

Handwriting at Harrow Gate Academy

Intent

At Harrow Gate Primary academy, our intent is to enable children to write legibly, fluently and comfortably.

We know that from a very early age 'good writers' develop fluent handwriting so that it becomes automatic. Once they have mastered the skill, they rarely need to expend much mental energy on their handwriting, so they can concentrate on tailoring their content for an audience, selecting appropriate vocabulary and more.

In stark contrast, students with handwriting difficulties can have their thinking slowed, and as their **working memory is strained** by the process of forming legible letters, words and sentences, their focus on spelling and organising ideas into paragraphs etc. can suffer. Weak writers may even suffer a **vicious circle**: to hide their spelling issues, they may try to keep their writing unclear, attempting to mask their attempts at certain words with small, deliberately ambiguous letter formations.

Issues with handwriting can extend into adolescence and may have a damaging effect on student attainment. Without fluency, a student can struggle at all levels of understanding.

The handwriting rich get richer and the poor get poorer. (Alex Quigley 2017)

Implementation

At Harrow Gate Primary Academy, we follow the **Penpals for Handwriting** programme from EYFS to Year 6. Penpals is a practical, active learning approach that supports the delivery of handwriting teaching. Each year group has the interactive software, teaching guide and practice materials. Each unit is discretely taught is a 20-30 minute lesson each week with follow up sessions where necessary.



Five Key Developmental Phases

Handwriting is a **developmental process** with its own distinctive stages of sequential growth. Penpals have identified **five stages** that form the structure of the programme:

1. Physical preparation for handwriting: gross and fine motor skills leading to mark-making, patterns and letter formation (EYFS, 3-5 years).
2. Securing correct letter formation (Key Stage 1, 5-6 years).
3. Beginning to join along with a focus on break letters, legibility, consistency and quality (Lower Key Stage 2, 7-9 years).
4. Securing joins along with a focus on break letters, legibility, consistency and quality (Lower Key stage 2, (7-9 years).
5. Practicing speed, fluency and developing a personalised style for different purposes (Upper Key Stage 2, 9-11 years).

1. Physical preparation for handwriting
2. Securing correct letter formation
3. Beginning to join
4. Securing the joins and practising speed
5. Developing a personal style

Impact

Children will be able to children to write legibly, fluently and comfortably. They will meet year group expectations and intervention will be in place to ensure that children catch-up. Summative assessments are carried out at the beginning and end of the school year. Formative assessment is ongoing and children needing additional support are quickly identified. Progress across classes is monitored by the class teacher and English team. Monitoring will include: writing moderations, lesson drop-ins, pupil voice and learning walks.