



## HANDWRITING POLICY



## **DEFINITION OF HANDWRITING:**

Handwriting is writing done with the hand using a pencil, pen, digital stylus or other marking instrument. Handwriting involves using a recognised system of symbols to express and communicate language.

### **1. AIM**

Our aim is for all children to learn and practise appropriate handwriting skills at each stage of development, working towards comfortable handwriting which is legible, fluent and fast, and can be sustained over longer passages of writing. We deliver this through the careful alignment of our intent, implementation and impact:

#### **INTENT:**

- To provide a carefully designed handwriting curriculum which is coherently planned and based on evidence-based practice to cumulatively develop children's knowledge and skills.

#### **IMPLEMENTATION:**

- Handwriting teaching is delivered by a confident and skilled teaching staff who have a good knowledge of the development of handwriting skills and who understand the importance of effective modelling across the curriculum.
- The school creates an environment that optimises learning within handwriting and quickly identifies those children who need further support.

#### **IMPACT:**

- Learners develop handwriting skills both in discrete handwriting lessons and across the curriculum and, as a result, achieve well.
- They produce legible, fluent and fast handwriting which enables them to express their thoughts and ideas and communicate with others.

### **2. TEACHING AND LEARNING**

Handwriting is a skill which needs to be taught explicitly. Successful practice in handwriting is based on consistency and continuity across the whole school community and in every area of the curriculum. To develop automaticity, children need regular practice. Since handwriting is essentially a movement skill, correct modelling of the agreed style by all teachers is vital. Consistency in the attitudes displayed, the methods employed and the models provided is the key to effective learning. A mixture of whole class, small group and individual teaching is planned throughout the school. Initially, we use the Jolly Phonics scheme, before moving to a progression map to provide regular instruction, practice and retrieval of the four main letter joins.

The children will:

- Learn to form upper and lower-case letters and digits 0-9 correctly from their Reception year.
- Learn and practise handwriting during dedicated handwriting lessons, with links made to the school's phonics and spelling programmes.
- Sit correctly at a table, holding their pencil comfortably and correctly. This is referred to across the school as the 'Perfect Learning Position'.
- Be encouraged to use neat, appropriately joined handwriting for all subjects as appropriate to the task and according to the ability of each individual.
- Understand which letters belong to which handwriting 'families' and practise these.

The teachers and teaching assistants will:

- Provide direct teaching and accurate modelling of handwriting.
- Have high expectations of the presentation of children's writing.
- Ensure that children adopt good writing posture and position.
- Observe individual children's handwriting to ensure correct grip and formation is adhered to, monitor progress and determine targets for development.
- Quickly identify children who have difficulty mastering handwriting and build in appropriate support and intervention.

### **3. TEACHING TIME**

For automaticity to be achieved, the teaching of handwriting should be frequent, discrete and direct. There should be a minimum of 5 x 10 minute handwriting lessons each week in Key Stage 1 and 2 x 15 minute or 3 x 10 minute handwriting lessons each week in Key Stage 2. More opportunities will need to be provided for children across the school who are identified as needing further support to improve their skills in letter formation and then joining.

### **4. STRUCTURE OF A LESSON**

Using the Jolly Phonics scheme or the school Handwriting Progression Map, identify the type of letter shape and where appropriate, join. Joining is initially introduced in Reception as children learn to join the digraphs and tricky words within Jolly Phonics. The joining of other letters is introduced in Year 2 at the teacher's discretion and only once letters are being formed correctly.

The teacher writes the letter or spelling pattern on the whiteboard or in a handwriting book using a visualiser, ensuring best practice is demonstrated to the children. See the Jolly Phonics Handbook or online subscription to use the correct language to describe each action. For children in Reception and Year 1, and those children in other year groups who need further support, the examples can also be written ahead of the lesson in the handwriting book for the child to trace over.

Provide regular opportunities for deliberate practice and check that the learning is then being applied to other curriculum areas.

## **5. ASSESSMENT AND MONITORING**

All children should be observed as they write during handwriting lessons – the teacher must circulate, monitor and intervene immediately. The following should be considered:

- Is the posture correct?
- Does the child hold the pen or pencil correctly?
- Does the child use the correct movement when forming and or joining letters?
- Are any letters reversed or inverted?
- Does the child write fluently and rhythmically?
- Is the writing easily legible?

Children in Reception and Key Stage 1 need to have their progress towards legible, joined handwriting monitored very carefully. Studies have shown that incorrect letter formation early on is a significant contributor to handwriting difficulties later on.

Senior leaders should monitor children's writing and presentation in books, across the curriculum, at least termly.

### **IDENTIFYING CHILDREN WHO NEED FURTHER SUPPORT:**

Handwriting is a complex skill to master, one that involves linguistic, cognitive, perceptual and motor components, all of which have to be coordinated into an integrated fashion. As a result, some children may have difficulty mastering it. These children need to be identified quickly and have additional support put in place.

To provide the most appropriate support, a teacher must first identify which area of handwriting is the main area of concern:

1. Legibility: can the words be read out of context?
2. Neatness: is the handwriting messy or poorly controlled?
3. Comfort: does the child experience pain, strain or discomfort when writing?
4. Pressure: is the child pressing too hard or not hard enough, or is the pressure within one piece of writing variable?
5. Speed: is the child writing very slowly, producing too little writing, or too fast, becoming inaccurate?
6. Motivation / enjoyment: is s/he reluctant to write or gives up too easily?

The 'Handwriting Initial Assessment Audit' available on the Drive can support this process.

## **RESOURCES AVAILABLE IN SCHOOL TO SUPPORT HANDWRITING DEVELOPMENT:**

### **Equipment:**

- Soft pencil grips to help reduce fatigue caused by writing pressure
- Slope boards to reduce the stresses and strains caused by working on flat surfaces
- Softer lead pencils to improve legibility for children with light pressure (e.g. 2B)
- Wide-lined exercise books and maths books with larger squares for children developing control of size

### **Small group and Individual Interventions:**

- Write from the Start: Unique Programme to Develop Fine Motor and Perceptual Skills Necessary for Effective Handwriting (book in school)
- Speed Up: A Kinaesthetic Programme to Develop Handwriting (book in school)
- Handwriting Development Activities developed by Warwickshire NHS Occupational Therapy Team (available on the Drive under English - Handwriting).

## **6. POSTURE**

In school, we refer to this as, 'The Perfect Learning Position':

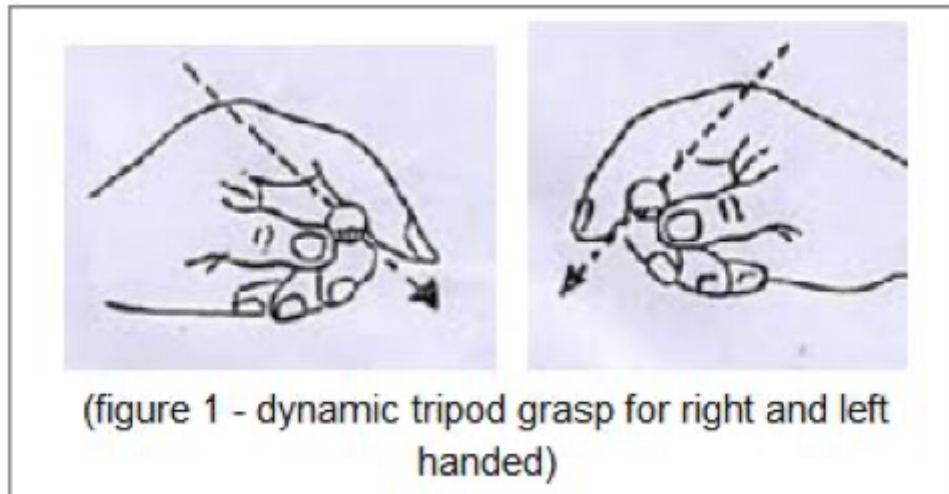
- Feet - flat on the floor.
- Arms - resting on the forearms without the shoulders being forced upwards. Forearms should ideally be positioned 45 degrees to the table edge away from the body in order to support the shoulder girdle.
- Back - should be almost straight (but slightly leaning forwards).
- Head - upright without the neck poking forwards.
- Weight - evenly distributed between feet and forearms.
- Non-writing hand - should support the work at the top corner furthest away from the writing hand. This allows the forearm to support the body enabling the writing arm to move lightly across the page.
- Left-handers should have the same posture as right-handers but may wish to use a sloping board to raise their work slightly or use a seat wedge to raise their bodies to allow them to see over their hand.
- Children should be seated so that a left-handed child sits on the left-hand side of a table if next to a right-handed child.

## **7. PAPER POSITION**

Right-handers should position the paper towards their right side and left-handers should position the paper towards their left side, within their body range, not too far and not too close. As they move down the page, right-handers should move the paper up in the same line using their left hand and left-handers should move the paper up in the same line using their right hand, to maintain the correct body posture.

## 8. PENCIL GRIP

Children need to hold a pen or pencil with an appropriate grip; this needs to be explained and modelled. A child's grip needs to be carefully monitored in the Early Years and Year 1 as it becomes very difficult to correct as a child progresses through school. The **dynamic tripod grip** offers the greatest control and allows the precise movements needed to form letters:



However, this grip does not suit all children. Comfort and ease of movement are more important. As a child grows older, if the grip is not causing pain, discomfort or fatigue, and it is not seriously affecting legibility, it should be left alone.

## 9. CORRECT FORMATION BEFORE JOINING

Teaching the correct formation of the letters should be given the highest priority and this should be achieved by pupils before any attempt is made at joining.

## 10. CHILDREN NEW TO THE SCHOOL

Children who join the school with established fluent joined handwriting should be allowed to continue with their current style of handwriting as long as it is consistent and legible.

## 11. HEALTH AND SAFETY

Children are shown how to sit correctly and how to hold writing tools comfortably. They are also shown how to position paper correctly. Adaptations will be made for right and left handed children, and resources which need to be copied will be in a position to ensure comfort of view.

## **12. TYPE OF WRITING IMPLEMENTS TO BE USED**

In Reception, Year 1 and Year 2, children need to use a sharp pencil. At the class teacher's discretion, from the Spring Term onwards, children in Year 2 can be asked to write in pen. All children write in pen from Year 3 onwards.

The school will provide a pen which is solely for the use of that child. Children can also bring in a pen from home if it is approved by the class teacher e.g. a fountain pen or ergonomic roller ball.