Searchlights for Spelling

Searchlights for Spelling is a comprehensive spelling scheme for Years 2–6/Primary 3–7 that covers all the word-level spelling objectives of the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) and meets the requirements of the National Curriculum.

It is a systematic scheme for teaching the patterns of the English spelling system through stimulating, multi-sensory activities. It builds up spelling concepts through an investigative approach, equipping children with the skills to tackle new words as well as developing their strategies for the recall of key words and spelling patterns.

The scheme also builds on NLS programmes such as Progression in Phonics (PiPs) and Spelling Bank and is cross-referenced to them, making use of their basic interactive techniques such as ‘Get Up and Go’, ‘Show Me’, and ‘Time Out’ (see Key terms overleaf for further explanation).

Spelling for writing

The reason for learning to spell is to become fluent in everyday writing. Searchlights is designed to equip children to write fluently, rather than simply to learn and be tested upon decontextualised lists of words. It aims to make spelling enjoyable, through developing a sense of curiosity about words and an awareness of language patterns.

The sessions begin by deepening children’s understanding of an objective or strategy, through direct teaching or investigation. This is followed by applying their understanding through shared writing and independent activities. It is important to ensure that spelling objectives are always emphasised in the children’s own writing, in order to reinforce the concept of spelling for a purpose.

A multi-sensory approach

The activities are based on four key learning styles:

- visual – remembering common patterns; writing words down to check whether they ‘look’ right; looking at the ‘tricky’ bit and trying the letters in a different order; looking for words within words; seeing the word in your mind, holding a word in your memory by seeing it, then looking to the top left of your mind to recall it.

- aural and oral – hearing and pronouncing words; emphasising or exaggerating pronunciation to aid learning (e.g. Wed-nes-day); breaking words into syllables or phonemes; remembering some words with a rhythmic strategy (e.g. Mrs d, Mrs i, Mrs f, Mrs e, Mrs u, Mrs lty, difficulty); using rhyme to spell by analogy.

- kinaesthetic – writing common patterns; tracing over words; sky-writing as you say each letter; getting the feel of common handwriting joins.

- cognitive – knowing rules, conventions, possible and impossible combinations; identifying word roots, suffixes and prefixes; using knowledge of grammar (e.g. ed – past tense), using mnemonics (e.g. there is a rat in separate).

By experiencing a multi-sensory teaching approach, children who learn in different ways have every chance of developing their ability to spell. Good spellers use a range of strategies. The whole-class and pupil activities in the scheme use a variety of approaches. To further support multi-sensory teaching, the above symbols are given next to the quickfire activities for each unit – Oddbods and Snip-snaps (see Key terms, page 4).

Identifying and representing phonemes

Searchlights generally follows the NLS Framework conventions for identifying and representing phonemes, including the use of ‘long’ and ‘short’ to distinguish certain vowel phonemes. For the most part Searchlights adopts other NLS terminology. Phonemes are represented by bold type in all materials, while letter patterns are red in the Teacher’s Book, OHTs and Pupil’s Book and underlined in the Photocopy Masters Book.

It is important to note that the teaching of certain phonemes and their associated letter patterns can be affected by regional variation in pronunciation. You will need to adapt your teaching of these phonemes to suit the needs of your class. Such instances are noted in the relevant units.

Spelling practice – little and often

Children need frequent practice so that spelling becomes automatic and does not interfere with the act of composition. Searchlights is designed to be...
Searchlights for Spelling

as flexible as possible and can be used in a variety of ways, depending on the needs of the children. The activities fit naturally into word-level work within the literacy hour and have a simple, regular pattern. They can be adapted for different classes and groups.

Spelling and handwriting

Searchlights emphasises the important link between spelling and handwriting, particularly in Year 5. Regular practice of handwriting joins helps to consolidate the learning of common letter strings. A joined script is offered wherever it is intended that a child will copy or continue writing.

Spelling log

It is helpful for children to develop the habit of keeping a personal spelling log. It can contain:

- collections of words arising from the independent activities;
- lists of oddbods (see Key terms below) and other ‘tricky’ words;
- results of spelling investigations;
- dictations and other tests;
- personal spelling targets;
- useful strategies or mnemonics;
- space for Look Say Cover Write Check practice.

A possible format for a spelling log is included in the Photocopy Masters Book for those who want to make use of it. Reference pages in the Pupil's Book and extra OHTs also provide useful material which the children could transfer to their log.

How to use Searchlights for Spelling

Key terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brush-ups:</th>
<th>activities which revisit objectives from the previous year, for those children who need more time to catch up.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Catch-you-out:</td>
<td>a word that is an exception to a specific rule or teaching point (e.g. where a word changes completely when forming a plural rather than just adding s or es).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get Up and Go:</td>
<td>individual children come out to the front to demonstrate something.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oddbod:</td>
<td>a ‘tricky’ word that causes common difficulties (featured on the Big Book left-hand page and in the list of words to learn in each unit).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Out / Show Me:</td>
<td>all children can respond by writing on dry-wipe boards and showing the spelling attempt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sky-writing:</td>
<td>drawing the shape of a letter or word in the air as an aid to memory.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Snip-snaps:</td>
<td>short, snappy ideas for further practice in applying the unit’s objective or in learning key words.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling log:</td>
<td>a personal ongoing record of words being learnt (see Photocopy Masters Book page 15).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Think about…/ Extra challenge:</td>
<td>both these suggestions take the children a little further in exploring or applying a spelling concept.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Colour-coding

Red type is used to highlight target letters and letter patterns. To highlight phonemes and distinguish them from spelling patterns, they are printed in bold type.

(In the Photocopy Masters Book, where colour is not used, letters and letter patterns are underlined and phonemes are in bold.)
The components

For each year there are four key components:

- **Teacher's Book** – containing a double-page spread of step-by-step notes for each unit's teaching as well as background information.
- **OHTs** (or Big Book for Years 2–4/Primary 3–5) – containing whole-class material for each unit as well as useful revision and supporting material.
- **Pupil's Book** – containing a double-page spread of differentiated activities for each unit and reference pages with word lists and reminders of spelling rules and strategies.
- **Photocopy Masters Book** – containing a photocopiable homework copymaster (PCM) for each unit as well as revision activities, assessment material and guidance for parents.

Together these resources provide 18 core units of work for the year (six units a term). Three additional units provide further material, which can be fitted in as necessary. Each unit comprises two parts:

- **Part 1** – introduces the spelling objective(s).
- **Part 2** – takes the objective(s) one step further, or introduces a further objective, and provides a test dictation.

**Part 1**

**Teaching the objective(s):** Swift, lively interactive teaching of objective(s), using the left-hand page of the Big Book. Plus teaching of key words, including ‘oddbods’ (see Key terms).

**Using the objective(s):** Developing the skill or concept through writing, including brief opportunities for shared writing.

**Independent work (Pupil’s Book):** Differentiated activities focusing on reinforcement and extension of target objectives (see Differentiation, opposite). This may take place as part of a literacy hour, or at another time.

**Review (plenary):** Review of independent work and recap of main teaching points.

**Homework:** Reinforcement task generally with an investigative element which can involve other family members; Words to Learn for the unit's dictation.

**Part 2**

An extended whole-class session.

**Teaching the objective(s):** Usually revisiting and developing the unit focus, using the right-hand page of the Big Book/OHT.

**Using the objective(s):** Writing with the class, pausing and discussing spelling points.

**Review (plenary):** Review and summary of new learning, and discussion of homework findings.

**Follow-up homework:** This allows for further exploration or reinforcement of learning.

**Test dictation:** Class dictation that includes examples of the spelling objective and oddbod(s) for the week.

**Differentiation**

Independent activities in the Pupil's Book are differentiated at three levels, A, B and C. A and B activities consolidate children's learning of the key objectives of the unit, while C activities are more challenging or address a further objective. C activities may anticipate Part 2. Children could work through all three when appropriate. The Extra Challenge in some units extends children’s learning further.

Children who find spelling particularly difficult may need extra time to revisit key objectives from the previous year or years. For Year 5/Primary 6 children who need extra phonics teaching, use activities for the earlier steps in the NLS Progression in Phonics (PiPs). *Searchlights* also provides a bank of Brush-up ideas based on the previous year’s objectives as well as four extra revision PCMs.

For each unit, the Words to Learn list on the homework PCM is differentiated (A, B, C) so that some children can be given fewer target words to learn.

**Paired spelling**

Children could spend ten minutes every day following this simple procedure in order to learn their individual lists (between five and 18 words at a time). This procedure could also be introduced to parents and it is given as part of the ‘How to help your child with spelling’ guidance (see the Photocopy Masters Book, pages 47–48).
The child reads the word; says it aloud; spells the letters out; tries to spell it out without looking.
Together, parent/partner and child discuss ‘tricky bits’ and devise a way of remembering them.
If the child finds the word hard to remember, repeat the first two stages as necessary before attempting to write.
The spelling partner/parent covers the word.
The child writes it down.
Together they check – if incorrect, revisit two or three more times.

Assessment

The units include a dictation test as well as a ternly SATs-style test to track progress. The 20 words selected for each SATs test (pages 11–14 of the Photocopy Masters Book) focus on the term’s objectives as well as key words or oddbods, or both. The first underlined word in each test is for practice before you start. See the notes in the English Tests Teacher’s Guide (QCA) for more guidance on how to give the test.

To be useful, spelling tests should always be diagnostic. Look carefully at the results to find out what strategies the children are using. It is important, too, not to penalise them for incorrect but intelligent, plausible guesses. One useful approach is to allocate two marks to each word: the first mark could be given if the target phoneme, pattern or rule is correct (e.g. ai spelt correctly in rain) and the second if the whole word is correct.

A simple Tracking sheet to help you monitor children’s progress is provided in the Photocopy Masters Book (pages 3–5). Children’s involvement in assessing their own progress in spelling is very important. To encourage children to review their own learning, yearly self-assessment sheets with ‘I can’ targets are also provided (see Photocopy Masters Book, page 16).

Test dictation

The object of regular dictation is to give the children practice in spelling words in context, reinforcing the importance of accurate spelling in writing.

Searchlights dictation provides three levels of differentiated sentences for each unit. The children learn the words before they are tested on some of them in context. In Year 5/Primary 6 there are 18 words to learn per unit: comprising words related to the unit’s objective(s) (wherever possible words are drawn from the NLS list of medium frequency words); the oddbod(s).

Test scores and comments can be recorded on the teacher Tracking sheet (see Photocopy Masters Book pages 3–5). The suggested procedure for the test dictation is as follows.

Introduction (first unit)

- Explain to the children what a dictation is.
- Tell them that you will be dictating sentences.

Procedure

- Tell them that first, you’ll read the whole sentence while they listen. Specify whether you want them to write out the whole sentence or just the target word.
- Then explain that you’ll read a little bit at a time while they write it down (if they are writing out the whole sentence).
- Tell them what to do if they come to a word they don’t know: try to break the word up into its sounds, or think of another rhyming word which perhaps they can remember how to spell.
- Give prompts where appropriate, e.g. reminding them of rules or asking questions such as: Remember that oddbod? Listen to that word again – what sound can you hear?
- Read the passage through again so that they can check their writing.
- Note: Make sure that you do not expose strugglers. Children should simply write the words they have learnt (A, A/B, A/B/C). There is no need to draw attention to difference here.

Homework

For each unit, a homework PCM provides the related list of words to learn for the dictation test and a task that reinforces the unit’s teaching, or focuses on revision. The sheets also encourage an investigative approach. Words to Learn for each unit are offered in three levels of difficulty. They are referred to as key words in the Photocopy Masters Book and listed there in full on pages 6–7.

Parents/carers are offered further guidance on a separate PCM: ‘How to help your child with spelling’.
# Scope and sequence chart – Year 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>NLS Objectives</th>
<th>OHT</th>
<th>Pupil’s Book</th>
<th>Homework PCM</th>
<th>Snip-snaps</th>
<th>Oddbods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Vowel endings</td>
<td>NLS 5.1.W4, W3</td>
<td>Words ending in vowels other than e</td>
<td>Vowel endings and plurals</td>
<td>Find the food</td>
<td>Syllable Specials</td>
<td>clothes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Rules for plurals</td>
<td>NLS 5.1.W5, W3</td>
<td>S/es pluralisation</td>
<td>Plurals</td>
<td>Spot the plurals</td>
<td>Why Not y? Hisses and Buzzes Beetle</td>
<td>babies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 More rules for plurals</td>
<td>NLS 5.1.W5, W3</td>
<td>Pluralisation f to ves</td>
<td>Plural nouns and verbs</td>
<td>Plurals quiz</td>
<td>Sereal Sentences Can’t Catch Me Missing!</td>
<td>children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Latin and Greek prefixes</td>
<td>NLS 5.1.W6, W3</td>
<td>Latin prefixes</td>
<td>Prefixes: trans, circum, bi</td>
<td>Spot the Greek and Latin!</td>
<td>On Your Marks ... Tele Trawl Word Sort</td>
<td>word, world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Spelling strategies</td>
<td>NLS 5.1.W1, W3</td>
<td>Spelling strategies</td>
<td>Spelling tips and mnemonics</td>
<td>Spelling investigations</td>
<td>Spelling First Aid Red Pen Pick a Number</td>
<td>window</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Word root patterns</td>
<td>NLS 5.1.W8, W3</td>
<td>Word root patterns</td>
<td>Words with common roots or meanings</td>
<td>Number roots</td>
<td>Compound Dominoes Root Happy Families Noun Clues</td>
<td>machine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Double consonant patterns</td>
<td>NLS 5.2.W4, W3</td>
<td>Consonant patterns: doubling</td>
<td>Double consonant patterns</td>
<td>At the double</td>
<td>Double Trouble Spot the Error Ten out of Ten</td>
<td>swimming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 c, g and y spelling patterns</td>
<td>NLS 5.2.W4, W3</td>
<td>Hard and soft c and g</td>
<td>Sorting hard and soft c and g; ge, dge</td>
<td>Newspaper hunt</td>
<td>What follows c? Consonant I Investigation Key Word Cricket</td>
<td>bicycle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Common letter strings, different sounds</td>
<td>NLS 5.2.W5, W3</td>
<td>Common letter string: different pronunciations ight</td>
<td>Sorting words by sound</td>
<td>Odd one out</td>
<td>Homographs Pronunciation Postbox Word Ladders</td>
<td>head, heard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Homophones</td>
<td>NLS 5.2.W6, W3</td>
<td>Homophones</td>
<td>Homophone pairs</td>
<td>Homophone sentences</td>
<td>Which One? First Past the Past Key Word Anagrams</td>
<td>whole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Possessive pronouns and adjectives</td>
<td>NLS 5.2.W7, W3</td>
<td>Pronouns</td>
<td>Possessive pronouns and adjectives</td>
<td>Spot the pronouns</td>
<td>Who Am I? Happy Families Kim’s Game</td>
<td>your, you’re</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Suffix shun</td>
<td>NLS 5.2.W8</td>
<td>Suffixes – shun</td>
<td>Sorting noun endings sion, tion, salion, lain</td>
<td>Investigation</td>
<td>Show Me Subject shuns Key Word Wipe-off</td>
<td>ocean</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Scope and sequence chart – Year 5 cont.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>NLS Objectives</th>
<th>OHT</th>
<th>Pupil’s Book</th>
<th>Homework PCM</th>
<th>Snip-snap</th>
<th>Oddbods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>NLS 5.3.W4, W3</td>
<td>Unstressed vowels</td>
<td>Unstressed syllables</td>
<td>Words that cause problems</td>
<td>Missing Syllables Join-up Key Word Sort</td>
<td>interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>NLS 5.3.W5, W3</td>
<td>Magic e</td>
<td>Adding suffixes to words ending in e</td>
<td>Adding suffixes to words ending in e</td>
<td>Base Word Build-up Quickfire Catchout Cloze Race</td>
<td>careful, caring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>NLS 5.3.W5</td>
<td>Words ending in y</td>
<td>Changing words with y endings</td>
<td>Try to end with y</td>
<td>Spot the Error Alphabet Addition Key Word Tower</td>
<td>supply</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>NLS 5.3.W5, W3</td>
<td>i before e</td>
<td>Sorting ie and ei words</td>
<td>ie sounds</td>
<td>Which One? Family Word Groups Key Word Sentence Race</td>
<td>seize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>NLS 5.3.W6, W3</td>
<td>Transformations</td>
<td>Transformations – adjectives and verbs to nouns</td>
<td>ology and ion</td>
<td>Base Word Transformations Transformations: Verb Tenses Key Word Scrabble</td>
<td>friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>NLS 5.3.W7</td>
<td>Negative transformations</td>
<td>Negative prefixes</td>
<td>Suspicious project</td>
<td>Listen Out Key Word Roundup Un Hunt</td>
<td>immediately</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional 1 Spelling strategies</td>
<td>NLS 5.1.W3, 5.2.W3, 5.3.W3</td>
<td>Using dictionaries</td>
<td>Dictionary work</td>
<td>What’s on the page?</td>
<td>What’s the Next Word? Dictionary Definitions Dictionary Quantiles</td>
<td>important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional 2 New words</td>
<td>NLS 5.2.W9, W3</td>
<td>New words</td>
<td>Technology words</td>
<td>Special interests</td>
<td>Technobabble Occupations Word Tennis</td>
<td>technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional 3 Words around the world</td>
<td>NLS 5.3.W8, W3</td>
<td>Words around the world</td>
<td>Latin, French and Greek derivations</td>
<td>Place names</td>
<td>Word Webs Car Number Plates Key Word Diamond Poems</td>
<td>language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YEAR</td>
<td>TEACHER RESOURCE</td>
<td>WHOLE-CLASS TEACHING</td>
<td>PUPIL RESOURCE</td>
<td>HOMEWORK REINFORCEMENT ASSESSMENT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y2</td>
<td>Teacher's Book</td>
<td>Big Book</td>
<td>Pupil's Book</td>
<td>Copymasters</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y3</td>
<td>Teacher's Book</td>
<td>Big Book</td>
<td>Pupil's Book</td>
<td>Copymasters</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y4</td>
<td>Teacher's Book</td>
<td>Big Book</td>
<td>Pupil's Book</td>
<td>Copymasters</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y5</td>
<td>Teacher's Book</td>
<td>OHTs</td>
<td>Pupil's Book</td>
<td>Copymasters</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y6</td>
<td>Teacher's Book</td>
<td>OHTs</td>
<td>Pupil's Book</td>
<td>Copymasters</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1 Vowel endings o, a, i, u

Objective for Unit 1
To examine the properties of words ending in vowels other than e

Part 1

You need
OHT 1; dry-wipe boards or notebooks; dictionaries; Pupil’s Book pages 2–3; PCM 1

Whole class
- Focus on the top half of the OHT. Ask the children what they notice about the words (all names of clothes; all end in a vowel other than e).
- Sort the words into groups according to the vowel ending.
- Prompt them to notice that most of them are foreign words and point out that the written forms of most English words end in a consonant or e.
- Explain that English has many imported words, some old, some new. Why might these words have been adopted? (imported fashions)
- Discuss where the clothes originally come from and check in a good dictionary, showing the children how to find the origin of a word (generally in brackets at the end of an entry; explain the abbreviations, e.g. Fr: French).
- Write the origins next to the words.
- Ask the children if they can see any patterns (e.g. o is a common Spanish ending – poncho, sombrero).
- Time Out/Show Me: discuss how to form the plural of each word. Try out spellings on dry-wipe boards and then check (all just add s).
- Explain that some words ending in o add es, e.g. potatoes. Ask for more examples (e.g. tomatoes, echoes, heroes).
- Compose sentences using the plurals and other appropriate foreign words, e.g. Wear kimonos at the pagodas. Wear sombreros during siestas.
- Introduce the oddbod: clothes – see below.

Pupil activities
A: Make plurals with animal words and write alliterative sentences.
B: Make plurals with musical words and write a story/poem.
C: Vowel ending quiz.

Extra challenge: Find plant names ending in a.

Review
- Can the children think of other words ending in a, i, o, or u? (e.g. sofa, ski, disco) Write the plurals together, recapping the rules and picking up on the two alternative plurals of buffalo (buffalo/buffaloes) and banjo (banjos/banjoes).
- What about plurals ending in two vowels? (e.g. blue, zoo, area) Establish the rule: add s.

Homework
Find food names with vowel endings and list the countries of origin.

Oddbod
clothes

- Highlight cloth and the.
- Point out the 'long' o in contrast to the 'short' o in cloth (same letter string, different sounds) and link to both. (If appropriate, also link to verb 'to clothe': cf. bath/bathe, breath/breathe.)
- Think of a mnemonic, e.g. the cloth makes clothes.

Snip-snap Syllable Specials

- Sort the clothes words according to the number of syllables.
- Build up spellings by syllabic parts, e.g ba/la/cla/va.
- Make up rhythmic patterns (e.g. 2, 3, 2, 3 syllable line: parka, kimono, tutu, bikini), chanting the words and clapping the rhythms.
Vowel endings o, a, i, u

NLS objectives for Unit 1

5.1.W4 5.1.W3

Part 2

You need OHT 1; dry-wipe boards or notebooks

Whole class
- Focus on the bottom half of the OHT. Ask the children to identify the theme (food) and to recognise word endings.
- Show Me: children guess word origins and offer definitions, using a dictionary where necessary.
- Discuss likes and dislikes, and make up menus.
- Look for common patterns, e.g. Spanish word ending lla, and Italian word endings lli, tti.
- Work out the plural spellings together, checking in a dictionary. N.B. Many are ‘uncountable’ nouns, and so can’t be pluralised (e.g. spaghetti, sushi).
- Time Out: compose a few alliterative slogans for chosen foods, first giving the children an example through shared writing, e.g. mouthwatering macaroni, superb sushi.

Review
- Recap the main collections of a and o endings – food, clothes, animals, music, plants – and the fact that the words are generally foreign imports.
- You could discuss why the words might have been imported (link to history and geography work) and make a class display with a map.
- Homework review.
- Look at homework findings and discuss patterns.

Follow-up homework
- Collect more examples of words ending in two vowels (e.g. ia, ea, oo).

Test dictation
OB We’re going shopping to buy some new clothes.
A I don’t like eating tomatoes or fish.
   To make pizzas you need some dough.
B My musical sister sings and plays the banjo.
   Potatoes and vegetables are good for you.
C The thief wore a black balaclava.

Snip-snap
I went shopping and I bought some ...
- Use this familiar word game to practise plurals of words ending in o and a.
- Start with a (e.g. avocados, aspidistras) and continue through the alphabet.
- The children will need some thinking time in pairs, spelling plurals on dry-wipe boards before contributing to the class alphabet.

Key Word Soccer
- Two or more teams compete to spell key words from the NLS list for Y 4 and 5 – or words frequently mis-spelt by your class.
- Each correct spelling scores a goal.
- Differentiate words according to the ability of individual players.