

# HANDWRITING RATIONALE



**February 2019**

*As a rights Respecting School we believe that all children have the right to an education, Article 28*

**The Pines Special School**  
**Handwriting Rationale**

The purpose of this policy is to set out a whole school approach to the teaching of handwriting. It provides guidance for all staff, new and experienced and it will underpin the continued development of the school as a learning community.

**Importance and Nature of Handwriting**

Handwriting is a means of recording language on paper, using a generally understood system of symbols. It is an important life skill as a functional tool for expressing language and as part of self-image and expression of personality. Despite the increased use of computers for writing, the skill of handwriting remains important in education, employment and in everyday life. As a school, we recognise that children's ability to write well for the rest of their lives depends on firm foundations of taught skills in their primary years.

The National Curriculum for English (2014) defines the **two dimensions** of the writing process as:

- **transcription** (spelling and handwriting)
- **composition** (articulating ideas and structuring them in speech and writing)

It requires that teaching develops pupils' competence in both dimensions.

'Writing also depends on fluent, legible and, eventually, speedy handwriting.'

**Handwriting for Children with Autism**

"Children with autism often have difficulties with fine motor skills. They may not have enough control to hold the pencil and form a letter. Writing requires the physical skill of holding a pencil and forming a letter and the understanding that what they are doing has meaning. Either of these skills may be difficult for a child with autism" *National Autistic Society 2019*.

**Aims:**

- To raise standards in handwriting across the school.
- To have a consistent approach to handwriting across the school.
- For all children to learn and practise appropriate and effective handwriting skills appropriate to their stage of development.
- For children to learn to hold a pencil comfortably whilst developing a legible style including writing from left to right, from top to bottom of the page, starting and finishing letters correctly.
- To continually work towards handwriting which is for our more able writers:
  - Legible • Presentable • Comfortable • Fluent • Flexible • Fast • Automatic
  - Sustainable
- For children to have opportunities to write in different styles and for different purposes across the curriculum.
- For children to begin to develop an appreciation that work is often presented for others to read and therefore, attention needs to be given to layout and presentation.

- For all staff to use and model the agreed handwriting conventions outlined in this document, thus providing consistency and continuity throughout the school community.

### **Development of Handwriting skills: Rationale**

Handwriting is complex perceptual-motor skill that is dependent upon the maturation and integration of a number of cognitive, perceptual, and motor skills including:

- Gross motor skills
- Fine motor skills
- Visual-motor control
- Eye hand co-ordination
- Cognitive and perceptual skills
- Tactile and kinaesthetic sensitivities
- Behaviour, concentration and motivation

Awareness of this complexity informs the curriculum and teaching progression across the school. It also underpins any intervention programme when children experience difficulties. From Early Years onwards, staff and children understand that handwriting is a 'whole body' activity.

### **Strategy for Implementation**

Handwriting is to be taught regularly through short, focused sessions, twice a week. Teaching generally occurs outside of English lessons.

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.

### **Considerations when teaching handwriting:**

- Organisation of the classroom – it is suggested that all children are facing the whiteboard.
- Correct posture.
- The paper should be positioned at a comfortable angle and moved up as the page is filled.
- Adequate space is needed so that the children are able to write without elbows touching.
- Pencil grip – firm but relaxed. Children need to be aware that they should not grip so hard that their hand aches but need to be able to apply some pressure.
- Left-handed children should not sit to the right of right-handed children. Left-handed children should be encouraged to tilt their work clockwise so that they can see what they have written. As writing from left to right is more difficult for left-handed children, they should be supported to ensure they do not learn bad habits of position, posture and pen hold which will deter them from developing a fast, fluent and legible handwriting style.

### **The role of the teacher:**

- To follow the handwriting rationale to help each child develop legible and fluent handwriting.
- To provide direct teaching and accurate modelling.
- To provide resources and an environment that promotes good handwriting.
- To observe pupils and monitor progress.

## **Continuity and Progression:**

### **Pre-writing skills**

Pre-writing skills will be taught through planned activities to develop:

- Hand eye co-ordination.
- Hand strength.
- Hand manipulation.
- Finger manipulation.
- Grasp and release.

### **Pencil Skills**

Early pencil skills will be taught through specific activities to develop confidence and enjoyment of the writing.

Activities might include:

- Mark making
- Copying a straight line (horizontal, then vertical)
- Copying shapes
- Copying a pattern
- Letter shapes

### **Capitals and lower case formation**

Children will be taught how to form lowercase letters initially followed by the introduction of capital letters.

“Capitals are easier to form and children learn them more quickly. However, it is very difficult to teach a child to use lower-case letters once they have learnt to use capitals” *National Autistic Society 2019.*

### **Cursive Writing**

Formal handwriting is taught following the agreed cursive style which acknowledges handwriting is a developmental process with its own distinctive stages of sequential growth.

Children will begin to learn cursive writing when they are working within the year 1 programme of study. All children will be taught using the Twinkl Handwriting Scheme.

Five stages are identified and these form the basic organisational structure of the scheme:

1. Let's Get Ready to Write! Short sessions designed to develop gross and fine motor skills to build strength and stability, and visual perception skills.
2. Forming Letter Families Sessions to teach children the sets of 'letter families' with the aim of securing the correct letter formation.
3. Positioning & Pre-Cursive Sessions designed to teach the formation of letters as a pre-cursor to joining.
4. Joining Letters Sessions which introduce different types of letter joins (and the letters best left unjoined) in an aim to increase legibility, quality and consistency.

5. Increasing Fluency, Speed & Style Sessions to further practise fluency and speed as well as pupils' own individual personalised handwriting style.

Shape

- Letters are taught in stroke related families
  - The Ladder Family - l, i, u, t, y, j
  - The One Armed Robot Family – n, m, h, k, b, p, r
  - The Curly Caterpillar Family – c, a, d, e, s, g, f, q, o
  - The Zig-Zag Monster Family – z, v, w, x

Space

- There should be an even space between words (a finger space).
- There should be an even space between letters.

Size

- The relative height of letters should be consistent: (ascenders, height of letters and descenders)
- Capital Letters are all the same height, sit on the baseline and do not join to the small letters
- The overall size of writing should be appropriate for development stage.

Sitting on the line

- All letters sit on the base line.

Joins

- Letter joins are diagonal or horizontal
- Some letters are better left unjoined

Speed

- Speed is developed in KS2 and reflects the level of automation
- As handwriting develops legibly, fluently, with increasing speed, children within the year 5 and 6 programme of study for writing will create their own personal style. They are taught that this must be easily read by others and that they should keep it comfortable, quick, fluent and most importantly, automatic. Children are taught to adapt their writing according to its purpose, e.g., unjoined style for labelling a diagram or data, writing an email address, or for algebra and 'block' capital letters (e.g. for filling in a form).

### **KS3**

At the end of KS3, Access Arrangements will be sought for students who will be accessing formal qualifications in KS4 and who struggle with their handwriting. The Pines will follow JCQ regulations to enable students to produce exam work using ICT. The reasons why an application would be made could be for a student with:

- a learning difficulty which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on their ability to write legibly;
- a medical condition;
- a physical disability;
- a sensory impairment;

- planning and organisational problems when writing by hand;
- poor handwriting.

If an application is to be made, the use of ICT would reflect normal classroom practice for the student.

### **Monitoring**

The frequency of handwriting sessions will be monitored throughout the school and evidence of handwriting sessions should be evident in writing books.

### **Conclusion**

This rationale sets out the intentions of The Pines School with regard to the teaching of Handwriting. Opportunities for discussion of any issue relating to this rationale will be made available and any concerns should be raised, in the first instance, with the post-holder.