

The Grammar 6 Handbook

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When it comes to making grammar pleasurable and accessible, one of my fail-safe resource has always been The Grammar Handbook – a structured programme that provides an astonishing wealth of really practical advice for teaching the subject. It comes from the creative people at Jolly Phonics, who produce materials that use the synthetic phonics method of teaching letter sounds in a fun and active way. This is ebullient grammar at its best, and I'm pleased to report that the programme now covers Reception to Year 6.

The Grammar 6 Handbook that I tested is an authentic, tried-and-tested teaching resource. It uses the term 'grammar' broadly, and covers acres and acres of English ground (with plenty of signposts so you always know where children are heading). As well as being supremely instructional, it offers glorious creativity, reassuring reliability and real challenge for developing writing skills.

The content of the handbook is designed to extend and polish children's understanding of grammar and introduce them to new elements. It teaches new spelling patterns, supports a greater understanding of sentence structure, expands vocabulary and comprehension, and cultivates dictionary and thesaurus skills. It's very ambitious, but it meets its own high expectations with aplomb.

If you are not yet familiar with the Jolly Phonics way of teaching, then don't worry; it mirrors what every good primary teacher will be doing anyway. It is characteristically multisensory, dynamic and whips along at a challenging pace. What might be new, unless you're Montessori trained, is that each part of speech is associated with its own action and colour. Don't worry, though – this is easily learned.

The authors are confident that using the Handbooks will mean you will see dramatic improvements in children's writing and I can vouch for that. Like most things, however, this only comes through consistent use and a commitment to this style of teaching.

The classes I have taught using this method have learned to spell better, punctuate with more precision, employ a broader vocabulary, and gain a greater insight into how sentences work. These gains are hard won and will depend on how much room you give Jolly Phonics to grow. If you have the flexibility to teach using a wide variety of materials, then



this resource is a must. But even if your school has a more structured programme, I'd try to find a way to sneak it in.

The Jolly Grammar Handbook is primarily made up of over 100 shrewdly written photocopiable activity sheets and has enough lesson plans and activities for two lessons per week. Each one-hour lesson has a clear focus. The first of the week is devoted to spelling and the second to grammar, while parts of speech, punctuation and vocabulary feature in both. The result is 36 spelling and 36 grammar lessons for a full year of teaching.

I was looking at the Y6 Handbook, which, as you'd expect, doesn't cover the basics. It does still consolidate and refine learning from previous years, but it wastes no time in introducing parts of speech such as countable and uncountable nouns; gerunds; relative pronouns; relative and modal adverbs; past participles and many more. It's an education in itself.

Lesson sheets are found in the photocopy section. Here the spelling notes all follow

the same format of revision, main point, spelling list, two spelling sheets, and dictation. The grammar notes have their own format too – aim, introduction, main point, grammar sheet, extension and rounding off activity. Both notes provide you with a clear and identifiable structure that becomes a useful classroom routine. The photocopyables themselves are child-friendly and communicate ambition using challenging content with fun and friendly illustrations.

To help you tackle learning on more than one front, the Handbook contains a helpful advice letter for parents, all the spelling lists, and grammar action cards that can be cut up for children to create their own grammar action sentences.

VERDICT:

Outstanding results

Some countries have adopted Jolly Phonics as government policy and so from humble beginnings to mainstream popularity, these resources have worldwide appeal and can boast outstanding results. The Grammar 6 Handbook will help children develop more mindful control over the intelligibility and quality of their writing. It's a grammar resource your class deserves.