

Malpas Alport Primary School

Handwriting policy

There are four main purposes to this policy:

- To establish an entitlement for all pupils;
- To establish expectations for teachers of this subject;
- To promote continuity and coherence across the school;
- To state the school's approaches to this subject in order to promote public, and particularly parents' and carers', understanding of the curriculum.

Introduction

The importance of handwriting to the curriculum

Handwriting is concerned with individual expression and the conveying of meaning through fluent composition. The principal aim is that handwriting becomes an automatic process that frees pupils to focus on the content of the writing. In order for this to occur, handwriting is taught in ways that enhance fluency, legibility, purposefulness and the opportunity for creative expression.

Strategy for implementation

Entitlement and curriculum provision

Handwriting is taught on a daily basis through modelling during phonics and spelling activities. There are regular opportunities for children to practise these skills. There are times at both key stages when this aspect of writing is a focus for attention and more time is devoted to the objectives relating to handwriting and presentation. At best it should be taught 'little and often' a few minutes at a time to practice a particular set of letters.

Teaching and Learning

Handwriting is a skill which needs to be taught explicitly. Since handwriting is essentially a movement skill, correct modelling of the agreed style by the teacher is very important; it is not sufficient to require pupils to copy models from a published scheme or worksheet. Consistency in the attitudes displayed, the methods employed and the models provided is the key to effective learning. A mixture of whole class, small group and individual teaching is planned.

Within Foundation Stage and Key Stage One children will be taught letter formation styles based on the Read Write Inc Phonics scheme.

Each group is exemplified by a key letter to help children to remember the starting point and subsequent movement of the letter.

The four groups of joins are then introduced:

1. to letters without ascenders

2. to letters with ascenders

3. Horizontal joins

4. Horizontal joins to letters with ascenders.

Children in all years will also be given regular opportunities to practise patterns that graduate from basic loops, arches, and zigzags to repeated individual letters joined in a continuous string, to pairs of letters, also joined.

Pencil grip.

It is essential that children are taught straight away how to hold a pencil correctly. Children should write with a pencil (or a pen when appropriate) with a rounded nib. Pencils should be reasonably sharp. A tripod grip is the most efficient way of holding a pencil. At the beginning of each year, teachers will check the pencil/pen grip of each child. If it is not effective, teachers will start by adjusting the grip and then consider the best writing implement for the child.

For right handers

Hold pencil lightly between thumb and forefinger 3 cm away from the point. The paper should be placed to the right slightly tilted to the left. Use the left hand to steady the paper.

For left handers

Hold the pencil lightly between the thumb and forefinger, resting on the first knuckle of the middle finger; hold about 3 cm from the tip. The hand should be kept below the writing line. The paper should be tilted slightly to the right at about 20/30 degrees. Use the right hand to steady the paper. NB It is very important that a right handed child is not seated on the left hand side of a left handed child as their elbows will collide.

The role of the teacher:

- to follow the school policy to help each child develop legible and fluent handwriting;
- to provide direct teaching and accurate modelling;
- to provide resources and an environment which promotes good handwriting;
- to observe pupils, monitor progress and determine targets for development.
- to model neat, legible writing at all times, including when marking children's work
- to have high expectations of all pupils' written work across the curriculum
- To provide/seek additional support for those whom handwriting is difficult
- Provide extra practise for home for those children who require *it (short practice sessions of 5 -10 minutes at home on about 5 days each week)*

All members of staff (including teaching assistants, supply teachers, students) are provided with appropriate handwriting models and are expected to promote the agreed handwriting style (cursive) by their own example.

The Foundation Stage teacher, in partnership with the English subject leader, is expected to communicate with pre-school agencies to encourage good practice.

Teachers pay particular attention to pupils with SEN needs which relate to handwriting using specialist programmes to support their learning.

Foundation Stage

The emphasis at this stage is with movement rather than neatness. Letter formation (starting at the right entry point and then moving in the right direction) learned at this early stage becomes automatic and has a profound influence on later fluency and legibility. To aid movement, close attention is given to pencil grip, correct posture, the positioning of the paper and the organisation of the writing space. Teachers are vigilant to ensure that bad habits do not become ingrained and that the specific needs of left-handed pupils (for example, additional tracking and tracing of letters at the pre-writing stage) and those with special educational needs are met.

In the pre-communicative stage pupils play with writing and these experiments are recognised and praised as an important stage in the child understanding that marks on paper convey meaning. Pupils are given the opportunity to experiment with a range of writing materials and implements; a multi-sensory approach is used to help pupils feel the movement in the hand.

In order that children can eventually acquire a legible, fluent and fast handwriting style, they need to develop skills including;

- good gross and fine motor control
- a recognition of pattern
- a language to talk about shapes and movement
- the main handwriting movement involved in the three basic letter shapes, as exemplified by l,c,r.

Handwriting and emergent/developmental writing

Ideally children should be supervised when they are practising handwriting until letter formation is secure. Bad habits established in the foundation stage are very hard to irradiate at a later stage. There should be a holistic approach to teaching handwriting and phonics so that pupils become used to thinking about letter shapes and sounds together. Using a pencil and holding it effectively to form recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed.

Joined up writing

Joined up writing will be introduced as soon as a child is secure in the movements of each letter. Joined up writing should be encouraged as soon as possible especially to practise some of the high frequency words, to help reinforce the fact that these words need to be remembered as wholes. Where two letters stand for one sound (digraphs) then it should be introduced as one joined unit that reinforces phonics and handwriting.

Key Stage 1

Building on the foundation stage, pupils at Key Stage 1 develop a legible style. This is achieved in Year 1 by developing a comfortable and efficient pencil grip and by practising handwriting in conjunction with spelling and independent writing. Correct letter orientation, formation and proportion are taught in line with the school's agreed handwriting style. This continues in Year 2 and the four basic handwriting joins (diagonal and horizontal joins to letters with and without ascenders) are practised.

Year 1

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.

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.

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Year 2

-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.

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

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].
- **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

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.

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.

Inclusion

The vast majority of pupils are able to write legibly and fluently. However, some pupils need more support and a specific individual or group programme is drawn up in consultation with the SEN co-ordinator.

All teachers are aware of the specific needs of left-handed pupils (see app.1) 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.

Teachers are alert to the fact that it is very difficult for left-handed pupils to follow handwriting movements when they are modelled by a right-handed teacher. Teachers demonstrate to left-handers on an individual or group basis, even if the resulting writing is not neat.

The learning environment

A dedicated writing area is established in all classrooms at Foundation and Key Stage 1. In all classes, writing boxes with suitable materials are available for pupils to work at their own tables. Writing areas/boxes are equipped with a range of writing implements, line guides, book making materials and instructions.

In all classrooms examples of good/excellent presentation should always be on display and pupils' final written outcomes celebrated. There should be a real purpose for writing so that all pupils' have a real sense of pride and achievement in their written pieces of work.

At all times teachers are to model correct letter formation and legible script that adheres to the agreed scheme in school. Around the room there should be examples of handwritten script as well as printed text (usually in the school's chosen font).

The role of parents and carers

Parents and carers are introduced to the school's handwriting style through written information and through invitations to be involved induction and parent evenings. The Foundation Stage teacher plays an important role in communicating this at an early stage, for example, to ensure that parents are informed and encouraged to offer good models to their pupils by using only capital letters for the beginning of their names, practising drawing patterns together, and playing joining up games which encourage left to right directionality. Parents are also responsible for supporting their child with any handwriting practise that they bring home.

This policy will be reviewed annually or in line with any changes made to curriculum advice.

Appendix 2: Teaching Sequence

| FS/Key Stage 1: also link closely to phonics and spelling patterns being taught | TERM 1 | TERM 2 | TERM 3 |
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| <p>Foundation Stage (see Development Matters)</p> | <p>Develop g gross motor skills -the vocabulary of movement -large movements -responding to music Developing fine motor skills -hand and finger play Making and modelling -links to art -using one-handed tools and equipment</p> | <p>Introduce long ladder letters: <i>l, I, t, u, j, y</i></p> <p>Introduce one-armed robot letters: <i>r, b, n, h, m, k, p</i></p> <p>Introduce capitals for both sets of letters Introduce the digits 0-9</p> | <p>Introduce curly caterpillar letters: <i>c, a, d, o, s, q, e, f</i></p> <p>Introduce zig zag letters: <i>z, v, w, x</i></p> <p>Introduce capitals for both sets</p> <p>Explore <i>ch, th, sh</i> Practise digits 0-9</p> <p>All children should be able to write the lowercase letters of the alphabet and know the four letter groups. If not, these children need targeted support before entering year 1</p> |
| <p>Year 1</p> <p>Pupils should be taught to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 <p>Understand which letters belong to which handwriting 'families' (i.e. letters that are formed in similar ways) and to practise these.</p> | <p>Letter formation practise of: -Long ladder letters -One-armed robot letters -curly caterpillar letters -zig zag letters</p> <p>Letter formation practise of capital letters and numbers</p> <p>Practise the vowels: <i>a, e, i, o, u</i></p> | <p>diagonal joins to ascender: <i>at, all, th, ch, cl</i></p> <p>diagonal joins, no ascender: <i>in, im, cr, tr, dr, lp, mp</i></p> <p>diagonal joins, no ascender to an anticlockwise letter: <i>id, ig, nd, ld, ng</i></p> | <p>Diagonal join, no ascender: <i>ee, ai, ay, ime, ine</i></p> <p>horizontal joins, no ascender: <i>op, oy, one, ome</i></p> <p>horizontal joins, no ascender to an anti-clockwise letter: <i>oa, og, wa, wo</i></p> <p>horizontal joins, to an ascender: <i>ol, ot, wh, oh,</i></p> <p>horizontal/diagonal joins, to an ascender to an anti-clockwise letter: <i>of, if</i></p> <p>All children should be able to form all letters (including capitals and numbers correctly and they should be correctly orientated. If not, these children need targeted support before entering year 2</p> |
| <p>Year 2</p> <p>Pupils should be taught to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. | <p>How to join a word: high frequency words</p> <p>Diagonal joins to ascenders in words: <i>eel, eet</i></p> <p>Diagonal joins, no ascenders in words <i>a_e</i></p> <p>Diagonal joins, no ascender, to an anticlockwise letter in words: <i>ice, ide,</i></p> <p>Horizontal joins, no ascender in words: <i>ow, ou, oy, oi</i></p> <p>Horizontal joins, to ascender in words: <i>ole, obe, ook, ool</i></p> <p>Horizontal joins, no ascender, to an anticlockwise letter in words: <i>oa, ade</i></p> | <p>Diagonal joins to r: <i>ir, ur, er</i></p> <p>Horizontal joins to r: <i>or, oor, ere</i></p> <p>Horizontal joins to r to ascender: <i>url, irl, irt</i></p> <p>Joining to and from r: <i>air</i></p> <p>Diagonal joins to s: <i>dis</i></p> <p>Horizontal joins to s: <i>ws</i></p> <p>Diagonal joins to s to ascender: <i>sh</i></p> <p>Horizontal joins to s to no ascender: <i>si, su, se, sp, sm</i></p> <p>Horizontal join from r to an anticlockwise letter: <i>rs</i></p> | <p>Diagonal join to anticlockwise letter: <i>ea, ear</i></p> <p>Horizontal join to and from f to ascender: <i>ft, fl</i></p> <p>Horizontal join from f (no ascender): <i>fu, fr</i></p> <p><i>qu, rr, ss, ff</i></p> <p>capital letter practice: height of ascenders and capitals</p> <p>All children should be able to use some joins and write letters of the correct size and orientation. If, not- these children need to be targeted before entering year 3</p> |

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| <p>Year 3</p> <p>Pupils should be taught to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> use the diagonal and horizontal strokes that are needed to join letters and understand which letters, when adjacent to one another, are best left un-joined 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]. <p>Pupils should be using joined handwriting throughout their independent writing.</p> | <p>Revise joins in a word: long vowel phonemes</p> <p>Revise joins in a word: <i>le, ing</i></p> <p>Joins within statutory words</p> <p>Joins in new vocabulary</p> <p>Revise joins in a word: <i>un, de</i> Revise joins to and from <i>s: dis</i></p> <p>Revise joins to and from <i>r: re, pre</i></p> <p>Revise joins to and from <i>f: ff</i></p> <p>Revise join: <i>qu</i></p> | <p>Joining b and p: diagonal join, no ascender: <i>bi, bu, pi, pu</i></p> <p>Joining b and p: diagonal join, no ascender, to an anti-clockwise letter: <i>ba, bo, pa, po</i></p> <p>Joining b and p: diagonal join, to ascender: <i>bl, ph</i></p> <p>Relative sizes of letters: silent letters</p> <p>Relative size and consistency: <i>y, ly, less, ful</i></p> <p>Parallel ascenders and descenders: <i>tl, ll, bb; pp, ff</i></p> <p>Relative size and consistency: capital letters</p> <p>Speed and fluency practice: <i>er, est</i></p> | <p>Consistency in spacing: <i>mis, ant, ex, non, co</i></p> <p>Consistency in spacing: apostrophes</p> <p>Layout, fluency and speed: -address -dialogue -poem</p> <p>Children who are not joining should be targeted with a handwriting rescue programme and have extra practise in school and at home (particularly over summer)</p> |
| <p>Year 4</p> <p>Pupils should be taught to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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]. <p>Pupils should be using joined handwriting throughout their independent writing.</p> | <p>Children who are not joining should be targeted with a handwriting rescue programme and have extra practise in school and at home</p> <p>Revise joins in a word: <i>ness, ship, ing, ed, s, ify, nn, mm, ss</i></p> <p>Revise Parallel ascenders and descenders: <i>tl, ll, bb; pp, ff</i></p> <p>Revise joins to anti-clockwise letters: <i>cc, dd</i></p> <p>Link spelling and handwriting</p> <p>Statutory words</p> | <p>Parallel ascenders: <i>al, ad, af</i></p> <p>Parallel descenders: <i>ight, ough</i></p> <p>Size, proportion and spacing: <i>ious, able, ful, fs, ves</i></p> <p>Speed and fluency practice: poem, drafting, note making, lists</p> | <p>Size, proportion and spacing: <i>v, k, ic, ist, ion</i></p> <p>Size proportion and spacing: apostrophes for omission</p> <p>Print alphabet: captions, labels, headings</p> <p>Presentational skills: font styles</p> <p>All children should be able to join their handwriting and letters should all be the correct size and orientation. If, not, these children must be targeted before entering year 5 (particularly over summer)</p> |
| <p>Year 5 and 6</p> <p>Pupils should be taught to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> write legibly, fluently and with increasing speed by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. | <p>Children who are not writing with fluency and consistency (not joining) must be targeted with extra practice at home and school and referred to SENCo for specialist handwriting programme</p> <p>Revise practising the 4 groups of joins</p> <p>Develop style for speed linked to prefixes and suffixes being taught</p> <p>Develop style for speed: pen breaks in longer words</p> <p>Different styles for different purposes</p> <p>Close links to spellings including statutory words</p> | <p>Publishing work</p> <p>Self-assessment/evaluating handwriting</p> <p>Writing at speed: spacing in words, spacing between words</p> <p>Self-assessment: -checking joins -consistency of size -letters resting on baseline -ascenders and descenders -consistency of size of capitals and ascenders</p> | |

Appendix 2: Assessment

It is important to establish ways of assessing handwriting at several levels.

At Malpas Alport School we will carry out:

- Whole school/class assessment

- Individual assessment
- Self-assessment

Whole school/class assessment

Handwriting will be monitored across the school on a regular basis to confirm that the handwriting policy is effective. A regular survey of children's writing allows for general, impressionistic assessment and may indicate the need for a more detailed investigation. This kind of monitoring will be carried out either by the Literacy Co-ordinator or by a member of the senior management team who will ensure that any weaknesses or problems are followed up.

The following criteria will be used:

- Is the writing generally legible and neat?
- Are the letters correctly shaped and proportioned/
- Are the joins correctly made?
- Are the spaces between letters, words and lines appropriate?
- Is the size of the writing appropriate?
- Is the writing properly aligned?
- Are the presentation standards achieved by the majority of pupils in line with the Literacy Strategy framework expectations

Individual Assessment

To assess the progress of individual children it is necessary to observe them as they write as well as studying their finished writing. Criteria for individual assessment include:

- Does the child adopt the correct posture?
- Does the child hold the pen/pencil correctly?
- Does the child use the correct movement when forming and/or joining letters?
- Does the child reverse or invert any letters?
- Does the child write fluently or rhythmically?
- Is the writing easily legible?
- Is the writing speed appropriate?
- Is the pupil's handwriting development in line national expectations?

Any concerns should then be passed onto the school's SENCO

Self-assessment

Pupils should be encouraged to examine their own handwriting critically and to check their progress. They should also to work in pairs and groups to discuss each others writing.

Help with Handwriting

1. Dyslexic children sometimes have problems with handwriting.

When learning to read, children first have to link the shape of the word on the page with the sound it makes. Then, when it comes to writing, they have to recreate that shape back onto paper. For children with dyslexia, decoding these patterns and making these links can often

be very difficult. As a result, they frequently fail to develop the automatic flow of writing which will help them to express themselves clearly and easily in writing.

2. It is recommended that children learn the continuous cursive style.

Typically, when first learning to write, children 'print' their letters. They then move on to 'joined up' writing at a later stage. For children with dyslexia, learning two styles of handwriting can add an extra layer of difficulty and cause confusion. It is, therefore, much more helpful if a young child can learn to use a single system of handwriting right from the start.

The most widely recommended handwriting style is called continuous cursive. Its most important feature is that each letter is formed without taking the pencil off the paper - and consequently, each word is formed in one, flowing movement.

The key advantages to this system are:

- By making each letter in one movement, children's hands develop a 'physical memory' of it, making it easier to produce the correct shape;
- Because letters and words flow from left to right, children are less likely to reverse letters which are typically difficult (like b/d or p/q);
- There is a clearer distinction between capital letters and lower case;
- The continuous flow of writing ultimately improves speed and spelling.

3. Practicing continuous cursive handwriting.

Paper: It is a good idea to use lined paper. At the earliest stages, you can use double lines to show the correct size of ascenders and descenders. Lines should be well spaced to start with - eg 10mm apart - gradually reducing to single lines about 5mm apart.

Posture: Make sure that the chair and desk are at the correct height. Your child's back should be straight and feet resting on the floor. A right-handed child should have their book slanted to the left. For a left-handed child the book should be slanted to the right.

Implements: It is best to use a standard HB pencil, well sharpened. With the youngest ages, you might use a chunky triangular pencil to aid the grip. As children get older and more confident, they can move on to a fountain pen or a special handwriting pen. You should avoid using ballpoint pens for handwriting exercises.

Taken from www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/