

Weston Turville CE School

Mission Statement – TO PURSUE WISDOM WITHIN A CHRISTIAN ETHOS

Handwriting Policy

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Policy produced by	L. Butcher
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Introduction

At Weston Turville School, we believe that handwriting is a skill which needs to be taught explicitly. It is a movement skill which affects all areas of written communication for all children. We therefore feel that these writing movements need to be practised correctly and regularly so as to avoid ineffective handwriting styles that will be harder to correct as the child becomes older.

In this school, we teach a cursive handwriting style through the Nelson Handwriting Scheme as we believe that this style will establish a systematic and consistence in style of writing throughout the school. This policy should be read in conjunction with the school's English policy and Presentation policy.

Cursive handwriting allows children to:

- minimise confusion for the child as every letter leads out with an exit stroke
- write with a fluid motion as letters naturally flow into each other
- form spacing between words as the child develops whole word awareness through the scheme
- develop a child's visual memory
- develop their writing skills regardless of academic ability
- develop skills of punctuation and grammar which are included within the progression of the handwriting scheme

Aims

We aim to provide effective handwriting lessons and activities so as:

- to provide equal opportunities for all pupils to achieve success in handwriting
- to produce clear, concise, legible handwriting
- to develop accuracy, fluency and speed as the children progress through the scheme
- to present work neatly and appropriately to a variety of audiences
- to promote confidence and self-esteem in writing
- to support the teaching and learning of spellings
- to encourage children to take pride in their work
- to build in cross curricular links to broaden experience
- to help children recognise that handwriting as a life-long skill and will be a fundamental element of all forms of written communication throughout their lives
- to display neatly presented work around the school as a model of excellence

Organisation and Planning

The new 2014 National Curriculum for English has a specific focus on handwriting and presentation for each year group. They are as follows:

Year 1

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.

Year 2

Pupils should be taught to:

- form 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 unjoined
- 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.

Years 3 and 4

Pupils should be taught 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
- increase the legibility, consistency and quality of their handwriting [for example, by ensuring that the downstrokes of letters are parallel and equidistant; that lines of writing are spaced sufficiently so that the ascenders and descenders of letters do not touch].

Years 5 and 6

Pupils should be taught to:

- write legibly, fluently and with increasing speed by:
- choosing which shape of a letter to use when given choices and deciding whether or not to join specific letters
- choosing the writing implement that is best suited for a task.

In order to achieve these expected outcomes, all classes are timetabled to carry out at least 20 minutes of focused handwriting per week. This is evident in all class timetables. Classes usually carry out further handwriting tasks and activities in conjunction with their weekly spelling practice. In EYFS this will be evident in their Letters and Sounds work which takes place every day for 20 minutes. In Years 3 and 4, elements of the Letters and Sounds work may be continued depending on the children's abilities. In Years 5 and 6, spellings often focus on vocabulary expansion or words which relate to cross curricular topics. In Key Stage 2, spelling practice takes place for at least 20 minutes per week.

As explained in the writing section of the English policy 2015, extended writing tasks are carried out on a regular basis throughout the year, which allows for the practice and development of handwriting skills.

Each class has the teacher and pupil books of the Nelson Handwriting Scheme relevant to their age group. The books are distributed as follows:

- Foundation Stage – Workbooks 1-4
- Year 1 –Workbooks 5-6, Skills Book Red Level

- Year 2 – Skills Book Red and Yellow Level and Handwriting Book A
- Year 3 – Handwriting Book 1
- Year 4 – Handwriting Book 2
- Year 5 – Handwriting Book 3
- Year 6 – Handwriting Book 4

Children throughout the school with special needs may be given tasks and activities from earlier books where necessary so that all children develop at their own pace. They also take part in extra sessions which focus on developing gross and fine motor control through specific activities including Rainbow Road activities. Increased time is also spent on handwriting for these children in smaller adult led groups. This will be specified in children's Individual Education Plans.

Teaching and Learning Styles

Teachers will model the correct handwriting formation and skills needed for the children throughout the school, during all lessons and in all written feedback to the children.

The Foundation Stage

The early learning goals for Communication, Language and Literacy underpin all handwriting work. Foundation stage children work according to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Framework using the Foundation Stage Curriculum. Their curriculum encourages the children to develop essential pre-writing skills which form the foundations of the handwriting lessons in Key Stages 1 and 2. This achieved by:

- The teacher and support assistants modelling different writing processes regularly
- Learning the letters of the alphabet and numbers 1-20.
- Making patterns and letter shapes in the air, on each others' backs, in shaving foam/ wet sand/ paint etc
- Linking letter sounds with their shape e.g. s = slippery snake, and encouraging children to write individual letters/ words when they are ready via their Letters and Sounds work
- Developing motor control and finger strength through a variety of activities to include (for fine motor control) daily dough disco and funky finger sessions, modelling with salt dough / plasticine, using clothes pegs and rubber bands etc, (for gross motor control) rolling balls/ hoops etc, skipping, using circus ribbons

Reception children are encouraged to 'mark make' with a variety of equipment, but when more formal writing is taught later in the year, they are encouraged to write with sharp, thick pencils on blank paper without lines. They are taught from the onset that the lower case letter f has a descender and the letter k has a loop so as to correspond with the Nelson scheme in preparation for Year 1.

Key Stage 1

The skills taught in Reception are continued throughout Key Stage 1. The following skills are also introduced from the Nelson Handwriting Scheme:

Year 1

- How to create the conditions for good writing: atmosphere, seating and posture, and pencil and pen grip.
- Formation of lower case and upper case letters.
- Formation of the numerals 0-9.
- Formation of the letters with exit flicks plus s.
- Formation of letters which start at the top of the x-height.
- Formation of letters which start at the top of the ascender.
- Formation of letters which finish at the top of the x-height.
- Formation of letters after which no joins are made. No joins are made to or from the letter z.
- Introduction and formation to the joining of these letters in high frequency words.

(Appendix A – Nelson Handwriting Scheme Examples)

Year 2

- Revision of the previously-learned joins with an emphasis on relative height.
- Re-cap their learning of lower-case and capital letters and practise forming them with consistency.
- Continue to practise using print letters, and revision that some letters are best left unjoined when next to other letters.

Children carry out handwriting lessons in specific handwriting books with lines to show where various letters and numbers should be positioned in order to develop letters of consistent size and proportion. Key Stage 1 children write with a sharp pencil only. Thick and thin pencils are provided for children for comfort and support.

Key Stage 2

Years 3 and 4

- Continuous practice and development of their handwriting skills.
- Writing with a slant is introduced for the first time.
- Joining using diagonal and horizontal strokes as well as the 'break letters' that are best left unjoined.
- Spacing letters consistently.
- Keeping ascenders and descenders in proportion.

In Year 3, children begin to carry out handwriting practise on lined paper, still using a sharp pencil, but may still sometimes use specialist handwriting paper. In Year 4, children will begin to write using a Berol handwriting pen using blue ink only. The handwriting pen is preferred as it avoids smudging and leaks. By the end of Year 4, all children should be writing in pen unless specific children need to write with a pencil.

Years 5 and 6

- Continuous practice of the joins and the break letters, looking at consistency of sizing and spacing.
- Practising automaticity and speed.
- Understanding the difference between informal jottings and final presented versions.

By Years 5 and 6, handwriting lessons will be carried out on normal A4 lined paper so that the consistent and proportionate letter sizes and formations can be transferred to everyday paper and book work.

Grip and Posture

A comfortable pencil grip is taught in Foundation Stage and consistently applied throughout the school. This generally consists of thumb and forefinger gripping the pencil with the middle finger supporting it. Other writing grips may be applied for children who may struggle with this grip. Writing grip triangles may be attached to the pencil if children find this comfortable and an aid to their natural pencil grip. The focus is for a comfortable recognised grip which maintains legible handwriting. Correct writing posture is also encouraged to include both feet planted firmly on the ground and the chair tucked well under the table so as to support the body. Legs, body and arms should be at 90° angles to each other. The non-writing hand is encouraged to hold the paper still. Hair is encouraged to be tied back so that it does not inhibit hand-eye coordination. Teachers will often start handwriting lessons with exercises to loosen muscles, improve coordination and prepare them for writing.

Left-Handed Children

Left-handed children are seated to the left of a right-handed child so as to avoid clashing. Workbooks and spelling logs are altered accordingly so that the children can write clearly and see what they are writing. Their paper needs to be to the left side of the midpoint of their body and tilted about 30° clockwise so they can see what they are writing. To avoid smudging their work, children are encouraged to position their fingers about 1.5 centimetres from the end of the writing implement.

Assessment and Recording

When children are engaged in handwriting activities teachers and teaching assistants constantly observe the children and offer continuing support, identifying, intervening and addressing any misconceptions or bad habits.

Assessments include:

- Observation of the children and correction at the time of writing.
- Marking of presentation in English and cross-curricular books in line with the 2014 National Curriculum expectations.
- Individual discussions with children in order to review their handwriting and set new targets.

Formative assessments are continuous, enabling the teacher to plan and adapt appropriately. We recognise that effective marking and the inclusion of the assessment of handwriting within writing assessments and Big Write tasks are important features of ongoing formative assessment.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Development

We believe that school self-evaluation is a necessary prerequisite for school improvement and we place high importance on our monitoring and evaluation procedures. Teachers keep their own running records which are kept in line with the English and Assessment policies.

Examples of children's written work, showing progression through the year group expectations, are kept in the English Coordinator's 'Writing Expectations' folder.

The class teacher, head teacher and ECL team members monitor the approaches outlined in this document, in line with school policy. Monitoring includes:

- lesson observations
- work scrutiny to include presentation and handwriting (carried out once a term across the school).
- moderation of writing to include general class work, cross-curricular work and (carried out once a term across the school)

The ECL team must provide Governors with an annual report outlining how English in school is placed currently and their intentions over the year. If writing is the focus then this will be the school's assessment and monitoring priority.

Liaison schools collaboratively moderate examples of year group expected and exceeding work to maintain a consistent approach to assessment. Schools are also notified by County when formal Year 2 and 6 writing moderations are due to take place.

Progress is discussed twice a year at parents' evenings and a written report is provided annually at the end of the year in line with the National Curriculum statutory requirements. If children have specific problems or targets associated with handwriting, then these will be addressed at the parents' meetings.

In-service training and staff meeting time is provided for staff in order to inform them of any writing developments or changes, to discuss any queries or concerns, and to moderate written based work.

Appendix A – Nelson Handwriting Scheme Examples

The Letter forms

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

The Capital letters

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

The Numerals

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

The joining sets

Set 1

a c d e h i k l m
n s t u

Twelve letters with exit flicks plus s.

Set 2

a c d e g i j m n o
p q r s u v w x y

Nineteen letters which start at the top of the x-height.

Set 3

b f h k l t

Six letters which start at the top of the ascender.

Set 4

f o r v w

Five letters which finish at the top of the x-height.

The break letters

b g j p q x y z

Eight letters after which no join is made. Joins are not made to or from the letter z.

The joined up sentence

The quick brown fox
jumps over the lazy
dog.