



Carden Handwriting Policy

Written by: Senior Leadership Team

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To be reviewed: Every 3 years or if new guidance becomes available

Statement of Intent

Carden Nursery and Primary School believes that the skill of handwriting needs to be taught. It is not a natural skill that will grow and develop like speaking or walking. Handwriting is a motor activity, a movement stored in the body rather than in the conscious memory. Our hands and fingers control the movements involved in handwriting. It is in our hands that the kinaesthetic memory lies. This controls the direction and shape of each letter.

An effective handwriting policy is based on a style that is quick and easy to learn. It should be neat, legible and fast. Pupils should eventually develop the ability to produce letters without thinking. An automatic response enables the brain to concentrate on other ideas i.e. spelling, grammar, syntax, style and content.

At Carden we use a cursive script (Linkpen 5b) to support our teaching of handwriting. Handwriting should be taught alongside phonic and spelling knowledge at all stages.

Cursive handwriting helps children to learn and remember spelling patterns. It is an integral part of the multisensory technique enabling pupils to make the automatic symbol-sound relationship for spelling. All children are introduced to cursive handwriting from the start of the Early Years Foundation Stage. We believe this raises standards in handwriting throughout the whole school, developing confidence, accuracy and fluency and improved presentation.

Cursive writing helps:

- Minimise confusion for children as every letter starts on the line with an entry stroke and leads out with an exit stroke
- It aids the left to right movements through each word across the page and helps develop a child's visual memory
- It helps sequencing and prevents reversals, inversions and omissions
- It aids legibility especially for those with motor and spatial difficulties providing a motor training programme
- Letters naturally flow into each other, it is impossible to write separate letters without joining, therefore it will eventually help children increase the speed of their writing
- Form spacing between words as the child develops whole word awareness

A cursive style of handwriting is recommended by the British Dyslexia Association.

Effective teaching of handwriting can only be achieved through modelling. Teachers must demonstrate letter formation and joins regularly and children must practice by carefully copying and repeating. It is important to observe children writing to ensure they are forming the letters correctly.

Handwriting Principles

- Handwriting should be taught explicitly, in short, frequent sessions. **It should be modelled by the teacher and then supervised.**
- Where possible, handwriting should be linked to phonic and spelling patterns. This will help handwriting and support 'muscle memory' for spellings
- When developmentally ready, pupils must practice using the lines they regularly use in writing books
- Teachers must have high expectations of writing according to their knowledge of each child (see section on SEND and inclusion)
- Teachers must neatly model the school agreed handwriting script at all times e.g. when writing on the whiteboard and when marking books

Handwriting in the Foundation Stage

Good handwriting relies on secure motor control and hand-eye coordination. Children in the Foundation Stage should learn handwriting through movement with the actual writing of letters as the ultimate aim. Children will:

- Engage in activities which develop gross motor strength and control
- Engage in activities requiring hand-eye coordination, visual tracking and crossing their mid-point
- Manipulate objects with increasing control to develop wrist strength and finger dexterity
- Develop fine motor control through using one-handed tools and equipment
- Develop a preference for a dominant hand
- Work through a sequence of pencil grip stages towards a dynamic tripod grip
- Draw lines and circles using gross motor movement
- Begin to use anticlockwise movement and retrace vertical lines
- Develop a recognition of pattern and replicate this

The key movements underpinning letter formation should be introduced through large-scale movements, from the shoulder. In the earliest stages, children should make the movements symmetrically using both arms. Once the movement is firmly established in kinaesthetic memory, it can be reduced in scale using activities such as sky writing, using sticks in sand, painting letters, chalks outside etc. When ready, children will then transfer these skills to their individual writing.

- Begin to form recognisable letters these are taught in relation to the three basic letter shapes **l, c, r (l team/ long ladders, c team / curly caterpillars, r team –one armed robot, and z team -zig – zag team) (Refer to appendices)**
- Use a pencil and hold it effectively to form recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed.

Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum

There are two strands within the curriculum which relate to this policy. They state what the expectations are for a child by the end of the Reception year.

During Reception children are taught to:

- **Physical Development:** ‘...handle equipment and tools effectively, including pencils for writing.’ ‘Use a pencil and hold it effectively forming recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed.’
- **Writing:** ‘Use (some) clearly identifiable letters to communicate meaning, representing some sounds correctly.’

At Carden:

- We initially introduce letters through phonics' teaching. At this stage we use standard letters (not continuous cursive). Phonics teaching during these very early stages is primarily about

grapheme recognition, blending sounds and recognising tricky words. This is why at this stage children are not specifically taught handwriting skills.

- When modelling writing throughout the year, teachers use a continuous-cursive script.
- During the Spring term children will begin to practise writing letters using a continuous cursive script during writing sessions through 'air writing' and may begin to use some of this in their own writing.
- During the Summer term 5 minute handwriting sessions will commence where children are introduced to the handwriting families (ladder letters / one armed robot letters / curly caterpillars / zigzag monsters) and will practise writing individual letters in a range of ways (using fingers in salt, paintbrushes, sand, chalks etc.).
- During the Summer term children who are ready will be encouraged by teachers to use a continuous cursive script when engaging with writing tasks (adult led and independent).

National Curriculum Standards

In September 2014, the DfE published the 'English Programmes of Study: Key Stages 1 and 2' document which included a set of handwriting standards that pupils are expected to reach by the end of each year group.

All members of school staff have regard to the National Curriculum standards for handwriting when delivering lessons.

During Year 1, pupils are taught to:

- Sit correctly at a table, holding a pencil comfortably and correctly (**See 'P' checks guidance**)
- Begin to form lower-case letters in the correct direction, starting and finishing in the right place
- Form capital letters
- Form digits 0-9
- Understand which letters belong to which handwriting families, (i.e. letters that are formed in similar ways (**handwriting families**) and to practice these
- Make links with phonics and spelling

At Carden:

Year 1

- 10 – 15 minutes per day
- Letter **shapes** - Teach the letters in relation to their handwriting families first.
- Children practise joining the same letters once forming them correctly using continuous cursive script.
- Children practise making patterns – handwriting patterns and patterns made by linking letters
- **Space** - Children need to understand spacing of letters within a word –should be evenly spaced. In addition there needs to be sufficient space between each word and the next.
- **Sitting on the line** - Once secure in forming letters correctly they need to know where to position them in relation to the baseline.
- **Size** – Children need to know the relative sizes of letters. Small/halfway letters / x-height e.g. a,e,o,s
- Tall letters/letters with ascenders e.g. h,l,b,k (plus all capitals)
- Tailed letters / letters with descenders e.g. p,g,y,j. A visual image helps children understand the sky / grass or underground. (See appendices)
- Children then practise writing a sequence of such letters to grasp fully concept of positioning e.g. p a t.

During Year 2, pupils are taught to:

- Form lower-case letters of the correct size relative to one another

- Continue using some of the diagonal and horizontal stroke needed to join letters and understand which letters, when adjacent to one another, are best left un-joined e.g. q, y, g, j, f
- Write capital letters and digits of the correct size, orientation and relationship to one another and to lower-case letters
- Use spacing between words that reflect the size of the letters

At Carden:

Year 2

- **Stringing** - Children first learn different types of join (diagonal join / horizontal join/joins to curly caterpillars)
- Children begin to practise words linked into the phase 5 phonic sounds
- Children practise high frequency / tricky words using correct joins

During Years 3 and 4, pupils are taught to:

- Use the diagonal and horizontal strokes that are needed to join letters and understand which letters, when adjacent to one another, are best left un-joined
- Increase the legibility, consistency and quality of their handwriting, e.g. by ensuring that the down-strokes of letters are parallel and equidistant; and that lines of writing are spaced sufficiently so that the ascenders and descenders of letters do not touch

At Carden:

Year 3

- **Fluency** – Using joined handwriting throughout their independent writing. (Automatic)
- Children begin to practise forming specific topic words
- Children to use letter patterns / words linked to ‘No nonsense’ spelling to practise
- Children begin to practise specific words taken from the word list in the national curriculum for this age band.

At Carden:

Year 4

- Children begin to practise forming specific topic words
- Children to use letter patterns / words linked to ‘No nonsense’ spelling to practise
- Children begin to practise specific words taken from the word list in the national curriculum for this age band.
- Fluency - Use joined writing in all situations/ Using handwriting patterns/ Help students to assess their own writing and monitoring their progress

During Year 5 and 6, pupils are taught to:

- Write legibly, fluently and with increasing speed by
 - Choosing which shape of a letter to use when given choices and deciding whether or not to join specific letters
 - Choosing the writing implement that is best suited for the task (i.e. quick notes, letters)

At Carden:

Year 5

- Children learn how to join from descenders y, g, j, f, to enable more speed and fluency when writing
- Children to use letter patterns / words linked to 'No nonsense' spelling to practise
- Children practise writing topic / example words from the curriculum using correct formation
- **Fluency** – Use joined writing in all situations/ Using handwriting patterns/ Help students to assess their own writing and monitoring their progress
- **Speed** – Understand that different tasks require different levels of speed and legibility.
- **Style** – Develop a style of writing that is both legible and speedy

At Carden:

Year 6

- **Fluency / Speed /Style**
- Children to develop awareness that different qualities and speeds of writing are required for different tasks: personal notes, exams, course work, job applications – and adapt accordingly. They should be aware that on occasions when an unjoined style is appropriate; for labelling diagrams/data, e-mail addresses etc. and be able to use capital letters for form-filling.
- Children to use letter patterns / words linked to 'No nonsense' spelling to practise
- Children practise writing topic / example words from the curriculum using correct formation.
- Fluency – Use joined writing in all situations. Help students to assess their own writing and monitoring their progress
- Speed – Understand that different tasks require different levels of speed and legibility
- Speed – Develop a style of writing that is both legible and speedy

Discrete Handwriting Lessons:

Discrete teaching requires clearly structured and focused teaching and learning. It involves explanation, demonstration and practice of the skill of handwriting. The skill can then be applied or used in contexts across the curriculum. Discrete teaching can help poor handwriting by clearly indicating the relationships between letters and the relationship of each letter to the writing base line.

In the discrete teaching of handwriting, each lesson should have a clear and simple focus (e.g. the correct formation of a single letter, revision of a group of letters such as those requiring clockwise movements, the introduction of a particular aspect of linking, or the practice of linking letters in commonly found patterns.) Letters should be taught in letter family groups and their similarities and differences should be stated clearly as this reduces the amount of new information to be learned as each new letter or type of linking is introduced.

A useful structure for a KS1 handwriting session is as follows:

1. Warm Up – a short session designed to develop gross and fine motor skill and visual tracking.
2. Forming letter families – looking at all the letters within a family and practising each in turn.
3. Positioning and Joining – teaching the formation of letters pre-cursor to joining / joining.

A useful structure for a KS2 handwriting session is as follows:

1. Warm Up – a short session designed to develop gross and fine motor skill and visual tracking.
2. Joining – teaching and practising different types of letter joins both individually and within words including patterns.
3. Increasing fluency, speed and style – practising speed as well as pupils' own personalised handwriting style.

Learning Environment

The letter family groups, commonly found patterns and examples of cursive script expectations MUST be displayed clearly in the classroom and referred to during teaching. It is also important that this is used on display boards and when teachers are writing on white boards, flip charts and when marking books.

Expectations of all adults

Adults in the school are the most important role model for children in terms of presentation and high expectations. They are responsible for modelling good practice, ensuring that where developmentally appropriate, considering children's individual needs, learners understand and follow handwriting expectations and present their work to the best of their ability.

Inclusion and Equal Opportunities

All children will have the opportunity to develop their handwriting skills of legibility and fluency. However, some pupils may need more support and a specific individual or group programme would

be implemented and monitored closely by the class teacher and SENCO. Outside agencies such as Occupational Therapy would be consulted as necessary.

It is recognised that it is essential for all children, especially those with specific learning difficulties, to be closely observed when learning the correct formation of individual letters. This will ensure that posture; pen/pencil grip and pressure; letter formation and placement are monitored and supervised to avoid the development and reinforcement of unhelpful habits.

Pupils who experience difficulties in fine motor movement will be given lots of opportunities to develop control through rehearsal with large body movements.

All teachers are aware of the specific needs of left-handed pupils and make appropriate provision. It is particularly important that left-handed learners are seated on the left of a right-handed child so that they are not competing for space. Teachers are aware that it is difficult for left-handed learners to follow handwriting movements when a right-handed teacher models them. Teachers or support staff will demonstrate to left-handed children on an individual or group basis using their left hand as appropriate. Left-handers should also sit with their body and paper at a slant to the right. This enables them to see their pen/pencil tip, preventing them smudging their work with their writing hand and allows the pen/pencil to move a bit more freely. They may also benefit from holding the pencil/pen higher up.

Pencil grips, thicker or triangular pencils, different types of pens, sloping surfaces and wider lines will be used by children who experience problems writing.

Assessment, Monitoring and Moderation

The handwriting skills developed in this policy must be applied to all pieces of writing the children do.

Teachers ensure the application of handwriting skills by:

- Reminding children of standards of writing and presentation at the beginning of lessons across the curriculum
- Having handwriting as a discrete lesson objective across the curriculum
- Comparing handwriting in handwriting books with writing in other books across the curriculum
- Senior Leadership Team to monitor handwriting and presentation in books across the curriculum regularly and provide feedback to teachers
- Focussed handwriting lessons are planned for target groups and/or individuals who require additional support. The amount of sessions needed is dependent on the needs of the children
- Children to be rewarded by the Assistant, Deputy or Head Teacher when they can demonstrate consistently good handwriting and presentation across a range of books.

Appendices

National Curriculum expectations

Copy of letter formation families

Copy of letter joins

Handwriting script

Copy of earth, sky, underground paper

Copy of good practice sheets P checks and S factors

Handwriting Website with useful resources

www.teachhandwriting.co.uk

National Handwriting Association website - Useful resources.

<https://nha-handwriting.org.uk/>

Handwriting Warm Up Activities

<https://www.teachhandwriting.co.uk/handwriting-warm-up-exercises.html#whole-hand>

Key Strengths Assessment for gross and fine motor skills

<https://www.teachhandwriting.co.uk/the-four-essential-strengths.html>