

Dear parents/carers,

Learning to spell is a complicated matter! Some children learn to spell effortlessly, and most do get there in the end, but for others the process of learning to spell can be difficult. The weekly spelling test may be great for those who can already spell, but for others it makes for a stressful time. Studies have shown that sending home a list of words to learn, in preparation for a weekly test, is not the most effective way for most children to learn and many children (although they may have performed well) have forgotten these words just a few hours after the test. Weekly tests promote memorisation rather than the deeper learning which fosters long-term retention. For these reasons, it is necessary to have an approach that meets the needs of all children and allows them to develop their skills at an appropriate rate, in order that they can happily spell common words accurately and develop a range of strategies to tackle more complex words with confidence.

The latest research and the recommended new framework for writing supports this view; moving forward, we are going to be stopping traditional-style weekly spelling tests in school this year. Does this mean we are teaching less spelling? No! In fact, we will actually have more time to teach spelling now as we will not have to squeeze in a weekly test.

In year 3 and 4, we will be using 'Spelling with Grammarsaurus' resources to support us in teaching spelling. In year 5 and 6, we will be developing our own sequential system following the national curriculum. Both will combine building on pupils' phonics knowledge alongside developing their understanding of morphology (how words are built) in an approach designed to be effective for all learners.

Pupils will learn new spellings from their own year group as well as revising spellings from previous years to apply to their current writing lessons. They will look at common patterns and base words, how to build words using parts of words, commonly misspelt words and how to manipulate words with suffixes and prefixes. Teachers are constantly assessing pupils' understanding while they teach and use this to guide them as to how fast or slow to move through new content.

We will continue to share with you an overview of what we will be covering to support practicing at home. We would still love you to support and encourage your children to practice spelling at home.

If you/your child is sad we are stopping weekly tests, please feel free to continue doing your own tests at home. We'll always enjoy congratulating them on their hard work if they want to share what they've been doing. Likewise, the statutory words for each year group will remain on Spelling Shed where children can access games to support them in learning these words. We will send children home with a reminder of their *edShed* logins.

Yours sincerely,
Tamsin Riley

A new approach to spelling with Grammarsaurus!

This year, through our work with **Grammarsaurus**, children will be learning how words are built — not just memorised!

We'll be focusing on **etymology** and **morphology** in spelling, which means understanding where words come from and how words are made up of smaller parts called **morphemes**, such as:

- **Base** – the core part of a word that carries meaning (e.g. help, move, play)
- **Affix** – a morpheme that is either a prefix or a suffix
- **Prefix** – a part added **before** the base to change its meaning (e.g. un-, re-, mis-)
- **Suffix** – a part added **after** the base to change its form or meaning (e.g. -ed, -ing, -ful, -ness)
- **Stem** – a word part that includes a base and may also contain other morphemes (e.g. lovely, dangerous, laziness)

What will students be doing?

- Building words using bases, stems and affixes
- Learning the **etymology** of words – understanding their origins, historical roots, and language journey
- Exploring how morphemes change the meaning of words
- Using **word matrices** to see how one base can create many new words. A word matrix is a chart that shows how one base can grow into many new words using different prefixes and suffixes. It helps children see spelling patterns and deepens their understanding of word meanings
- Writing **word sums**
(e.g. runⁿ ⊕ ing = running, help ⊕ ful = helpful, drive^e ⊕ er = driver)
- Directly applying new spelling knowledge in their writing units
- Learning **four key spelling rules** for adding suffixes:
 1. Double the final consonant letter when a word ends in a CVC pattern, then add the vowel suffix.
 2. Drop the final silent e vowel letter, then add the vowel suffix.
 3. Change the final letter y after a consonant letter to i, then add the suffix (except -ing).
 4. Just add the suffix.

How you can help at home

We encourage a **creative and playful approach** to spelling rather than learning word lists. Here are some fun ways to support your child:

- Practise **phonics** to help spell common bases correctly, especially high-frequency ones like 'look', 'call', 'read', 'watch', etc.
- Take a simple base like 'play', 'jump', or 'walk', for example. Using word sums, see how many new words you can make with different prefixes and suffixes:

play ⊕ed = played

play ⊕er = player

re ⊕ play = replay

un ⊕ play ⊕ able = unplayable

- Practise breaking words into **word sums** to see how words are made:

walked = walk ⊕ed

biker = bike ~~r~~ ⊕ er

watching = watch ⊕ ing

- Choose a new base that you have learnt, maybe of Latin or Greek origin, and explore how many **prefixes and suffixes** you can add

Why morphology matters

Learning about morphemes helps children:

- **Improve their spelling** by recognising patterns not just sounds – for example, learning that the suffix -ed is the correct way to spell past tense verbs helps avoid mistakes like 'checkt' or 'needid'
- **Understand word meanings**
Knowing the meaning of a base (like 'move') helps children make sense of related words like 'remove', 'mover', or 'movement'
- **Expand their vocabulary and improve reading comprehension more easily**
As they begin to recognise familiar word parts, they can make sense of new words on their own, supporting reading and learning



scan me!