

Stratford-sub-Castle Church of England VC Primary School

*Learning for life in a positive and caring
Christian community*

Handwriting Policy

The Handwriting Policy was written during the Autumn Term 2014. It should be read in conjunction with the *Aims of the School, Home Learning Policy, Teaching and Learning Policy and Marking for Learning Policy.*

This policy will be reviewed in 2017/2018.

Principles and agreed conventions

Introduction

At Stratford-sub-Castle Primary School, we are committed to enabling pupils to achieve a high standard of handwriting and presentation of written work, through the use of effective and efficient pen control, good concentration, mark-making and writing which starts on the line (cursive style). The school has adopted the on-line scheme www.letterjoin.co.uk.

It has been recognised that a cursive script has an impact on children's reading and writing ability. While recognising this, staff members are aware of the perceptual development of each individual child. There are occasions when children in the Foundation Stage reach this level of perceptual maturity enabling them to link curves and straight lines successfully, but it is never assumed that all children are at the same stage of development or can approach any task with the same ease. We work with the understanding that using a cursive script too early can put undue pressure on some children.

Handwriting and Reading

In school children are exposed to both cursive and print styles as well as commercial print. An awareness of reading in print and writing in cursive is developed side by side, through prompts around rooms/school, teachers' lettering, labels on displays/teaching aids e.g. alphabet on tables and through modelling of writing.

Handwriting and Spelling

Research shows that there is a close link between handwriting and spelling. We recognise this link and work to develop handwriting and spelling skills in tandem.

Handwriting Rules:

1. Each lower case letter starts on the line with an entry stroke.
2. Letters which finish at the top join horizontally.
3. Letters which finish at the bottom join diagonally.
4. All down strokes are straight and parallel.
5. All rounded letters are closed.
6. The horizontal cross line of the letter 't' should be the same height as the lower case letters.
7. All similar letters are the same height.
8. Each letter should be written in one flowing movement.
9. Each word should be written in one flowing movement.
10. Letters within a word should be evenly spaced.
11. The body of the letter sits on the line.
12. The letter "f" ascends and descends.

13. z descends
14. Upper case letters are never joined.
15. All numbers start at the top and do not join.

Handwriting Activities

Handwriting activities are undertaken to:

- develop effective and efficient pen hold
- develop effective sitting position for handwriting
- develop fluent handwriting
- develop the habit of concentration which is crucial to good handwriting
- place a strong emphasis on the importance of presentation
- provide the class teacher with the opportunity to help assess an individuals' progress and monitor areas requiring reinforcement

All discrete handwriting sessions begin with warm up sessions.

Child Development

Children make marks using as wide a range of materials as possible, both indoors and out. We observe each child individually and ensure that they have the prerequisite skills they need, before we move them onto formal writing. We recognise that young children need to be exposed to activities using ribbons, dance and large paint brushes, involving big movements to develop gross motor control.

(We recognise the importance of developing gross motor skills first, as some babies and toddlers have missed out on the vital stage of lying on the floor and propping themselves up to look at things. By lying on the floor and propping themselves up, they develop the muscles and ability to position themselves which are prerequisites to the development of gross motor skills. We understand that if young babies and children do not develop the musculature to carry out gross motor skills then they cannot develop the fine motor skills they need to write.)

When gross motor skills are secure, we work to develop the fine motor skills which eventually develop into writing.

Developmental Stages

We recognise and understand the following developmental stages.

The developing stages of pre-writing:

- lines and dots. (Often at this stage the child has no predetermined hand.)
- ability to imitate directional marks made by others.
- curves and enclosures.
- ability to copy straights and curves made by others.
- ability to link straights and curves to form a symbol.

Pencil grip development:

Pencil grip follows a predictable pattern. This develops from:

- the basic palmar grasp, where the child wraps all his fingers round the pencil and moves his whole arm to make marks
- to the digital finger grasp, where the hand is above the pencil and the child uses the whole arm to manipulate it
- to the tripod grasp, with fingers placed near the tip of the pencil with the thumb opposing the fingers, and movement controlled by the fingers.

Activities to encourage pencil grip and rotation

These activities are fun, play activities, but have a direct effect upon developing perception, control and sensory experiences and regularly occur in the Foundation Stage and where appropriate in Key Stage 1.

Activities to develop pencil grip:

- **Playdough** - pinching, squeezing with thumb and forefinger.
- **Threading** - beads, pasta, straws.
- **Picking up small objects** - use tweezers and pipettes/eye droppers.
- **Finger rhymes** - stretching, curling fingers.
- **Water play** - using spray toys and spray bottles.
- **Colouring** - model and teach colouring /shading techniques
- **Craft activities** - glue sticks and paint brushes.
- **Icing cakes** - using a plastic dispenser to push and squeeze out the icing.
- **Strengthening activities** - swinging from the climbing frame or grasping to climb and crawl.
- **'Pinch and swing'**

(If a child needs reminding about grip, the 'pinch and swing' start is used. This method requires the child to pick up the pencil by the writing tip. While holding the tip, the child swings the top of the pencil over and onto the back of the hand between the thumb and index finger. This is the natural position for writing.)

Activities to develop correct rotation:

- Stirring cake mixture - encourage a two-handed operation, one to hold the bowl and one to stir. (Encourage an anti-clockwise rotation.)

Mark- making and sensory play Mark-making goes beyond a pencil and paper and includes a range of textures and media:

- Paint using an easel and large brushes.
- Paint the playground with water.
- Draw shapes in the air with a wand.
- Dance with a ribbon in your writing hand.
- Chalk on boards, dark coloured sugar paper or the ground.
- Draw in the sand.
- Finger paint on the table with cold water paste and powder colour.
- Make rubbings on rough surfaces.
- Draw in corn flour slime.
- Tactile displays that allow the child to change or move the objects.
- Use tactile, natural materials e.g. wood, suede, hessian and fur.

Foundation Stage (developmental stages throughout Early Years)

Stage 1- (Big Movement mark making in preparation for cursive)

On entry foundation stage are involved in a variety of activities to develop essential pre- writing skills in line with the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile.

Developing Gross Motor Skills

Throughout our Early years and where appropriate into KS2 children develop pre-writing and writing skills through music and movement

Developing Fine Motor Skills

- Hand and finger play
- Making and modelling
- Links to art
- Using one-handed tools and equipment

Developing Patterns and Basic Letter Movements

- Pattern marking
- Responding to music
- Investigating straight lines
- Investigating loops
- Investigating circles
- Investigating angled patterns
- Investigating eights and spirals

Stage 2

Introducing letters with ascenders and descenders, (lower and upper case) with entry stroke. Alongside patterning and mark making activities.

Stage 3

Introduce curly letters and zig-zag letters (lower and upper case) with entry stroke. Alongside patterning and mark making activities. By the summer term of the Foundation Stage all "typical" children are introduced to all letters of the alphabet with the entry stroke and capital letters. The EYFS teacher assesses the class and differentiates for the children, who are not developmentally ready to be introduced to the cursive script. Children practise their first and surname in cursive script by tracing over in the first instance, then underneath and then using motor memory

Key Stage 1

Year 1

Children develop the basic handwriting patterns by linking their phonic work with their handwriting. The spelling patterns found in the phases of "Letters and Sounds" are linked to handwriting. Sounds are closely linked in handwriting patterns (through discrete handwriting and phonic sessions) and the children's visual awareness of words is harnessed e.g. cat, hat. Practise of particular High Frequency Words helps to develop good visual and writing habits e.g. the and etc. Again spellings are closely linked with handwriting activities assisting the children with phonic skills required for successful reading. Rhyming patterns within words are developed and integrated into handwriting sessions thereby developing a child's visual awareness of phonics. High Frequency Words are also reinforced to help develop correct spelling habits and also aid a child's confidence in developing unaided writing. Capital letters are consolidated throughout Year 1 and more complex phonics is integrated e.g. blends, digraphs, word endings etc.

Year 2

The focus is on children developing:

- More intense skills of concentration
- Correct formation
- Cursive writing so that early writing experiences do not have to be adapted later on.
- More self-confidence as they see themselves writing as adults do;
- More pleasure in their writing activities because of their new found confidence and success.
- Less confusion with b/d reversal.
- Continued phonics/cursive development through Year 2.

Key Stage 2

In Key stage 2 the children continue with the fully cursive handwriting scheme taught in Key Stage 1. (Letter-join) The expectation is that "typical" children will be forming and joining letters correctly by the time they are in year three. Teachers model the fully cursive handwriting style when writing on the smart board, flipchart or in children's books. New children joining Key Stage 2 are assessed immediately and awarded a pen licence as appropriate.

Hand / posture

Children who write with the left hand...

Teachers ensure that the:

- writing surface and chair are suitable for the child's own height;
- 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);
- writing paper is to the left of the child's body midline;
- paper is tilted up to 32 degrees in a clockwise direction;
- writing tool which moves smoothly across the paper is used;
- paper is supported with the right hand;
- writing forearm is parallel with the paper edge as the child writes;
- writing tool is held sufficiently far from its point to ensure that the child can see what he/she is writing;

Children who write with the right hand...

Teachers ensure that the:

- writing surface and chair are suitable for the child's own height;
- child sits towards the left of their partner leaving plenty of space for writing on the right side of his/her mid-line (this allows maximum space for arm movement);
- writing paper is to the right of the child's body midline;
- paper is tilted up to 32 degrees in an anti-clockwise direction;
- writing tool which moves smoothly across the paper is used;
- paper is supported with the left hand;
- writing forearm is parallel with the paper edge as the child writes;
- writing tool is held sufficiently far from its point to ensure that the child can see what he/she is writing;

Inclusion

Children with difficulties

Sometimes some children may experience difficulties but this is often due to a co-ordination problem or adapting a left handed style. Teachers are aware that children with Dyspraxia, Autistic Spectrum Disorders, Cerebral Palsy, Down Syndrome and any other motor functioning impairment may have ongoing difficulty with handwriting due to the nature of their special need and therefore may need to be supported with alternative means of recording. Activities to develop 'gross motor skills' are promoted as these assist fine motor skills, as well as plenty of pre-writing activities to loosen up the wrist and upper arm.

Materials, Tools and Books

Emphasis throughout the school is placed on the use of good quality felt pens both fine and broad. These assist with the flow of the writing. Children are encouraged to take care of materials and tools. A variety of materials and tools are used to develop pre-handwriting skills.

Monitoring

The effective implementation of this policy is monitored every term by the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher and/or subject leaders.