Spelling Policy

RATIONALE

• Spelling, along with grammar and punctuation, is a convention of written language. These conventions are closely linked with the other modes of language ie. speaking, listening and reading. Learning to spell is part of the process of learning language and learning about the use of language. Therefore spelling should not be taught in isolation.

• The English language is a systematic and patterned language with irregularities. Learning to spell is a process of working out the patterns and systems of the English language, then applying these understandings to new words as they are encountered. Therefore learning to spell entails learning to understand the systematic code by which English is written.

• Children need to be competent spellers in order to be able to communicate effectively through the written word. The ability to spell easily and automatically enables them to become more effective writers.

• Spelling is one aspect of effective writing. Historically, however, levels of literacy have been measured by spelling ability. Among employers in the ‘public’ arena this attitude still prevails. It is very important for children to be aware that generally someone is going to read what they write. They must take responsibility to see that spelling is correct. Accurate spelling enhances life opportunities.

• English spelling is closely linked with meaning. As learners become more conscious of conventional spelling it becomes an inherent part of their understanding about language.

• Learning to spell is a developmental process which is lifelong. Our language is exciting and stimulating. Developing an interest in language and the study of words is an important life skill.

• Learning to spell involves learning to apply different strategies appropriately so that children can spell correctly all the words they write. These strategies include sound sequences, knowledge of graphophonics relationships, visual patterns and meaning. In order to do this they learn to classify, hypothesise, generalise, look for patterns and relationships and seek to understand the relationships between meaning and spelling. Spelling is a thinking process, not a rote learning task.

• The approach to the teaching of spelling at St Joseph’s School is based on two main premises which underpin the school’s program;
  - learning about the written language;
  - learning the strategies that competent spellers use.

BELIEF STATEMENTS

We believe that children learn to spell best when:

• They are provided with a rich language environment.
• They are provided with good models of language (written and spoken) *AURAL INPUT.
• They can use a range of spelling strategies.
• They are given frequent opportunities to write.
• They are frequently monitored.
• Teaching is directly related to their learning needs.
• They are independent learners and are self-motivated.
• Words are learned in context but they can apply their word knowledge and spelling skills into other contexts.
• They can make connections between what they can read and write.
• They are exposed to a range of self-evaluation strategies.
• They feel confident to have a go.
• Spelling is valued and they know it has a purpose.
• They receive positive affirmation.
• They are challenged.

AIMS

We aim to assist children to:

• Understand sound - symbol relationships.
• Communicate effectively in the written form.
• Develop the range of strategies which competent spellers use to assist them to learn to spell new words.
• Apply different spelling strategies appropriately.
• Develop an ever-increasing vocabulary of words that can be used and spelled correctly.
• Develop a positive attitude towards spelling.

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- Develop confidence in the use of words in written forms.
- Develop a willingness to attempt to spell unknown words, using a wide variety of strategies and resources.
- Use, identify and develop a range of strategies for self-correction.
- Understand the links between word meaning and spelling.
- Progress through the range of outcomes for spelling as detailed in the W.A First Steps Developmental Continuum. as appropriate.

STRATEGIES

In accord with our beliefs about how children best learn spelling, teachers at St Joseph’s School use a combination of the following strategies to support children’s learning.

Provision of a rich language environment.

Teachers ensure that:
- The classroom environment is full of print which is relevant, topical, useful and attractive.
- Print is displayed where children can read it and use it effectively. Types of displays include:
  - Classroom labels / sentence labels.
  - Signs
  - Descriptions on murals and other displays
  - Charts depicting poems or short stories.
  - Word lists – word families and topic lists.
  - Class writing
  - Wall stories
  - Teacher’s own modelled writing.
  - Helper's rosters.
  - Class books.
- Rooms have an abundance of printed literature – books, magazines, newspapers, dictionaries – presenting a variety of text genre.

Provision of Good Language Models (Written and Spoken)

When teaching large numbers of students for whom English is a second language it becomes even more important to provide them with good models of written and spoken language. Teachers at St Joseph’s provide good language models through:
- Their own use of language.
- Shared book experiences.
- Modelled writing.
- Shared writing.
- Taped stories.
- Listening posts.
- Songs / poems / chants etc.
- Class discussion times.
- Pairing children with buddies (good language models)
- Regular opportunities for interaction with adults.

Use Of A Range Of Spelling Strategies

At St Joseph’s these include:
- Have-a-Go sheets.
- Spelling Journals.
- Visual Memory – ‘Look, Cover, Write, Check’ (Look – focus on the part you don’t know, Cover – Cover the word, Write – write it from memory, Check – check the spelling)
- Phonics – formal teaching of sounds and blends, rhyming words, stretching words to hear sounds.
- Graphophonics – Sound Sleuth, word sorting, creating word banks, secret messages, visual patterns.
- Morphology – Words within words, compound words, chunking, root words, derivation of words, spelling rules, word building, syllabification, homophones, suffixes and prefixes.
- Mnemonics – Memory tricks and rules.
- Word Study – What comes next? Word sorts, exploring words, word searches, crosswords, magic words, little words in big words, word snakes, square words and circle words, riddles and clues, rebus activities (text with pictures substituted for some words), cloze activities, bingo etc.
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- Use of computer programs – Phonics Alive, Spell It, Reading Blaster, Kid Phonics, Chicka Chicka Boom Boom etc.

**Provision of Frequent Opportunities to Write.**
At St Joseph’s this is achieved through:
- Independent writing activities.
- Class books.
- Dictation activities
- Classroom learning centres.
- Diaries.

**Frequent Monitoring of Children.**
This is achieved through:
- Plotting all children on the Developmental Continuum for Spelling and Writing (W.A First Steps)
- Collection and analysis of writing samples which leads to the investigation, identification, and grouping of common needs and individual needs to inform planning.
- Charting of progress based on personal improvement.
- Teacher observation.
- Monitoring and assessment of children’s work on a day to day basis.
- Spelling conferences.
- Child self-assessment.
- Formal and informal testing.

**Ensuring That Teaching Is Directly Related To Learning Needs.**
Common practices at St Joseph’s School which ensure that this happens are:
- The frequent monitoring of children’s progress (see above)
- The use of Learning Centres in the classroom.
- The use of ‘clinic style lessons’ which focus on specific skills through such activities as Modelled Writing, Shared Writing, Guided Reading and Shared Reading.
- Team planning.
- Frequent monitoring and evaluation of the Literacy Program.

**Encouraging Children to be Independent Learners who are Self-Motivated.**
This is achieved through the use of:
- ‘Prompt Cards’ – If I can't spell a word I can ……..
- charts which show the process of self-checking / correcting.
- Have-a-Go Sheets.
- Look, Cover, Write, Check.
- Learning Centres.
- Writing Centres.
- Editing and proof reading.
- Spelling Journals.
- Use of classroom resources – dictionaries, word lists, environmental print etc.

**Ensuring that Words are Learned in Context but they can Apply their Word Knowledge and Spelling Skills in other Contexts.**
In order to achieve this, teachers at St Joseph’s:
- Provide frequent opportunities for children to write. (see above)
- Use an Integrated Curriculum approach to teaching and learning.

**Ensuring That Children Can Make Connection Between What They Read And What They Write.**
This is achieved through:
- Modelled Writing.
- Shared Writing.
- Shared Book experiences.
- Poems, songs, chants, Nursery Rhymes.
- Cloze activities.
- Innovated texts.
- Developing knowledge of meaning and morphemes.

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- Writing sentences with spelling words.
- Use of Integrated Units / Topics to promote understanding.

**Ensuring That Children Are Exposed To A Range Of Self-Evaluation Strategies.**

These include:
- Look, Cover, Write, Check.
- Proof reading.
- Visual clues – Does it look right?
- Use of dictionaries and other classroom resources.
- Modeled Writing – Teacher self correcting.
- Self-Evaluation Sheets and Progress Cards. (W.A First Steps p 74, 75)

**Ensuring that Children are Confident to Have a Go.**

Teachers at St Joseph’s develop children’s confidence through:
- Providing an non-threatening environment in which children are encouraged to take risks.
- Providing a print-rich environment.
- Encouraging the use of ‘Have-a-Go’ sheets and other strategies.
- Encouraging student self-evaluation.
- Providing lots of resources in the classroom to assist children to spell correctly.
- Providing positive feedback and praise.
- Teaching to the point of need.
- Providing activities and strategies appropriate to children’s phases of development.
- Giving children a range of strategies to suit their particular learning styles.
- Spelling Journals.

**Ensuring that Spelling is Valued and the Children Know it has a Purpose.**

This is promoted through:
- Writing for an audience.
- Spelling in context within an Integrated Curriculum.
- Modeled Writing.
- Shared Writing.
- Provision of a print-rich environment.
- Displays of children’s work.
- Class books.
- Spelling Journals.

**Ensuring that Children Receive Positive Affirmation.**

Teachers at St Joseph’s School:
- Give constant feedback, praise, assistance.
- Constantly update displays of children’s work.
- Present awards for good efforts.
- Ensure that learning is enjoyable.

**Ensuring that Children are challenged.**

- Children are presented with a wide range of strategies and activities.
- Extension work is provided for those who require it.
- Teaching is directed at appropriate achievement levels for all children (according to Spelling DC for First Steps)
- Children are encouraged to use a problem solving approach.

**ASSESSMENT**

- The real test of a child’s spelling ability lies in the skill with which understanding about spelling are applied to real writing tasks.
- The assessment of a child’s spelling behaviours should focus on his / her achievements by comparing past and current performances. It should focus on what students can do in relation to a wide range of communication tasks, and on what they still need to learn.
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• As a result of conclusions drawn from data, collected through assessment procedures, appropriate action may need to be taken in order to improve a child’s skills. Appropriate action should structure the learning in relation to each child’s stage of development.

• The information gained from student assessments needs to be shared with students, teachers and parents.

Methods of Assessing

• Analysis of child’s writing.
• Observation of the child throughout different areas of the curriculum noting their strategies, preferred learning style, responses and attitude.
• Conferencing.
• Informal testing.
• Pupil self-evaluation.
• Descriptive assessment.
• Cloze activities.
• Prepared dictation.
• Classroom learning activities chosen as assessment activities.

RECORDING

Information about Individual Students.
To ensure regular and thorough assessment and that expectations and outcome of the Policy will be met, the following documentation is required for each child.
• Folders containing un-edited or revised first-draft writing samples (dated)
• Anecdotal records of each child’s understandings related to their attitude towards spelling, their willingness and ability to consult resources, the quality of their spelling approximations, their proof reading skill development ….
• Results of spelling tests.

Information about the Classroom Program
• Teachers plan components of the Literacy Program with support personnel. They are required to use a common Language Planning Sheet to identify program elements.
• Day to day program implementation and activities are recorded in each teacher’s Work Program.

EVALUATION

The evaluation of St Joseph’s Spelling Policy will consist of the following components:
• Regular review of current educational theory in respect to developments in spelling.
• An examination of the data collected over time at different developmental stages. These will be analysed and compared with past and current performances in terms of the progress made and the progress which could be expected.
• An annual review of all components of our school's Literacy Advance Strategy.