

Bitterne CE Primary School



Policy for Handwriting

"Handwriting is a tool that has to work. It must be comfortable, fast and legible." Angela Webb, Chair, National Handwriting Association

Reviewed June 2015

Aims

As a school, our aims in teaching handwriting are that the pupils will:

- Experience coherence and continuity in learning and teaching from Year R to Year 6.
- Develop a recognition and appreciation of pattern and line
- Understand the importance of clear and neat presentation in order to communicate meaning clearly
- Take pride in the presentation of their work and therefore study handwriting with a sense of enjoyment and achievement – handwriting awards (Appendix D).
- Be supported in developing correct spelling quickly through a multi-sensory approach to handwriting
- Be able to write quickly to aid expressing themselves creatively and imaginatively across the curriculum and for a range of purposes.
- Use their skills with confidence in real life situations.
- To develop handwriting skills that met the end of year expectations for each year group. (National Curriculum 2014)

Teaching and Learning

We teach handwriting as a specific skill rather than as an independent task (which can often reinforce poor formation having a reverse effect than the intended outcome). Little and often is the most successful way – at least 10 minutes 3 times a week is ideal with additional, independent practice. Sometimes it is appropriate for a whole class session to focus on a specific skill. At other times, to cater for the range of handwriting ability, differentiated group working is needed.

Basic structure of a handwriting session:

- Relaxation (Appendix B)
- Posture check, feet flat on the floor, back touching the chair (3 right angles – knee, waist, elbow)
- Teacher modelling
- Children practicing independently with teacher model, then from memory

Sessions should be fun, varied and multi-sensory: write letters in the air, on backs of hands or palms of hands. Also 'orally describe letter shapes and joins with children.

Normal exercise books will be used for handwriting skill sessions. At KS2 handwriting will be done at the back of the literacy book. In addition, whiteboards and pens are ideal as mistakes can be wiped away leaving no record.

In **Reception** the children will revise the skills acquired in nursery which included:

- Develop gross motor control (Appendix A)
- Develop fine motor control (Appendix A)
- Use a range of mark making tools such as pencils, pens and crayons, with confidence and enjoyment
- Develop a recognition of pattern
- Develop a language to talk about shapes and movements
- The main handwriting movements involved in the three basic letter shapes; l, c, and r
- Make marks on their planning cards of the appropriate colour
- Develop letter-like shapes on their planning cards e.g. 's' for sand
- Produce letter-like shapes on planning cards for the appropriate session
- Their first name, using a capital letter for the beginning and correct letter formation

In Reception they will then further their skills by:

- Learning letter formation alongside phonics using the letters and Sounds scheme
- Learn letter formation using 'shape families: **long ladder** letters l i j t u y

one-armed robot letters r b h k m n p

curly caterpillar letters c a d e g o q f s

zigzag letters z, v, w, x,

At the end of Reception or the beginning of Year One the majority of the children should be introduced to joins. Lined paper or line guides are provided. Lines can be widely spaced (15mm) or 8mm. It may help children to leave a blank line between each line of writing initially to avoid ascenders and descenders overlapping. As children progress and their handwriting improves, then the lines spaces in their book will reduce, usually in Y1.

The Joining Style

"Joins between letters are only worthwhile if they increase the speed, rhythm and ease of writing *without* reducing legibility"

Which letters join?

Joins are made **both to and from** the following 17 letters:

a c d e f h i k l m n o r t u v w

Joins are made **to but not from** the following 8 letters:

b g j p q s x y

Joins are *never* made **to or from the letter z**

The 4 basic joins:

1. Diagonal joins to letters without ascenders e.g. in, on, at
2. Diagonal joins to letters with ascenders e.g. at
3. Horizontal joins to letters without ascenders e.g. on
4. Horizontal joins to letters with ascenders e.g. the 'eb' in z-eb-ra

Inclusion

The vast majority of pupils are able to write legibly and fluently. However, some pupils need further support and provision will be made for this in individual 'Passports to Success'. Teachers of children whose handwriting is limited by problems with fine motor skills should liaise with the SENCO to develop a programme designed for the individual child. This may involve extra handwriting sessions and access to extra resources. Other areas that could be considered are posture, lighting, angle of table etc. Outside agencies can be contacted, where appropriate, for children whose standard of handwriting is falling below the expected standard, but not SEN, booster sessions will be provided in addition to normal provision.

Occupational Therapy advice will be sought and acted upon in developing fine motor skills. For some children they will use a specific handwriting book for handwriting practice with extra lines as

a guide to letter size. This should be discussed with the SENCO. The use of the specific book will decrease as the child develops the skills to write using normal lines in their literacy book.

All teachers and teaching assistants are aware of the specific needs of **left-handed pupils** and make appropriate provision:

- paper should be positioned to the left for right handed pupils and to the right for left handed pupils and slanted to suit the individual in either case;
- pencils should not be held too close to the point as this can interrupt pupils' line of vision;
- pupils should be positioned so that they can place their paper to their left side;
- left-handed pupils should sit to the left of a right-handed child so that they are not competing for space;
- extra practice with left-to-right exercises may well be necessary before pupils write left-to-right automatically.

All adults are alert to the fact that it is very difficult for left-handed pupils to follow handwriting movements when a right-handed teacher models them. Teachers and teaching assistants demonstrate to left-handers on an individual or group basis, even if the resulting writing is not neat.

ICT

The growth in the use of word processing and desktop publishing has increased pupils' awareness of the importance of presentation and the variety of handwriting styles/fonts available. Pupils are encouraged to evaluate a range of fonts and to select whatever is appropriate to suit particular purposes.

Teachers will use the dyslexic friendly Comic Sans font on the IWB or typed work for children. Also, the Nelson IWB programme displays a font with clear 'lead out' joins which can also be used to model joined handwriting.

Teachers discuss handwriting and presentation in all subjects and all adults must model good handwriting themselves. Children will be encouraged to write the full date in every subject except maths. Teachers are **explicit** about different types of handwriting for example, personal note-taking or best handwriting for presentation, but remember not all the children will be able to achieve this in Key Stage one. Teachers give handwriting a high priority in classroom displays. ***The use of rubbers is discouraged. Mistakes are indicated by marking through with one neat horizontal line with a pencil.***

Teachers aim to make handwriting lessons relevant to the curriculum, by providing a purpose to the work where possible, encouraging the children to view handwriting as part of the overall presentation.

Assessment and recording

Teachers assess handwriting on a regular basis against the National Curriculum age expectations in Appendix C (at least once per term) and record the standards achieved. This will then show the progress over time. A handwriting assessment of pupils who arrive during a year should be made within two weeks of then arriving. Teachers will ensure that when marking written work, comments about neatness are kept in proportion to those about the learning intention. However, where

appropriate, teachers will comment on handwriting and presentation. Children will be working towards handwriting awards from Reception to Year 6 (Appendix D). When they have become an 'Expert' they will gain their pen licence.

Speed writing- At regular times each term, children will be given 5 minutes to write about something familiar or that they have just learned. This could also be done by giving the children a piece of text on a linked topic to copy for 5 minutes. At KS2, this will be recorded at the back of the literacy book with a heading of speed writing.

The writing speed for each minute can be calculated by dividing the total number of words written by 5. This is also an opportunity to compare the standard of the speed handwriting with the writing for independent tasks. When writing at speed, it is likely that the handwriting for some children will not be of such a high quality when compared to normal independent writing. The challenge over time is to develop such a fluent, quick and joined style that the difference reduces.

A record of this should be kept to see improvement. Children who have a low wpm (words per minute) should be discussed with SENCO for strategies.

Resources

- A range of pencils and pens including triangular pencils and pens and those with special grips.
- Normal exercise books and whiteboards
- Nelson Handwriting resources accessible from Public area on school network and in Nelson Textbooks
- Different line spaces according to different years
- Coloured books for those that need it

Review

This policy will be reviewed every 2 years in line with the school's policy review programme. The subject leader is responsible for reporting to the governors' curriculum committee about the quality of its implementation and its impact on standards. In the light of this, policy amendments may be made.

Equal Opportunities

We ensure that each individual child receives an equal learning experience regardless of ability, culture and gender.

Appendix A

Activities and exercises to develop gross motor control:

Gross motor control is the term used to describe the development of controlled movements of the whole body, or limbs such as the legs or arms. Of particular importance in relation to handwriting is the development of good posture and balance. Activities such as:

- Dancing and skipping
- Running and jumping to music
- Use of small apparatus e.g. throwing, rolling, catching, kicking and bouncing balls
- Cycling
- Gripping climbing frames
- Building with large-scale construction kits
- Hammering
- Consolidate vocabulary of movement by talking about movements such as, *going round and round, making curves, springing up and sliding down, making long, slow movements or quick, jumpy movements*
- Make large movements in the air with arms, hands and shoulders with dance ribbons, use music

Fine Motor Control is the term used to describe smaller movements, usually of the hand and fingers (or of the feet and toes).

Activities and exercises to develop fine motor control:

- Folding paper
- Cutting out shapes from paper and card
- Fitting things into frames like geometric shapes
- Model making
- Building and stacking bricks
- Screw toys and wood working tools
- Pegboards
- Modelling with malleable materials like Playdoh, plasticene and clay
- Drawing in sand and sand and water play in general, including sieving, pouring and picking up toys using tools e.g. fishing rods and cranes
- Sewing and weaving
- Chopping and peeling when cooking
- Develop the pincer movement by using tweezers to pick up sequins, beads and feathers, sprinkling glitter, sand and salt
- Scribbling and drawing with chalk, dry wipe pens, felt tip pens and paints on small, large boards and easels and on small and large paper
- Playing with tactile and magnetic letters
- Puzzles
- Games and miming involving finger and wrist movement e.g. finger puppets
- Use increasingly finer tools to make patterns of lines

Appendix B

C.A.P.E. [clear, active, positive, energetic] use daily to “bring the individual into balance”

- Water
- Brain buttons
- Cross crawls
- Hook ups

Specifically for writing

Lazy 8's

Double doodles

Hand gym/miming activities to relax fingers and hands before writing

- Washing
- Wringing, rubbing, shaking and folding clothes
- Brushing hair
- Stroking something
- Playing a musical instrument
- Playing with snow, bubbles, feathers, balloons

Later on:

- Sit in the writing position but with arms dangling limply. While in this position let the hands flutter loosely
- Let the forearms lay limply on the table in the correct writing position. Raise and lower the elbows several times
- Place elbows on the table with the forearms held upright. Let the hands flap loosely backwards and forwards
- Clench and unclench the fists
- Drum lightly with fingers on the table
- Circle the hands, inwards, then outwards
- Hold the pen in the tripod grip lightly. With the forefinger tap the pencil lightly

Appendix C Curriculum expectations for handwriting and presentation

Year 1

Writing – handwriting

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 practise these.

Notes and guidance (non-statutory)

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

Writing – handwriting

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.

Notes and guidance (non-statutory)

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.

Years 3 and 4

Writing – handwriting

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].

Notes and guidance (non-statutory)

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 and 6

Writing – handwriting and presentation

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.

Notes and guidance (non-statutory)

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 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.

Appendix D: Handwriting Awards

These awards can be given at any time but usually at the end of a term after a more formal handwriting assessment.

There are special certificates that the children will be awarded for each stage.

When a child has achieved the 'Expert Award', they will also achieve their pen licence. This will mean they will be presented with a pen that they should then use to write with from this point forwards in all their written work.

Apprentice- certificate

- Is able to form letters of own name correctly
- Begins to form other letters correctly (upper and lower case)
- Can group letters into 'words'
- Is beginning to control size of letters

Scribe- certificate and special pencil

- Orientates letters correctly
- Most letters are correctly formed: capitals and lower case are not mixed up
- Letters are evenly sized
- There are spaces between words

Expert- certificate, pen licence and a pen.

- All letters are correctly formed with ascenders and descenders
- Appropriately sized
- Evenly spaced
- Begins to make simple diagonal joins e.g. in am at

Master Scribe- certificate and a special pen

- Consistently accurate letter formation
- Can join most letters correctly
- Can control size and orientation with joining
- Ascenders and descenders correctly formed within joined writing