

Newdale Primary School: Policy for Handwriting

Updated October 2022; next review October 2024



Read, Write, Inc. Handwriting

There are regular timetabled slots for handwriting to ensure that children build up their handwriting skills every day. We make the physical process of writing - handwriting - enjoyable from the start, so children see themselves as 'writers'. We use mnemonics - memory pictures - to help children visualise the letter or join before they write it down.

Children need to practise handwriting under the guidance of a teacher so they do not develop habits that will be difficult to undo later. We don't ask children to copy letters or words. We need their attention to be focused on their own formation of letters and joins. We allow 5 to 10 minutes for every handwriting session marked on the timetable.

Three handwriting stages

Stage 1: These lessons are taught while children read the Red, Green, Purple, Pink and Orange Storybooks. The online 'checklists' for each letter are in the Handwriting files in Read Write Inc. Phonics Online.

Stage 1a: Children practise correct letter formation.

Stage 1b: Children learn where to place the letters on the writing line.

Stage 2: These lessons are taught while children read the Yellow, Blue and Grey Storybooks. The online 'checklists' for each letter are in the Handwriting files in Read Write Inc. Phonics Online. Children learn a mature style of writing that will lead to joined-up writing.

Stage 3: These lessons are also taught while children read the Yellow, Blue and Grey Storybooks. The online 'checklists' for each letter are in the Handwriting files in Read Write Inc. Phonics Online. Children learn the two basic joins: the arm join (diagonal) and the washing line join (horizontal) and the two variables for each join.

Handwriting position

We teach children that when you use the handwriting signal they automatically go into the perfect handwriting position:

- feet flat on the floor
- bottom at the back of the chair
- body one fist from the table
- shoulders down and relaxed

- back leaning forward slightly
- left/right hand holding the page
- left/right hand ready in a tripod grip

Teaching handwriting from EYFS to the end of RWI

- Children develop hand eye co-ordination, gross and fine motor skills to support handwriting.
- Children use a range of tools to develop drawing lines and circles using gross motor skills e.g. swirling ribbons, batting balls, painting.
- Children use a range of materials to develop fine motor skills e.g. wax crayons, markers, pencils, sponges, chunky brushes, cotton wool balls, shaving foam, finger paints, etc.
- Children practice manipulative skills e.g. cooking, playing with constructions, threading and playing instruments.
- Children use variety of tools and paper, indoors and outdoors for purposeful writing. e.g. role play, labelling, making cards.
- Children physically develop the movements of letter shapes using gross motor skills (linked to music and sounds) to gain confidence with the basic movements and flow of writing from the end of nursery and the very beginning of reception.
- Children are introduced to letters in line with their RWI Phonics stage of development. Teachers will further embed handwriting when they are carrying out the daily Phonics session and in class sessions.
- Children are taught how to correctly hold a pencil: using a tripod grasp and ensuring the first finger is around 2 cm away from the point. They may use triangular shaped pencils to support this initially and if required.
- Children are taught to form letters using an printed style.
- Children are taught how to form all letters correctly by the end of reception.
- Parents are given opportunities to support their child to practise their letter formation at home. Teachers send home materials to enable parents to do this.

Once children have mastered the basic joins in stage 3, we begin to transition into continuous cursive handwriting.

Continuous Cursive Handwriting

Aims and rationale behind this style

This handwriting style is recommended by the British Dyslexia Association, to ensure high levels of presentation; a simpler approach to forming joins; and a clearer distinction between capital and lower case letters.

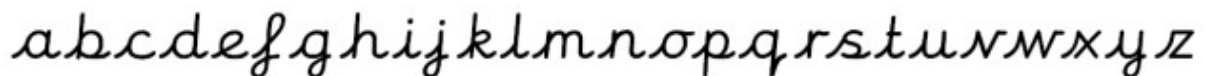
We want children to achieve a neat, legible style with correctly formed letters in cursive handwriting. Each letter begins in the same place on the line and flows from left to right. This reduces the likelihood of reversal mix-ups such as b/d and p/q.

A smooth flow improves speed and spelling; children develop fluency whilst writing, with a physical memory of how each letter is written. Eventually, the children are able to write the letters with confidence and correct orientation.

All adults to adopt correctly and neatly formed cursive handwriting when writing in children's books, on the interactive whiteboard or when shown on displays / other handwritten resources.

We provide regular opportunities for children to develop, practise and perfect their skills and provide targeted support for any child experiencing difficulty.

Our agreed cursive style is as below:



- All letters will join apart from the letter 'x'.
- Each lower-case letter begins on the line and loops into the main body.

High expectations from staff

We have high expectations; valuing work that is the child's best effort and supporting when it clearly is not.

We identify left-handed children and make sure they have sufficient space in which to work and that they are tilting their paper by slanting to the right. We ensure these children in particular maintain a good posture and straight hold of their pencil.

We encourage children to assume a correct sitting position in order to write - as set out above and model how to hold a pencil correctly. The hand that is not holding the pencil is holding the paper.

Children are provided with appropriate paper and pencils and/or pens (i.e. all pencils must be sharp and of a reasonable length).

Staff reinforce how to form letters, beginning each letter in the same place on the line, using a variety of strategies and materials and demonstrating a fluid motion.

We monitor children's progress through regular observations of how letters and numbers are formed in all subject areas and we implement intervention for those children not forming letters or numbers correctly.

Where necessary, support spotlight children and provide differentiated tasks to ensure progress for all such as allowing children with very poor fine motor skills to print if necessary.

Staff model good handwriting: on the board, in marking children's work, displays, use cursive handwriting font on teaching materials where possible etc.

High expectations from pupils

Our children are encouraged to take pride in their work, creating texts for different purposes and having the opportunity to write in different styles.

Pupils learn to write clearly recognisable letters and form them correctly from the Early Years, and know how to write each letter from the line and join letters neatly by the start of KS2 at the latest.

Children are encouraged to write with speed and fluency in order to develop a legible individual style (KS2) and can demonstrate correct letter formation and joins learnt in all handwriting across the curriculum (KS1 and KS2).

Teaching and Learning

Across the school there will be regularly taught handwriting sessions. In reception, these will be daily initially for the first term, then at least 3 x weekly (unless intervention required).

During handwriting sessions in all key stages, children will apply taught formations to letters, words or parts of text relevant to their current learning. For example, they may practise the letters from their current phonics focus, the letter strings used in their weekly spellings, key vocabulary related to core texts or use parts of text from guided reading or literacy.

Children will use a standard HB pencil, well sharpened and when the teacher deems a child ready, usually by the start of KS2, they will get a pen licence. (A pencil will be used in mathematics at all times.)

Every session will have a clear focus and work is to be initialled, so that over the course of a week, children have had their progress observed by an adult. Planning is provided for the RWI scheme and for cursive writing.

There is no expectation that formal written plans are available on the staff drive. Books will be used as evidence for the progression of handwriting.

Children are to be given a lined handwriting book from year 1, using the appropriate sized lines for their age, which continues throughout the school. In reception classes, children will use a book for both phonics and handwriting to record progress and link the two together.

It should be made very clear to children that a handwriting style is very different to a printed style of writing, but that cursive writing allows speed and fluency.

Other points

The school encourages the use of Comic Sans as it ensures that dyslexic learners can read text easily.

We also have photocopiable practise sheets from Collins which support teaching and learning and provide a model for teacher to determine how well children are progressing.

Not all display materials will be expected to appear in continuous cursive writing (children should be exposed to a wide range of fonts as in the real world). However, there must be a clear display to support handwriting in EYFS and KS1; it may be also appropriate to use table-top mats as further support.

IWB and Printed fonts

An easily recognisable plain, evenly spaced sans serif font ought to be used where possible when typing on IWBs and in printed materials (such as slips in books) to ensure that all children can read the type clearly. A sans serif font (such as Comic Sans, Arial, Verdana, Century Gothic etc.) is recommended by the British Dyslexic Association to facilitate ease of reading and cut down on visual stress.

Best practice for dyslexic readers has the advantage of making documents easier on the eye for everyone.

Printed font should be no smaller than 12 point.

It is also recommended that a white background should not be used, as it can be too dazzling. A cream or soft pastel is easier on the eye. Use dark-coloured text on light and avoid green and red/dark pink for colour-blind individuals.

Cursive writing should be limited to the actual handwritten word and not used on the IWB.

Equal opportunities and SEND

All children must have the opportunity and the encouragement to reach their full potential regardless of race, creed or sex. Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, where necessary, will be provided with specialist equipment such as pencil grips or wider ruled lined paper. Children will also have the opportunity to use iPads and other tools deemed appropriate to rehearse specific skills on a more regular basis. Intervention is available for children who experience significant difficulties to practice pre-writing skills and fine motor coordination.

Homework

Pencils should be used in homework books unless children have a pen licence and children are encouraged to use the cursive script in all written home learning.

Review:

Reviewed October 2022.

To be reviewed in October 2023 by senior leadership team, staff and governors.