



15th September 2017

Dear Parents

Spelling in Years 3-6

I am writing to give you details of how spelling is taught in Years 3-6. As the children will not be returning home with weekly lists to learn, I wanted to reassure you that spelling remains an important area of English that is regularly targeted in lessons and, in fact, the Department is working hard to raise its profile. However, there is no 'one way suits all' method of teaching (unfortunately) – children learn to spell in many ways - so we too use a variety of approaches to help children master spelling.

Occasionally, lists will be sent home, but when they are not, children will be developing their own personal spelling banks and targeting approximately 5 words a week. These words will be taken from a range of sources: the spelling focus of the week; corrected spellings within their marked books; from the statutory word lists for Years 3-6. They may work with partners within their English group to check the troublesome words at a designated point in the week. Limiting the number of words aims to ensure success and enable deeper learning.

Over the next few weeks, children will be introduced incrementally to various strategies to help learn spellings and patterns. They will use spelling journals to try out different approaches, constantly revisiting, researching and learning to spell accurately. Learning at home should be an extension of the practice at school as well as a quick test of memory. There is little evidence that the traditional practice of learning spellings at home and being tested on them is effective. However, there is a high expectation within the new National Curriculum that pupils will learn many increasingly complex words.

The aims of this approach are: for pupils to take responsibility for their spelling learning; to discuss their learning with class members and parents; to refer back to previous lessons, and, for teachers to see how pupils are tackling tricky bits of spelling. It will also provide scope for strong spellers to research and experiment with words and vocabulary.

One of the English Department's targets is to foster a pride and respect for our wonderful language and a desire to preserve tradition. I am a great fan of technology and keen to embrace the opportunities it holds, but, I have noticed a decline in accuracy and determination to spell words correctly with 'spell-check' voiced as a reason not to worry. To an extent, this argument is valid; however, at this time of transition, children's ability not only in English, but across the curriculum, is judged through their written work. Therefore, to communicate effectively, spelling and handwriting remain integral and important elements.

This said, we are as a school, piloting an online spelling programme called Spellzone (<https://www.spellzone.com>). The children will be given their own username and password and after an initial test, a personalised learning pathway is generated. Teachers may set specific exercises in class or for homework and will be able to monitor progress and completion of tasks and levels. Children may also choose to dip into the programme at home and this we fully support.

I hope that the above gives you an insight into the approach we are taking to teaching spelling at Town Close. Should you like some practical ideas as to how you might support your child with their spellings, please email me, I can send you a booklet with ideas and activities to help secure learning, many of which will be covered in the lessons.

Finally, I am attaching a list of the statutory word lists for Years 3-6, which can also be found on Firefly. They are not easy!

If you have any questions, I would be happy to offer my thoughts either by email or in person.

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G Chitty', is displayed within a light grey rectangular box.

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