



**St. Gerard's Catholic Primary School.**

**HOW DO YOU SPELL...**



**Helping your child to be  
a good speller.**

We hope this booklet will help you with some of the questions you may have about spelling with your child.

## Helping your child with spelling

When we write we have to consider a number of aspects.

- We need to know what the purpose of our writing is and for whom we are writing.
- We need to think about the content and what form our writing will take, for example, is it a shopping list, a report, a letter to a friend, an email?
- We then need to think about the structure appropriate to the purpose and form of our writing - the use of sentences, paragraphs and punctuation.
- We then select the vocabulary that will best convey our meaning.
- And finally we think about how to spell the words we write.

Children can find writing a real challenge; they need encouragement, support and praise for their efforts. You can best support them by encouraging them to write on every possible occasion, praising their efforts and, importantly, by letting them see you writing whenever possible. You can play word games with them (e.g. **I spy**, **Find the word** puzzles), you can point to interesting or new words as you read to your child (without interrupting the flow of the story) and you can compose emails together.

Most of us, even if we consider ourselves to be good spellers, make spelling mistakes at some point. What is important is that we know what to do when we get stuck and we know how to correct our mistakes.

The English language is a rich but complex language but, despite its complexity, 85% of the English spelling system is predictable. Your child will learn the rules and conventions of the system and the spelling strategies needed to become a confident speller.

Here are some of the strategies that will help your child become a confident and accurate speller:

- **Sound it out:** breaking the word down into phonemes (e.g. *c-a-t*, *sh-e-ll*) - many words cannot be sounded out so other strategies are needed;
- **break it down and sound it out:** dividing the word into syllables, say each syllable as they write the word (e.g. *re-mem-ber*);

- using the **Look, say, cover, write, check** strategy: look at the word and say it out aloud, then cover it, write it and check to see if it is correct. If not, highlight or underline the incorrect part and repeat the process;
- **Find the root word:** making links between the meaning of words and their spelling (e.g. *sign, signal, signature; the root word of undo is do: the prefix un has been added, the root word of quickly is quick: the suffix ly has been added*)
- **Say it like it is:** some words have silent letters. When you say these words, say their silent letters too (e.g. wed-nes-day, muscle, stomach, scissors)
- **Memory tricks:** using mnemonics as an aid to memorising a word (e.g. *people: people eat orange peel like elephants, could: O U Lucky Duck*);
- **using a dictionary** as soon as they know how to.

## Learning spellings

Each week your child will be given spellings to practise and learn. These will be based on phonics and spelling being worked on in class, topic words or specific words that your child needs to learn how to spell. Depending on the words and your child there will be between 5 and 15 words to practise and learn. It is important that they are practised regularly in short sessions during the week so that they are committed to long term memory.

The best method to learn a word is the **Look, say cover, write and check** method.

When spelling a word it is helpful to see it in your head.

- Look at the word you want to spell and copy it down carefully
- Look at it closely
- Say the word carefully out loud
- Cover the word up
- Write the word without looking at it. Just remember what the word looks like
- Check that the word is spelt correctly
- If it is wrong, then do it all again. Start by looking closely at the word.

Tip - use this look, say, cover, write and check method to firm up spelling of all words - even those that have been learnt with other methods.

Some children may find other methods such as spelling the word aloud may help with remembering how to spell words.

Please return the spelling sheet to class on the day requested.

## Final tips and advice on spelling

**If you have trouble spelling a word.....**

- Try one of the 6 spelling strategies. Choose the best strategy for the word you need to spell.
- Use the look, cover, say, write, check method to 'firm up' spelling of all words- even ones learnt to spell using other methods.

**Here are 2 more things you can do to find out how to spell a word:**

- Find the word in the dictionary and copy it down.
- Ask a friend or someone in your family.

**Don't guess at spellings.** Use a good method and you will spell better than by just guessing. If you spell a word sensibly, then anyone reading your work will know what you mean, even if you have just got the spelling a bit wrong.

**Don't spend a long time worrying over a spelling.** It's better to spell the best you can, carry on with your writing and come back to the word later.

**The internet and dictionaries.** If you want to practise your spellings more. Look online. There are lots of fun spelling games there and you can also look up spellings in a dictionary - a 'real' one or an online dictionary.

Encourage your child to have a go at spelling words they are unsure of. This will give them the opportunity to try out spelling strategies and to find those that they find useful. You can help them to use the strategies outlined above and praise their efforts.

Thank you for your support