

Handwriting Policy

The Bythams Primary School



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Signed: 

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Handwriting Policy

Introduction

At The Bythams Primary School, we are committed to enable pupils to achieve a high standard of handwriting and presentation of written work, through the use of effective and efficient pen control, good concentration, and mark making and writing that starts on the line (cursive style). We believe that clear and effective handwriting raises standards throughout the school by raising confidence, accuracy, fluency and a sense of pride in the children's own work.

Benefits of developing a cursive style throughout the Primary School.

It has been recognised that a cursive script has a positive impact on children's reading and writing ability and this script has been promoted in schools. While recognising this, adults need to be aware of the perceptual development of each individual child. There will be occasions when children in the Foundation Stage reach this level of perceptual maturity enabling them to link curves and straight lines successfully, but it should never be assumed that all children are at the same stage of development or can approach the task with the same ease. Using a cursive script too early can put undue pressure on some children.

The rules of the Cursive Style support children:

- To support children's presentation and style children are encouraged to write on the line. This will be practised on white boards and on the interactive whiteboard using the Pen Pals Handwriting Scheme.
- To develop the flow of Cursive Writing as letters naturally flow into each other.
- To form spacing between words as the child develops whole word awareness
- To develop a child's visual memory
- To improve all children's writing skills regardless of academic ability
- To develop skills of punctuation and grammar

Handwriting and Reading

In school children are exposed to both cursive and print styles as well as a range of print. They develop an awareness of reading in print and writing in cursive side by side in their learning, such as prompts around rooms/school, teachers lettering, labels on displays/teaching aids e.g. alphabet on tables and through teachers modelling of writing. This is modelled during teaching sessions and children are encouraged to apply the handwriting techniques throughout their work.

Handwriting and Spelling

Research shows that there is a close link between handwriting and spelling.

Handwriting Rules:

- Letter joins are taught by linking to spelling patterns and phonic phases to support children's application of skills.
- All down strokes are straight and parallel.
- All rounded letters are closed.
- The horizontal cross line of the letter 't' should be the same height as the lower case letters.
- All similar letters are the same height.
- Each letter should be written in one flowing movement.
- Each word should be written in one flowing movement.
- Letters within a word should be evenly spaced.
- The body of the letter sits on the line.

Introduction

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

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

All discrete handwriting sessions should begin with warm up sessions and should be focussed and short (approximately 15-20 minutes and linked to spelling patterns).

Development

Children need opportunities to make marks using as wide a range of materials as possible, both indoors and out. Many children are too quickly urged to write at a table with only pencils or pens.

It is vitally important that they have the opportunity to use gross motor skills first, as some babies and toddlers miss 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.

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.

It is important that we observe each child individually and ensure that they have the prerequisite skills they need before we move them onto formal writing. Young children need to be exposed to activities using ribbons, dance and large paint brushes, involving big movements to develop gross motor control. When that is secure then we can develop the fine motor skills which will eventually develop into writing.

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 should regularly occur in any Foundation Stage setting.

Activities to develop pencil grip:

- **Play dough** – 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
- **Craft activities** – glue sticks and paint brushes
- **Icing cakes** – using a plastic dispenser to push and squeeze
- **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 recommended. 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. (please refer to the pencil grip clips on the Pen Pals CD Rom).

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
- **Mixing powder paint and blending colours** – similar to above.

Mark- making and sensory play

Mark-making should go beyond a pencil and paper and include 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 or dark coloured sugar paper
- Draw in the sand
- Finger paint on the table with cold water paste and powder colour
- Make rubbings on rough surfaces
- Draw in cornflour slime
- Make tactile displays that allow the child to change or move the objects
- Use tactile, natural materials e.g. wood, suede, hessian and fur.

Learning to hold a pencil and make marks that ultimately lead to writing is a complex development. No child's work should be ignored. We will never understand the reason for their mistakes if we, the educators, are not observant. Little children's scribbles and drawings are their way of communicating and showing observation of their world. We, as adults, should encourage, praise and celebrate their achievements.

Foundation Stage (developmental stages throughout Early Years)

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 Development Matters.

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

Over the year the Foundation Stage children will have been introduced to all letters of the alphabet using the Read Write Inc scheme. Each letter will be taught and a caption will also be given and taught to the children, to ensure they recall how to write the letter correctly. Capital letters will be taught later in the foundation year, following the suggested outline of development in the Pen Pals Scheme.

Foundation Stage teachers, through assessment, will differentiate the children that are developmentally ready to be introduced to the cursive script. Children will be taught handwriting in line with their phonics phase of development, building up the ability to write common words, names and attempt independent writing.

Key Stage 1

Year1

Children develop the basic handwriting patterns found in letter formation in the order found in the Pen Pals Scheme.

As the children move to Year 1 so the skills acquired in foundation stage are continued, consolidating correct formation, concentration. 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

Children develop:

- More intense skills of concentration
- Correct formation and do not have to 'unlearn' incorrect formation habits
- 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
- Continue phonics/cursive developing through Year 2.

Key Stage 2

In Key stage 2 the children will continue with the fully cursive handwriting scheme taught in Key Stage 1. The expectation would be that most children will be forming and joining letters correctly by Year 3.

Children will be taught handwriting on a weekly basis.

Children will practise their handwriting linked to the sound or spelling rule they are learning.

Teachers should model the fully cursive handwriting style when writing on the smart board, flipchart or in children's books.

Children will be awarded a pen license when they show correct joining and improvement in their writing style.

In addition to this, any children in years 3-6 who are struggling to form and join letters correctly will have appropriate support, working alongside parents to support their needs as appropriate.

Left Handed Children

Each left handed child is identified and closely monitored by the class teacher. The following guidelines are useful to help left -handed children. Please refer to the support materials in the Pen Pals Teacher's books and CD Rom materials.

Guidelines for writing left handed

Ensure that:

- 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 (please use the writing mats if required).
- 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 co-ordination problem or adapting a left handed style. Teachers should be aware that children with Dyspraxia, Autistic Spectrum Disorders, Cerebral Palsy, Downs Syndrome and any other motor functioning impairment may have on-going 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' 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.

Materials, Tools and Books

Emphasis throughout the school is placed on the use of good quality writing pens and pencils, both fine and broad. These assist with the flow of the writing. Children will achieve a pen licence once their writing has reached a high enough standard to use a pen. Children are encouraged to take care of materials and tools. A variety of materials and tools are used to develop pre-handwriting skills.

Books

Foundation Stage –a variety of paper/ IWB & white boards

Year 1- single line A5 books

Year2 – tram lined books

Year3 – smaller tram line books

Years 4-6- lined books as dictated by the needs of the child

AFL Writing Assessment

AFL statements can be used to support children in having ownership over their learning. This may also be linked to the children's writing targets. For example:

You have been successful in remembering to join the 'ai' within words.

You have been successful in remembering where to start your letters.

You have been successful in remembering to write on the line.