

Beaconsfield Primary School

'Shining a Light on Learning'



B - Belief
P - Perseverance
S - Success

Handwriting Policy

September 2019

Review date:

September 2022

Aims and Objectives

- To enable each child to write legibly, fluently and at a reasonable speed.
- To encourage children to take pride in the presentation of their work.
- To ensure a consistent approach to handwriting and presentation throughout the school.
- To adopt a common approach towards handwriting by all adults when writing in children's books, on the whiteboard, on displays and resources.

As a school we have chosen to use the Nelson Handwriting Scheme as this provides a clearly structured programme with full coverage of the technical aspects of writing (including letter formation, basic joins, printing, speedwriting and slant). These skills are taught in meaningful and curriculum-relevant contexts, particularly in the areas of phonics, spelling, punctuation, and vocabulary.

Progression of Skills

Nursery

Children are supported to develop their gross motor and fine motor skills through a range of play and mark-making activities. As children begin to develop control and coordination, their marks begin to take shape and include patterns. Children are encouraged to participate in fine motor activities daily to develop correct pencil grip.

Reception

Writing skills are encouraged through physical play, mark making and eventually using phonic knowledge to write words. Fine motor skills are developed further to support correct pencil grip. Children use Nelson Handwriting workbooks in small groups to practice motor skills before moving on to early letter formation.

Year 1

Children continue to learn how to sit correctly at a table and hold a pencil comfortably and correctly. They form lower case letters in the correct direction, starting and finishing in the right place. Pupils form capital letters and digits 0-9 and are taught which letters belong to which handwriting 'families' (i.e. letters that are formed in similar ways).

Year 2

In Year 2 children begin to use joined handwriting. Children are taught to form lower case letters of the correct size relative to one another and ensure that capital letters and digits are the correct size relative to lower case letters. They also learn to use spacing between words which reflects the size of the letters.

Years 3 and 4

In Years 3 and 4 children learn to use the diagonal and horizontal strokes that are needed to join letters and understand which letters, when adjacent to one another, are best left unjoined. They increase the legibility, consistency and quality of their handwriting (for example, by ensuring that the downstrokes of letters are parallel and equidistant, and that lines of writing are spaced sufficiently so that the ascenders and descenders of letters do not touch).

Years 5 and 6

By Years 5 and 6, children should be using joined handwriting consistently in all their work and be able to write with increasing speed. They are also taught to choose the writing implement and style which is best suited for the task.

Teaching and Learning

As handwriting is a movement skill, demonstration by a competent adult is essential. **All adults are expected to model the correct handwriting style at all times in accordance with this policy and to use the same language of letter formation to ensure consistency throughout the school** (see Appendix 1: Reference Guide and Appendix 2: The Language of Letter Formation).

Nelson Handwriting groups the letters into sets based on **handwriting families**. These are letters that are formed in similar ways.

- Set 1: c a o d g q s f e
- Set 2: i l t u j y
- Set 3: r n m h k b p
- Set 4: v w x z

The **joining groups** divide the letters according to how they will join to other letters:

- Group 1: a c d e h i k l m n s t u (13 letters with exit flicks plus s).
- Group 2: a c d e g i j m n o p q r s u v w x y (19 letters which start at the top of the x-height).
- Group 3: b f h k l t (6 letters which start at the top of the ascender).
- Group 4: f o r v w (5 letters which finish at the top of the x-height).
- Break letters are the 8 letters after which no join is made. Joins are not made to or from the letter z: b g j p q x y z. Capital letters and numerals are never joined.

Four different **types of joins** are taught:

- The first join: Group 1 to 2 (diagonal joins to letters without ascenders)
- The second join: Group 1 to 3 (diagonal joins to letters with ascenders)
- The third join: Group 4 to 2 (horizontal joins to letters without ascenders)
- The fourth join: Group 4 to 3 (horizontal joins to letters with ascenders)

Handwriting Lessons

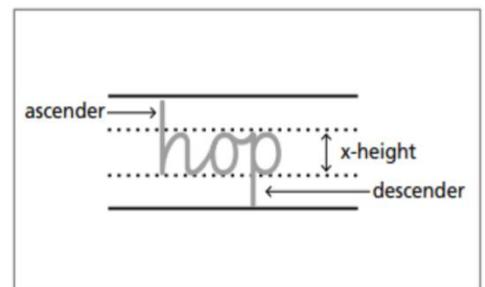
Teachers are expected to deliver **one dedicated thirty-minute handwriting lesson every week**. In Reception (and during the transition into Year 1), it is more appropriate to deliver handwriting lessons to small groups of children with similar levels of readiness and motor control.

Handwriting lessons will usually be structured as set out below:

1. Warm up activities to develop motor skills and prepare children to write (a range of ideas and videos to support teachers with this can be found on the Nelson Handwriting online resource).
2. Children should be reminded of the 'Getting Ready to Write' guidelines (posture, pencil/pen grip and angle of paper) and the 'Handwriting Checklist' (*see Appendix 3*).
3. The teacher should introduce and model the key objective for the session. Children will often be invited to practice this using their 'magic finger'.
4. Children will use the textbooks (workbooks in Reception) to practice the key objective. These textbooks contain activities with different levels of challenge. All children should complete the 'Focus' activity, most children will complete the 'Extra' activity and some more able children will also complete the 'Extension' activity within the session.
5. Teachers and support staff should observe children carefully and be ready to intervene with support and encouragement throughout the lesson.

Vocabulary

There are some technical terms which are extremely useful in discussion about handwriting. Teachers should ensure that children have a clear understanding of their meaning (at an age appropriate level) and refer to them throughout handwriting lessons. These terms include: **clockwise**, **anticlockwise**, **vertical**, **horizontal**, **diagonal**, **parallel**, **ascender**, **descender**, **consonant**, **vowel**, **joined**, **slanted**, **x-height**.



Planning

Teacher guides (including detailed lesson plans), textbooks (workbooks in Reception), support, extension and assessment activities are available in each year group to provide guidance for teachers and teaching assistants. There is also a wealth of materials contained in the online Nelson Handwriting resource which provide support with planning, teaching and assessing handwriting effectively. The Nelson Handwriting software also allows teachers and support staff to create printed resources in accordance with the handwriting policy.

Handwriting books

Pupils in Reception use Nelson workbooks during handwriting lessons.

Handwriting books are used from Year 1 to Year 4. From Year 2 onwards children are expected to include the long date (e.g. Monday 1st September) at the start of their work using the handwriting guidelines on the page as this will provide a useful opportunity to apply their handwriting skills.

Children in Years 5 and 6 will complete the activities in their English books as this will encourage them to apply what they are learning in handwriting lessons to other areas of the curriculum. They should include the long date and learning objective at the start of their work as per the presentation guidelines.

Writing Implements

Children in EYFS and Key Stage One should use a pencil to write. In the early stages a soft pencil with a thick stem may be most appropriate. Too thin a pencil, offered too soon, may result in a tight grip. The standard pencil should be introduced as a child's motor skills begin to improve.

From Year 3 onwards, children should work towards achieving their 'Pen Licence'. Once they are able to demonstrate they are using neat and consistently joined handwriting then they are given a handwriting pen to use and their 'Pen Licence' certificate can be awarded in Key Stage Two assemblies (*see Appendix 7*). If their handwriting or the standard of presentation of their work deteriorates, then this licence should be 'revoked'.

Teachers and support staff should ensure the handwriting pen is working well as damaged nibs can make it very difficult for the child to write comfortably.

Children are not permitted to use writing implements other than pencils or handwriting pens with the exception of homework.

Presentation of Work

A set of guidelines for the presentation of work form an integral part of our feedback policy (*see Appendix 4: We take pride in our work - Year 1 version and Appendix 5: We take pride in our work - Year 2 - 6 version*). These rules encourage children to take pride in their work and also reinforce the key handwriting skills. These guidelines must be displayed in every classroom.

The Classroom Environment

The classroom environment is key in promoting the correct handwriting style and should be seen as an integral part of teaching and learning. As mentioned above, it is imperative that all adults model the correct handwriting style at all times both in written feedback in books and in the classroom environment (on whiteboards, working walls etc.).

Other expectations for the classroom environment include:

- The handwriting posters demonstrating correct letter formation should be displayed in the classroom (*see Appendix 6: Handwriting poster for classrooms*).
- At least one display within the classroom should include some handwritten labels.
- The Nelson Handwriting software allows teachers and support staff to prepare resources, activity sheets, display labels etc. using the correct handwriting style. This should be used whenever possible.
- The Nelson Handwriting software does not work in Microsoft Publisher and therefore when larger text is required for displays then the Comic Sans font should be used (this is the closest in style to the handwriting policy).

Assessment

Handwriting books must be marked in accordance with the feedback policy. Immediate (often verbal) feedback within the lesson is likely to have the most impact on progress. Pupil books from across the curriculum also provide valuable opportunities for feedback relating to handwriting objectives. Any incidents of poor effort with handwriting or messy presentation should always be addressed by the teacher in accordance with the feedback policy.

In the early stages of learning to write, the process is more important than the product. Irregular letter forms starting in the correct place with movement in the correct direction are to be preferred to uniformly regular letters achieved through wrong movements.

Every effort should be made to prevent significant faults becoming ingrained habits that will be difficult to break.

Common faults include:

- faulty pencil/pen grip
- incorrect letter formation
- reversals and inversions
- poor posture and paper positioning

Criteria relating to handwriting form part of the Writing Assessment Criteria which are used to track children's progress each term. Handwriting targets may form part of pupils' termly mentoring meetings when appropriate.

Left Handers

Teachers need to be aware of left-handers in the classroom as they do have different needs. 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.

The left-handed, like the right-handed child, needs to be shown as early as possible how to hold a writing implement correctly. The video available on the online teaching software shows

this clearly. There is also a photocopiable version of the Pupil Book flap in each of the Resources and Assessment books which can be copied and used with left-handed children. If possible, the teacher will demonstrate how to hold a pen and how to form and join letters with their left hand.

The hand should be kept below the writing line. This enables the children to see what they are writing and encourages correct pen hold.

The grip the left-hander uses means the pencil is pushed as the child writes, whereas the right-hander pulls their pencil across the page as they write. It is important therefore that the left-hander's pencil is not too sharp so that it will run smoothly across the page.

The left-hander often crosses the 'f' and 't' from right to left. Many left-handers therefore will find it easier to leave the 'f' unjoined.

The left-hander will find it easier if the paper is tilted slightly to the right, at about 8°. The higher the angle the harder it is for most children to write efficiently. The right hand is used to steady the paper, above the writing line.

Bad habits are easily learnt and many left-handers adopt a hooked pencil hold which can result in a tired grip and affect the quality of their writing. When they begin to use a pen their hand can easily smudge the ink as they write. If a child already has a 'hooked' pencil hold, teachers should not force them to change as it is very difficult to alter the way a child has learnt to hold a pencil and confidence can easily be destroyed. Adults should encourage them instead to angle their paper 8° to the left, i.e. the same angle used for a right-handed child.

Children who require additional support

Some children find will inevitably find handwriting more difficult and will require additional support. Identifying problems early is very important (e.g. pencil grip, letter formation) as this can prevent children from developing bad habits which can quickly become ingrained.

Some pupils may need additional activities to help them develop their fine motor skills. If appropriate, we can also refer them to our Occupational Therapist. Teachers should discuss any concerns with the SENCo.

Handwriting interventions take place to provide additional support where required. These sessions will follow a similar structure to whole class lessons. 'Preteaching' of the objectives to be taught that week in handwriting lessons will be used whenever possible (using the 'Focus' activities) as this will enable children to take part in whole class lessons more effectively.

Whilst handwriting is important, teachers and support staff must take care that a child who finds handwriting challenging does not lose confidence in their writing ability. Support and

encouragement to improve handwriting skills should be balanced appropriately with developing the skills the child needs to become an effective writer.

Monitoring

The English Leader will monitor standards of handwriting across the school through book scrutiny and learning walks and provide support and training as appropriate. Whilst monitoring the standards of handwriting across the school is predominately the responsibility of the English leader, all subject co-ordinators are encouraged to play a role in promoting good handwriting when monitoring work from across the curriculum.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Reference Guide

Appendix 2: The language of letter formation

Appendix 3: 'Getting ready to write' and the 'Handwriting checklist'

Appendix 4: We take pride in our work (Year 1 version)

Appendix 5: We take pride in our work (Year 2 - 6 version)

Appendix 6: Handwriting poster for classrooms

Appendix 7: Pen Licence Certificate