The following information comes from ‘Support for Spelling’ a document published by the DfE aimed at Years 2 – 6.

Guide for parents: How to help your child with spelling

There are a number of aspects to consider with spelling, and many methods, strategies and games you can use to help encourage and support your children in becoming confident and accurate spellers. You will find a variety of suggestions below.

Aspects to consider when writing

There are a number of aspects to consider when writing. These include:

* knowing what the purpose of our writing is and who we are writing for;
* thinking about the content and what form our writing will take. For example it might be a shopping list, a report, a letter to a friend, or an email;
* thinking about the structure appropriate to the purpose and form of our writing, including the use of sentences, paragraphs and punctuation;
* selecting the vocabulary that will best convey our meaning;
* thinking about how to spell the words we write.

Supporting and encouraging your child

Children can find writing a real challenge. They need encouragement, support and praise for their efforts. You can best support your child by:

* encouraging them to write on every possible occasion, praising their efforts and, importantly, letting them see you writing whenever possible;
* playing word games with them, for example, I spy, and Find the word puzzles;
* pointing to interesting or new words as you read to your child (without interrupting the flow of the story);
* composing 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 and 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.

Spelling strategies

There are many strategies that you can use to will help your child become a confident and accurate speller. These include:

* sounding words out: breaking the word down into phonemes, for example, c-a-t and sh-e-ll. Many words cannot be sounded out, so you will need to use other strategies;
* dividing the word into syllables, and saying each syllable while writing the word. For example, re-mem-ber;
* using the Look, say, cover, write, check strategy:

Look at the word and say it out aloud, then cover the word, then write it and finally check to see if it is correct. If not, highlight or underline the incorrect part and repeat the process;

* using mnemonics to help memorise tricky words. For example, people: people eat orange peel like elephants, and could: O U Lucky Duck.
* finding words within words. For example, rat in separate;
* making links between the meaning of words and their spelling. For example, sign, signal, and signature. This strategy is used at a later stage than other strategies;
* working out spelling rules for themselves. This strategy is used at a later stage than other strategies;
* using a dictionary as soon as they know how to.

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 identify those that they find useful. You can help them to use the strategies outlined above and praise their efforts

The following information comes from ‘Letters and Sounds’, a document published by the DfE aimed Years R – Yr2. It may be useful if spelling issues come up in normal conversations at home.

**This is guidance for teachers and is given as information only. We will be covering this teaching and learning in our daily phonics sessions, so there is no need for you to teach your child this information.**

Spelling guidelines

These spelling conventions and guidelines can help you refine your teaching approaches. Learn about some common recurring mistakes children make when learning words, and how find simple ways they can correct them.

Phoneme position

The position of a phoneme in a word can rule out certain graphemes that can work with it. The 'ai' and 'oi' spellings don't occur at the end of English words or immediately before suffixes. Instead, the 'ay' and 'oy' spellings are used in these positions (e.g. 'play', 'played', 'playing', 'playful', 'joy', 'joyful', 'enjoying', 'enjoyment').

In other positions, the /ai/ sound is most often spelled 'ai' or a- consonant- vowel, as in 'rain', 'date' and 'bacon'. The same principle applies in choosing between 'oi' and 'oy' ('oy' is used at the end of a word or immediately before a suffix, and 'oi' is used elsewhere. There is no other spelling for this phoneme.

When you are first teaching this, simply pronounce the relevant vowel sounds for children (/a/, /e/, /i/, /o/ and /u/; /ai/, /ee/, /igh/, /oa/ and /oo/). Later the terms 'long' and 'short' can be useful when children need to form more general concepts about spelling patterns.

The 'w special' and sound conventions

When an /o/ sound follows a /w/ sound, it is frequently spelt with the letter 'a' (e.g. 'was', 'wallet', 'want', 'wash', 'watch', 'wander'). This is often referred to as the 'w special'. This extends to many words where the /w/ sound comes from the 'qu' grapheme (e.g. 'quarrel', 'quantity', 'squad', 'squash').

When an /ur/ sound follows the letter 'w' (but not 'qu') it is usually spelt 'or' (e.g. 'word', 'worm', 'work', 'worship', 'worth'). The important exception is 'were'.

An /or/ sound before an /l/ sound is frequently spelled with the letter 'a' (e.g. 'all', 'ball', 'call', 'always').

Words ending in 'v'

English words do not end in the letter 'v' unless they are abbreviations (e.g. 'rev'). If a word ends in a /v/ sound, e must be added after the v in the spelling (e.g. 'give', 'have', 'live', 'love', 'above').

This may seem confusing, because it suggests that the vowels should have their 'long' sounds (as in 'alive', 'save' and 'stove') but in fact there are very few words in the 'give'/'have' category (i.e. words with short vowels). They are mostly common words and are quickly learned.

Using elisions

Examples of elisions (sometimes known as contractions) include, 'I'm', 'let's' and 'can't'.

Children usually find them easy to spell, but can struggle to know where to put the apostrophe.

Teach them that it marks the place where letters are omitted.

The 'their' and 'there' confusion

Confusions are common between 'their' and 'there' and can persist unless appropriate teaching is given.

'There' is related in meaning and spelling to 'here' and 'where' (all are concerned with place).

'Their 'is related in meaning (plural person) and spelling to 'they' and 'them'.

To avoid confusing children, it is advisable not to teach 'there' and 'their' at the same time because they sound very similar. Secure the understanding of one of them before teaching the other.

An additional problem with the word 'their' is its unusual letter order. However, if children know that 'they', 'them' and 'their' share the same first three letters, they are less likely to misspell 'their' as 'thier'.

The schwa sound

Giving vowel graphemes their full value in reading can help with the spelling of the schwa sound.

If children initially sound out the word 'important' using a clear /a/ sound in the last syllable, this will help them to remember to spell the schwa sound in that syllable with the letter 'a' rather than with any other vowel letter.

In deciding whether to use 'ant' or 'ent', 'ance' or 'ence' at the end of a word, consider whether there is a related word where the vowel sound is more clearly pronounced.

When deciding between 'occupant' or 'occupent' the related word 'occupation' shows that the vowel letter must be 'a'. Another example is 'residance' or 'residence', where the word 'residential' shows that the letter must be 'e'.

The 'i' before 'e' except after 'c' rule

This rule is not worth teaching as it only applies to words where the 'ie' or 'ei' stands for a clear /ee/ sound. Unless children fully understand this, words such as 'sufficient', 'veil' and 'their' look like exceptions. There are so few words where the 'ei' spelling for the /ee/ sound follows the letter 'c' that it is easier to learn the specific words:

'receive'

'conceive'

'perceive

'ceiling'

'deceive' (and the related words 'receipt', 'conceit', 'deceit').