

STATEMENT

Oxford Children's Dictionaries

Oxford University Press (OUP) is renowned around the world for its high quality educational and scholarly publishing. Altogether we publish more than 500 dictionaries, thesauruses, and language reference works, across forty languages. These cater for very young children who are learning to read and write, through to scholars of our language interested in discovering the etymology of words. At the centre of our dictionary publishing sits the *Oxford English Dictionary*, widely believed to be the accepted authority on the evolution of the English language over the last millennium.

All of our dictionaries have several important principles in common. All are based on top quality lexicographical research – monitoring and researching how language is evolving, and applying the highest of editorial standards. Where appropriate, our dictionaries are carefully checked by teachers and consultants; we trial sample texts in hundreds of schools via questionnaires in order to test the appropriateness of them. Importantly, all of our dictionaries are designed to reflect language as it is used, rather than seeking to proscribe certain words or word usages.

Our children's dictionaries, of which there are 17 in the UK alone, are structured by age, with each dictionary specifically written with a certain age group in mind, and with headwords and levels of definition varying according to what that child will need most at any given age. We employ extremely rigorous editorial guidelines in determining which words could be included in each dictionary, based on several criteria: acknowledging the current frequency of words in daily language of children of that age; corpus analysis; acknowledging commonly misspelled or misused words; and taking curriculum requirements into account. These requirements then need to be balanced against the appropriate length of any given dictionary, to create accessibly sized resources.

The current edition of the *Oxford Junior Dictionary* is aimed at 7 year-olds. It has 288 pages, approximately 6,000 headwords. This dictionary is not designed for children to use as they progress higher up the school years, and should be regarded as an introduction to language. The editorial content of the *Oxford Junior Dictionary* reflects language children will come across today at home, and at school. Headword coverage links in with curriculum requirements (especially the National Literacy Strategy). It also gives words covering the main religious faiths, e.g. Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Sikhism; there are headwords relating to places of worship, e.g. church, mosque, synagogue, temple; the main festivals, e.g. Christmas, Easter, Eid, Diwali, Passover, Hanukkah. As required by schools, it pays special attention to IT, and gives a more global coverage.

The *Oxford Primary Dictionary* is the next dictionary in the children's range. Aimed at 8 year-olds and above, this is a more comprehensive dictionary, designed to see students through to age 11, with 608 pages, and 14,500 headwords.

Recent media coverage has implied that OUP are removing words from our dictionaries for children, thus restricting access to Britain's heritage. All the words quoted in the articles as having been taken out of the *Oxford Junior Dictionary* are included in the *Oxford Primary Dictionary* (examples: abbey, aisle, altar, bishop, chapel, disciple, parish, parishioner, pew, monarch, duke, empire, coronation, mistletoe, gerbil, dwarf, acorn, goldfish, guinea pig, dandelion, starling, fern, willow, Whitsun, Whit Sunday, heather, saint, buttercup, sycamore, marzipan, carol, cracker, holly, ivy, elf, goblin, christen, minister, monastic, monastery, monk, nun, nunnery, psalm, pulpit, sin, devil, vicar).

The broader content, and bigger dictionary format, reflects literacy vocabulary children are taught in school and more global coverage.

For full details of our range of dictionaries for children visit www.childrensdictionaries.co.uk

For any further details please contact:

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