



ACTIVE SPELLING CASE STUDY



The Impact of Active Spelling after just six months

This case study discusses the impact of Active Spelling over the first six months of its introduction at Grimoldby Primary School.

INTENT...

Like many schools, we'd tried a lot of different approaches to teaching spelling, with mixed results. Then, along came the COVID-19 pandemic, and standards of spelling took a hit. We needed an approach to teaching spelling that was simple, consistent and high-impact – and if it didn't break the bank, that would be a welcomed bonus!

Having spoken to many schools about their approaches, there seemed to be a general consensus that 'raising standards in spelling was difficult': there was no easy, quick-fix that teachers so often crave in the busy and often relentless world of education.

However, the schools that were already involved with Active Spelling seemed to have different ideas. They asserted that standards of spelling were strong, teachers enjoyed teaching spelling and – here comes the big one – pupils loved spelling sessions!

Attending an Active Spelling open morning indicated several things. Firstly, that no teachers were going to be de-skilled with a pre-made, 'copy and paste' scheme. Secondly, this was rooted in theory and research, yet incredibly simple to implement. Thirdly, this was going to work. It was going to do exactly what it said on the tin.

"It's so simple and it's so high-impact. How often do you get that in education these days?"

Stuart Spendlow,
Deputy Headteacher

IMPLEMENTATION...

Starting in September 2022, we booked in training for all staff which consisted of two twilight sessions. The first focused on the theory of spelling and how the human brain learns to spell. The second focused around the actual delivery of Active Spelling sessions and how to ensure optimum impact, including a full rundown of all the various spelling strategies.

After that, it was a case of throwing ourselves into the deep end – trying it out to get a feel for it and ironing out any teething problems (mostly with how to fit daily sessions into the timetable).

It was immediately apparent that both teachers and pupils loved the consistency of it – easy to plan, easy to create and easy to deliver. For the first time in a long time, there was a buzz around spelling. Pupils were actually excited to spell and were eager to apply their knowledge. And what's even better is seeing 7-year-old children explaining how the skills of orthography, graphology and morphology help them to be a better writer!



After the first few terms, we booked in a Quality Assurance visit to help us refine things even further. This was an incredibly supportive process which identified strengths and provided areas for us to develop further. As a result of this, we knew that Active Spelling was running at its highest level and that all staff were confident in using Active Spelling despite it still being relatively new.

Over the next few months, Active Spelling really started to feel effortlessly embedded into our school day and the impact was glaringly obvious...

IMPACT...

We didn't need endless spreadsheets of data to see the impact this was beginning to have after just a few weeks: it was clear in pupils' writing that their awareness of spelling patterns and rules had drastically improved.

Based on the qualitative data collected, we observed a noticeable improvement in pupil spelling since the implementation of Active Spelling. Teachers reported that pupils demonstrated increased confidence in their spelling abilities and showed a greater willingness to attempt challenging words. Moreover, there has been a visible reduction in spelling errors in written work and homework, indicating improved spelling proficiency.

Students themselves expressed satisfaction with the new approach, highlighting that it has helped them develop a deeper understanding of spelling rules and patterns. They reported feeling more equipped to apply these rules independently, leading to enhanced spelling accuracy. One pupil commented, "My spelling is loads better! I know lots of strategies to try when spelling words and I find myself remembering more."

2023 KS2 SATS data showed that 44% of pupils scored 15/20 or more in the Spelling Test – up from 34% the previous year, further highlighting the significant impact of Active Spelling after just one academic year of implementation.

"I feel like I just get spelling now. I used to just randomly guess but now I know what to try and how to actually remember spellings."

Year 6 pupil