

# The Spelling Book

## Intended Design and Impact of The Spelling Book



Jane Considine



The Training Space  
Transforming teaching and learning

## **What is the research evidence on the teaching of spelling?**

This document brings together the current research evidence on the teaching of spelling in one place. The information has been organised into four sections: Phonics, Investigations, Differentiation and Application. The purpose of this document is to sharpen our thinking as a profession on the most important things that will make learning happen and improve our approach to the complex task of teaching spelling. It tracks key scientific findings that have been shown to positively improve teaching and learning outcomes. Against this backdrop of scientific understanding, The Spelling Books have been designed in such a way to maximise learning benefits for pupils.

## Phonics

Key Idea	Research Evidence on Learning/Writing	Quote for Consideration	Intended Design and Impact of The Spelling Book
DECODING – Synthetic phonics gives the pupils the ability to ‘sound out’ words on a page. Once they hear those ‘unglued’ sounds they can make plausible spelling choices.	National Reading PanelUK, 2000; Rose Review UK, 2006; Rowe - Australia, 2005; Castles, Nation and Rastle, 2018	“Having considered a wide range of evidence, the review has concluded that the case for systematic phonic work is overwhelming.” - Rose, 2006	‘Go Grapheme Grafters’ has been interleaved into the annual scheme so that pupils meet words and focus on phonemes within these. The pupils then track these sounds represented within these words to different words with the same letter representation for that sound.
ALPHABETIC CODE - Children need to learn this code. They must be taught individual phonemes and how to ‘unglue’ these phonemes from each other to be able to spell.	Diane McGuinness, 1997	“The brain searches for ‘reoccurring regularities’. What is frequently encountered will be remembered. What is very strange or discrepant will be noticed.” - Diane McGuinness, 1997	The Spelling Book teaches the sounds (phonemes) in the English language and how each of these phonemes is mapped to letters. Pupils should be taught spelling probabilities based upon how many words have that particular spelling, i.e. the most common option.
SPELLING ALTERNATIVES – Support pupils to understand the most probable or least ambiguous spelling for phonemes they can hear.	Hays et al., 2005	“Sound ‘ee’ Key word: Key Spelling Alternatives – Most to least frequent 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 ee ea y ie e e-e ey.” - Vowel Chart – Diane McGuinness 1997.  “Adult spellers are very attentive to context when selecting a vowel sound spelling.” - Hayes et al., 2005	The Spelling Book encourage pupils to zoom into letter representations of sounds and notice commonalities and why certain words are spelt that way and which parts of these are tricky. Tricky parts often came from vowel sounds which are more volatile (more options). Knowing the most to the least frequent spelling alternatives improves spelling. Not only this but the position of the sound also influences how it is represented e.g. ‘ey’ at the ends of words for ee, such as monkey.

PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS – Critical for pupils to learn to decode and encode words in an alphabetic language.	Eighth report of session, House of Commons Ed and Skills Committee, 2004 – 2005; TeachingChildren to Read Rose Report, 2006; Education Endowment Foundation, ImprovingLiteracy in Key Stage 1, 2020	“Understand that blending and segmenting are reversible processes.” Education Endowment Foundation – Improving Literacy in Key Stage 1, 2020	The Spelling Books have, threading through them, a systematic phonics approach that explicitly teaches pupils the sound – letter relationship for spelling.
--	---	---	---

### Investigations

Key Idea	Research Evidence on Learning/Writing	Quote for Consideration	Intended Design and Impact of The Spelling Book
HYPOTHESIS - Introduce hypothesis to test and alongside this, give words to sort that challenge thinking.	Templeton and Morris, 1999; Haverwas and Walker, 2004	“Effective spelling activities include some analysis or sorting by the student, requiring them to look for the patterns in words.” -Templeton and Morris, 1999	Sorting into categories of similarity and being able to identify patterns and ‘sameness’ strengthens pupils’ understanding of frequency in letter representation.
MODEL - Model whether words ‘prove’ or ‘disprove’ hypothesis as part of word sorts introduced by the teacher.	Bear et al, 2008; Wolf, 2007; Butyneic and Woloskyn, 1997	“Teachers must include some direct instruction in spelling.” Schlagal, 2002	Investigations ‘come to life’ in the classroom through close looking at words. The brains predisposition for seeking patterns has an effect on the effectiveness of spelling instruction.
PATTERN FINDING - The purpose of the investigations is to draw conclusions from the work study that has taken place.	Invernizzi et al., 1997; Cunningham, 2004	“Research on the brain indicates that the brain is a pattern detector, rather than an applier of rules.”- Cunningham, 2004	Categorising words and sorting them for similarities and differences in the investigations helps to better understand internal structure and connected meaning, e.g. wise – wisdom, nation – national. Our brains are predisposed to be pattern detectors, which means effective spelling instruction should emphasis opportunities to explore and organise, and ultimately detect those patterns.

<p>MISS. TAKE (puppet/ character who misspells words) - Pupils practise their close analysis of words to identify parts that have gone wrong. Discuss why and edit so it is correct.</p>	<p>Vandenborre et al., 2018; Johansson - Malmeling et al., 2020; Ellis, 1982; Hatfield, 1989; Lindgren and Sullivan, 2002; Fitria, 2020</p>	<p>“Spelling errors can be attributed to poor phonological awareness skills so that it is difficult for learners to develop an understanding of relationships between sounds and letters.” - Tira Nur Fitria 2020</p>	<p>Successful editing is a life skill and the vehicle of Miss. Take is a regular opportunity for pupils to hone the craft. This enables discussions about phonics, root words, morphemes, prefixes and suffixes. It helps children reflect their own challenges with spelling.</p>
<p>WORD WIZARD (puppet/ character who provides useful information about spelling.) - The Word Wizard provides insightful information about how to spell and highlights patterns between words.</p>	<p>Frith, U 1971, 1998</p>	<p>“Cognitively rich structures need to be unpacked before model of reading and writing can be constructed.” - Uta Frith</p>	<p>The Word Wizard’s function is to make certain aspects of spelling visible. He is precise and can explain why spells occur as they do for phonological or morphological reasons. He is an expert in etymology too.</p>
<p>INSIGHTS - Good spellers develop insights into how words are spelled based on sound/ letter correspondences, morphemes, syllables and etymology.</p>	<p>IDA, 2011; Rebecca Putman, 2017; Bear and Templeton, 1998; Schlagal, 2002; Treiman and Kessler, 2006; Elbro and Ambak; 1996</p>	<p>“Focus being on increasing children’s understanding of the relations between the spellings of different words, and instruction around units that can be generalised to other spelling situations, and therefore easier to move in long-term memory.” Emily J.R. Colchester, 2010</p>	<p>Primary ‘brave spellers’ are defined as phonics first spellers who make ‘good’ plausible choices and strengthen their spelling further by understanding morphemes. Morphemic thinking develops with more prefix and suffix work as well as the influence of history on words. All the investigations build increasing pupil sophistication of invariant patterns and knowledge.</p>

## Differentiations

Key Idea	Research Evidence on Learning/Writing	Quote for Consideration	Intended Design and Impact of The Spelling Book
<p>ASSESSMENT - Through judgement of their independent writing, pupils can diagnose their spelling problems.</p>	<p>Shlagal and Wallace, 2006</p>	<p>“They are ‘using’ but ‘confusing’ words.” - Schlagal and Wallace</p>	<p>Assessment of what pupils can and cannot do is vital and will inform the next steps. ‘My Focus Five’ means that the assessment is authentic and comes from the pupils daily writing that in turn has an impact into application into their future work. Early identification of spelling mistakes is necessary to support pupils to rectify quickly so they do not rehearse and embed mistakes.</p>
<p>MY FOCUS FIVE - These are a pupils current targeted words drawn down from editing sessions.</p>	<p>Bear and Templeton, 1998</p>	<p>“Students should be grouped appropriately for spelling and word study.” - Bear and Templeton</p>	<p>The teaching that is locked within ‘My Focus Five’ should be matched to the pupil’s current level of skill in terms of phonemic awareness and their knowledge of sounds and how to represent them (graphemes).</p>

<p>TRICKY BIT - Rather than teach spelling in a binary way as in right or wrong the part that has gone awry gets identified.</p>	<p>Templeton and Morris, 1999</p>	<p>“Misspelled words should not be marked ‘wrong’ but the parts that are correct should be discussed as much as the parts spelled incorrectly.” Templeton and Morris, 1999</p>	<p>Pupils are actively encouraged to also identify correct, as well as incorrect, parts. ‘Miss. Take’, a character who makes mistakes in spelling, becomes a vehicle to tackle common class errors. Pupils look closely at words and notice the tricky bits identified as a capital T over the hard part. Through correcting Miss. Take’s issues, they notice it is often in medial position, vowel sounds or the doubling of consonants that cause problems.</p>
--	-----------------------------------	--	---

**Application**

<b>Key Idea</b>	<b>Research Evidence on Learning/Writing</b>	<b>Quote for Consideration</b>	<b>Intended Design and Impact of The Spelling Book</b>
<p>SPELLING JOURNAL AND ERROR LOGS - Active and conscious looking at words improves the accuracy of spelling. Spelling is a very conscious act.</p>	<p>Bear and Templeton, 1998; Alderman and Green, 2011</p>	<p>“Student involvement in learning through the use of word journals, self-correcting, conferencing or error logs is critical.” - Alderman and Green, 2011</p>	<p>Investigations, sounds associations (Go Grapheme Grafters) and spelling journals and tracking of focus words to apply accurately, provide authentic opportunities to use and practise spelling and therefore growth in their spelling attainment.</p>

<p><b>SPELLING IN ACTION</b> – Illustrative spells can be targeted linked to topics and plot points so that they have cross curricular relevance and enrichment for pupils. Context creates a reason to spell accurately, e.g. Egyptian topic</p>	<p>Improving literacy Key Stage 1; Education Endowment Foundation, 2021</p>	<p>“The teaching of spelling is likely to work best when the spellings are related to the current content being studied in school and when the teachers encourage active use of any new spellings in pupil’s writing.” Education Endowment Foundation, 2021</p>	<p>The ultimate aim of The Spelling Books is to increase ‘slick’ automation into pupils’ independent writing. All writing with purpose will focus on high expectations for cognitive growth in spelling. Teachers will actively recognise improvement and praise pupils who are strengthening that bridge from learnt spellings into everyday work.</p>
<p><b>READING IMPROVES SPELLING</b> - Spelling is trickier and requires more conscious effort. However, the more you read the more accurate your spelling is.</p>	<p>Bryant and Bradley, 1983; Cunningham and Stanovich, 1991 Gentry, 1982; Caravolas, 2001; Muter, Snowling and Taylor, 1994; Treiman, 1983; Critten, Pine and Steffler, 2007; Plaza and Cohen, 2007</p>	<p>“Reading is a strong predictor in development of conventional spelling.”- Caravolas, 2001</p>	<p>Spelling Journals became a personal record of point of interest. Patterns across words are recognised as well as very individual ways that spellings that cause problems can be memorised. Pupils own reading journeys become the heart of this work and encourage self motivation to polish spelling.</p>
<p><b>AUTOMATION</b> - Proficient spellers have two banks of words to draw from those that are already automatic (memorised and sorted) and those that have not yet been.</p>	<p>Wilde, 1999; Wallace, 2000; Westwood, 2014</p>	<p>“Proficient spellers have many more strategies to help them problem-solve, and they use them flexibly.” Wilde, 1999</p>	<p>The Spelling Book puts at the heart of teaching an increased sense of sorting for automation. ‘Brave Spellers’ do not get stuck on words. They problem solve and continue writing. They become word detectives and identify common patterns.</p>



