



# St Helens Primary School

## Handwriting policy

### Handwriting in the classroom

The skill of handwriting needs to be taught. It is not a natural skill that will grow and develop like speaking or walking. Handwriting is a motor activity. A movement stored in the body rather than in the conscious memory. Our hands and fingers control the movements involved in handwriting. It is in our hands that the kinaesthetic memory lies. This controls the direction and shape of each letter.

Handwriting will be taught in a way that encourages neat, legible and fluid writing. 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, grammar, syntax, style and content.

At St Helens we believe effective teaching of handwriting can only be achieved through modelling. Teachers must demonstrate letter formation and joins regularly and children must practise by carefully copying and repeating. It is important to observe children writing to ensure they are forming letters correctly.

### Handwriting Principles

Handwriting will be taught explicitly, in short, frequent sessions. Teachers will be looking for consistency such as letter formation and size. Where possible, it will be linked to phonic and spelling patterns. This will help with handwriting and with the 'muscle memory' of spellings. When ready, pupils should be practising on the lines they are going to use in their writing books. High expectations of writing are needed during all lessons. Children may need to repeat work that is not satisfactory.

Teachers need to model good handwriting at all times, e.g. when writing on the whiteboard and when marking books.

### Teaching letter patterns

Teachers will introduce/refer to patterns for letter families to focus on features that recur in letter formation:

The focus will be on patterns which build on the four basic letter shapes:

- The 'c' set (c o a d g q e f s)
- The 'l' set (i l t j u y)
- The 'r' set (h n m r b p k)
- The 'z' set (v w x z)

## **Early Writing**

Children in EYFS and KS1 will be given the opportunity to practise writing movements/patterns as this will support the fluency of cursive handwriting, for example diagonal and horizontal lines, curls and circles. Teachers will include patterns that move across the body, from left to right. They will allow children to produce the movement across the entire line. This encourages fluency of movement and helps to emphasise the right to left direction of our writing system. In addition, learning a series of early rhythmical movements can help children with specific learning difficulties improve their fine motor coordination.

Advantages:

- The motor memory of the child's hand and fingers helps them to spell as each word becomes one movement and not many.
- Children can write at a faster pace.
- Lessens the chance of reversing letters
- Spaces between words become more obvious.
- Upper and lower-case letters are clearer.
- Each letter pattern links to a family of letters:

Teachers will talk about the movements they make when modelling the patterns. Children will be invited and encouraged to invent 'sounds' to make as they draw their patterns, for example a bouncing sound as they bounce up from the one-armed robot's feet, a buzzing sound as you draw anticlockwise spirals. This will help commit the writing movement to memory.

## **Handwriting in the EYFS**

Good handwriting relies on secure motor control and hand-eye coordination. Children in EYFS should learn handwriting through movement with the actual writing of letters as the ultimate aim.

At St Helens children are taught how to print letters, when and if appropriate to the individual child they may be taught how to join during the summer term.

The key movements underpinning letter formation should be introduced through large-scale movements, from the shoulder. In the earliest stages children should make the movements symmetrically using both arms. Once the movement is firmly established in kinaesthetic memory, it can be reduced in scale using activities such as sky-writing, using sticks in sand etc. and then reduced further in art activities using felt tip pens, crayons and chubby pencils.

The children will be provided with opportunities to secure their motor control and hand-eye coordination.:

- Physical control through large-scale movement such as outdoor play.

- Balancing, climbing, marching and moving to music.
- Manipulative skills such as using tools, cooking utensils and scissors.
- Fine motor control and hand-eye coordination, through activities such as jigsaws, threading, cutting and manipulating 'small world' equipment.

### **Progression**

Pupils in EYFS will be taught to:

- Engage in activities requiring hand-eye coordination.
- Use one-handed tools and equipment.
- Draw lines and circles using gross motor movement.
- Manipulate objects with increasing control.
- Begin to use anticlockwise movement and retrace vertical lines.
- Begin to form recognisable letters.
- Use a pencil and hold it effectively to form recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed.

**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
- Make links with phonics and spelling

**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 not joined
- 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.

**Year 3-4** 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 not joined.
- Increase the legibility, consistency and quality of their handwriting, e.g. by ensuring that the down strokes of letters are parallel and equidistant; that lines of writing are spaced sufficiently so that the ascenders and descenders of letters do not touch.

**Year 5-6** pupils should be taught to:

- Write legibly, fluently, with increasing speed and personal style by: Choosing which shape of a letter to use when given choices and deciding, as part of their personal style, whether or not to join specific letters.
- Choosing the writing implement that is best suited for a task (e.g. quick notes, letters).
- Joined up handwriting style