

Ickford News

I stand corrected and am obliged to offer an apology. (I managed to get to week 5!) My lovely mother picked up on a spelling mistake in Newsletter 2 where I wrote: “slipping out discretely at the first signs of disturbance” when I should have written “discreetly”. I met Mum this week and she handed me a piece of paper with the meanings of *discrete* and *discreet* clearly explained and I can assure you, I will never make the same mistake again!

The English language is difficult and I would guess that very few ever fully master it. Language is fluid, constantly evolves and spelling is particularly difficult because English has been impacted upon over hundreds of years by a number of different foreign languages according to who ruled the land, religion, advances in printing and the fact that we only have 26 letters in our alphabet.

In my experience as a teacher in a number of different schools, approaches to teaching children how to spell have varied immensely. Some have adopted the learned spelling list and nothing else, others an approach seemingly based on osmosis whereby spelling knowledge mysteriously seeps into each child without any formal teaching at all and others the i before e except after c type rule approach.

Unfortunately, none of these approaches is guaranteed and I have learned that a combination of approaches is probably the best. The key is to engage children in language and to try and develop their interest in it. Then it becomes a fascinating subject to teach and to learn about. I have reproduced an excerpt from a book, *Spell it Out. The Singular Story of English Spelling* by David Crystal which I think best encapsulates my own opinion

of how we should be approaching spelling in schools.

No-one is born with an ability to spell. Everyone has to learn how to do it. The key question is how to do it most effectively. Spelling should be explicitly taught. Spelling principles and lists can be helpful if they are the right principles and lists. Word lists should contain: high frequency, relevant words that children will actually use to write; and groups of related words (word families).

Spelling is about internalising letter sequences in words. To this end: children should be encouraged to read as much as possible – and not just formal texts – anything. The more children see spellings – whether regular or irregular – the more readily they will start to use them in their writing.

Children should be taught to use dictionaries and thesauruses to build their own lists of words that matter to them; and children should be told stories about word origins to help them remember how to spell them, e.g. “annus” means year in Latin, hence “annual”, “ped” means foot, hence “pedicure”, “phot” means light and “graph” means “writing” in Greek, hence “photograph”.

Rather than talking about rules with lots of exceptions, teach children principles of spelling probability, e.g. “q” is almost always followed by a “u”, English words don’t usually end in a “v” or a “u” – hence the need to add a silent “e” to words like “have” and “blue”, and a silent “e” at the end of a word often makes the vowel long (the so-called “bossy e”).

Spelling is often described as a bridge between reading and writing. Therefore, when providing phonics-based reading instruction, children should also be taught all the sounds each letter can make.

At Ickford, we constantly work hard to try and improve teaching so that the children can learn more effectively. I have encouraged teachers to be less reliant on spelling lists given out of context and to look at different approaches to assessing spelling understanding but it is not always easy and I am happy that teachers have professional autonomy to vary their approaches according to individual needs. As my mother so accurately pointed out, we never stop learning and I am delighted to have learned something new this week. One thing I am already really sure of though is that every teacher at Ickford wants the very best for the children and, as a result, they are happy to keep learning.

This week as part of that learning process and teacher development, I have observed literacy lessons in every year group and discussed them with each member of staff. It has been fascinating to see the children developing their writing through engagement in a range of genres and topics. The infants were writing about prehistoric times whilst in class 3 Miss Mordente inspired her children to write from the point of view of Roman gladiators about to enter the cauldron that was the Colosseum in Rome. In Class 4 I saw the children excited by Shakespeare's Macbeth and writing narratives for this play and Romeo and Juliette to develop their figurative and sensory language use. In Class 5, Mme Basnett challenged the children to write balanced arguments around the title, 'Graffiti, Art or Vandalism?' preceded by some skilful discussion and debate worthy of much older students. I have to admit, I can't remember my Primary school literacy lessons being so rich and adventurous. I spent most days writing, My News!

I cannot deny, it has been a challenging week, with lots of what I refer to as 'real life Headteacher stuff' to do but, it has been a good week. Firstly, it began to feel like Autumn, my favourite season and secondly, I now know the name of every new child in Class 1. I also had time to read to all of the children in assembly and to play some 'mad sponge ball' football with the youngest children.

I also completed the first parent show rounds of the year and it is during these hours that I am able to step back and see just how lovely our school is. I am happy to have such a great team around me and privileged to look after wonderful children. We are all very lucky and perhaps this can be best summed up by a picture sent to me this week which some of you may have already seen.



Children in school in Malawi wearing Ickford school uniform donated by Louise Sayer on behalf of the PTA. More than 50 children in one class, differing ages, no furniture, no touch screen, no chairs, no desks, no complaints! I have a feeling I know where I'm off to.

Have a good weekend,

Mr Ronane

Ickford News from the office

Dates for your diary...

7 th October 2.30pm	Harvest Festival, St Nicholas Church
22 nd October	Class 5 Visit to Bletchley Park
22 nd October 4.30-7pm	Parents Evening
23 rd October	Flu Vaccinations
24 th October 4.30-7pm	Parents Evening
24 th October 9am	Class 4 Assembly
28 th Oct – 1 st Nov	Half Term
7 th November	School Photos
14 th Nov	Class 4 Visit to Rivers & Rowing Museum
14 th Nov 7.30pm	McAfee Internet Safety Talk
19 th Nov 7.30pm	Maths Workshop
6 th December	Christmas Fayre
10 th Dec	KS1 Nativity for Grandparents & Pre School Aged Children
12 th Dec 7-8pm	KS1 Nativity (no preschool aged children)
13 th Dec 9am	French Assembly
16 th Dec	Christmas Lunch
17 th Dec 7-8pm	KS2 Carols in the Church
18 th Dec	Whole School Pantomime Trip – Beauty and the Beast
19 th Dec	Inset Day

School Lottery

A winner within school every week!

If you would like the chance to win, and support the school, please click on the link below and get signed up!

<https://www.yourschoollottery.co.uk/lottery/school/ickford-school>



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