

Handwriting Policy

Aim

It is our aim that all pupils should develop a fluent and legible style of handwriting.

Handwriting is a movement skill and one which is best taught directly by demonstration, explanation and practise. The principal aim is that handwriting becomes an automatic process, which frees pupils to focus on the content of the writing in any area of the curriculum. The correct formation of all letters needs to become automatic and may require a lot of practise. In order for this to occur, handwriting is taught in ways that enhance fluency and legibility.

Teaching and Learning

Handwriting is a skill which needs to be taught explicitly. Since handwriting is essentially a movement skill, correct modelling of the agreed style by the teacher is very important; it is not sufficient to require pupils to copy models from a published scheme or worksheet. Consistency in the attitudes displayed, the methods employed and the models provided is the key to effective learning.

Handwriting is taught three times per week in short discrete sessions. This explicit teaching and practise of handwriting skills generally occur outside literacy time. Children spend time concentrating on developing accuracy, fluency and speed without the distraction of spelling and composing text. Handwriting practise should be 'little and often', a few minutes at a time to practise a particular set of letters.

The role of the teacher

- To follow the school policy to help each child develop legible and fluent handwriting
- To provide direct teaching and accurate modelling
- To provide resources and an environment which promotes good handwriting
- To observe pupils, monitor progress and determine targets for development
- To model appropriate handwriting to the children when using white boards, flip charts or marking books

Continuity and Progression

The letter formation taught is a pre-cursive style. This ensures an early transition to joined writing. Continuity of style is ensured through use of the Penpals handwriting scheme. Once children are able to form letters correctly, handwriting books with line guides are provided to

help develop uniformity of size and the correct position of the letters. Generally wide lines are used at Key Stage One and narrow lines are used at Key Stage Two, according to the child's needs and at the teacher's discretion.

Posture

Developing a good posture is as important as developing a good pencil grip. Correct posture is taught in line with the guidelines in the handwriting scheme. Children will be able to sustain writing for longer if they become used to sitting comfortably.

- Ensure that they have a good pencil grip.
- Ensure feet are flat on the floor.
- Children should be sitting up with their bottoms pushed into the back of their chairs.
- The lighting should be good, so that the children can see what they have written.
- Children should have a direct view of the teacher / board.
- Children should use their non-writing hand to steady the paper and bear some body-weight.
- The paper should be tilted slightly.

Progression in handwriting

Handwriting is a part of the Early Years Foundation Stage and National Curriculum for Writing. Children begin by learning how to form recognisable letters; by the end of Year Four, children are expected to increase the legibility, consistency and quality of their handwriting, for example, by ensuring that the down strokes of letters are parallel and equidistant; that lines of writing are spaced sufficiently so that the ascenders and descenders of letters do not touch.

Foundation Stage

The emphasis at this stage is with movement. Letter formation (starting at the right entry point and then moving in the right direction) learned at this early stage becomes automatic and has a profound influence on later fluency and legibility. To aid movement, close attention is given to pencil grip, correct posture, the positioning of the paper and the organisation of the writing space. At this stage the correct formation of letters is stressed.

Children who have been allowed to invent their own ways of forming letters will find it harder to change the longer they are allowed to persist and unless these habits are 'unlearned' it will be very difficult for them to learn a fluent, joined style. To encourage correct letter formation a 'pattern' is used to aid memory e.g. 'a' - all the way round, down and flick.

Pupils are given the opportunity to experiment with a range of writing materials and implements; a multi-sensory approach is used to help pupils feel the movement in the hand. Gross motor skills are developed through sky writing letters, making patterns in the air and making different body shapes and actions. Fine motor skills are developed through bead threading, playdough modelling, finger painting etc. Pencil control is developed through tracing, pattern copying, etc.

Suggested activities to develop gross and fine motor skills:

- Tracing in wet sand
- Painting using thick brushes (water on playground / wall)
- Pegboard patterns
- Sewing and weaving activities
- Cutting out
- Whiteboard work
- Draw letters on backs / different textures e.g. carpet, sandpaper
- Jelly letters
- Letter formation is practised and the link to the phonic sound is made

Shape families are used to introduce the letters of the alphabet and are sorted into four main movement groups. The four groups are:

- Long ladder letters: l, i, t, u, j, y
- One armed robot letters: r, b, n, h, m, k, p
- Curly caterpillar letters: a, c, o, d, g, q, e, s, f
- Zigzag monster letters: v, w, x, z

Key Stage One

Building on the Foundation Stage, pupils at Key Stage One develop a legible style. This is achieved in Year One by developing a comfortable and efficient pencil grip and by practising handwriting in conjunction with spelling and independent writing. Children move on to thin pencils when appropriate. Correct letter orientation, formation and proportion are taught in line with the Penpals handwriting scheme.

Basic joins are introduced as soon as children are secure in the movements of each letter. In Year One these joins are introduced with the phonic teaching e.g. ch is taught as 'two letters one sound' (a digraph) so it makes sense to write it as one unit. This continues in Year Two and the four basic handwriting joins (diagonal and horizontal joins to letters with and without ascenders) are practised and letters that do not join are identified.

Key Stage Two

In Year Three children consolidate their use of the four basic handwriting joins, ensuring consistency in size, proportion and spacing of letters. By the end of Year Three, joined handwriting should be used at all times unless other specific forms are required, e.g. printing on a map, a fast script for notes.

In Year Four handwriting speed, fluency and legibility are built up through practice.

Inclusion

The vast majority of children are able to write legibly and fluently. However, some pupils need more support and provision will be made for this in Individual Provision Plans. Teachers of

children whose handwriting is limited by problems with fine motor skills should liaise with the SENCO to develop a programme designed for the individual child. This may involve extra handwriting sessions and access to extra resources. Other areas that could be considered are posture, lighting, angle of table, pencil grips etc.

Left handed pupils

All teachers are aware of the specific needs of left-handed pupils and make appropriate provision:

- Make sure that left-handed children sit on the left of right-handed children, otherwise their writing arms will clash.
- Put a mark at the left side of the page to indicate where writing begins as some left-handed children mirror-write from the right.
- Left-handed children usually need to have the paper slightly to the left of centre of their body and should be encouraged to tilt their work clockwise so they can see what they have written.

Teachers are alert to the fact that it is very difficult for left-handed pupils to follow handwriting movements when a right-handed teacher models them. Teachers demonstrate letter formation to left-handers on an individual or group basis, even if the resulting writing is not neat. The Penpals CD-Rom has animations to show letter formation.

Assessment

Children are encouraged to assess their writing and notice good formation and areas for development as part of Assessment for Learning in the school. At the start of the year the children complete a handwriting assessment from the Penpals scheme to be used as a baseline and compare this to their handwriting at the end of the year. Review points throughout the year allow children to see their progress by comparison with previous work.

Working with parents

Parents receive a copy of the correct formation of letters as specified in the Penpals Handwriting scheme, along with the parent guidance for handwriting. This information is communicated annually at the start of year Information Session and the class parent guidance booklet handed out at this time. Parents can request to use the handwriting whiteboards and may purchase one from the school office for a small fee.

Monitoring of School Policy and Practice

The Literacy Leader is responsible for monitoring the implementation of this policy.

Review

This Policy will be reviewed bi-annually or earlier if necessary.

Date:

Signed:

Dr S Burton

Chair of Governors