



# Oaklands School

## Handwriting Policy

### Rationale

Handwriting is an important skill for children to learn and can affect written communication across the curriculum. If handwriting is taught well, it can be mastered by most pupils by the time they are seven or eight years old, therefore enabling them, with practise, to develop a faster and more mature style as they prepare to move to secondary school and beyond.

Handwriting is a movement skill. Movements of the hand when writing are firmly established in a person's memory because they have been practised so often. Therefore, it is important that children are given opportunities to practise handwriting movements regularly and correctly. From the first handwriting sessions in EYFS, it is vital that children are taught to form letters of the alphabet with the correct sequence of strokes. The correct formation of all letters needs to become automatic and may require a lot of practise. As a result, a consistent approach to the teaching of handwriting within our school needs to be established and maintained.

### Aims

As a school our aims in teaching handwriting are that the pupils will:

- Experience coherence and continuity in learning and teaching across the EYFS, KS1 and KS2
- Understand the importance of clear and neat presentation in order to communicate meaning clearly.
- Take pride in the presentation of their work and therefore write with a sense of enjoyment and achievement.
- Achieve a neat, legible style with correctly formed letters in cursive handwriting.
- Be able to write quickly to aid expressing themselves creatively and imaginatively across the curriculum and for a range of purposes.
- Develop fluency and speed whilst writing so that eventually they are able to write letters with confidence and correct orientation
- Develop a fluent, joined handwriting style by the end of Year 2
- Be presented (in assembly) with their "Pen Licence" during Year 3.

### Objectives

All pupils should be given the opportunity to develop an effective, cursive style of writing. In order to do this they should consistently be taught:

- How to hold a pencil/pen using the correct and comfortable grip
- To form letters properly, identifying where to start and finish each letter
- To form letters of regular shape and size
- To use the correct terminology of ascenders, descenders and lead off
- To form upper and lower case letters
- To write from left to right and top to bottom of the page
- To put regular spaces between letters and words
- How to join letters correctly, as identified in the handwriting policy
- To be fully aware of neat and clear presentation in order to communicate meaning effectively
- To write legibly with increasing fluency and speed

## Teaching and Learning

### Handwriting Principles

- Handwriting should be taught as a specific skill to the pupils. At least 45 minutes per week should be spent on handwriting skills; class teachers should divide this time up into more manageable short, but frequent sessions, applicable to the age of the pupils and the tasks being set. Time for additional, independent practice is also recommended (e.g. early morning activities)
- It should be modelled by the teacher and then supervised. Children should be encouraged to self/peer assess, looking for consistency.
- Where possible, it should be linked to phonic and spelling patterns. This will help with handwriting and the 'muscle memory' of spellings.
- When ready, children should be practising on the lines they are going to use in their writing books.
- Teachers need to model good handwriting at all times, e.g. when writing on the whiteboard and when marking books.
- The school has agreed to follow the basis of the 'Nelson' handwriting script but with a few specific differences (capital I has a top and a bottom; g, j and y should be joined with a loop).
- Teachers should use the 'Nelson' handwriting Teacher's book for guidance and handwriting activities for the pupils. (The website, <http://teachhandwriting.co.uk> can also be used as a teaching resource. This includes activities and patterns for practising handwriting. The website organises letter joins according to the order of letter strings in phonics. Extra care MUST be taken when choosing activities as some of the letters do not follow our formations and their Phonic scheme may not match RWI).
- In every handwriting session, teachers should ensure that pupils are relaxed and are sitting correctly with their feet flat on the floor and their back touching the chair. The teacher should model the handwriting exercise, the pupils then practise independently with the teacher model and then they finally work from memory.
- A model of the school's handwriting style should be displayed in all Y1-Y6 classrooms. A range of writing implements, line guides, word lists and dictionaries should be available, appropriate to the age of the pupils.
- Pupils of all ages need to see good examples of handwriting on all classroom and corridor displays throughout the school.

### EYFS

Although the EYFS is not included in the National Curriculum Programme of Study, handwriting does need to start in the early stages of the school. An Early Learning Goal for Reception children is:

*'Children show good control and coordination in large and small movements. They move confidently in a range of way, safely negotiating space. They handle equipment and tools effectively, including pencils for writing.'*

Development Matters gives the following guidance:

30-50 months:

- Holds pencil between thumb and two fingers, no longer using the whole hand to grasp
- Holds pencil near point between first two fingers and thumb and uses it with good control
- Can copy some letters, e.g. letters from their name

40-60 months:

- Shows preference for a dominant hand
- Begins to use anticlockwise movement and retrace vertical movement

- Begins to form recognisable letters
- Uses a pencil and holds it effectively to form recognisable letters most of which are correctly formed.

**Therefore, in LK/UK pupils are encouraged to:**

- Engage in pre-writing or 'writing-readiness' activities
- Sit with the correct posture for handwriting, with the positioning of the paper and the organisation of the working space supervised by the teacher
- Make large marks and small marks, using gross and fine motor skills
- Make patterns such as wiggles, curves, straight lines, zig-zags and circles
- Develop gross motor skills
- Develop fine motor skills
- Engage in activities requiring hand-eye coordination
- Use a range of mark making tools such as pencils, pens and crayons, with confidence and enjoyment
- Develop a recognition of pattern to develop free flowing hand movements
- Use one handed tools and equipment
- Begin to use anticlockwise movement and retrace vertical lines
- Develop the main handwriting movements involved in the three basic letter shapes; l, c and r
- Begin to form recognisable letters
- Develop language to talk about shapes and movements
- Use a pencil and hold it effectively to form recognisable letters, with those from their name correctly formed

**Reception pupils will need to:**

- Engage in pre-writing or 'writing-readiness' activities
- Practise holding a writing or drawing implement correctly
- Sit with the correct posture for handwriting, with the positioning of the paper and the organisation of the working space supervised by the teacher
- Practice and enjoy making marks using a variety of materials
- Make large marks and small marks, using gross and fine motor skills
- Make patterns such as wiggles, curves, straight lines, zig-zags and circles
- Practise drawing patterns inside bigger shapes. Keeping within the lines
- Learn letter formation alongside phonics using the Read, Write, Inc scheme
- Learn letter formation using 'Shape families'
- Form numerals 0-9

Pupils need to be provided with the opportunities to hold a range of writing implements, using the tripod grip, before the muscle memory becomes fixed. Shoulder movements also need to be developed to encourage upper body strength. When letters are taught, correct letter formation must be insisted upon and corrected when necessary.

**'Writing-readiness' suggested activities include:**

- Threading
- Construction apparatus
- Pegboards
- Sewing
- Tracing

- Stencils
- Colouring
- Painting
- Scissor cutting
- Experiment with a range of pens, pencils, crayons, felt tips, chalk, interactive whiteboard, sticks, paint, water
- Use a selection of materials (shaving foam, mud, wet/dry sand, water) including malleable materials (play dough, clay, mod rock, plasticene)
- Finger and counting rhymes

## Year 1

More formal teaching of handwriting should take place in Year 1, with frequent, direct and discrete teaching taking place. Letter formation should be modelled and handwriting activities should be supervised to ensure that pupils do not form habits which are unhelpful later. Correct letter formation is crucial. Pupils should be able to form letters correctly and confidently.

Pupils writing will generally develop at a slower pace than their reading during Year 1. This is because they need to encode the sounds they hear (spelling skills), develop the physical skill needed for handwriting, and learn how to organise their ideas in writing.

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' (i.e. letters that are formed in similar ways) and to practise these.

At some point during the Summer term, the school aims to start introducing the idea of the 'arm and washing line' and teaching certain key words such as 'the, to, in at' as these represent short words for which children will be taught not to join from capital letters.

## Year 2

In Year 2, pupils should revise and practise correct letter formation frequently. Handwriting should still be modelled and activities supervised to ensure letters are formed, and eventually, joined correctly. Pupils should be taught to join letters correctly. This will be achieved by using the following 'arm and washing line' rule;

**Arm** – to be used to join from a letter where the pencil is starting on the line.

The arm needs to be like a short slide to climb up – if the slide is too steep you get arm ache from holding on!

**Washing Line** – to be used to join from a letter where the starting point is in the air.

The washing line needs a slight dip in the middle – if the line is too straight it will snap when the wind blows. If it dips too low, then the washing will go in the mud.

Pupils should be taught to:

- Form the 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 un-joined

- 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.

We aim to have the majority of pupils using a joined style of handwriting by the end of Summer Term in Year 2.

### **Years 3 & 4**

In Years 3 and 4 pupils should be joining their handwriting. It is expected that pupils will write in a joined, cursive style throughout their independent writing across all areas of the curriculum.

Handwriting should continue to be taught directly and with some supervision of activities, particularly for those pupils still finding it difficult to form letters correctly.

Pupils should be taught:

- Use the diagonal and horizontal strokes that are needed to join letters and understand which letters, when adjacent to one another, are best left un-joined.
- Increase the legibility, consistency and quality of their handwriting (e.g. by ensuring that the down strokes of letters are parallel and equidistant; that lines of writing are spaced sufficiently so that the ascenders and descenders of letters do not touch).

During Year 3, Pupils should be presented with their 'Pen Licence'.

### **Year 5 & 6**

In Years 5 & 6, pupils should continue to practise their handwriting and be encouraged to increase the speed of it so that any problems with forming letters do not get in the way of the pupils writing down what they want to say. There will be less direct teaching of handwriting in Years 5 & 6, although those pupils who are still finding letter formation difficult may need extra support and supervision during independent handwriting activities.

Pupils should be taught to:

- Write legibly, fluently and with increasing speed by:
  1. Choosing which shape of a letter to use when given choices and deciding, as part of their personal style, whether or not to join specific letters
  2. Choosing the writing implement that it's best suited for a task (e.g. quick notes, letters)

Pupils should be clear about what standard of handwriting is appropriate for a particular task, for example, quick notes or a final handwritten version. They should also be taught to use an un-joined style, for example, for labelling a diagram or data, writing an email address, or for algebra and capital letters, for example, for filling in a form.

### **Equal opportunities/Inclusion/Special Needs**

All pupils must have the opportunity and the encouragement to reach their full potential regardless of race, creed or sex. The vast majority of pupils will learn to write legibly and fluently. However, some pupils will need more support and provision. In some cases, teachers of pupils whose handwriting is limited by problems with fine motor skills should liaise with the SENDCo to develop a programme designed for the individual child. When necessary, 'intervention handwriting groups' should be established, within a class or year group, to provide additional practice and support to a small number of identified pupils.

All teachers should provide an appropriate working space for all the pupils, especially with regard to the specific needs of **left-handed pupils**. They must take the following into account:

- Left handed pupils should sit to the left of a right handed child so that they are not competing for space
- Paper should be slanted to the left for right handed pupils and to the right for left handed pupils

- Pencils should not be held too close to the point as this can interrupt pupils line of vision
- Extra practice with left to right exercises may well be necessary before pupils write left-to-right automatically
- Left handed pupils often find it very difficult to follow handwriting movements when a right handed teacher models them.

### **The role of parents and carers**

Parents and carers are introduced to the School's Handwriting style in their Class Handbook as soon as they start in the EYFS. The Handwriting policy is also available to the parents on the Oaklands School website.

As from September 2020, the School's policy on Handwriting has been included in the UK 'Ready to read and write' information meeting and the Reception 'RWInc' meeting.

### **The contribution of handwriting to other aspects of the curriculum**

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. Pupils are encouraged to evaluate a range of fonts and to select whatever is appropriate to suit particular purposes.

Teachers discuss handwriting and presentation in all subjects, in particular during Work Scrutinies. They aim to make handwriting lessons relevant to the curriculum, by providing a purpose to the work where possible, encouraging the pupils to view handwriting as part of the overall presentation policy.

### **Assessment, Recording and Moderation**

Pupils in EYFS are assessed on an on-going basis through almost daily observations. In KS1 & KS2, handwriting is assessed as part of the pupils creative writing assessments (Criterion scale) which take place every half term. Teachers will record key aspects of each pupil's progress throughout the year and include this within the English end of year report to parents.

Lesson objectives/pupil outcomes are recorded on the weekly English lesson plans. Teachers aim to ensure that when marking written work, comments about neatness are kept in proportion in relation to those about content and learning outcomes/progress of the pupil. Pupils will be encouraged to reflect upon their work as individuals, through peer and self-assessment, as appropriate.

The use of rubbers is discouraged. Mistakes are indicated by drawing through with one neat horizontal line.

### **The role of the KS1 & KS2 English Subject Coordinators**

The English subject coordinators are responsible for ensuring that high quality handwriting activities are carefully planned in all year groups to ensure that skills are developed over the key stages so that pupils meet the end of the key stages so that pupils meet the end of key stage expectations. Curriculum coverage will be monitored via the weekly English lesson plans and through discussions at Key stage meetings.

The Coordinators, alongside the SLT, will also take on a monitoring role in lessons, to ensure quality of teaching and learning within handwriting and liaise with the Headmistress to ensure that any training needs of the staff have been identified and resourced.