



NETTLESWORTH PRIMARY SCHOOL

Handwriting

Nettlesworth Primary School

What is Handwriting?

Handwriting is a complex skill which involves a wide range of cognitive, linguistic and perceptual motor abilities. It is the way we record our thoughts on paper using a generally understood system of symbols.

Rationale

The first priority in any handwriting programme should be the aim to develop legibility. Handwriting is a means of communication and so should be easy to read with letters properly formed. The second priority is speed.

"It is necessary to insist on the correct movement from the earliest days to ensure smooth progress to a flowing hand." (Rosemary Sassoon)

The third priority should be to promote a personal hand. After modelling, when the pupil is ready, he/she should be encouraged to develop his/her own personal handwriting style – one which is legible, fluent and in line with the pupil's natural inclination. Ultimately, handwriting should be an expression of 'self.'

Link to spelling

"Memory in the hand" - the hand will remember letter order and patterns so it is logical to link phonics and other common spellings patterns. The holistic approach to learning handwriting and phonics together is an ideal basis for emergent writing because children become used to thinking about letter shapes and sounds together. As children begin to join letters to write digraphs and some high frequency words, their writing and spelling will become increasingly accurate." ('Developing Early Writing')

Expectations

The ability to write easily and confidently affects the child's quality of work and self-esteem. The approach to handwriting is a whole-school approach with continuity throughout all classes. As a school we aim to have the children "joining" their letters as soon as they are able.

In the early stages children's mark-making and emergent writing should be valued and encouraged, yet at all times great emphasis must be placed on teaching correct letter formation. By the end of KS1 we would expect the majority of the children to be writing using correct letter formation, holding the pencil correctly and with some idea of neat presentation.

By the end of KS2, we would expect the children to be completing the majority of their work in ink using a fluent, cursive style, preferably using a suitable and comfortable pen and with the ability to organise their work neatly and with appropriate presentation. It should be borne in mind that pupils who are ready to use pen, regardless of age, should be encouraged to do so.

Nettlesworth expects that by the end of Year 3 that all pupils should be able to do the following:

- • ☐ Build up handwriting speed
- • ☐ Increase fluency and legibility
- • ☐ Be proficient in the implementation of the four basic joins introduced in Year 2. These include: •
 1. diagonal joins to letters without ascenders, eg "ai, ar, un"
 2. horizontal joins to letters without ascenders, eg "ou, vi, wi"
 3. diagonal joins to letters with ascenders, eg "ab, ul, it"
 4. horizontal joins to letters with ascenders, eg, "ol, wh, ot"
- • ☐ Ensure consistency in size and proportions of letters and the spacing between letters and words.

JOINING – WHEN AND HOW?

As soon as children are able to write in joined handwriting they should begin to use this for all their written work, so it becomes automatic.

However, when children are first learning to write in joined writing, less written work "may" be accepted as they are practising a new style.

2

School style

Foundation stage – the focus should be upon correct letter formation, using cursive style

Year 1/2 – the focus should be extended to exit strokes, encouraging joining

Year 2-6 – as and when appropriate the majority of pupils should be taught a fluent style using both entry and exit strokes.

Year 5 and 6 – fluency and speed should be developed. Pupils need to understand that competent writers have two kinds of handwriting:

- • ☐ One which is good quality and neat, used for more formal purposes
- • ☐ The other a fast, note-taking hand which may be more untidy than "best" writing but still "legible".

Time should be set aside to teach children how to write more quickly. (See "Presentation and Display – Speedwriting").

NB Children should not be asked to join until they are secure in basic letter formation.

Capital letters – from early foundation stage all pupils should be exposed to capital letters and their relation to lower case letters; this should be through practising during writing and also capital letters being displayed around the classroom. This will lead to a more direct teaching of correct upper case letter formation as and when appropriate in Year 1.

Progression

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Gross motor control – the children are involved in a wide range of activities to develop gross motor control eg bikes, scooters, building with large construction etc. The children will be encouraged to follow the “Write Dance” programme to develop specific gross motor movements which will help them in handwriting e.g. swirling ribbons in circular movements.

Fine motor control - many opportunities are provided for developing hand/eye coordination and fine motor control including tracing patterns in the sand, kneading dough, finger painting, cutting, threading, printing and pouring water. Children make vertical and circular marks with a variety of media. Children learn to trace and write their name. They engage in pattern work to develop specific fine motor movements and control. Letter formation is taught in relation to the phonics work being carried out in class.

Year 1

Children will continue to engage in a range of gross and fine motor activities, also practising specific handwriting patterns and further links being developed to the phonics work in class. Where appropriate, some children may begin to join 2 letter words building up to 3 letters, linking with CVC work.

Year 2

The majority of pupils in this year group will be learning to join their writing. The children are taught the 4 **basic joins** (see expectation above) and practise these in conjunction with the phonic work and high frequency spellings. Attention is paid to refining letters with clear ascenders and descenders.

Pupils at KS1 especially should have ample opportunity to work on handwriting patterns, preferably on widely spaced single lined paper and using pencil, coloured crayon, felt tips etc.

Key Stage 2

Fluency and speed should be developed. Pupils need to understand that competent writers have two kinds of handwriting:

- ☐ One which is good quality and neat, used for more formal purposes
- ☐ The other a fast, note-taking hand which may be more untidy than “best” writing but still “legible”.

Time should be set aside to teach children how to write more quickly. (See “Presentation and Display – Speedwriting”).

3

Rules for good handwriting.

1. Good writing is based upon a pattern of ovals and parallel lines.
2. All small letters start at the top. (until entry strokes are taught in KS2).
3. All down strokes are parallel.
4. All similar letters are the same height.
5. All down strokes are equidistant.
6. Ascenders and descenders are no more than twice the height of small letters.

7. Lines of writing are far enough apart for ascenders and descenders not to touch.
8. Capital letters are no higher than the ascenders.

Left-handed children

Provision must be made for left handed children. If these children are taught how to be left-handed then they can write as freely and legibly as right-handed children. The following practical considerations all help:

- ➤ ☐ Left-handers should always sit on the left side of a right-hander. This will avoid their arms colliding.
- ➤ ☐ The left-hander needs to have the paper on the left hand side of the mid-line of the body. After tilting the paper to a comfortable angle it should be pushed about 5cms away from the body. Incorrect paper position will usually result in an awkward, twisted grip. Some left-handers may need to hold the pencil a little further away from the point than right-handers so that the writing is not obscured by the thumb knuckle.
- ➤ ☐ Ideally, left-handers should have the light coming over the left shoulder.
- ➤ ☐ It is important for left-handers to sit on a higher chair. This position, together with the paper being pushed away from the body, will prevent the elbow locking into the side of the body when the writing has reached only halfway across the page.
- ➤ ☐ Put a mark on the left-hand side of the page to show which side to start and avoid mirror writing.

Special Educational Needs (SEN)

Pupils experiencing specific difficulties should have their needs identified in their waves of provision. Children with pronounced handwriting difficulties should have regular access to laptops to type up work. This occurrence will be very rare and will not be introduced until professional advice has been sought from inclusion lead.

Tools and equipment

Children of all ages should be encouraged to handle all sorts of writing implements and to choose which they like using best. Available tools could include: large/small, thick/thin pencils, crayons, felt tips, charcoal, chalk, a variety of pen types.

Nettlesworth Primary school children can use any BLACK INK BASED PENS

Pupils should be encouraged, where appropriate, to use pen for written work; use of pen should be firmly established for the majority of pupils in years 4, 5 and 6. Where pen is used, children should be encouraged to make a choice of their own which is comfortable and suits them and should be used for mathematics. Available tools could include: large/small, thick/thin pencils, crayons, felt pens, charcoal and chalk as well as a variety of pen types/paper types.

Nettlesworth Primary School does NOT give out pen licences – the time when a child is ready to use pen will be at the discretion of the class teacher.

Paper – a variety of paper should be used to practise on and the size of paper should be considered. Large paper for infants often makes the task more difficult as they have to stretch across the paper to reach the top of the page!

Where appropriate, lined paper should be introduced as soon as possible.

Different sized lines may be used for individuals as well as the use of tramlines to show letter height differentials. Line guides can be used to help with presentation.

The children should be encouraged to write on a soft surface (not straight onto a wooden desk). The free hand should steady and move the paper up the table rather than the writing hand moving down the paper.

Presentation and displays

Children should be aware of what is expected of them in each class. In Key Stage one work should be clearly dated with titles underlined. In Key Stage Two children are expected to write the long date, along with the learning objective. A clearly visible copy of Nettlesworth's letter formation for left/right handed children, as well as an example of a neat, legible, joined script, should be on display. Examples of SATs handwriting scripts are useful for upper KS2.

Even when they can write well the quality of children's handwriting will of course fluctuate and will depend to a certain extent on the perceived purpose and the conditions under which it was done. Even so it is often helpful to organise some time in the week when the pupils can remind themselves how good their writing can be when they concentrate on it. This handwriting period can also be a time when pupils can be taught how to plan the layout of their work on the page and how to present it attractively.

Some of the following suggestions may prove helpful:

1. Writing out a self composed or copied poem, taking care to plan the positioning on the page, then decorate it appropriately. Handwriting patterns can be used to decorate 'published' pieces of work; this will further help to consolidate fluidity and control.

2. Use the handwriting period for writing up the final draft of stories.

3. Speedwriting – this is more suitable for older pupils and is designed to help them when the aim of

the handwriting is speed rather than beauty (i.e. when taking notes) but readability is still important. The pupils choose any book from which they will copy. The teacher then tells them when they should start writing and when they should stop – about five minutes. The pupils then count the number of words that they have written. They then exchange books with a neighbour who reads what they have written and rings any words, which they are unable to read; these are then subtracted from the total. The point of the exercise is that each pupil is trying to improve on his/her own record. It is not a competition between pupils.

Timetabling

KS1 – 5-10 minutes daily

KS2 – 15 minutes weekly and additional time allocated where needed

Little and often is best!

Feedback – should be immediate specific and positive; specific faults should be identified as soon as they occur and dealt with – children can be provided with smart handwriting targets.

Home and Pre-school Liaison

Parents are given a copy of the school's printed style with arrows to show correct letter formation on entry to school. If their child is experiencing difficulties, this will be communicated informally or during parents evening and the sheet can be given if the parents wish to help.

Teachers carry out informal assessments in the course of their teaching. This helps the teacher plan according to the needs of the pupils. This can be used to monitor pupils' progress. At the end of the academic year pupils with specific handwriting difficulties should be identified and receiving teachers informed.

ASSESSMENT Year 1

Pupils should be taught to:

- • ☐ sit correctly at a table, holding a pencil comfortably and correctly
- • ☐ begin to form lower-case letters in the correct direction, starting and finishing in the right place
- • ☐ form capital letters
- • ☐ form digits 0-9
- • ☐ understand which letters belong to which handwriting 'families' (ie letters that are formed in similar

ways) and to practise these

Year 2

Pupils should be taught to:

- form lower-case letters of the correct size relative to one another
- 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
- write capital letters and digits of the correct size, orientation and relationship to one another and to lower- case letters
- use spacing between words that reflects the size of the letters

Years 3 and 4

Pupils should be taught to:

- use the diagonal and horizontal strokes that are needed to join letters and understand which letters, when adjacent to one another, are best left unjoined
- increase the legibility, consistency and quality of their handwriting, [for example, by ensuring that the downstrokes of letters are parallel and equidistant, and that lines of writing are spaced sufficiently so that the ascenders and descenders of letters do not touch]

Years 5 and 6

Pupils should be taught to:

- write legibly, fluently and with increasing speed by:
- choosing which shape of a letter to use when given choices and deciding whether or not to join specific letters
- choosing the writing implement that is best suited for a task

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