

Castleton&Glaisdale Federation

Handwriting Policy Statement

June 2015

“Handwriting is a tool that has to work. It must be comfortable, fast and legible.” Angela Webb, Chair, National Handwriting Association

Introduction

Handwriting is a skill which, like reading and spelling, affects written communication across the curriculum. Given effective teaching, handwriting can be mastered by most children by the time they are seven or eight years old enabling them, with practice, to go on to develop a faster and more mature hand writing style ready for secondary school and adult life.

Handwriting is a movement skill: gross motor strength and control are essential for postural stability, and fine motor competence is needed for controlling the writing tool. In order to write, children must have a clear concept of the shape of each different letter and be able to translate that into a motor pattern. This requires visual perception and visual-motor integration. Writers must also be able to hold the writing tool in a grip that is comfortable, functional and efficient so that it allows them to control the very small movements required for writing. This is why children need to practise handwriting movements correctly and often.

Statutory requirements

Teaching handwriting in the Foundation Stage follows QCA Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage and RWI.

Handwriting at Key Stages 1 and 2 is part of the National Curriculum core subject, English. (See Appendix 1)

Rationale for teaching handwriting

Children need to understand the importance of clear and neat presentation in order to communicate meaning clearly. They need to take pride in the presentation of their work and therefore study handwriting with a sense of enjoyment and achievement.

Early handwriting lessons are vital and the most important issue is to ensure that children learn to form the letters of the alphabet with the correct sequence of strokes from the beginning of the writing experiences. Children need to develop a recognition and appreciation of pattern and line which, in the early stages, is supported through a varied and multi-sensory approach to handwriting: for example, writing letters in the air, on backs, on hands, on carpets, in sand, with paint, etc.

The correct formation of all letters needs to become quite automatic so that children can write quickly in order to express themselves creatively and imaginatively across the curriculum and for a range of purposes. Children should become able to use their writing skills with confidence in real life situations.

Teaching involving demonstration, explanation and practice is utilised throughout the school to ensure that children experience coherence and continuity in learning and teaching across the

Foundation Stage and both Key Stages. Through purposeful guided practice, children are taught the conventional ways of forming letter shapes, (both lower case and capitals), how to join letters accurately and consistently, and how to use and understand the language of writing and its terminology confidently (for example, ascenders/ descenders).

Overall, in handwriting, children should:

- Develop a legible style of handwriting in both joined and printed styles, with increasing fluency, confidence and speed
- Be aware that different forms of handwriting are to be used for different purposes (for example, drafting, rough work, final presentation etc.)
- Understand the importance of correct posture (including having feet on the floor) and paper position according to whether right or left handed.

The use of ICT

The growth in the use of word processing and desktop publishing has increased children's awareness of the importance of presentation and the variety of handwriting styles/fonts available. In school, children are encouraged to evaluate a range of fonts and to select whatever is appropriate to suit particular purposes.

Teachers vary their approaches in the direct teaching of handwriting using both the conventional whiteboard and the Interactive Whiteboard to demonstrate correct letter formation and joins clearly either to the whole class or to groups. Demonstration and support is also afforded to individual children as needed.

Cross curricula handwriting opportunities

Teachers discuss handwriting and presentation in all curriculum subjects and aim to model good handwriting themselves. Teachers are explicit about different types of handwriting for example, personal note-taking or best handwriting for presentation, but remember that not all the children are able to achieve this, particularly in Key Stage one. Handwriting is given a high priority in classroom displays. The use of rubbers is discouraged with preference being given to indicating mistakes by marking through with one neat horizontal line. A model of the agreed handwriting style is displayed in both classrooms.

Teaching approaches and organisation of handwriting

Teachers aim to make handwriting lessons relevant to the curriculum, by providing a purpose to the work where possible, thereby encouraging the children to view handwriting as part of an overall presentation policy.

Handwriting is timetabled in regular weekly sessions and where possible integrates various areas of the curriculum, for example, practising scientific vocabulary, cloze procedure linked to history, etc. The RWI phonics programme also allows for opportunities for practicing letter formation. Close links are made between handwriting practice and the learning of spellings / phonics with activities and investigations used to strengthen children's appreciation and application of handwriting skills as well as understanding and application of words in the correct context.

All handwriting activities are undertaken as class activities in order to: develop the habit of concentration which is crucial to good handwriting; place an emphasis on persevering for perfection;

provide teachers with the opportunity to help assess individuals' progress and monitor areas requiring reinforcement.

The 'Cripps' handwriting formation is used throughout school with children progressing to a cursive script when they are ready and are shown when it is not appropriate to join specific letters. Handwriting is delivered through the comprehensive Morrell's Handwriting Scheme which is structured to enable children to master handwriting skills leaving children free to focus on the quality, speed and content of their writing. The scheme provides progressive exercises that help to build confidence by guiding the writer through the correct letter formation and the joining process.

Each child has their own, individual workbook, based on their ability rather than age which progress from the early development of letter formation through to fluent joined-up handwriting.

All children write with standard pencils until their handwriting has become fluent and mature at which point they begin writing in ink. From years 5 and 6, competent hand writers are encouraged to develop their own style whilst maintaining a clear focus on correct letter formation and orientation.

Teaching handwriting in the Foundation Stage

On entry to the Foundation Stage children are involved in a variety of activities to develop essential pre-writing skills in line with the Early Learning Goals of the Foundation Stage Curriculum. A variety of appropriate resources are used to support children's learning, for example, alphabet friezes, practice sheets, tactile letters, chunky pencils, various felts, crayons, letters in 'air', tracing in sand /shaving foam, etc.

Throughout the Foundation Stage children are introduced to the relationship between letter symbols and letter sounds using the letters and sounds programme where sounds are closely linked in handwriting patterns 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 for example, 'the', 'and'.

Writing patterns are practised in order to encourage a flowing style. Children practise writing by tracing over in the first instance, then underneath and then using motor memory. When children are ready they are taught to-produce letters which start on the line. Children initially use jumbo pencils which aids correct grip and are more easily manipulated by small fingers. As their writing skills progress, children move onto using standard rounded or hexagonal pencils.

By the end of the Foundation Stage, children will have been introduced to all letters of the alphabet and most will be engaging in more independent writing.

Teaching handwriting in Key Stage 1

In Key Stage 1, the skills acquired in the Foundation Stage are continued, consolidating correct formation, concentration and accurate precision work. Spellings continue to be closely linked with handwriting activities assisting the children with phonic skills required for successful reading.

Key Stage 1 children are initially taught to produce letters which start on the line and finish with ligatures ('flicks') to encourage a flowing style before moving on to joining letters appropriately with horizontal and diagonal joins to letters with and without ascenders. They begin with letter

formation of individual letters, moving to groups of letters, then to short words and beyond as necessary.

Children are encouraged from the onset to consider size, position and orientation (with regard to lines) of letters. During year 1, the teaching of capital letters becomes more pertinent as children's writing progresses to meet the demands of accurate punctuation in writing.

Teaching handwriting in Key Stage 2

In Key Stage 2 handwriting style continues to develop through close links with the National Literacy Strategy, including consolidate the four main joins in handwriting. Phonic, spelling and awareness of grammar are all taught through handwriting practise and as fluency, accuracy and speed develops children are encouraged to write with an ink pen.

Throughout Key Stage 2 children are taught children to recognise when to use a clear, neat hand for finished presented work as opposed to informal writing for rough drafting, notes etc.

Teaching the joining style

"Joins between letters are only worthwhile if they increase the speed, rhythm and ease of writing *without* reducing legibility"

Joins are made both to and from the following 17 letters: a b c d e f h i k l m n o p r s t u v w z

Joins are made to, but not from, the following 8 letters: g j q x y

The 4 basic joins are:

1. Diagonal joins to letters without ascenders e.g. in, on, at
2. Diagonal joins to letters with ascenders e.g. at
3. Horizontal joins to letters without ascenders e.g. on
4. Horizontal joins to letters with ascenders e.g. the 'eb' in z-eb-ra

Assessment and recording of handwriting

Teachers assess handwriting on a regular basis to note progress and to determine future targets for improvement. The presentation of all work is monitored through regular book/ work scrutiny.

Teachers aim to ensure that when marking written work, comments about neatness are kept in proportion in relation to those about content and/or meaning.

In the Foundation Stage assessment of letter formation takes place at the end of the autumn, spring and summer terms. End of stage assessment is also recorded in the Communication, Language and Literacy section of children's Foundation Stage profiles.

In Key Stage 1 assessment of handwriting and letter formation is ongoing through the marking of books, discrete handwriting sessions and teacher observations where constructive feedback is given. Samples of children's writing is also scrutinised and moderated against National Curriculum criteria. Handwriting is also assessed as part of the SATs long writing task in the summer term of Year 2.

In Key Stage 2 assessment of handwriting continues to be ongoing through the marking of books, discrete handwriting sessions and teacher observations. Handwriting is also assessed as part of the

longer writing task undertaken in the English Standard Assessment Tests in the summer term of Year 6. The Annual Report to Parents incorporates comments for this area of English and the STA's.

Expectations for children's achievement in handwriting

See Appendix 2- handwriting progression

Inclusion for handwriting

Children with Special Educational Needs are no different from other children in their need to produce legible handwriting at a good speed. As such, children with learning difficulties, either general or specific, (such as dyslexia, DCD/dyspraxia, ASD or AD/HD), have the same aims and aspirations as the rest of the school.

Where children have specific, ongoing difficulty in mastering handwriting skills due to problems with fine motor control, individual programmes of work can be devised to accommodate the child's need, and to facilitate progress towards the agreed objectives. This may involve extra handwriting sessions, access to extra resources and consideration of factors such as posture, lighting, angle of table etc. Outside agencies may be contacted where appropriate.

Sometimes some children may experience difficulties with handwriting due to adopting a left-handed style. Teachers are aware that it can be difficult for left-handed children to follow handwriting movements when a right-handed teacher models them and take steps to demonstrate to left-handers on an individual or group basis, even if the resulting writing is not neat.

Left-handed writers are encouraged to adopt practices which support their handwriting development and afford them the means of success: for example, sitting towards the left of their partner leaving plenty of space for writing; positioning writing paper to the left of the child's body midline; tilting paper up to 32 degrees in a clockwise direction; supporting paper with the right hand; keeping the writing forearm parallel with the paper edge as the child writes; holding the writing tool sufficiently far from its point to ensure that the child can see what he/she is writing.

The Governing body and handwriting

Regular reports are made to the literacy governor and the full governing body on the progress of handwriting provision in the school. The handwriting policy is reviewed in line with the school's policy review programme or in the light of changes to legal requirements.

Role of co-ordinator

The Literacy subject co-ordinator is responsible for improving standards of teaching and learning in handwriting.

This involves:

- Monitoring and evaluating progress and standards of attainment in both key stages
- Producing an action plan identifying targets for the year
- Developing and reviewing the handwriting policy statement
- Developing guidelines for the teaching of handwriting
- Providing support and advice for colleagues
- Attending English courses to update knowledge of handwriting best practice and cascading this information to staff

- Reporting to the governors on the development of handwriting within the school
- Ordering and organising resources for handwriting
- Ensuring the provision of a quality learning environment

Literacy Co-ordinators: Jane Douglas, Hayley Webster, Rachel Grace

Review: June 2018