



Deepdale Community Primary School Policy for Handwriting



Definition

Handwriting is a 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 or pen 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

We believe that effective handwriting is:

- Legible
- Presentable
- Comfortable
- Fluent
- Flexible
- Fast
- Automatic
- Sustainable

And that our children should progress through this list such that when they leave us at the end of KS2 their writing is flexible and fast.

Curriculum content (what we teach)

We use the Letterjoin style font *as a basis*



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Expectations Foundation Stage

Handwriting appears within the Educational Programmes for Physical development (Fine Motor Skills) and for Literacy (Writing).

Taken from the *Physical Development Educational Programme - Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage 2021*

“Fine motor control and precision helps with hand-eye co-ordination, which is later linked to early literacy. Repeated and varied opportunities to explore and play with small world activities, puzzles, arts and crafts and the practice of using small tools, with feedback and support from adults, allow children to develop proficiency, control and confidence.”

Taken from the *Literacy Educational Programme - Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage 2021*

“Writing involves transcription (spelling and handwriting) and composition (articulating ideas and structuring them in speech, before writing)

The level of development children should be expected to have attained in handwriting by the end of the EYFS is defined by the following early learning goals (ELGs):

ELG: Fine Motor Skills Children at the expected level of development will:

- Hold a pencil effectively in preparation for fluent writing - using the tripod grip in almost all cases;
- Use a range of small tools, including scissors, paint brushes and cutlery;
- Begin to show accuracy and care when drawing.

ELG: Writing Children at the expected level of development will:

- Write recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed

In addition to ensure that our children are Year One ready the expectation is that children will:

- Form all 26 graphemes correctly.
- Know that letters should sit on the line.

****NB** See below year 1 expectations for letter formation (as this is how we teach letter formation in our EYFS as per the Red Rose Letters & Sounds scheme linked to the teaching of Phonics)

YEAR 1 EXPECTATIONS

STATUTORY REQUIREMENT

Pupils should be taught to:

- sit correctly at a table, holding a pencil comfortably and correctly (*also EYFS expectation*)



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- 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**.



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| | | | |
|----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| a | Round the anchor and down the rope. | n | Down the nose and over the nostril. |
| b | Down the bat and round the ball. | o | Back around the octopus. |
| c | Curl round the cat. | p | Down the path, up the path and round the pond. |
| d | Back round the dog's body, up to his ears and down to his tail. | q | Quick! Back round the pond, down and splash. |
| e | Across the shelf and over the elf. | r | Rain down to the ground and over the rainbow. |
| f | Follow down the flamingo and fly. | s | Slip down the slide. |
| g | Go round the gorilla and swing from the vine. | t | Down the tree and across the branch. |
| h | Down the hill and over the hedge. | u | Down under the sea, up for breath and down again. |
| i | Down the insect and don't forget his cap. | v | Down the vase and up the vase. |
| j | Jump off the jetty and don't forget your cap. | w | Down the wave and up the wave. Down the wave and up the wave. |
| k | Down the koala's body, arm and leg. | x | Cross the box and cross the box. |
| l | Down the long ladder. | y | Down the yo-yo, up the yo-yo and swing. |
| m | Down the mound and over the moles. | z | Zip, zap, zoom! |

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



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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 Red Rose Letters and Sounds scheme initially before moving onto the Letterjoin scheme to structure the majority of our teaching of handwriting. 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 through the use of, for example, squeeze stress balls. 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 do not expect all children to write in pen by the end of KS1; however we do expect that they will be able to select the most appropriate writing implement for the task. Pen Licences can be obtained in Year 3. We also have a wide variety of pencil / pen grips for children to trial.

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" or "curl round the cat"
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.

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 or 1:1 as this enables us to observe closely.

EYFS

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)



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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.

Writing opportunities are provided in all areas of provision to give status to their early independent writing, and to 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.

KEY STAGE 1

Children are taught handwriting skills in discrete handwriting group sessions for 15 minutes at least three times a week or similar (as this is a motor skill 'little and often' works best).

During handwriting sessions, children are taught all of the basic letter shapes, according to the Letterjoin 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.



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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

Throughout key stage 2 handwriting skills are revised and practised in discrete handwriting lessons for 15 minutes twice a week or similar using the Letterjoin scheme.

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

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:



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- Legible - EYFS/KSI/KS2
- Presentable - EYFS/KSI/KS2
- Fluent - KSI/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.

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

Handwriting is monitored half-termly by SLT. The expectation is that a high standard of handwriting is evident across all pupil workbooks.

Frances Ball

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