

The Teaching of
HANDWRITING
at
OXLEY PARK ACADEMY



INTRODUCTION

At Oxley Park Academy we believe that, whilst 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. To realise this aim, the basic script and its development to joined handwriting is described in this booklet and should be taught in all year groups throughout the Academy.

The purpose of using the same system throughout the school is to produce continuity and consistency in the teaching and learning of handwriting. As a school, we acknowledge and celebrate 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 in all classes. Mastery of the basic skills and the development of an efficient, individual style can only be achieved through competent teaching and regular practice. We therefore include daily handwriting instruction and practice as one of our 'immovables' across the Academy.

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 start from the top, except lower case 'd' and 'e' which start in the middle
 - Forming all letters correctly
 - Knowing the size and orientation of letters.

BASIC SCRIPT

The lower case letters of basic script are shown below:

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

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 also 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 taught at Oxley Park Academy represents a progression from basic script, providing for increased fluency and speed by joining some, but not all, letters. It has the same letter shape as the basic script and has no unnecessary features such as loops. There are two basic joins – horizontal and diagonal.

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

b g j p q x y z s

Examples of joining with break letters are given in Appendix 1.

CAPITAL LETTERS

Capital letters for both basic and cursive script are shown below:

A B C D E F G H I J K L M
N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

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

At Oxley Park Academy 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 (highlighter)
- Under teacher's writing (directly under words – write in large letters, leave large spaces between words)
- Copying patterns
- Practicing patterns in words
- Independence

Teaching letter formation

- Model good handwriting all the time
- Demonstrate
- Talk through the process using the THRASS handwriting pattern
- Encourage children to verbalise the process using the THRASS handwriting pattern
- 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
- Overwrite using the THRASS overwrite chart
- Write over highlighter pen (or dotted letters)

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 in Y6) with a rounded nib. Pencils should be reasonably sharp.
- A tripod grip is the most efficient way of holding a pencil

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 left hand side of a left handed child as their elbows will collide!

Assessment

Phase leaders in team meetings and senior leaders should monitor children's writing and presentation in books regularly (at least termly). 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 Level Descriptors in 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.

ORDER OF TEACHING

Year R and Year 1 – Single letters

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

Supporting activities

- finger tracing patterns
- finger tracing letters
- tracing patterns
- tracing letters
- overwriting
- copying under

Year 2

1. Diagonal join – to letters without immediate ascender

un um ig id ed an ing ung

2. Diagonal join – to letters with immediate ascender

ch th it ll li lu ck ack at unk

3. Horizontal join – to letters without immediate ascender

or od pg re ve wo oon oom

4. Horizontal join – to letters with immediate ascender

wl vl of ff fl flo wh

5. Practise break letters

b g j p q x y z s

6. Practise capital letters

Year 3

Revision:

- Practise the break letters - b g j p q x y z s
- 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
 - o you oi
 - re oe fe
 - fu wu vu
 - ot ol ok
 - ai al ow ol

Year 4

- 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
- fte 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
- practice sentences with punctuation included

Years 5 and 6

- practice consistency and size of letters
- practice using a diagonal join
- practice leaving an equal space between letters
- practice joining to the letter 'y'
- practice using a horizontal join
- practice the size and height of letters
- practice joining from the letter 'i'
- practice joining to and from the letter 'v'
- practice consistency in forming and joining letters
- practice crossing double tt on completing the word
- practice joining to and from the letter 'e'
- practice joining to and from the letter 'w'
- practice joining to the letter 't'
- practice with punctuation
- practice with break letters
- practice joining to and from the letter 'm'
- practice ensuring the ascender on the letter 't' is the correct height
- practice spacing between words
- practice forming and joining the letter 'f'
- practice speed writing
- develop fluency (through dictation)

Appendix 1

Examples of joining with break letters