

St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School

Handwriting Policy



“Doing our best for God”

Rationale

At St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School, all children are taught how to form the individual letters from the start in Reception. As they move into Year 1, the cursive style is introduced to the children ready for the joined up style. We believe this raises standards in the Early Years and impacts throughout the whole school, developing confidence, accuracy and fluency. Children understand the importance of clear and neat presentation in order to communicate meaning clearly. Throughout school, children are encouraged to take pride in the presentation of their work and therefore study handwriting with a sense of enjoyment and achievement.

Aims

- To provide equal opportunities for all pupils to achieve success in handwriting.
- To produce clear, concise, legible handwriting.
- To present work to a variety of audiences neatly.
- To develop accuracy and fluency.
- To help children recognise that handwriting is a form of communication and as such should be considered important in order for it to be effective.
- To promote confidence and self-esteem.
- To encourage children to take pride in their work.
- To build in cross curricular links to broaden experience.
- To help children recognise that handwriting as a life-long skill and will be a fundamental element of all forms of written communication throughout their lives.
- To display neatly presented work around the school as a model of excellence for others to aspire to.

The rules of the Cursive Style helps:

- to minimise confusion for the child, as every letter starts on the line with an entry stroke and leads out with an exit stroke.
- with the flow of Cursive Writing, as letters naturally flow into each other, it is impossible to write separate letters without joining.
- form spacing between words as the child develops whole word awareness, develop a child's visual memory
- all children's writing skills, regardless of academic ability, to develop skills of punctuation and grammar

All children write with a pencil, although older pupils are introduced to blue ink pens.

Cursive Lower Case Letters

a b c d e

f g h i j k

l m n o p

q r s t u

v w x y z

Early Years

Statutory guidance

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Write recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed;
- Spell words by identifying sounds in them and representing the sounds with a letter or letters;
- Write simple phrases and sentences that can be read by others.

Children take part in activities to develop their fine and gross motor-skills and recognition of patterns, for example, to form letters using their index finger in sand or using paint. Children should begin to learn how to correctly hold a pencil. Then how to use a pencil, and hold it effectively to form recognisable letters most of which are correctly formed. They should be given the opportunities to develop their handwriting, using the pre cursive style, to their full potential at that age.



On entry, Reception children are involved in a variety of activities to develop essential pre-writing skills in line with the Early Learning Goals of the Foundation Stage.

Activities to develop gross motor control, for example rolling hoops and running with a hoop, ribbon movement, chalking, painting on a large scale, Interactive White Board.

Activities to develop fine motor control: e.g. tracing, colouring within guide lines and pictures, pattern work, using glue spreaders in small pots, painting with the tips of the fingers, cotton buds, sand, plasticine, threading. All these develop spatial awareness - "P.E. on paper." Children develop the basic handwriting patterns. They learn to print at this stage, getting ready for the cursive style of letters to be taught, followed by the joined up which is taught from Year 1 onwards. Letterjoin Handwriting Programme (see Phonics webpage for details).

Children are introduced to actual letter formation in conjunction with the introduction of phonic skills. Sounds are closely linked in handwriting patterns and the children's visual awareness of words is harnessed e.g. 'cat', 'hat'. Practice of particular High Frequency Words helps to develop good visual and writing habits e.g. 'the', 'and'. Usually by the end of the Reception Year, all children will have been introduced to all letters of the alphabet through patterns as shown above and introduced to more independent writing. Children practice their names by tracing over in the first instance and then underneath and then using motor memory.

Year 1

Statutory Requirements

Pupils should be taught to:

- sit correctly at a table, holding a pencil comfortably and correctly
- begin to form lower-case letters in the correct direction, starting and finishing in the right place
- 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 practice these.

As the children move to Year 1, so the skills acquired in the Foundation Stage are continued, consolidating correct formation, concentration and accurate precision work. All children write in pencil. Again spellings are closely linked with handwriting activities assisting the children with phonic skills required for successful reading. Children will be introduced to cursive style of writing through different forms. They have daily practice using the letterJoin programme. Once children have mastered the cursive style of writing, they are introduced to the joined p approach which is an expectation by the end of Year 2.

Year 2-6

The Cursive /joined up style continues to develop through close links with the National Curriculum (2014) for English. Phonics, spelling and awareness of grammar are all taught through handwriting practice and as fluency and accuracy develops, pupils are encouraged to write with an ink pen (usually in Year 5, although exceptions may be made for younger, more-able pupils as appropriate).

Handwriting is timetabled in short, regular sessions and, where possible, is integrated across the curriculum, e.g. practicing scientific vocabulary, cloze procedure linked to history.

Year 2

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 un-joined
- 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

Year 3 and 4

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 downstrokes of letters are parallel and equidistant; that lines of writing are spaced sufficiently so that the ascenders and descenders of letters do not touch].

Year 5 and 6

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.

All handwriting activities are undertaken as class activities for the following reasons:

- to develop effective and efficient pen hold
- to develop the habit of concentration which is crucial to good handwriting
- to place a strong emphasis on the insistence of perfection
- to provide the class teacher with the opportunity to help assess individuals' progress and monitor areas requiring reinforcement.

Handwriting lessons are taught discreetly throughout the week. Lessons may begin with a warm-up activity (e.g. exercising hand/fingers to music, 'air-writing'), including writing patterns or phonemes etc, which is led by the teacher modelling writing on the board. Children will then copy into their books, applying the same techniques, closely monitored by the teacher. In some lessons, it is also appropriate to practice speed-writing (usually written at the back of their book), which also helps them to think quickly and remember spellings.

Handwriting books have coloured lines to assist with accuracy and consistency in size and form, although other exercise books are either blank or have one line only. Where pages are blank or when children write on to A4 paper, they are expected to use a line guide and paperclips to hold the guide in place. For those children who have mastered a fluent, neat cursive style, continual practice will not be necessary and alternative provision will be made for these pupils.

Shared and Modelled Writing

During lessons, particularly English, teachers will use the school agreed cursive style when modelling writing to children in class and when giving feedback in exercise books.

The use of Computing

All teachers use the Interactive Whiteboard in direct teaching: use of the lined writing templates are an essential tool for learning, as the teacher can demonstrate the correct letter formation and joins clearly to the whole class at once if necessary. Younger children rehearse 'large letters/joins' on a blank screen, using different colours and thicknesses of line - we have adopted the Letterjoin programme – <https://www.letterjoin.co.uk/> for use in school and home.

Handwriting and Reading

In school, children are exposed to both cursive and print styles as well as commercial print. They develop awareness for reading in print and writing in cursive side by side in their learning, such as prompts around classrooms/school – teachers lettering, labels on displays/teaching aids e.g. alphabet on tables and through teachers modelling of writing.

Inclusion

Left Handed Children

Each left-handed child is identified and closely monitored by the class teacher to ensure success. The following guidelines are useful to help left-handed children.

The writing surface and chair are suitable for the child's own height.

The child sits towards the left of their partner leaving plenty of space for writing on the left side of his/her – mid line (this allows maximum space for arm movement).

The writing paper is to the left of the child's body midline.

The paper is tilted up to 32 degrees in a clockwise direction.

A writing tool which moves smoothly across the paper is used.

The paper is supported with the right hand.

The writing forearm is parallel with the paper edge as the child writes.

The writing tool is held sufficiently far from its point to ensure that the child can see what he/she is writing.

Children with difficulties

Sometimes some children may experience difficulties but this is often due to a coordination problem or adapting a left handed style. Activities to develop 'gross motor skills' can be promoted as these will assist fine motor skills, as will plenty of pre-writing activities to loosen up the wrist and upper arm. Older children needing additional support are given short bursts of handwriting practice, one -to-one with a Teaching Assistant, as often as possible (daily preferably.) Use of a small whiteboard and pencil/pen is often the most successful aid as they are less restrictive and enable the child to feel less inhibited. It maybe that some children are not following the cursive style of writing and will use print – specialist teacher advice is sought when making this decision.

The presentation of all work is monitored through regular work scrutinies.

Terminology

Cursive: Leading to joined up handwriting.

Capital and Lowercase: the names of capital and lowercase letters (rather than 'big' and 'small').

Ascenders and Descenders: letters that go above and below the usual letter line and below the base line.

Letter Bodies: the main bodies of the letters, which are neither ascenders or descenders (e.g. the rounded parts of 'b', 'd' and 'a' and the arches of 'm' and 'n')

Entry and exit strokes: Entry stroke starts on the line and exit strokes generally end on the line (with the exception of 'o', 'v', 'w', 'r' and 'x')

Signed: *Alexis Satterthwaite* (Head Teacher)
(on behalf of the Governing Body)

Date: January 2024

Review date: January 2026