

HANDWRITING

Introduction

The importance of handwriting to the curriculum

Handwriting is concerned with individual expression and the conveying of meaning through fluent composition. The principal aim is that handwriting becomes an automatic process which frees pupils to focus on the content of the writing. In order for this to occur, handwriting is taught in ways that enhance fluency, legibility, purposefulness and the opportunity for creative expression.

Strategy for implementation

Entitlement and curriculum provision

Handwriting is taught regularly through weekly lessons (more frequently at Key Stage 1) following the requirements of the National Literacy Strategy Framework. Teaching generally occurs outside the Literacy Hour, although shared and guided writing provides many opportunities for the modelling and monitoring of handwriting. There are times at both key stages when this aspect of writing is a focus for attention and more time is devoted to the objectives relating to handwriting and presentation.

Teaching and Learning

Handwriting is a skill which needs to be taught explicitly. Since handwriting is essentially a movement skill, correct modelling of the agreed style by the teacher is very important; it is not sufficient to require pupils to copy models from a published scheme or worksheet. Consistency in the attitudes displayed, the methods employed and the models provided is the key to effective learning. A mixture of whole class, small group and individual teaching is planned.

The role of the teacher:

- to follow the school policy to help each child develop legible and fluent handwriting;
- to provide direct teaching and accurate modelling;
- to provide resources and an environment which promotes good handwriting;
- to observe pupils, monitor progress and determine targets for development.

Continuity and Progression

Foundation Stage

The emphasis at this stage is with movement rather than neatness. Letter formation (starting at the right entry point and then moving in the right direction) learned at this early stage becomes automatic and has a profound influence on later fluency and legibility. To aid movement, close attention is given to pencil grip, correct posture, the positioning of the paper and the organisation of the writing space. Teachers are vigilant to ensure that bad habits do not become ingrained and that the specific needs of left-handed pupils (for example, additional tracking and tracing of letters at the pre-writing stage) and those with special educational needs are met.

In the pre-communicative stage pupils play with writing and these experiments are recognised and praised as an important stage in the child's understanding that marks on paper convey meaning. Pupils are given the opportunity to experiment with a range of writing materials and implements; a multi-sensory approach is used to help pupils feel the movement in the hand.

Key Stage 1

Building on the foundation stage, pupils at Key Stage 1 develop a legible style. This is achieved in Year 1 by developing a comfortable and efficient pencil grip and by practising handwriting in conjunction with spelling and independent writing. Correct letter orientation, formation and proportion are taught in line with the school's agreed handwriting style. This continues in Year 2 and the four basic handwriting joins (diagonal and horizontal joins to letters with and without ascenders) are practised.

Years 3 and 4

In Year 3 the pupils consolidate their use of the four basic handwriting joins, ensuring consistency in size, proportion and spacing of letters. Handwriting speed, fluency and legibility are built up through practice. By Year 4 joined handwriting is used at all times unless other specific forms are required, e.g. printing on a map, a fast script for notes.

Years 5 and 6

Years 5 and 6 are used to consolidate learning for those pupils who have not yet achieved a fluent and legible joined script. Those who have will develop an individual style based on the principles of good handwriting taught in previous years. Experimentation with different styles and writing implements is encouraged with the aim of increasing speed whilst maintaining legibility.

Inclusion

The vast majority of pupils are able to write legibly and fluently. However, some pupils need more support and a specific individual or group programme is drawn up in consultation with the SEN co-ordinator.

All teachers are aware of the specific needs of left-handed pupils and make appropriate provision:

- paper should be positioned to the left for right handed pupils and to the right for left handed pupils and slanted to suit the individual in either case;
- pencils should not be held too close to the point as this can interrupt pupils' line of vision;
- pupils should be positioned so that they can place their paper to their left side;
- left-handed pupils should sit to the left of a right-handed child so that they are not competing for space;
- extra practice with left-to-right exercises may well be necessary before pupils write left-to-right automatically.

Teachers are alert to the fact that it is very difficult for left-handed pupils to follow handwriting movements when they are modelled by a right-handed teacher. Teachers demonstrate to left-handers on an individual or group basis, even if the resulting writing is not neat.

The learning environment

A dedicated writing area is established in all classrooms at Foundation and Key Stage 1. In all classes, writing boxes with suitable materials are available for pupils to work at their own tables. Writing areas/boxes are equipped with a range of writing implements, line guides, book making materials and instructions. Examples of different styles of handwriting are provided.

The role of parents and carers

Parents and carers are introduced to the school's handwriting style through written information. The Nursery/Reception teacher plays an important role in communicating this at an early stage, for example, to ensure that parents are informed and encouraged to offer good models to their pupils by using only capital letters for the beginning of their names, practising drawing patterns together, playing joining up games which encourage left to right directionality.

The reception teacher, in partnership with the English subject leader, is expected to communicate with pre-school agencies to encourage good practice.

Assessment and recording

Teachers use the school's handwriting assessment sheets on a regular basis (each half term in Nursery/Reception and at Key Stage 1) to note progress against the criteria listed and to determine future targets for improvement. A handwriting assessment of pupils who arrive later than Reception Year is made within two weeks.

Teachers pay particular attention to pupils with IEPs which relate to handwriting.

The contribution of handwriting to other aspects of the curriculum

ICT

The growth in the use of word processing and desktop publishing has increased pupils' awareness of the importance of presentation and the variety of handwriting styles/fonts available. The school's chosen font is used for labelling, captions, instructions, letters to parents, etc, but pupils are encouraged to evaluate a range of fonts and to select whatever is appropriate to suit particular purposes.