

St. Louise de Marillac Primary School

Spelling and Word Study Policy



In our school, we encourage the children to take risks and to attempt the spelling of unknown words. We do not want spelling to be a barrier to children's writing, so we value their use of approximate spellings and praise them for their efforts.

Primary Language Curriculum: Learning outcomes

Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4
Junior and Senior Infants Through appropriately playful learning experiences, children should be able to	First and Second class Through appropriately engaging learning experiences, children should be able to	Third and Fourth class Through appropriately engaging learning experiences, children should be able to	Fifth and Sixth class Through appropriately engaging learning experiences, children should be able to
Recognise, name and sound letters and use some correct spellings, drawing on their sound and letter patterns to try out invented spelling.	Use knowledge of letter- sound correspondences and common spelling patterns to accurately spell words.	Analyse how letter- sound correspondences, common spelling patterns and meaningful word parts and roots impact on spelling, using this knowledge to correctly spell words in their writing.	
Spell high frequency and high interest words accurately.	Spell a wide range of high frequency words accurately and begin to use reference materials to check and correct spelling.	Use appropriate reference materials to independently check and correct spelling.	

Spellings in the Junior Classes

In junior and senior infants, pupils spend a lot of time developing their phonological awareness skills. Time is spent teaching rhyming, syllabification, alliteration, using sound boxes, breaking words apart into sound boxes, teaching onset and rime, blending and segmenting etc. In order to develop these foundational skills, the formal Jolly Phonics Programme is not introduced by the junior infant teachers until November, after the mid-term break. The Jolly Phonics Programme continues to be taught in senior infants and first class. Spellings begin to be taught formally in First Class and spellings are based on the letter digraphs and spelling patterns from the Jolly Phonics Programme, as well as the Tricky word spelling list and the BLM2 Spellings.

Spellings can be assessed as part of a weekly spelling dictation or an independent writing activity. The tricky word and BLM2 spelling lists are to be used by pupils as a reference sheet and all pupils with spelling difficulties need to be provided with their own copy.

In second class, the tricky word and BLM2 spelling lists are revised if necessary. Brendan Culligan's Corewords 1 spelling list and dictation exercises are then introduced. Further spelling lists can be taken from the Over The Moon English programme.

Spellings in the Senior Classes

It is envisioned that our pupils would have a good grasp of the conventions of spelling by the time they begin Third Class. The pupils in 3rd – 6th Class will follow Brendan Culligan's Corewords 1, 2, 3 & 4 and dictation exercises.

At the beginning of each week the teacher will call out a number of dictation sentences depending on differentiated groups. Both teacher and child will choose 3 to 5 words for spelling that week. These words will be entered into the child's personal dictionary for future and continual reference. At the end of the week the dictation will be repeated and the child will self-assess the work.

The literacy programme in use in our school is called Over the Moon. Further spelling lists and access to specific vocabulary on a weekly basis can be used in conjunction with the core words, where the teacher deems necessary.

Methodologies

The methodology we use to teach spellings is Look- Say – Cover – Write – Check. This is a multi-sensory approach as the children use their ears to hear the word, their voice to say it, their eyes to see it and their hands to write it.

Step 1: Look 'n' say

1. Show the word to the child. The child must be trained to look carefully at the word.
2. Child says the word.
3. Talk about the word - its meaning, etc.
4. Teacher and child examine how the word is made up e.g. "Can you see a smaller word in the word?", "Can you see the double letters?" "What letter does it start with?", "What letter does it end with?", "How many letters are in the word?", "Can you name the letters that spell the word?"
5. If a child is having difficulty, the following activities give extra support – use magnetic letters to make the word, read the word, break the word apart letter by letter, re-build the word, child traces over the word. Further guidance with regard to supporting children with spelling difficulties can be found in the appendices attached.

Step 2: Cover

- 1 Child closes their eyes and tries to remember the word. Children must be trained to visualise words with their eyes shut *"to see them inside your head"*.

Step 3: Write

- 1 Ask the child to write the word without copying it. The child says the whole word as they write.

Step 4: Check

- 1 The child checks his / her word to see if it's correct.
- 2 The child uses a positive marking scheme to check some words using a letter by letter marking scheme.
- 3 If an error is made, it often helps to underline the part of the word that presented difficulty in colour.
- 3 The child then covers / crosses out the misspelled word.
- 4 The child writes the whole word again.

Spelling Strategies to be taught from first class to sixth class

1. Letter Strings
2. Mnemonics
3. A word in a word
4. A picture

Each child is given spellings to learn each night Monday to Thursday. These spellings may be assessed at the end of the week through different methods, usually as a dictation exercise or an independent writing assessment. The spellings to be taught are outlined below but some children with SEN may require differentiated spelling. This may be decided at the teacher's discretion. Some of the more difficult words from the Core list of spelling words, which children constantly misspell, can be revised at each class level.

Assessment of Spellings

The child's ability to spell may be informally assessed through his / her writing. The teacher's observation will allow the child's most pressing needs to be identified.

Spellings are usually formally assessed at the end of the week by means of a dictation test. This makes sense as spelling is a written activity. The notion of the 'Friday Test', where words were given in a list without any use of context is long gone! In dictation the words are called out in simple sentences. Every spelling is not marked as incorrect – the bit of the word that is incorrect is underlined / highlighted. A positive marking scheme will then be used to correct the letters in the words that are correct by ticking over each correct letter in the word and then focusing on the small part of the word that needs to be practised.

Other methods to assess spellings include: cloze tests (where the child inserts appropriate word from that week's spellings), hangman, word-searches and crosswords. Alternatively, children may link creative writing with spelling by writing a paragraph using the words given as spellings.

Pre-test: Teachers may implement the use of a pre-test on a Monday. This will allow the children to compare their attempts, self-assess and monitor their own progress.

Standardised Test: The Vernon Spellings Test will be administered to all pupils in 2nd– 6th class in September/October to assess the stage they are currently at with their spelling.

Spelling Bee: The Spelling Bee takes place for pupils in 5th/6th class.

	Suggested Spelling Lists	Assessment	Methodologies
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Junior Infants	Phonological awareness programme Jolly phonics programme introduced in November	Teacher observation and teacher designed tasks	Synthetic phonics approach Look, say method for tricky words
Senior infants	Jolly phonics programme	Teacher observation and teacher designed tasks	Synthetic phonics approach Look, say method for tricky words
1st class	Jolly phonics programme Tricky word spelling lists BLM 2 spelling lists	Teacher observation and teacher designed tasks Weekly spelling dictation exercises Positive marking scheme/self-assessment	Synthetic phonics approach Look, say, cover, write, check method 1. Letter Strings 2. Mnemonics 3. A word in a word 4. A picture
2nd class	Revision: Tricky word spelling lists & BLM 2 spelling lists Brendan Culligan's Corewords 1 Over the moon spelling/vocabulary words	Teacher observation and teacher designed tasks Weekly spelling dictation exercises Positive marking scheme/self-assessment Vernon spelling test	Look, say, cover, write, check method Spelling notebook 1. Letter Strings 2. Mnemonics 3. A word in a word 4. A picture
3rd-6th class	Brendan Culligan's Corewords 1, 2, 3, 4 Over the moon spelling/vocabulary words	Teacher observation and teacher designed written tasks Weekly spelling dictation exercises Positive marking scheme/self-assessment Vernon spelling test	Look, say, cover, write, check method Spelling notebook 1. Letter Strings 2. Mnemonics 3. A word in a word 4. A picture

This is a pilot, which is included in our school's Self-Evaluation Plan. This pilot will be reviewed at the end of the school year 2025. Also, the 'Spellings For Me' programme is being run in second class on a trial basis.

This Spellings policy was revised and updated during the School Self-Evaluation Process in the school year 2022-2024. It was discussed at a staff meeting on the 13th March 2024. It was given for consultation/approval to the Parents' Association and was ratified by the Board of Management on 15th April 2024.

Chairperson's Signature: _____

