



HANDWRITING POLICY

Reviewed November 2015

Related Documents:
Teaching and Learning Policy

1. Introduction

This policy is to outline how we do 'Hand writing' at Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School. As a school we recognise that handwriting is an important skill and children's ability to write fluently for the rest of their lives depends on a good foundation of taught handwriting in the early years of their education.

We believe that handwriting is a developmental process with its own distinctive stages of progression from readiness for handwriting, through to letter joins, practicing speed and fluency and higher presentation skills. A flexible, fluent and legible handwriting style empowers children to write with confidence and creativity. This is an entitlement that needs skilful teaching if each individual is to reach their full potential at Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School.

2. Aims

Our aims in teaching handwriting are:

- For all children to develop a well-formed, legible style of handwriting in both joined and printed styles, with increasing fluency, confidence and speed.
- To raise attainment for all pupils in handwriting through a consistent approach, guided by: **The Penpals (Cambridge University Press) Handwriting scheme.**
- That all teachers and support staff must use and model the agreed cursive style of handwriting when writing on the board or marking work.
- That teachers, support staff and pupils use all opportunities for writing as handwriting practice in all writing across the curriculum.
- To make provision for left handed children to develop free flowing writing.
- For all children's skills in handwriting to be reflected in the presentation of their work and their joy of writing.

In order to achieve this, children will be taught:

- To develop fine motor control,
- The importance of correct posture and paper position whether right or left handed,
- To use a pen/pencil and to hold it effectively,
- To write from left to right and top to bottom on a page,
- To start and finish letters correctly,
- To form letters of consistent size and shape,
- The language of writing and how to use the correct terminology, (e.g. ascenders)
- To put regular spaces between words,
- How to form upper and lower case letters,
- How to join letters correctly,
- How to write legibly in both joined and printed style,
- To use different styles of writing for different purposes,
- The importance of neat and clear presentation in order to communicate meaning effectively.
- To develop greater control and fluency as they become increasingly confident.

3. Our Handwriting Scheme

At Sacred Heart Catholic Primary, school handwriting is developed through systematic and regular practice in the teaching of handwriting using the **Penpals Handwriting scheme**. Penpals provides clear progression for children aged 3 to 11 starting in nursery where children practice their gross and fine motor skills in readiness for handwriting, finishing in Years 5 & 6 where basic handwriting issues are revised and speed and fluency improved. This whole school approach ensures a consistency of style and approach which leads to an effective progression of experience and teaching. Some children who may need extra support with handwriting, may receive extra interventions to support them with their writing development. For children who may need extra support with developing their hand writing skills, may receive a *motor skills intervention* program to address gaps within their hand writing skills.

3.1. Differentiation:

Penpals takes a developmental approach to the teaching of handwriting so there is an opportunity to start where the children are. If children aren't ready for the age appropriate work then they should be working from an earlier book or at the very least, the homework should be from an earlier book.

3.2. Recommended Timings:

Penpals lessons consist of a 15 minute whole class session followed by a 15–20 minute independent activity session. Children will then apply their hand writing skills within Literacy lessons and other writing opportunities.

Reception - the development of gross and fine motor writing skills are continuous and ongoing every day. Letter formation will be taught using the Penpals for Handwriting materials.

- Year 1 – 3 x 15 minute sessions per week
- Year 2 – 3 x 15 minute sessions per week
- Year 3 – 1 x 30 minute session per week
- Year 4 – 1 x 30 minute session per week
- Year 5 – 1 x 30 minute session per week
- Year 6 – 1 x 30 minute session per week

3.3. Common Approaches:

- To be consistent in the way in which we form individual letters by following the Cambridge Penpals Handwriting guidance
- To follow the Cambridge Penpals Handwriting guidance for 'Joining letter sets' which builds on letter formation in Foundation stage with no joining letter sets to the teaching of joins throughout each year group.
- That we are consistent in the way in which we join letters i.e. it must be remembered that some letters never join: All capital letters **g, j, x, y** and **z**
- Handwriting patterns should be taught in a handwriting lesson and are a pleasurable and creative way of practising handwriting movements. They can also be used as decorative borders round pictures or written work.
- Teaching the correct formation of the letters should be given highest priority and that this should be achieved by pupils before any attempt is made at joining. We aim for all children to be using a pen when going into Year 5. Since handwriting is an essential movement skill, correct modelling of the agreed handwriting style by all adults is very important. We will never simply ask children to copy models from a sheet or practice book.
- When required, advice will be requested from Occupational Therapists or other relevant agencies to help with specific individual problems.
- Intervention measures are to be included in IEPs where relevant.

3.4. Pencil/Pen Grip

The pen or pencil should be gripped comfortably between forefinger and thumb with the second finger below to steady it. If you pick up a pen which is lying on the table in front of you with its nib towards you in line with your forearm, you instinctively pick it up in the correct grip.

3.5. Posture

Children should be encouraged to sit up straight with their feet on the floor. The non-writing hand must be used to steady the book or paper.

3.6. Guidance for Left-handers

Left-handed children will not in any way be discouraged from favouring the left-hand in their work. However, special rules apply for left-handers. They should sit on the left-hand side of double desks or tables. They must be able to rest their left forearms on the edge of the desk. The book or paper must slope in line with the left forearm. As writing is completed down the page, the paper must be moved away from the body in the same line. The aim is to keep the left arm in much the same position at all times to avoid the elbow being cramped by the chest. Moving the paper away from the body prevents writing becoming cramped at the foot of the page. Practise on a vertical board could help this position. The right hand must be used to control the movement of the page.

The left hand should end up below the line of writing to avoid smudging and to give a clear view of what is being written. Children should be discouraged from hooking their left hand above the line of writing to avoid smudging. The tripod grip (thumb and first finger grip the pencil, which then rests on the side of the second finger) should be encouraged.

3.7. Guidance for Right-handers

Right-handers do not face the same problems as left-handers, but many children will find it helpful to slope the paper slightly and to move it away from the body as the page is completed.

4. Monitoring and Assessment

- The monitoring of the teaching of handwriting is carried out by Class teachers, the Head teacher, Literacy co-ordinator in line with the school development plan.
- Assessment of handwriting is an on going process and will take place formally and informally, during the regular, focused handwriting sessions and across other curricular areas. This will provide evidence of children's progress and attainment, will serve to inform the children's future learning targets and provide information when reporting to parents.
- Handwriting is assessed and a mark given as part of SATs at the end of KS1 and 2
- TIPP's writing grids will reflect children's attainment in this area.
Samples of children's work will be collected on a regular basis and assessed against set criteria.

5. Checklist for Teachers

If a child's handwriting is to develop into a pleasing and consistent style, it is helpful to examine each piece of writing in the light of the following criteria:

- Shape- Are all letters properly formed and clear?
- Joining- Are as many letters as possible joined consistently?
- Slope- Is the slope of letters consistent? Letters should either be all perpendicular or all sloping (predominantly a forwards slope will be used, however backwards slopes can be developed).
- Evenness- Are letters of a consistent and reasonable size? Capitals can be too big; tall letters too tall, small letters too small.
- Floating and Sinking- Do letters sit on the line? Words sometimes float above or sink below the writing line. This happens because the writing hand is not moving steadily across the page.
- Particular Letters- Which letters are really well formed? Which ones need careful practise?

6. Handwriting Skills and Development

To achieve our aims we will give our children opportunities to develop their handwriting through the following: - by using Penpals for Handwriting (Cambridge University Press) as a handwriting scheme, by using the Primary Strategy to link handwriting to phonics (where appropriate) and by monitoring and assessing handwriting as part of the marking process.

7. Foundation Stage

Children begin the Foundation Stage with a wide variety of writing skills ranging from simply making marks to writing their own name unaided. They will move from gross to finer motor skills using a variety of tactile methods. They need opportunities to make marks in their own way and to gradually refine these into recognisable patterns and eventually individual letters.

The Penpals for handwriting scheme (Cambridge University Press) will be introduced in Reception and will help prepare children for handwriting, consolidate their motor control and introduce letter shapes. It is expected that most children will be forming each letter by the end of Reception. Handwriting should be taught alongside phonics making use of the kinaesthetic learning to help children to internalise the letter shapes that go with the sounds.

Children should write on wide-lined paper when they have the hand control to do it confidently. Lined paper is important because so much about handwriting is to do with the letters' orientation to the line. Letters and Sounds' suggests a sequence for teaching the letters sounds, handwriting can thus be coordinated with phonic teaching where two letters stand for one sound.

A range of pre-writing activities opportunities must be provided in the learning environment to encourage and support children develop gross and fine motor skills, develop co-ordination and to promote pencil control and awareness of letter shapes and orientation.

7.1. Possible activities:

- large-scale motor movements
- Sky-writing
- Writing with a stick or finger in sand
- seeds and other tactile materials
- Letter shapes/feely letter shapes
- Tactile letter tracing using textured shapes
- Large paper and brushes to make writing patterns
- Whiteboards and pens
- Making letters with malleable materials e.g. Plasticine, play dough, clay
- Roller ball
- Write Dance CD
- Using paints, chalks or large felt tips
- Use sky-writing and large-scale practise
- Ensure correct posture
- Practise tracing over lines and shapes
- Trace over letters and simple words
- Practise copy writing own name

- Use a comfortable and efficient pencil grip
- To produce a controlled line which supports letter formation
- To write letters using the correct sequence of movements
- Introduced joined script for writing child's name – practise writing name in
- Joined script using laminated name card

8. Key Stage 1

8.1. Year 1

In Year 1, children practise forming letters and are introduced to diagonal joins, horizontal joins both to letters with and without ascenders. An introduction to joined writing can be started when a

- child has developed a consistent, clear print style, where letters are generally correctly formed.
- To form lower case letters correctly in a script that will be easy to join
- To practise handwriting in conjunction with phonics, spelling and independent writing, ensuring
- correct letter orientation, formation and proportion, in a style that makes letters easy to join

8.2. Year 2

By Year 2 children should be moving towards a joined handwriting style and be able to write on lined paper with a reasonable degree of accuracy. They practise and build on Year 1 joins and are introduced to break letters. Children need to be made aware of:

- (a) Where the letter starts;
- (b) Where the individual letter stands with regard to the baseline;
- (c) Ascenders and descenders - lined paper will assist;
- (d) Spacing and finger space between words;
- (e) Consistent writing size;
- (f) Capital letters and their appropriate use

To practise handwriting patterns from Yr 1 and to practise the four basic handwriting joins

1. diagonal joins to letters without ascenders e.g. ai, ar, un,
2. horizontal joins to letters without ascenders, e.g. ou, vi, wi
3. diagonal joins to letters with ascenders e.g. - ab, ul, it.
4. horizontal joins to letters with ascenders e.g. - ol, wh, ot.

To practise handwriting in conjunction with spelling and phonic patterns and to use joined script consistently in their writing

9. Key Stage 2

In KS2 the children undertake formal handwriting practice 2 times weekly, with an emphasis on short, sharp and focussed sessions that are taught, (35 minutes a week: e.g. a 15 minute introduction followed up by daily 5 minute sessions). The children practise their handwriting using a blue pen if the class teacher feels that they are ready, otherwise they will continue to use a pencil.

In Year 3 children continue to practise correct letter formation according to NC guidelines and the schools agreed letter formation using the ICT resource 'Penpals for Handwriting Units' as necessary. The emphasis is on building upon the joins established in Year 2 and using spellings as a basis for handwriting practise.

In Year 4 children continue to practise correct letter formation according to NC guidelines and the schools agreed letter formation using the ICT resource 'Penpals for Handwriting Units' as necessary. The emphasis is on ensuring consistency in size and proportion and using joined writing for all writing except where other special forms are required.

In Years 5 and 6 NC guidelines assume handwriting skills should be established and that children should have their own developed cursive style. However, in reality this is not always the case. Children in Years 5 and 6 then will have opportunities to revisit the basics and work on the presentation side of their handwriting as outlined in 'Penpals for Handwriting Years 5/6'. Children should also be given opportunities to practise handwriting in conjunction with spellings. Handwriting practice is sometimes included in homework in KS2.

9.1. Year 3

The introduction of handwriting pens will begin in Year 3. It is our aim that the majority of Year 3 have been taught the whole range of joins and will be developing a degree of accuracy and fluency by the end of the year.

In the first 2 terms, children will consolidate joins from Years 1 and 2 and will be taught to join parallel descenders and ascenders. The third term will focus on consistency of spacing, layout, speed and fluency practice.

To use joined handwriting for all writing except where other special forms are required; to practise correct formation of basic joins from Yr 2; to ensure consistency in size and proportion of letters and spacing between letters and words; to build up handwriting speed, fluency and legibility through practise.

9.2. Year 4

Formation of capitals, lower case letters and the two basic join types (horizontal and vertical) should now be familiar and secure. The majority of children should be able to use joined-up writing for most of their work. Whilst there is continued emphasis on using the movements of handwriting to support spelling through the revision of common letter patterns, they will also be given opportunities to develop speed and accuracy.

To know when to use;

- a clear neat hand for finished, presented work.
- informal writing for everyday informal work, rough drafting etc.
- To ensure consistency in size and proportion of letters and spacing between letters and words.

To use a range of presentation skills e.g:

- print script for captions, sub-headings and labels
- capital letters for posters, title pages, headings
- a range of computer-generated fonts and point sizes

9.3. Years 5 and 6

By Years 5 and 6, it is expected that most children will be writing fluently and are joining their writing across the curriculum. In these year groups the emphasis is on increasing speed, developing presentation skills and learning how to use different styles for different purposes. To practise, reinforce and refine skills taught in previous years.

*The Penpals Years 5&6 Teacher's Book and CD-ROM have slightly different aims, so there is no one-to-one correlation between units as there is earlier in Penpals for Handwriting. The Book aims to teach speed and fluency alongside presentation. It therefore provides practice activities and self-assessment alongside projects intended to help children with their style and the presentation of different kinds of text. The CD-ROM is split between Basic and Presentation units. Basic units focus on basic handwriting skills and address common issues that may be inhibiting fast and fluent handwriting. They frequently support units in the Book, especially those that assess handwriting. Presentation units recognise that the purpose for writing has implications for handwriting style.

10. Resources

- Pens/Pencils provided by the school.
- In KS2, blue handwriting pens will be available from school or may be provided from home. We discourage the use of roller balls, biro or gel pens.
- Sloping surfaces
- Pencil grips
- Penpals for Handwriting materials:
- FS write-in practice books
- Big books Year 1 – 4
- Pupil practice books Years 1 – 4
- CD Rom Years 1 -6- all loaded onto school computers and laptops. These include teacher's notes, handwriting patterns and homework sheets as PDF files
- Teacher book Years 1 – 6