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HANDWRITING POLICY

Our Vision

Through our inclusive, broad and balanced curriculum we promote our Christian ethos, Christian values and, by extension, British Values. We offer a wide range of PSHE (Personal, Social, Health and Citizenship Education) and SMSC (Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural) activities and always prioritise the wellbeing and development of the 'whole child' over narrow academic attainment. This means that we place a strong emphasis on developing confidence, resilience, empathy, creativity, charity, social responsibility, character and values through all learning experiences.

Why do we need to teach handwriting?

The skill of handwriting needs to be taught as it is not a natural skill that will grow and develop like speaking or walking. Handwriting is a motor activity; a movement stored in the body rather than in the conscious memory. Our hands and fingers control the movements involved in handwriting. It is in our hands that the kinaesthetic memory lies. This controls the direction and shape of each letter. This handwriting policy is based on a style that is quick and easy to learn and teaches the children to write in a neat, legible and fast style. Pupils should eventually develop the ability to produce letters without thinking. This automatic handwriting style then enables the brain to concentrate on other ideas i.e. spelling, grammar, syntax style and content.

Continuous Cursive Style

Continuous cursive handwriting teaches pupils to join letters in words as a series of continuous flowing movements or patterns. All words can be written without taking the pencil off the page. The style is quick, particularly when it is practised from an early stage. The final product is neat and fast. Children should be introduced to the joined handwriting from an early stage as to avoid learning two different styles of writing and having to unlearn one in order to write the other. Continuous style:

- Provides a directional left, right movement. This rhythmical flowing movement aids speed and accuracy.
- Reduces the chance of reversing letters by eliminating the need to lift the pen/pencil between letters. The spaces between words become distinct.
- Forms loops only on letters which descend below the line (with the exception of the f which also loops above the line.) This encourages a fluid movement and makes a distinction between ascenders and descenders.
- Distinguishes clearly between upper and lower case letters.

The Benefits of the Continuous Cursive Style

Pupils with specific learning difficulties find continuous cursive useful because the pencil stays on the page throughout every word, thus simplifying the movement. The motor memory of the child's hand and fingers helps the child to spell, as each word becomes one movement. Ideas, images and descriptions can flow more easily from the child's pen/pencil as they have fewer decisions to make as to where each letter starts and how letters are formed.

Effective teaching of handwriting can only be achieved through modelling. Teachers must demonstrate letter formation and joins regularly and children must practice by carefully copying and repeating .It is important to observe children writing to ensure they are forming letters correctly.

Handwriting Principles

- Handwriting should be taught explicitly, in short, frequent sessions. It should be modelled by the teacher then supervised. Children should be self/peer assessing, looking for consistency
- Where possible, it should be linked to phonic and spelling patterns. This will help with handwriting and with the 'muscle memory' of spellings.
- When ready, pupils should be practising on the lines they are going to use in their writing books - High expectations of writing are needed. Children need to repeat work that is not satisfactory.
- From Year 4 children can gain a 'pen licence' for correct formation of letters, consistent fluidity and correct joins. This is re-set at the beginning of each year.
- Teachers need to model good handwriting at all times, e.g. when writing on the whiteboard and when marking books.

Handwriting in the Foundation Stage

Good handwriting relies on secure motor control and hand-eye coordination. Children in the Foundation Stage should learn handwriting through movement with the actual writing of letters as the ultimate aim. Children will:

- Engage in activities requiring hand-eye coordination
- Use one-handed tools and equipment
- Draw lines and circles using gross motor movement
- Manipulate objects with increasing control
- Begin to use anticlockwise movement and retrace vertical lines
- Begin to form recognisable letters
- Use a pencil and hold it effectively to form recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed

Throughout the Foundation Stage, children need lots of opportunities to develop:

- Physical control through large-scale movement such as outdoor play. Balancing, climbing, marching and moving to music.
- Manipulative skills such as using tools, cooking utensils and scissors.
- Fine motor control and hand-eye coordination, through activities such as jigsaws, threading, cutting and manipulating 'small world' equipment.

The key movements underpinning letter formation should be introduced through large-scale movements, from the shoulder. In the earliest stages children should make the movements symmetrically using both arms. Once the movement is firmly established in kinaesthetic memory, it can be reduced in scale using activities such as sky writing, using sticks in sand etc. and then reduced further in art activities using felt tip pens, crayons and chubby pencils.

Reception

- Pre-writing stage- patterning
- Individual letter formation - use of the cursive script from the outset. Begin to form lower - case letters in the correct direction, starting and finishing in the right place.
- Have a clear lead in and lead out.
- Word formation based on letter groups

The National Curriculum English Programmes of Study provide guidance on teaching handwriting:

Year 1 pupils should be taught to:

- Sit correctly at a table and hold a pencil comfortably and correctly.
- Hold a pencil with an effective grip.
- Form lower-case **letters** correctly *-starting and finishing in the right place, going the right way round, correctly oriented.*
- Form digits 0-9 correctly.
- Practise forming letters in handwriting families:
 - 'Long ladders' - i, j, l, t, u,
 - 'One armed robots' - b, h, m, n p, r
 - 'Curly caterpillars' - c, a, d, e, g, o, q, f, s
 - Zig-zag letters - k, v, w, x, y, z
- Have clear ascenders ('**tall letters**') and descenders ('**tails**').
- Have a clear lead in and lead out.
- Form **capital letters** correctly.

Year 2 pupils should be taught to:

- Form lower-case **letters** of the correct size relative to one another.
- Orientate **capital letters** correctly.
- Use **capital letters** appropriately e.g. *Not always writing A as a capital, not using capitals within words.*
- Write **capital letters** and digits of the correct size relative to one another and to lower case **letters**.
- 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.
- Use spacing between **words** which reflects the size of the **letters**.

Year 3 pupils should be taught to:

- Form and use the four basic handwriting joins.
- Write legibly.

Year 4 pupils should be taught to:

- Use a joined style throughout their independent writing.
- Write with consistency in size and proportion of letters, e.g. 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.

Year 5 pupils should be taught to:

- Write fluently using a joined style as appropriate for independent writing.
- Choose when it is appropriate to print (lower case or upper case) rather than to join writing e.g. printing for labelling a scientific diagram or data, filling in a form, writing an e mail address.

Year 6 pupils should be taught to:

- Write, using a joined style, with increasing speed.
- Choose the writing implement that is best suited for a task e.g. pencil for quick notes, handwriting.

The introduction of Pens

Children will be introduced to the use of pens for handwriting during Year 4. Throughout the year children will make the transition from pencil to pen by earning their 'pen licence.' Black handwriting pens (not biro) will be used. The children will be taught how to 'correct' their work when using pens - 1 neat line using a ruler through the word/words they want to cross out.

Marking

All adults responsible for writing in the children's books should write using the continuous cursive style.

Teaching

All modelled and shared writing should be using the continuous cursive style and children should be encouraged and supported to use this style at all times

SEN

Individual children who are identified as having fine/gross motor problems that affect their handwriting may require a specific pen or pencil grip to support their writing. Planned interventions may also be delivered to support these children.

Time

It is important to devote time outside of the daily English lesson to the teaching and practising of handwriting skills. 10 - 15 minute handwriting sessions (3 times per week) will be used throughout the school in order to teach and enable children to practise their skills. At no stage should it be practised unaided as it is important to ensure that the children are forming the letters correctly. To encourage good habits, the teacher should walk around the classroom continuously monitoring and correcting the following where necessary:

- Pencil/ pen grips
- Sitting position
- Letter formation, size or placement.

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