as a spelling tool

The use of dictionaries – either physical, online or through other devices, is an essential tool for spelling success. It encourages children to see root words, word classes, understand homonyms and also opens their mind to the wide range of vocabulary available. Some tasks may specifically require the use of dictionaries or children may need to use them to find out exact meanings of words.

FURTHER OPPORTUNITIES FOR SPELLING AT HOME

Lots of things that families do every day present opportunities to learn how to spell key words.

- Going shopping: write lists, help to find goods on the shelves and read the labels. Signs in supermarkets, names of foods that children like most will be remembered first and of course will help reading.
- Environmental print: walks, rides in the car, on buses and trains expose children to familiar words, new words and signs. You can have fun looking for spellings that have been changed for effect e.g. 'KWIK-FIT', spot the road signs and signs on restaurants.
- Games: Published and traditional family games help with spelling and are good fun! Scrabble, Boggle, Snap, Lotto, Upwords, Lexicon, Kanu go, Hangman, crosswords, and word searches are just some examples.
- 'Find it' challenges: pages from magazines and newspapers together with a highlighter are a cheap and easy way to provide and encourage visual skills. For example, ask your child to find words beginning with 'r', or words with two syllables, or words with 'ch' in them, etc.

'"That was what I wanted to ask you," said Pooh, "because my spelling is wobbly. It's good spelling but it wobbles and the letters get in the wrong places."'

A. A. Milne, Winnie the Pooh, 1926