



Newstead Primary  
School

## HANDWRITING POLICY

## INTRODUCTION

Although our children live in an ever-advancing technological world, the ability to write legibly and quickly continues to be an important basic skill that should be taught and developed in the primary years.

The aim of teaching handwriting is to enable each child to write legibly, fluently, without strain and with sufficient speed to facilitate flow of thought to paper. There are varying thoughts about the best 'method' to teach handwriting; in this booklet the basic non-cursive script and its development to joined handwriting is described.

The purpose of using the same system throughout a school is to produce continuity and consistency in the teaching and rehearsal of handwriting. Every school acknowledges and celebrates individual differences and therefore the key message of this booklet is that, to achieve our aim for the teaching of handwriting, our emphasis should be on the learning of efficient movements rather than on the religious copying of model shapes. Teaching needs to be informed and consistent in order to provide a base on which individual handwriting may progressively develop.

This booklet describes the consistent approach that should be the basis of the teaching of handwriting across a school. Mastery of the basic skills and the development of an efficient, individual style can only be achieved through competent teaching and regular practise. Daily handwriting instruction and practise (whether in specific handwriting lessons or through modelled and shared writing) should, therefore, be one of the 'immovables' across a school.

## Aims

1. To know the importance of clear and neat presentation in order to communicate meaning effectively.
2. To write legibly in both joined and printed styles with increasing fluency and speed by:
  - Having a correct pencil grip
  - Knowing that all letters *initially* start from the top (covered in Reception year), except lower case 'd' and 'e' which start in the middle
  - Forming all letters correctly, starting from the line (from Year 2)
  - Knowing the size and orientation of letters.

## BASIC SCRIPT

Basic script refers to an alphabet that is simple and practical – it can be written at speed and with ease but allows some variation without loss of a consistent appearance. It refers to letters that are formed correctly but are not joined. Basic script provides a sound foundation for later progression to a cursive form and to the expression of individual preferences.

## CURSIVE SCRIPT

“Cursive” is a term that usually refers to handwriting in which the letters within words are connected by joining strokes to increase the speed of writing. The cursive style described in this booklet represents a progression from basic script, providing for increased fluency and speed by joining most letters.

The break letters (letters that are not joined from) are:

x z

Small letters refers to letters that have no ascenders or descenders e.g. a, c, e, i

Tall letters refers to letters that have an ascender that reaches to the top of the line e.g. b, d, l, h

Long letters refers to letters that have a descender and fall below the line e.g. g, j, p, q, y,

## **STAGES OF TEACHING**

The main stages of teaching handwriting are:

- Teaching grip, letter shapes and movements
- Teaching joins
- Increasing speed and flow without loss of quality

Although the outline below gives a guide to the sequence of teaching, it is not intended as a fixed sequence of learning that every child should go through which does not take into account developmental differences between children, particularly in younger children. As with all aspects of learning, teachers should take account of the starting point for each child and their readiness to progress.

### **Teaching outline**

We believe that the teaching of handwriting in the early stages is a joint process of developing fine motor and hand-eye co-ordination alongside the teaching of correct pencil grip and letter formation. Teaching should have the following sequence:

- Hand and finger strength
- Physical preparation
- Tracing
- Patterns
- Over teacher’s writing
- Under teacher’s writing (directly under words – write in large letters, leave large spaces between words)
- Copying patterns
- Practising patterns in words

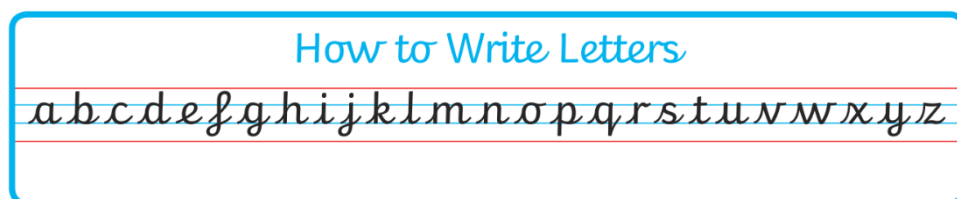
- Independence

### Ideas for teaching letter formation

- Demonstrate by modelling good handwriting
- Talk through the process
- Encourage children to verbalise the process
- Children form letters in the air
- Finger trace over tactile letters
- Write in sand with finger or stick
- Write with chalk on chalkboard
- Wax resist letters
- Form letters with pegs on pegboard
- Form letters with beads in plasticine
- Finger trace the outline of letters on the back of the person in front of you
- Write over highlighter pen (or dotted letters)

### Expectation for teaching staff

Teachers should model good handwriting all the time using the example script below. This includes writing on classroom display and written feedback given to children.



**The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.**

### Handwriting practise books

Children will practise handwriting in a standard lined exercise book. This will be the same type of exercise book used in other lessons. This is to ensure a smooth transition from practise to application.

### Getting ready to write

## Seating and posture

- Chair and table should be at a comfortable height
- The table should support the forearm so that it rests lightly on the surface and is parallel to the floor
- Encourage children to sit up straight and not slouch
- The height of the chair should be such that the thighs are horizontal and feet flat on the floor
- Tables should be free of clutter
- Rooms should be well lit
- Left-handed pupils should sit on the left of their partners

## Pencil grip

- Children should write with a pencil (or pen when introduced) with a rounded nib. Pencils should be reasonably sharp.
- A tripod grip is the most efficient way of holding a pencil. '**Pinch, slip, grip**' is the phrase that should be used to remind the children of the expected tripod grip.

### *For right handers*

- Hold lightly between the thumb and forefinger about 3cm away from the point.
- The paper should be placed to the right tilted slightly to the left.
- Use the left hand to steady the paper.

### *For left handers*

- Hold lightly between thumb and forefinger resting on the first knuckle of the middle finger.
- Hold about 3cm from the tip.
- The hand should be kept below the writing line.
- The paper should be tilted slightly to the right at about 20 - 30°.
- Use the right hand to steady the paper.

NB It is very important that a right-handed child is NOT seated on the lefthand side of a left-handed child as their elbows will collide!

## Assessment

Children's writing and presentation in books should be monitored regularly. The following should be considered:

- Is the writing generally legible?
- Are the letters correctly shaped and proportioned?

- Are the joins made correctly?
- Are the spaces between the letters, words and lines appropriate?
- Is the size of the writing appropriate?
- Is the writing properly aligned?
- Are the writing standards achieved by the majority of pupils in line with the National Curriculum?

### **Individual assessment**

Children should be observed as they write during handwriting lessons – the teacher must circulate, monitor and intervene. Teachers also need to monitor and mark whole pieces of writing. The following should be considered:

- Is the posture correct?
- Does the child hold the pencil correctly?
- Does the child use the correct movement when forming and or joining letters?
- Are any letters reversed?
- Does the child write fluently and rhythmically?
- Is the writing easily legible?
- Is the pupil's handwriting development in line with the Level Descriptors in the National Curriculum.

### **When to teach handwriting**

Handwriting is a physical skill. Therefore it needs to be practised as regularly as possible. If you don't use it, you lose it. When letters, and later joins, are taught, children need direct. Whole class input should be followed up with small group work so that children aren't left to continually make errors in their letter formation or joins (practice makes permanent). Teaching and practice for **20 minutes 2-3 times a week is ideal**. Once children are writing fluently, they should continue to practise on a regular basis so that they can develop their own style.

### **Possible order of teaching**

#### **Year R – Single letters (in line with phonics teaching)**

The letters (with the exception of **d** and **e**) will be formed by starting from the top of the letter and finishing on the line.

- s a t p
- i n m d
- g o c k
- e u r h
- b f l j
- v x y q

## Year 1

In year 1 children should continue to practise the correct formation and orientation of letters taught in Reception. They should practise writing letters that are formed in similar ways using 'families of letters'.

### 1. Curly caterpillars

**c a o q g d e s f**

### 2. Ladder letters

**l i t u j y**

### 3. One-armed robots

**r b n h m k p**

### 4. Zig- Zag monsters

**v w x z**

### 5. Capital letters

### 6. Numbers 0-9

## Year 2

In year 2, children will continue to practise forming all letters in the correct direction, starting and finishing in the right place. Once secure, they will begin to start to form all letters starting from the line. During the spring term, they will start to join groups of letters in preparation for developing continuous cursive handwriting.

## **Autumn term**

1. Revise all letters including capital letters
2. Pre-cursive Small letters (starting from the line)  
a c e i m n o r s u v w x z
3. Pre-cursive tall letters  
b d h k l t
4. Pre-cursive long letters (that fall below the line)  
f g j q y

## **Spring term**

1. Join identical cursive letters  
aaaa eeee hhhh mmmm nnnn pppp ssss
2. Join small letters to small letters  
ae ui ie ee aw ir
3. Join small letters to long letters  
ag cg if ap ap ay mp
4. Join small letters to tall letters  
al ih ek ab ad ck
5. Join horizontal letters to small letters  
vi wi wa we ra re ro or wn ow wo
6. Join horizontal letters to long letters  
wy, ry, og

7. Join horizontal letters to tall letters

wh rh ol ok rk

8. Join horizontal to horizontal letters

oo rm rr ro ov

9. Join groups of letters (such as digraphs and trigraphs taught in year 1 phonics)

**Term 3**

Practise joining letters in whole words. The expectation by the end of year 2 is that most children should be using continuous cursive handwriting when writing in all books.

**Year 3**

Revision and practise:

- Practise the break letters - x z
- Practise capital letters
- Further practice of joins:
  - in ine
  - ut ute
  - ok oh
  - ri ru ry
  - oa ad as
  - ee ea ed
  - ow ov ox
  - ky hy ly
  - ha ta fa
  - od oo og
  - er ir ur
  - ai al ay
  - you oi
  - re oe fe
  - fu wu vu
  - ot ol ok
  - ai al ow ol

**Year 4**

Revision and practise:

- ning ping ting
- oc od oo
- ake ome are
- fla flo fle
- who wha whe
- ie in il
- inly ky ny
- ap ar an
- ick uck ack
- he we re
- fet fir fin
- wra wri kni
- ii ll tt rr nn mm cc oo dd ff ee
- ew ev ex (attention to spacing)
- th ht fl (attention to proportions)
- ac ag af
- practise sentences with punctuation included

### **Years 5 and 6**

Revision and practise:

- practise consistency and size of letters
- practise using a diagonal join
- practice leaving an equal space between letters
- practise joining to the letter 'y'
- practise using a horizontal join
- practise the size and height of letters
- practise joining from the letter 'i'
- practise joining to and from the letter 'v'
- practise consistency in forming and joining letters
- practise crossing double tt on completing the word
- practise joining to and from the letter 'e'

- practise joining to and from the letter 'w'
- practise joining to the letter 't'
- practise with punctuation
- practise with break letters
- practise joining to and from the letter 'm'
- practise ensuring the ascender on the letter 't' is the correct height
- practise spacing between words
- practise forming and joining the letter 'f'
- practise speed writing and develop fluency (through dictation)