

Tanworth in Arden Academy Trust

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Tanworth in Arden Church of England
Primary School & Nursery

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Dear Parent/Carer,

We have been reviewing the ways in which we teach spelling. Making use of the latest research and detailed analysis of the outcomes for our children.

In Key Stage 1 Phonics

Every day, every child is participating in a high quality, synthetic phonics lesson using the Letters and Sounds programme. This programme of study is divided into six phases, with each phase building on the skills and knowledge of previous learning. Children have time to practise and rapidly expand their ability to read and spell words. They are also taught to read and spell 'tricky' words, which are words with unusual spelling patterns or that contain graphemes (written sounds) that have not yet been taught. We know this is working well because the results of our statutory Phonic Screening Checks have improved this year.

As children become competent in using their phonological understanding to make sensible attempts at spelling words, for example that the word 'beak' could be spelt 'beek', 'beak' or 'beke', children need to move beyond phonics to learning about other strategies to choose the correct spelling. This broadening of understanding begins in Year 2 and supports children in rooting their understanding in the context of written text.

Year 2 and Year 1 (after Autumn Half- Term) will continue to have a weekly list of words that have been taught throughout the week. As the spellings are so closely linked to their phonic learning, they will continue to have a weekly test to help embed reading skills and their knowledge of spelling patterns.

In Key Stage 2

Spelling is a vital skill. We understand that once children have a secure knowledge of phonics they then may learn to spell more complex words at varying rates and need to be taught accordingly. Research shows that the traditional spelling test is one of short term memory and does not support children in understanding the principles of spelling. Recent scans of the brain have shown that when children learn spellings for a test they are using a different part of their brain entirely from when they tackle spellings in the context of their writing.

We have developed an approach to teaching spelling which we believe will support children with their long-term learning of spelling structures and patterns. Whilst spelling lists will be sent home, they will not be tested in the traditional way as we believe this does not constitute 'teaching.' What we have found, and believe, is that children who learn to spell with ease will always do well in a spelling test and others who find spelling difficult, will not; therefore reinforcing their perception as a learner as being a 'bad speller'. We have also noticed that children who do learn spellings for a test are not always applying this knowledge into their writing, which is the true indication of children being able to spell.

At the same time children who find learning spelling lists difficult, not only do not use the spellings correctly in writing but also find the task of learning spelling lists stressful and often feel unnecessary pressure on the day of the test. The pressure on parents to 'drill' their children on spelling lists as well as the expectation that every child should read regularly at home and complete other homework activities gave another reason for us to review our practice.

The teaching of spelling at Tanworth in Key Stage 2 moving forward, will encourage children to explore word origins and spelling patterns in order to apply these skills when reading and writing new and unknown words.

- There will be a weekly focus on spelling patterns –children will have opportunities to apply their spelling skills throughout the week.
- Children will be assessed through dictation (not weekly)
- Spelling patterns will be sent home for children to share

If you have any questions or queries about the teaching of spelling, then please speak to your child's class teacher in the first instance.

Thank you for your continued support.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "S Bamford".

Mrs Shelley Bamford
Headteacher