

Policy Statement for Handwriting

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We give the highest priority to securing the basic skills of literacy for all pupils and we acknowledge the strong link between reading, writing and spelling. We view handwriting primarily as a tool for clear communication to present finished work clearly and attractively and to write letters, stories etc. – but we also recognise its use as a personal speedy form of note-taking or jotting, and as a calligraphic art form.

We teach cursive writing at Swinton Queen Primary School because:

- ❑ It aids left to right movements through each word and across the page.
- ❑ The word is treated as a unit. A joined style with loops under the line enables the pupil to go from the beginning to the end of a word without a break.
- ❑ It eliminates reversals and inversions. The differences in similar letters in cursive writing are not determined entirely by difference in direction. There are differences in appearances and in movement pattern.
- ❑ The smoother flow reinforces learning of spelling as letter sounds and shapes can be blended while writing.
- ❑ Learning of spelling is further reinforced as common spelling patterns are learnt not only as an academic exercise but also by the body as a movement pattern.
- ❑ There is no need to learn a new handwriting style later. As children are taught cursive handwriting from the start, their fluency is not hampered by having to relearn letter shapes at a time when they want to express their ideas more freely on paper.
- ❑ It gives space between the words. It is easier for young children to space words than is the case with a script that is not joined.
- ❑ It gives space between the letters automatically with the joining stroke.
- ❑ It facilitates earlier development of personal style.
- ❑ It gives potential for speeding up.

At Swinton Queen Primary School we recognise the importance of Early Years education:

It is important to note that the Foundation Stage ensures that meaning and pleasure are associated with reading and writing from the beginning. A writer needs something to say and the skill to communicate it and the Foundation Stage lays the foundations of good writing and handwriting by:

- ❑ Making links between reading and writing so that the children understand that writing carries a “message”.
- ❑ Encouraging imaginative play and the development of manipulative skills through the provision of suitable activities, games and materials.

- Providing opportunities for pencil skills such as pattern making, drawing and “play” writing, to establish direction, continuous flow and common handwriting shapes and encouraging parents to practice a range of pencil skills at home.

Before a child begins writing we are aware of:

- Posture – sitting comfortable with feet on the floor and body upright. (“My feet are flat, my bottom is back, my hands are on the table.”)
- Furniture – of the appropriate height.
- Light – to be able to see what they are doing without eye strain.
- Left handers – ideally, when seated in pairs, a left-handed child is seated to the left of a right-handed child.
- Types of paper – lined paper or lined underlay are used. We aim to provide paper with a variety of colours and sizes for special presentation purposes.
- Pencil grip – A writer needs a firm and controllable grip that is comfortable and allows for fine motor movement. An efficient grip that most children find comfortable is to hold the pencil between the thumb and index finger. Observation and discussion with the child regarding the most comfortable method is necessary. Triangular or hand-hugger pencils are provided where appropriate.

Teaching Handwriting

Handwriting is a motor skill, which we teach carefully. Every teacher has a copy of the Handwriting Scheme.

The aim of the Handwriting Scheme is to reinforce these spelling, whilst developing a fluent, joined handwriting style that is clear, neat and legible.

Handwriting should be done in Handwriting books. Plain or appropriately lined books/line guides should be provided according to the developmental stage of the individual pupil. Every entry should be dated.

In order to promote transfer to independent work, positive attempts by pupils should be praised. Teachers should consider their own handwriting.

Handwriting should be taught in short bursts.

- Discouraging simple copying – once poor handwriting habits have been established they are hard to change.
- Establishing good habits by showing children how individual letters are formed.
- Providing a multi-sensory approach where appropriate;
- Using an entry and exit stroke to ensure correct spacing.
- Showing children how to make the entry stroke by taking their pencil from the line to the starting point of the letter.
- Teaching the correct starting point of each letter to enable children to make horizontal joins correctly.
- Practising and revising letters in letter “families” based on similar movement.

- ❑ Discouraging children from writing rows of one letter as it does not help them to learn the similarities and relationships between letters.
- ❑ Providing regular opportunities to practise handwriting common letter strings, word families and sight words.
- ❑ Providing a good model by using the cursive style for any handwriting intended to be read by children e.g. hand-written labels, captions and notices around the school; writing in children's books.