

Ballacottier School

Better Spelling Programme



How Does It Work?



The Better Spelling Programme is designed to establish a baseline spelling level for pupils in Year 1 to year 6 at the start of each academic year.

Pupils complete a simple dictation exercise that highlights the level of their spelling competence. This allows the teacher to identify a starting point for his/her class in September and shows where there are gaps in past learning which can be revisited through the year. The dictation is repeated in July so that year on year progress can be monitored across the school at individual pupil, class and Key Stage level.

Ideally each class should follow their chronological year group programme, with gaps in past learning being addressed through the year. This may require additional time being spent on spelling and this will need to be built into literacy sessions.

Pupils with additional needs can follow the programme of an earlier year group to secure spelling patterns before moving forward. These pupils could be taught in mixed class groups led by a member of the support staff team or the class teacher at the same time as the rest of the class follow their weekly programme (if staffing allows), otherwise these pupils would need to make up a separate group within the class working on their individual spelling targets.

A Week by Week progressive scheme of work is provided for staff to follow. At the end of each half term a series of assessment tasks are available to be used to assess and monitor progress, including a set of dictations that assess each of the teaching points (spelling patterns) covered over the 6 week period. This provides valuable data about which pupils in the group/class are secure in their learning and which spelling patterns need to be revisited.

The programme is progressive and ensures that spelling is being taught in a thorough and consistent manner across the school which in the long term should improve spelling standards. Weekly resources are provided to support the teaching of new spelling patterns/rules. Teachers may choose to use their own existing resources, or develop new ones to supplement those provided. If all staff add resources to the folders we should find ourselves with a bank of resources resulting in teachers having to spend less time making their own.

Weekly lists of spellings should be shared at home to involve and inform parents, but these do not require formal testing in the classroom. The half termly assessment tasks should be sufficient to assess progress on individual pupils and groups. Half termly Spelling lists should be sent home so that parents are fully aware of the spelling expectations for their children and so that parents can support learning at home. Homework sheets that support and consolidate learning from the class can be used where appropriate. A booklet has been developed for parents explaining how children learn to spell and how learning in fun ways makes learning to spell a positive experience.