



## Dilton Marsh C of E Primary School

### Handwriting Policy

*"Writing also depends on fluent, legible and eventually, speedy handwriting."*

(English National Curriculum 2014)

#### Rationale

Even in this technological, computer-literate age, handwriting is an important skill for children to learn and can affect written communication across the curriculum. If handwriting is taught well, it can be mastered by most pupils by the time they are seven or eight years old, therefore enabling them, with practice, to develop a faster and more mature style as they prepare for secondary school and beyond.

Handwriting is a movement skill. Movements of the hand when writing are firmly established in a person's movement memory because they have been practised so often. Therefore it is important that children are given opportunities to practise handwriting movements regularly and correctly. From the first handwriting sessions in EYFS, it is vital that children are taught to form letters of the alphabet with the correct sequence of strokes. The correct formation of all letters needs to become automatic and may require a lot of practice. As a result, a consistent approach to the teaching of handwriting within our school needs to be established.

#### Aims

- To have a consistent cursive approach across the whole school to ensure high levels of presentation.
- To enable children to achieve a neat, legible style with correctly formed letters in cursive handwriting.
- To enable children to develop fluency and speed whilst writing so that eventually the children are able to write letters with confidence and correct orientation.

#### Objectives

All children should be given the opportunity to develop an effective, cursive style of writing. In order to do this they should be taught:

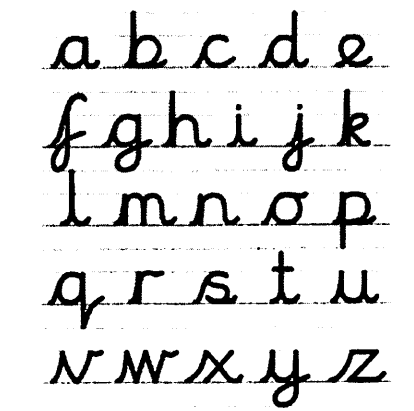
- How to hold a pencil/pen using correct and comfortable grip.
- To form letters properly, identifying where to start and finish each letter.
- To form letters of regular shape and size.
- To use the correct terminology of ascenders, descenders, lead on and lead off.
- To form upper and lower case letters correctly.

- To write from left to right and top to bottom of the page.
- To put regular spaces between letters and words.
- How to join letters correctly, as identified in the handwriting policy.
- To be fully aware of the importance of neat and clear presentation in order to communicate meaning effectively.
- To write legibly with increasing fluency and speed.

### **Teaching and Learning**

As recommended by the British Dyslexia Association, we have adopted a continuous style of writing. This cursive style should be modelled by teachers and teaching assistants when working with children and modelling writing.

Our agreed cursive style is this:



Teachers can use <http://www.teachhandwriting.co.uk/> as a teaching resource to support handwriting. This includes activities and patterns for children to use prior to letter formation, animations showing how each letter is formed and activities and patterns for practising handwriting. This website organises letter joins according to the order of letter strings in phonics.

### **EYFS**

Although EYFS is not included in the National Curriculum Programme of Study, handwriting does need to start in the early stages of school. An Early Learning Goal for Reception children is: "Children show good control and coordination in large and small movements. They move confidently in a range of ways, safely negotiating space. They handle equipment and tools effectively, including pencils for writing."

At Dilton Marsh C of E Primary School we know that handwriting is a developmental process with its own distinctive stages of sequential growth. We feel that it can be counterproductive if we ask the children to form/join letters before they are developmentally ready; therefore it is important we are aware of these developmental stages:

- readiness for handwriting – hand eye coordination, gross and fine motor skills
- Pencil grip
- Development leading to pattern and letter formation
- Beginning to join

- Securing the joins
- Practising speed and fluency
- Presentational skills

### **Readiness for handwriting and pencil grip**

Before the children begin the formal teaching of handwriting they need to experience appropriate activities that help them develop their hand eye coordination, gross and fine motor skills. These do not need to be formally recorded in a book using a pencil, photographic evidence can be taken to monitor a child's gross and fine motor development.

Gross Motor Skills	Fine Motor Skills	Hand eye coordination	Pencil grip
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ribbon sticks</li> <li>• dancing – shoulder and arm movements</li> <li>• throwing and catching large and small balls</li> <li>• Climbing frame</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dough gym</li> <li>• chopping and peeling</li> <li>• small construction toys</li> <li>• sieving, pouring with sand and water</li> <li>• squashy balls</li> <li>• finger rhymes</li> <li>• tearing paper/folding paper</li> <li>• screwing on bottle tops</li> <li>• pegging things on a washing line</li> <li>• puppets including finger puppets</li> <li>• scissor skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sand, water and paint play</li> <li>• using tools such as rolling pins, tweezers</li> <li>• threading and lacing</li> <li>• using tongs</li> <li>• jigsaws, simple puzzles and inset puzzles</li> <li>• magnets and paper clips</li> <li>• fishing games</li> <li>• peg boards – patterns and pictures</li> <li>• post boxes – posting letters</li> <li>• using the computers mouse and keyboard</li> <li>• stencils</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Threading beads and lacing cards</li> <li>• Sprinkling coloured sand, glitter, salt</li> <li>• pencil grips and triangular pencils</li> <li>• tracing and marble letters</li> </ul>

### **Pencil Grip**

Children's pencil grip depends on their physical development of the muscles in their hands not their age. Pencil grip needs to be clearly taught and misconceptions need to be addressed as they occur. By the end of EYFS children will be expected to hold their pencil using the static tripod grip, barring a few exceptions. The dynamic tripod grip may not develop until the children are in KS1. Staff are expected to model a tripod grip when writing in front of the children.

## **Pattern and letter formation**

Once the children have developed their pencil grip and control they will be developmentally ready to begin letter formation. In the early years there is no focus on the size of the letters but the 'flow' of the formation. Children in Early years are taught to use a pre cursive style, with letters formed as in the schools policy but there is not the expectation to join letters.

Letters can be taught in groups, according to how they are formed. Handwriting families are:

Curly Caterpillars, c,a,d,e,g,o,q,f,s also x when drawn cursively;

Long ladders, l,j,i,t,u,y;

One armed robot, b,h,k,m,n,p,and r;

Zig zag, v,w,z.

As a school we use RWI handwriting letter formation rhymes and pictures i.e. 'Down Maisie, round the mountain, round the mountain' but there is no upstroke! Therefore we model to the children how to use the upstroke when teaching handwriting, therefore say "get ready..." before the RWI phrase.

## **Year 1**

More formal teaching of handwriting should take place in Year one, with frequent, direct and discrete teaching taking place. Letter formation should be modelled and handwriting activities should be supervised to ensure that pupils do not form habits which are unhelpful later. Correct letter formation is crucial. Pupils should be able to form letters correctly and confidently.

When teaching handwriting, pupils should learn how to:

- sit correctly at a table, holding a pencil comfortably and correctly,
- form lower-case letters in the correct direction, starting and finishing in the right place,
- form capital letters
- form lower case letters of the correct size relative to one another,
- form digits 0-9
- Understand which letter belongs to which handwriting families and to practise these.

## **Year 2**

In year 2, pupils should revise and practise correct letter formation frequently. Handwriting should still be modelled and activities supervised to ensure letters are formed, and eventually joined correctly. Pupils should be taught to join letters correctly. This should be a natural and easy step as children have already learned the necessary "flicks" in the continuous cursive style taught from Reception.

Pupils should be taught to;

- use the joins starting with diagonal and horizontal strokes,
- understand which letters, when adjacent to one another, are best left un-joined (only Capital Letters are not joined)
- Write capital letters and digits the correct size, orientation and relationship to one another and to lower case letters
- Use spacing between words that reflect the size of the letters.

## **Lower Key Stage 2**

In years 3 and 4 children should be joining their handwriting. It is expected that pupils will write in a joined, cursive style throughout their independent handwriting across all areas of the curriculum. Handwriting should continue to be taught directly and with some supervision of activities, particularly for those children finding it difficult to form letters correctly. The aim of the handwriting in Lower Key Stage Two is to increase the fluency with which pupils are able to write down what they want to say. This will also support development of pupil's composition and spelling.

Pupils should be taught to:

- increase the legibility, consistency and quality of their handwriting (for example 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)

At the start of Year Three children will be writing in pencil. However, as children show that they can form and join letters correctly and that they can present their work neatly, children will receive their "Pen License" and therefore will be expected to write in pen. Pen will be used in all subjects except maths, where pencil will be used. It will be expected that by the end of Year Four, if not sooner, all children will be writing in pen. At Dilton Marsh C of E Primary School, we use black handwriting pens or fountain pens only.

### **Upper Key Stage 2**

In Years 5 and 6, children should continue to practise their handwriting and be encouraged to increase the speed of it so that any problems with forming letters do not get in the way of the children writing down what they want to say. There will be less direct teaching of handwriting in Upper Key Stage 2, although those children who are still finding letter formation difficult may need extra support and supervision during independent handwriting activities.

Pupils should be taught to:

- Choose the writing implement that is best suited for the task.
- Write legibly, fluently and with increased speed.

Pupils 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 un-joined style, for example; for labelling a diagram or data, writing an email address, filling in a form with capital letters, or for algebra.

### **Modelling handwriting and the environment**

A lot of what children learn about handwriting is from watching adults writing. Therefore it is of upmost importance to always model good handwriting practice when writing in front of the children. Even down to the way we hold our pencil can impact on the children's development- just something to consider!

Displaying good handwriting in the environment is also important. With the ease of typing labels and signs on the computer we need to consider if everything the children see around school is printed. Handwriting peg, draw labels, display signs etc. can be time consuming but the effect of seeing handwriting around the environment can have a huge impact on the children's knowledge and development. Where appropriate, children should also be encouraged to produce good quality handwriting to display in the environment.

A handwriting display should be present in each learning space, whether this is simple letter formation or examples of joins (depending on the children's needs). The handwriting must be presented sized correctly and sitting on a line. Be aware that examples of handwriting pre-made on teaching websites do not always follow the letter formation we use in our schools.

### **Other factors effecting handwriting**

- Make sure tables are big enough (width)
- Height of tables and chairs- so feet can be flat on the floor
- Good lighting
- Use non writing hand to steady the paper
- The paper should be tilted slightly (depending on left or right handed)

### **Left handers**

At least 10% of the population is left handed- a slightly higher proportion are male. There is no need for left handed children to be disadvantaged when writing, if a few simple strategies are employed:

- Model letter formation, sky writing etc. Specifically for left- handed children, with your left hand.
- Make sure that left- handed children sit on the left of right- handed children, otherwise their writing arms will clash.
- Put a mark at the left side of the page to indicate where writing begins as some left- handed children mirror- write from the right.
- Left- handed children usually need to have the paper slightly to the left of centre of their body and should be encouraged to tilt their work clockwise so they can see what they have written.
- Experiment with seat height- some left- handed children may need a higher seat to view their work clearly and to prevent the elbow locking into their side as they work across the paper.

### **To avoid smudging:**

- Left- handed children should be encouraged to position their fingers about 1.5cm away from the end of their writing implement;
- The pencil should sit in the 'v' between the thumb and forefinger, sitting parallel to the thumb;
- The wrist should be straight.
- Writing from left to right is more difficult for left handed children. They should, therefore, be given more attention in the classroom to ensure that they do not learn bad habits of position, posture and pen hold which will deter a fast, fluent and legible hand.

### **Equal opportunities and Special Needs**

All children must have the opportunity and the encouragement to reach their full potential. Children with Special Educational Needs, where necessary, will be provided with specialist equipment such as pencil grips or wider ruled paper. Interventions are available for children who experience significant difficulties to practise pre writing skills and fine motor control.

### **Assessment, Monitoring and Moderation**

Children in EYFS are assessed on an ongoing basis through observation, handwriting informs part of this. Within Key Stage One and Two, handwriting is assessed as part of the children's written work assessments each term.