



Handwriting Policy

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Aim

We aim for our children to leave in Year 6 with the ability to write using their own style of fast, fluent, legible and sustainable handwriting, as well as other styles of writing for specific purposes. In addition to teaching handwriting during our regular handwriting lessons, we have high expectations that what is taught and practiced in handwriting lessons will be used in all writing activities. We believe that handwriting is integral to a child's personal development and know that children's engagement and self-esteem can be improved by their satisfaction and pride in good quality presentation.

Definition

Handwriting is complex perceptual-motor skill that is dependent upon the maturation and integration of a number of cognitive, perceptual, and motor skills, which is developed through instruction (Hamstra-Bletz and Blote, 1993; Maeland, 1992). It is a complex process of handling language by pencil grip, letter formation, and body posture. Handwriting efficiency requires mastery of multiple skills, including vision, coordinating the eyes, arms, hands, memory, posture, and body control, as well as the task of holding a pencil and forming letters.

Rationale

The skill of handwriting is a complex one to learn i.e. it is so much more than holding a pencil and forming letters. This policy seeks to ensure that all adults understand this and take this into account when teaching handwriting.

The importance of handwriting in the curriculum

Handwriting is concerned with individual expression and the conveying of meaning through fluent composition. Handwriting should become an automatic process, which frees pupils to focus on the content of their writing. In order for this to occur, handwriting is taught in ways that enhance fluency, legibility, purposefulness and the opportunity for creative expression. It is important that all adults model the correct formation at all times, when marking, teaching and for display.

National Curriculum 2014 states: 'Writing...depends on fluent, legible and, eventually, speedy handwriting.'

Aims

Handwriting is a taught skill that develops at different rates for different children. All of the teachers in the school put a priority on teaching handwriting and have high expectations for handwriting across the curriculum. Our school uses *Penpals for Handwriting* to ensure that:

- The importance of handwriting is recognised and given appropriate time.
- The progression of handwriting is consistent across the school.
- Handwriting is acknowledged to be a whole body activity and emphasis is placed on correct posture and pencil grip for handwriting.
- Expectations of left-handed children are equal to those of right-handed children, and appropriate advice and resources are available to ensure that they learn to write with a comfortable, straight wrist.
- Handwriting is linked into grammar, punctuation and spelling in order to practice and contextualise all of the transcriptional and stylistic skills for writing.
- Children learn to self-assess their own writing and develop understanding and responsibility for improving it.
- Children learn to write in different styles for different purposes such as print for labelling a diagram, illustrated capitals letters for creating a poster, swift jottings for writing notes, making a 'best copy' for presentation and fast, fluent and legible writing across the curriculum.

Progression of skills

Penpals enables us to teach and secure the development of handwriting throughout the school:

- First, children experience the foundation of handwriting through multi-sensory activities (Priority in EYFS F1 and F2 and continued throughout school).
- Correct letter formation is taught, practised, applied and consolidated (EYFS/Y1).
- Joining is introduced only after correct letter formation is used automatically (Y1/Y2/Y3).
- Joins are introduced systematically and cumulatively (Y2–Y6).
- As children practice joining, they pay attention to the size, proportion and spacing of their letters and words (Y3–Y6).
- Once the joins are secure, a slope is introduced in order to support increased speed and fluency (Y5).
- Children are introduced to different ways of joining in order that they can develop their own preferred personal style (Y6).

In using *Penpals*, we ensure that our children follow the requirements and recommendations of the National Curriculum. We share the aspirations that children's handwriting should be 'sufficiently fluent and effortless for them to manage the general demands of the curriculum' and that 'problems with forming letters do not get in the way of their writing down what they want to say'.

Handwriting tools

Throughout their time in school, children use a range of tools for different purposes and styles of handwriting including:

- A range of tools, materials and exercises that build muscle strength and develop gross and fine motor movements
- A wide range of tools and media for mark-making in the EYFS.
- Whiteboard pens throughout the school.
- Fingers when writing on the interactive whiteboard.
- Art supplies including coloured pens and pencils for posters, displays and artwork.
- Sharp pencils for most writing until a pen licence is awarded (a range of pens will be made available).
- A handwriting pen for when they sustain a good level of presentation (a range of pens will be made available).

Handwriting is always introduced and practised in Handwriting Books and on lined paper so that children quickly learn about letter orientation including ascenders and descenders. As children's fine motor skills improve and their letter formation or joining becomes increasingly accurate, the width between the lines they write on gradually decreases.

Expectations Foundation Stage

From the moment children begin to move and handle objects they are preparing for the act of writing. All children in our EYFS should be given opportunities to experience and practise the following (taken from the *Statutory Framework for EYFS, DfE, 2012*)

From Physical Development: Moving and Handling

8-20 months

- *Picks up small objects between thumb and fingers.*
- *Enjoys the sensory experience of making marks in damp sand, paste or paint.*
- *Holds pen or crayon using a whole hand (palmar) grasp and makes random marks with different strokes.*

16-26 months

- *Beginning to balance blocks to build a small tower.*
- *Makes connections between their movement and the marks they make.*

22-36 months

- *Shows control in holding and using jugs to pour, hammers, books and mark-making tools.*
- *Beginning to use three fingers (tripod grip) to hold writing tools*
- *Imitates drawing simple shapes such as circles and lines.*
- *May be beginning to show preference for dominant hand.*

30-50 months

- *Draws lines and circles using gross motor movements.*
- *Uses one-handed tools and equipment, e.g. makes snips in paper with child scissors.*
- *Holds pencil between thumb and two fingers, no longer using whole-hand grasp.*

- Holds pencil near point between first two fingers and thumb and uses it with good control.
- Can copy some letters, e.g. letters from their name.

40-60 months

- Shows a preference for a dominant hand.
- Begins to use anticlockwise movement and retrace vertical lines.
- Begins to form recognisable letters.**
- Uses a pencil and holds it effectively to form recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed.**

From Literacy: Writing

- Gives meaning to marks they make as they draw, write and paint.
- Writes own name and other things such as labels, captions.
- Attempts to write short sentences in meaningful contexts.

****NB See below year 1 expectations for letter formation (as this is how we teach letter formation in our EYFS)**

YEAR 1 EXPECTATIONS

STATUTORY REQUIREMENT

Pupils should be taught to:

- sit correctly at a table, holding a pencil comfortably and correctly (**also EYFS expectation**)
- begin to form lower-case letters in the correct direction, starting and finishing in the right place (**also EYFS expectation**)
- form capital letters
- form digits 0-9
- understand which letters belong to which handwriting 'families' (i.e. letters that are formed in similar ways) and to practise these.

NON STATUTORY (BUT EXPECTED AT OUR SCHOOL)

Handwriting requires frequent and discrete, direct teaching. Pupils should be able to **form letters correctly** and confidently. The size of the writing implement (pencil, pen) should not be too large for a young pupil's hand. Whatever is being used should allow the pupil to hold it easily and correctly so that bad habits are avoided.

Left-handed pupils should receive specific teaching to meet their needs.

YEAR 2 EXPECTATIONS

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Pupils should be taught to:

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

- *start using some of the diagonal and horizontal strokes needed to join letters and understand which letters, when adjacent to one another, are best left unjoined*
- *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 reflects the size of the letters.*

NON STATUTORY (BUT EXPECTED AT OUR SCHOOL)

*Pupils should revise and practise correct letter formation frequently. They should be taught to write with a joined style as soon as they can **form letters securely with the correct orientation.***

YEARS 3 & 4 EXPECTATIONS STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Pupils should be 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 unjoined*
- *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].*

NON STATUTORY (BUT EXPECTED AT OUR SCHOOL)

Pupils should be using joined handwriting throughout their independent writing. Handwriting should continue to be taught, with the aim of increasing the fluency with which pupils are able to write down what they want to say. This, in turn, will support their composition and spelling.

YEARS 5 & 6 EXPECTATIONS STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Pupils should be 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 a task.*

NON STATUTORY (BUT EXPECTED AT OUR SCHOOL)

Pupils should continue to practise handwriting and be encouraged to increase the speed of it, so that problems with forming letters do not get in the way of their writing down what they want to say. They should be clear about what standard of handwriting is appropriate for a particular task, for example, quick notes or a final handwritten version. They should also be taught to use an unjoined style, for example, for labelling a diagram or data, writing an email address, or for algebra and capital letters, for example, for filling in a form.

How we teach handwriting

OVERVIEW

We use the Cambridge Penpals scheme to structure our teaching of handwriting from EYFS through to Year 6. Our focus is initially on legibility and presentation, ensuring that the child feels comfortable when handwriting so that fluency is achieved. At all ages/stages we make sure that children are given the opportunity to exercise the necessary muscles in order to be able to write comfortably; also we give the children the freedom to choose pen or pencil and to choose which kind of pen that they feel most comfortable using. **Once children have a legible, joined style of handwriting we assume that they will try a pen of their choice from a given selection.** We expect that all children will obtain their pen licence during Year 3.

When teaching handwriting we use 'self-instructional training' to support children to become autonomous. The steps that should be followed are:

1. Adult models task whilst talking aloud, *for example "to form a c I am going to start at one o'clock, curve round in this direction – to the left, and end here"*
2. Child performs task while adult provides instructions out loud, *for example "put your pencil at one o'clock, now curve round to the left and stop"*
3. Child performs task while verbalising instructions, *for example "I start at one o'clock, curve round to the left and stop"*
Then, when ready developing to:
4. Child performs task while whispering instructions
Then, when ready developing to:
5. Child performs task using private speech

We use a common language to teach handwriting, including the P checks and S factors (see attached guidance).

We always observe children while they write in order to identify anything that needs correcting at the point of learning – therefore we prefer to teach handwriting in small groups, in EYFS and KS1, as this enables us to observe closely and identify misconceptions.

EYFS

Daily Fine and Gross Motor Activities. Weekly - 3 x 10 minutes Penpals.

From entry to the EYFS we teach:

- good gross and fine motor control
- a recognition of pattern
- a language to talk about the shapes and movements that will lead into the main handwriting movements which create the three basic letter shapes (c,l,m)

The first stage of handwriting teaching involves gross motor skill development activities, which are closely linked to whole-body movements. Children are shown how to make large movements in the air with their arms, hands and shoulders, e.g. with ribbons fixed to the ends of sticks.

Emerging letter shapes are developed in a number of ways, for example:

- Sky writing with both hands
- Making patterns on each other's backs
- Making letter shapes in a damp sand tray

Children in this stage are provided with a variety of surfaces to make marks on, including different types of paper and card, whiteboards, chalkboards, interactive white boards, 'magic boards' etc. and they are given the opportunity to use a wide range of mark making tools, including pencils of varying thicknesses and colours, markers, chalk, wax crayons, pastels, paint, charcoal etc.

They have experience of a wide range of activities to develop hand and finger strength which leads on to developing a good pencil grip. When children are ready, they pick up the writing implement themselves and decide which hand they prefer, although hand dominance is often evident before this stage. They are taught to hold the pencil between the thumb and forefinger with the pencil resting on the third finger. The thumb and forefinger should also be able to move slightly so that very fine movements required for writing are possible.

Pencil grips and triangular pencils are used to encourage a good grip, and children are monitored so that they do not hold the pencil too tightly which produces tension in the arm and shoulder. Children who are left handed are encouraged to tilt their work clockwise so that they can more easily see what they have written.

Children are provided with the opportunity to mark make and write in all the continuous provision areas as well as having a designated 'writing area' to give status to their early independent writing and develop a positive attitude to the act of writing, and left-right orientation is encouraged.

By the end of the foundation stage, children are able to sit correctly at a table, holding a pencil comfortably and correctly and begin to form lower-case letters in the correct direction, starting and finishing in the right place.

Possible activities:

- large-scale motor movements
- Sky-writing.
- Lifting various weighted objects to build shoulder strength.
- Writing with a stick or finger in sand.
- seeds and other tactile materials
- Letter shapes/feely letter shapes
- Tactile letter tracing using textured shapes
- Large paper and brushes to make writing patterns
- Whiteboards and pens
- Making letters with malleable materials e.g. Plasticine, play dough, clay.
- Roller ball
- Using paints, chalks or large felt tips.
- Use sky-writing and large-scale practise

- Ensure correct posture
- Practise tracing over lines and shapes
- Trace over letters and simple words
- Practise copy writing own name
- Use a comfortable and efficient pencil grip
- To produce a controlled line which supports letter formation
- To write letters using the correct sequence of movements.
- Introduced joined script for writing child's name – practise writing name in
- Joined script using laminated name cards.

KEY STAGE 1

Regular Fine and Gross Motor Activities. Weekly - 3 x 10/15 minutes Penpals.

During handwriting sessions, children are taught all of the basic letter shapes, according to the Penpals scheme, and they have the opportunity to practise letter formation in a variety of ways, starting with sky-writing to encourage good formation and reinforce previous learning.

There is an expectation that:

- this handwriting style will be applied to all writing that the children do
- the P checks will be made and children will become familiar with how to self-check
- the *appropriate* S factors will be considered and children will become familiar with how to self-assess
- joining will not be taught unless children are forming letters correctly

KEY STAGE 2

Weekly - 2 x 20 minutes Penpals.

Throughout key stage 2 handwriting skills are revised and practised in discrete handwriting lessons for 15/20 minutes, at least, twice a week. Handwriting practice can incorporate GPS (SpAG) activities or wider curriculum opportunities.

There is an emphasis on applying handwriting skills to all written work. They work at a personal pace, revisiting and refining skills.

High standards of presentation are valued in each year group in order to encourage children to take pride in their work.

There is an expectation that:

- the P checks will be made and children will be able to self-check
- the S factors will be considered and children from Year 4 upwards will be able to self-assess (see S factors self-assessment sheet in appendix)

By the end of KS2 children should be able to write at speed when necessary, and should be able to adapt their handwriting according to the task. Skills practice in Y6 should take these requirements into account.

Inclusion

We endeavour to identify children with learning difficulties with handwriting swiftly – if we are unsure we seek professional advice. We observe young (or new) children carefully in order to identify any issues early on.

Children identified as having a specific learning difficulty with handwriting have a school based plan written in consultation with the SEND coordinator, and special provisions are made to cater for their specific needs.

Children who are left-handed are taught to slant their book or paper so that their writing can be read more easily. They are discouraged from holding a pen or pencil too close to the point as this can interrupt their line of vision, and they are supported to choose a writing implement that is not going to smudge as they write. Additionally, a left-handed child should be positioned to the left of a right-handed child to enable both to write comfortably without bumping into each other.

How we assess handwriting

Observing children as they handwrite is the primary way that we assess handwriting. In the first instance we are looking for correct letter formation (both lower case and capital letters) by observing how the letters are formed.

When we are confident that the children are forming their letters correctly we assess whether the children's handwriting is:

- Legible – EYFS/KS1/KS2
- Presentable - EYFS/KS1/KS2
- Fluent – KS1/KS2
- Flexible – KS2
- Fast – KS2

We use our assessments for the following purposes:

1. To identify next steps of learning (this is our priority)
2. To ascertain whether pupils are working at age-related standards for handwriting (as set out in the EYFS Framework and National Curriculum)
3. To provide evidence for end of Key Stage assessments

In order to assess whether handwriting is legible we look at (the S Factors):

- Shape – From Year 1 onwards
- Size - From Year 1 onwards
- Space – From Year 2 onwards
- Sitting on the Line - From Year 2 onwards
- Stringing - From Year 3 onwards
- Slant – From Year 4 onwards
- Speed - From Year 4 onwards
- Style – From Year 5 onwards

The children will be expected to self-assess against these S factors from Year 4 onwards (sheet in appendix).

In addition we use the National Curriculum end of Key Stage assessment criteria for handwriting.

Appendix 1:

Guidance: The language we use when teaching handwriting

The baseline

The 'x high' letters

Long ladder letters – l, i, t, u, j, y

One-armed robot letters – r, b, n, h, m, k, p

Curly caterpillar letters – c, a, d, o, s, g, q, e, f

Zig zag monster letters – z, v, w, x

Ascenders/descenders

Related to x high, ascender, descender – sky, grass, underground

Letter bodies

Upper case

Lower case

Exit flicks

Joining stroke

P checks (see separate guidance)

S factors (see separate guidance)

Appendix 2

Guidance: Furniture and Tools

Chairs positioned at tables in order for the writer to sit comfortably with the correct posture for handwriting

Correct chair height for tables

Foot rests, cushions to adapt furniture where necessary

Support: Laminated line-guides with zoning (appropriate to KS1 and to KS2 books) and x height lines if required

Variety of mark makers - EYFS

Variety of pencils

Variety of pens

P checks and S Factors posters displayed

Font /letter formation posters displayed in every room where writing will happen

Letter formation Apps

Variety of pencil grips (or similar) to provide support

Appendix 3

Guidance: P checks and S Factors

P CHECKS

Posture

Paper

Pressure

Pencil Grip

S FACTORS

Shape

Space

Size

Sitting on the line

Stringing

Slant

Speed

Style and Stamina