

Handwriting Policy St Mary's Writhlington

An effective handwriting policy is based on a style that is quick and easy to learn. It should be neat, legible and fast. Pupils should eventually develop the ability to produce letters without thinking. An automatic style releases the brain to concentrate on other ideas i.e. spelling, syntax, grammar, style and content. At St Mary's we teach the Cursive handwriting style from Reception onwards.

Initially, handwriting will be taught as part of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum, with emphasis not only on letter formation, but pencil grip and sitting position. This will then be taught in conjunction with the Phonics lessons in Reception. Then, as handwriting links more and more with spelling and phonological development, it will feature more in the general literacy teaching in Key Stage 1. Practise, however, still requires an adult to observe and help children maintain accurate letter formation. The teacher, who walks around the class, continuously correcting pencil grips, sitting position, letter formation, size or placement, can stop bad habits forming before they happen. It's more desirable to have one good letter than a row of poorly formed ones with the emphasis on quality rather than quantity.

Cursive handwriting teaches pupils to join letters in words as a series of continuous flowing movements or patterns. Words can be written without taking the pencil off the page. Continuous style provides a directional left, right movement. This flowing, rhythmical movement aids speed and fluency particularly when practised from Foundation level with the final product being neat and fast.

This cursive style also lessens the chance of reversing letters by eliminating the need to lift the pencil between letters. The spaces between words become distinct and distinction between upper and lower case is clearer.

Pupils with specific learning disabilities find continuous cursive useful because the pencil stays on the page throughout every word, thus simplifying the movement. Children with motor problems learn a series of easy, rhythmical movements, which help to improve fine motor co-ordination.

In addition, the motor memory of the child's hand and fingers helps him to spell, as each word becomes one movement rather than many. Ideas, images and descriptions can flow more swiftly if fewer decisions need to be made about where each letter starts and how letters are formed.

Children are introduced to the joined hand at the earliest stages. Therefore the pupil avoids learning two different styles of writing.

Pre-writing Stage

In the early stages of handwriting development, children are introduced to activities to establish fine motor skills. Patterning, drawing and colouring helps establish the feeling of continuous flow and teaches the hands the most frequently used movements. Multi-sensory experiences ensure that the techniques are not only fun to learn, but that the skill is learnt effectively by pupils with a variety of learning styles.

Suggestions:

- Create patterns using a variety of tools e.g. felt tips, paint, chalk, glitter pens.
- Go outside and use playground chalks, large brushes and water from squeeze bottles to create patterns on the ground.
- Introduce finger painting, painting over pre-drawn spirals and wavy lines.
- Use a variety of surfaces e.g. white boards, black boards, different coloured paper on a horizontal or vertical surface,
- Stimulate touch by using different materials such as textured boards made of velour, carpet, sandpaper.
- Use trays containing sand, salt, shaving foam to practise patterns.
- Encourage motor memory by using blindfolds, tracing in the air or on other children's backs and using 'magic wands' to assist letter formation.
- Verbalise the movements with the children to encourage auditory and kinaesthetic links in memory.
- Encourage the children to produce big patterns. Large movements relax the hand and arm muscles and release a tense, tight grip. Trace large patterns on the floor in P.E. using hands and feet.
- Develop physical strength and co-ordination by teaching finger rhymes and games. Introduce play-dough activities involving pulling, shaping and squeezing. Also: Occupational Therapy Resources, such as the 'Teach Handwriting' programme, 'Disco Dough' and 'Finger Gym.'
- Develop confident pencil control through fun activities such as dot to dot, tracing, drawing through mazes, drawing pictures and colouring.

	Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
Reception	<p>To understand how to represent writing on a page. To sit correctly at a table and hold a pencil comfortably and correctly.* To begin to form all lower case letters in the correct direction; starting and finishing in the correct place.</p>					
<p>* Research shows pencil grip is very hard to correct beyond the age of 6. Therefore priority will be given to pencil grip and writing position during Reception and Year 1. ** NC guidance (non-statutory): Pupils should revise correct letter formation across all year groups frequently. They should be taught to write using cursive script as soon as they can form letters securely with correct orientation.</p>						
Year 1	<p>To make sure the children sit comfortably when writing and hold a pencil correctly and comfortably* To form all letters correctly; starting and finishing in the correct place and recognising which letters belong to the same family when practising. To join letters together to write words.** To form capital letters correctly. To form digits 0-9 correctly.</p>					
Year 2	<p>To form lower case letters correctly, maintaining a consistent size with tall/low letters sized relative to one another. To join writing using appropriate diagonal and horizontal strokes and knowing which letters are best left unjoined. To write capital letters and digits using correct size, orientation and formation. To use regular sized spaces between words which reflects the size of the letters and to keep handwriting neat.</p>					

