

Principles

Thirk Community Primary School Handwriting Policy

"Handwriting is a tool that has to work. It must be comfortable, fast and legible."

Angela Webb, Chair, National Handwriting Association

Aims

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

- Develop a recognition and appreciation of pattern and line
- Learn the conventional ways of forming letter shapes, both lower case and capitals
- Understand the importance of clear presentation in order to communicate meaning
- Take pride in the presentation of work, developing handwriting with a sense of enjoyment and achievement
- Be supported in developing correct spelling quickly through a multi-sensory approach to handwriting
- Be able to write quickly to aid expressing themselves creatively and imaginatively across the curriculum and for a range of purposes
- Use their skills with confidence in real life situations
- Develop a fluent, comfortable, legible, joined handwriting style

Knowledge, Skills and Understanding

Knowledge, Skills and understanding will be developed in the order of the scope and sequence section of the Teacher's book in the Pen Pals Handwriting Scheme

In **Foundation Stage (pre-school and Year R)** the children are encouraged to:

- Develop gross motor control (See Appendix A)
- Develop fine motor control (See Appendix A)
- Use large equipment to make marks e.g. big chalks, large paint brushes, shaving foam, finger painting etc.
- Use a range of mark making tools such as pencils, pens and crayons, etc with confidence and enjoyment
- Develop a recognition of pattern
- Develop a language to talk about shapes and movements

When the children have developed appropriate gross and fine motor control, they will be gradually introduced to letter formation and encouraged to learn:

- how to write their first name, using a capital letter for the beginning and correct letter formation

During Foundation Stage 2 (Year R) the majority of children will:

- Learn letter formation alongside phonics using Pen Pal suggested formation
- Use a pencil, and hold it effectively to form recognisable letters, **most** of which are correctly formed.
- Receive instant feedback when errors in pencil grip or formation are seen.

Lines can be widely spaced (15mm). It may help children to leave a blank line between each line of writing initially to avoid ascenders and descenders overlapping. Formation practice will also occur without the restriction of lines, including the use of whiteboards, sand trays etc.

In Reception children will be taught letter formation in groups:

- Ladder letters: l,i,t,u,j,y.
- One-armed robot letters: r,b,n,h,m,k,p.
- Introducing capital letters for the one armed robot letters: R,B,N,H,M,K,P.
- Introduce capitals for long ladder letters: L,I,T,U,J,Y.
- Introduce curly caterpillar letters: c,a,d,o,s,g,q,e,f.
- Introduce zig-zag monster letters: z,v,w,x.
- Introduce capitals for curly caterpillar letters: C,A,D,O,S,G,Q,E,F.
- Introduce capitals for zig-zag monster letters: Z,V,W,X.
- Begin to explore joining ch, th and sh if ready.

By the end of Year One children are expected to:

- write most letters, correctly formed, some of which will be joined, using a comfortable and efficient pencil grip
- write with spaces between words accurately
- develop speed and stamina
- join long vowels/digraphs if appropriate

At Year Two the majority of children will:

- write legibly, using upper and lower-case letters appropriately and correct spacing within and between words
- form ascenders and descenders consistently and correctly
- practise writing at speed
- write most words in a joined style

At Year Three the majority of children will:

- have developed a regular joined handwriting style
- further develop writing speed and stamina
- produce writing which sits on the line

At Year Four the majority of children will write with:

- joined handwriting all of the time
- ascenders and descenders in the correct place and on the lines
- automaticity (i.e. not having to think about formation).

Year Five and Six the majority of children will write with:

- consistent size and letter spacing
- a cursive, legible, accurate style
- competency at a steady dictation speed
- once fluent with joined handwriting, children should be encouraged to write in a personal style
- the Year Five/Six teacher will give a suitable pen once they are satisfied that joining is fluent and neat

Teaching and Learning

At Thirsk Community Primary School we teach the Sassoon Cambridge Joiner font style using the Pen Pals Scheme. It has materials available in all year groups and for all abilities. We teach handwriting as a specific skill, little and often – at least 10 minutes 3 times a week is ideal with additional, independent practice. Handwriting and spelling are taught at the same time, one reinforcing the other

Basic structure of a handwriting session in KS1:

- relaxation (see Appendix B)
- posture check (good posture for writing is very important), feet flat on the floor, back touching the chair
- teacher modelling
- children practising independently with teacher model, then from memory.

Sessions should be fun, varied and multi-sensory: write letters in the air, on backs or on hands (first backs then palms); orally describe letter shapes and joins with children. We use a variety of writing materials including books, whiteboards, chalk, felt pens, crayons, plasticine, shaving foam etc. The daily phonics session provides opportunities to correct handwriting errors and staff should be aware that it is appropriate to correct pencil grip, letter formation, letter joins etc at this time.

The Joining Style

“Joins between letters are only worthwhile if they increase the speed, rhythm and ease of writing without reducing legibility”

See the Scope and Sequence section of the Teacher book for the Pen Pals Scheme (copy attached to policy)

Inclusion

The vast majority of pupils are able to write legibly and fluently. Teachers of children whose handwriting is limited by problems with fine motor skills should liaise with the SENCO to develop a programme designed for the individual child. This may involve extra handwriting sessions and access to extra resources. Other areas that could be considered are posture, lighting, angle of table etc. Outside agencies can be contacted where appropriate.

Left handed pupils

Teachers should be 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 – avoiding elbows knocking
- left handed pupils should be encouraged to bring their hands down and round so a hooked, claw like style doesn't develop
- extra practice with left-to-right exercises may well be necessary before pupils write left-to-right automatically.
- letters which have a cross-stroke such as T, t and f will be formed slightly differently by left handers, where the cross is formed right to left rather than left to right.

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

The contribution of handwriting to other aspects of the curriculum

Teachers discuss handwriting and presentation in all subjects and aim to model good handwriting themselves. Teachers are **explicit** about different types of handwriting for example, personal note-taking or best handwriting for presentation.

Teachers give handwriting a high priority in classroom displays. The use of rubbers is allowed. However longer errors are indicated by marking through with one neat horizontal line.

Teachers in KS2 aim to make handwriting lessons relevant to the curriculum, by providing a purpose to the work where possible, encouraging the children to view handwriting as part of an overall presentation policy.

Assessment and recording

Teachers assess handwriting when assessing writing, using the National Curriculum criteria (See Appendix C) and determine future targets for improvement. Teachers aim to ensure that when marking written work, comments about neatness are kept in proportion in relation to those about content and/or meaning.

Equal Opportunities

We ensure that each individual child receives an equal learning experience regardless of ability, culture and gender.

We are committed to equal opportunities for all irrespective of race, gender, sexuality, disability or religion. We will monitor the impact of this policy to ensure that no group is adversely affected.

Review

The policy will be reviewed every three years by the Curriculum Committee.

Signed by: Chair of Curriculum Committee:

Date: Date for review:

Activities and exercises to develop Motor Control

Gross Motor Control is the term used to describe the development of controlled movements of the whole body, or limbs such as the legs or arms. Of particular importance in relation to handwriting is the development of good posture and balance. Activities such as:

- Dancing and skipping
- Running and jumping to music
- Use of small apparatus e.g. throwing, rolling, catching, kicking and bouncing balls
- Cycling
- Building with large-scale construction kits
- Hammering
- Consolidate vocabulary of movement by talking about movements such as: *going round and round, making curves, springing up and sliding down, making long, slow movements or quick, jumpy movements*
- Make large movements in the air with arms, hands and shoulders with dance ribbons, use music
- Rolling hoops
- Running with hoops
- Chalking
- Painting on a large scale
- Interactive Whiteboard

Fine Motor Control is the term used to describe smaller movements, usually of the hand and fingers (or of the feet and toes).

Activities and exercises to develop Fine Motor Control:

- Folding paper
- Cutting out shapes from paper and card
- Fitting things into frames like geometric shapes
- Model making
- Building and stacking bricks
- Screw toys and wood working tools
- Pegboards
- Modelling with malleable materials like Playdoh, plasticene and clay
- Drawing in sand and sand and water play in general, including sieving, pouring and picking up toys using tools e.g. fishing rods and cranes
- Sewing and weaving
- Peeling fruit
- Develop the pincer movement by using tweezers to pick up sequins, beads and feathers, sprinkling glitter, sand and salt
- Scribbling and drawing with chalk, dry wipe pens, felt tip pens and paints on small, large boards and easels and on small and large paper
- Playing with tactile and magnetic letters
- Puzzles
- Games and miming involving finger and wrist movement e.g. finger puppets
- Use increasingly finer tools to make patterns of lines
- Tracing
- Colouring within guidelines and pictures
- Pattern work

- Using glue spreaders in small pots
- Painting with the tips of fingers
- Threading
- Separating beads into colours.

Hand gym/miming activities to relax fingers and hands before Writing

- Washing
- Wringing, rubbing, shaking and folding clothes
- Brushing hair
- Stroking a cat
- Playing a musical instrument
- Playing with snow, bubbles, feathers, balloons
- Picking up sweets to put in a dish or your mouth.

Later on:

- Sit in the writing position but with arms dangling limply. While in this position let the hands flutter loosely
- Let the forearms lay limply on the table in the correct writing position. Raise and lower the elbows several times
- Place elbows on the table with the forearms held upright. Let the hands flap loosely backwards and forwards
- Clench and unclench the fists
- Drum lightly with fingers on the table
- Circle the hands, inwards, then outwards
- Hold the pen in the tripod grip lightly. With the forefinger tap the pencil lightly.

Handwriting Level Descriptors

Level 1

- most letters correctly formed and orientated
- spaces between words
- upper and lower case sometimes distinguished

Level 2

- letters generally correctly shaped but inconsistencies in orientation, size and use of upper/lower case letters
- clear letter formation, with ascenders and descenders distinguished
- generally upper and lower case letters not mixed within words

Level 3

- legible style, shows accurate and consistent letter formation, sometimes joined

Level 4

- Handwriting style is fluent, joined and legible.

Level 5

- Handwriting is joined, clear and fluent and, where appropriate, is adapted to a range of tasks.