

Elm Academy Handwriting Policy

“Handwriting is a tool that has to work. It must be comfortable, fast and legible.” Angela Webb, Chair, National Handwriting Association

Aims

As a school our aims in teaching handwriting are that the pupils will:

- Experience coherence and continuity in learning and teaching across the Nursery and School
- Develop a recognition and appreciation of pattern and line
- Understand the importance of clear and neat presentation in order to communicate meaning clearly
- Take pride in the presentation of their work and therefore study handwriting with a sense of enjoyment and achievement.
- Be supported in developing correct spelling quickly through a multi-sensory approach to handwriting
- Be able to write quickly to aid expressing themselves creatively and imaginatively across the curriculum and for a range of purposes.
- Use their skills with confidence in real life situations.
- Develop a fluent, joined handwriting style during Year Two which will progress through KS2.

Knowledge, Skills and Understanding

During and at the end of the Foundation Stage:

Use a pencil, and hold it effectively to form recognisable letters [with ‘kicks’/‘flicks’], **most** of which are correctly formed

At Year One:

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

At Year Two:

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

At year 3 and 4:

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
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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].

At year 5 and 6:

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

Handwriting is part of English, a National Curriculum core subject.

Teaching and Learning

We teach handwriting as a specific skill rather than as an independent task (which can often reinforce poor formation having a reverse effect than the intended outcome). Little and often is the most successful way – at least 10 minutes 3 times a week is ideal with additional, independent practise.

Basic structure of a handwriting session:

-relaxation, see Appendix B

-Posture check, feet flat on the floor, back touching the chair (page 160 **Developing Early Writing**)

-Teacher modelling

-Children practising independently with teacher model, then from memory

Sessions should be fun, varied and multi-sensory: write letters in the air (sky writing pg 156 **Developing Early Writing**), on backs or on hands, backs then palms if they can bare it!; orally describe letter shapes and joins with children 'the patter';

Books can be used and whiteboards and pens are ideal as mistakes can be wiped away leaving no record of poor performance.

In **Nursery** the children are encouraged to:

- Develop gross motor control
- Develop fine motor control
- Use a range of mark making tools such as pencils, pens and crayons, with confidence and enjoyment
- Develop a recognition of pattern
- Develop a language to talk about shapes and movements
- The main handwriting movements involved in the three basic letter shapes; l, c, and r
- Make marks on their planning cards of the appropriate colour
- Develop letter-like shapes on their planning cards e.g. 's' for sand
- Produce letter-like shapes on planning cards for the appropriate session
- Their first name, using a Capital letter for the beginning and correct letter formation
- Mark making in line with Development Matters statements

In **Reception and Year 1**, the children continue to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding from Nursery in addition to:

- Learning letter formation alongside phonics using an adaptation of the Jolly Phonics scheme

Learn letter formation using 'shape families:

1. **Long Ladders (down and off in another direction) – i, l, t/j, y, u**
2. **One armed robots (down and retrace upwards) – r, n, m/ h, b, k/p**
3. **Curly Caterpillars (anti-clockwise round)– c, o, a, g, q, d/ s**
4. **Zig Zag letters – v, w/ x / z**
5. **Tricky letters – e / f although follow a similar pattern to the curly caterpillars**

The hardest letters for the children to learn are p, z, e, s, x, f

At the end of Year One or the beginning of Year Two, the majority of the children should be introduced to joins. Lined handwriting books are provided to help children to form ascenders and descenders accurately.

The Joining Style

“Joins between letters are only worthwhile if they increase the speed, rhythm and ease of writing *without* reducing legibility”

The 4 basic joins:

1. Diagonal joins to letters without ascenders e.g. *in*
2. Diagonal joins to letters with ascenders e.g. *it*
3. Horizontal joins to letters without ascenders e.g. *on* (w, v, r, o)
4. Horizontal joins to letters with ascenders e.g. *oh* (w, v, r, o)

Handwriting progression

No lead-ins progressing to fully cursive as soon as possible but ideally by Year 3;

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

<http://www.cursivewriting.org/joined-up-handwriting.html>

Teachers discuss handwriting and presentation in all subjects and aim to model good handwriting themselves. Teachers are explicit about different types of handwriting for example, personal note-taking or best handwriting for presentation, but remember not all the children will be able to achieve this in Key Stage one. Teachers give handwriting a high priority in classroom displays. The use of rubbers is discouraged. Mistakes are indicated by marking through with one neat horizontal line.

All members of staff (including teaching assistants, supply teachers, and students) are provided with appropriate handwriting models and are expected to promote the agreed handwriting style by their own example.

Inclusion

The vast majority of pupils are able to write legibly and fluently however some pupils need more support and provision will be made for this within Individual Education Plans [I.E.P.s], alongside other targets. There will be no specific target for handwriting, however where there are difficulties, interventions will be put in place to support children. Teachers of children whose handwriting is limited by problems with fine motor skills should liaise with the SENco/Julie Collins to develop a programme designed for the individual child. This may involve extra handwriting sessions and access to extra resources. Other areas that could be considered are posture, lighting, angle of table etc. Outside agencies can be contacted where appropriate.

All teachers are aware of the specific needs of **left-handed pupils** and make appropriate provision:

- paper should be positioned to the left for right handed pupils and to the right for left handed pupils and slanted to suit the individual in either case;
- pencils should not be held too close to the point as this can interrupt pupils' line of vision;
- pupils should be positioned so that they can place their paper to their left side;
- left-handed pupils should sit to the left of a right-handed child so that they are not competing for space;
- extra practice with left-to-right exercises may well be necessary before pupils write left-to-right automatically.
- **Developing Early Writing** page 161 has further guidance (This can be collected from the Literacy Coordinator)

It is important that teachers are alert to the fact that it is very difficult for left-handed pupils to follow handwriting movements when a right-handed teacher models them. Teachers need to demonstrate to left-handers on an individual or group basis, even if the resulting writing is not neat.

The role of parents and carers

Parents and carers are introduced to the school's handwriting style through a leaflet. The Foundation Stage staff play an important role in communicating this at an early stage, to ensure that parents are informed and encouraged to offer good models to their children by using only capital letters for the beginning of their names.

The contribution of handwriting to other aspects of the curriculum

ICT

The growth in the use of word processing and desktop publishing has increased pupils' awareness of the importance of presentation and the variety of handwriting styles/fonts available. Pupils are encouraged to evaluate a range of fonts and to select whatever is appropriate to suit particular purposes.

Teachers aim to make handwriting lessons relevant to the curriculum, by providing a purpose to the work where possible, encouraging the children to view handwriting as part of an overall presentation policy.

And for teachers...writing on an interactive whiteboard

Accurate handwriting using this technology takes practice, and yours needs to be as neat and legible as it would be on an old-fashioned whiteboard. Here are some tips:

- Make sure you can calibrate the board and change the thickness of the pen or stylus.
- Be aware of the legibility of different 'ink' colours. Red, for example, can be hard to read from a distance.
- Press firmly and hold the pen or stylus at a 90° angle.
- Stand to one side of the board when writing so all children can see.
- Explore the templates or gallery in your IWB software — they will include lined and squared paper that will help guide your handwriting and offer a better model.

Resources

Pencils triangular and ordinary

A range of pens for the children to choose from

Paper and books

The Phonics Handbook offers sound advice on developing correct pencil grip.

Review

This policy will be reviewed in line with the school's policy review programme. The subject leader is responsible for reporting to the governors' curriculum committee about the quality of its implementation and its impact on standards. In the light of this, policy amendments may be made.

Appendix A

Activities and exercises to develop Gross Motor Control:

Gross Motor Control is the term used to describe the development of controlled movements of the whole body, or limbs such as the legs or arms. Of particular importance in relation to handwriting is the development of good posture and balance. Activities such as:

- Dancing and skipping
- Running and jumping to music
- Use of small apparatus e.g. throwing, rolling, catching, kicking and bouncing balls
- Cycling
- Gripping climbing frames
- Building with large-scale construction kits
- Hammering
- Consolidate vocabulary of movement by talking about movements such as, *going round and round, making curves, springing up and sliding down, making long, slow movements or quick, jumpy movements*
- Make large movements in the air with arms, hands and shoulders with dance ribbons, use music

Fine Motor Control is the term used to describe smaller movements, usually of the hand and fingers (or of the feet and toes).

Activities and exercises to develop Fine Motor Control:

- Folding paper
- Cutting out shapes from paper and card
- Fitting things into frames like geometric shapes
- Model making
- Building and stacking bricks
- Screw toys and wood working tools
- Pegboards
- Modelling with malleable materials like Playdoh, plasticene and clay
- Drawing in sand and sand and water play in general, including sieving, pouring and picking up toys using tools e.g. fishing rods and cranes
- Sewing and weaving
- Chopping and peeling when cooking
- Develop the pincer movement by using tweezers to pick up sequins, beads and feathers, sprinkling glitter, sand and salt
- Scribbling and drawing with chalk, dry wipe pens, felt tip pens and paints on small, large boards and easels and on small and large paper
- Playing with tactile and magnetic letters
- Puzzles
- Games and miming involving finger and wrist movement e.g. finger puppets
- Use increasingly finer tools to make patterns of lines

Appendix B

Hand gym/miming activities to relax fingers and hands before writing

- Washing
- Wringing, rubbing, shaking and folding clothes
- Brushing hair
- Stroking a cat
- Playing a musical instrument
- Playing with snow, bubbles, feathers, balloons
- Picking up sweets to put in a dish or your mouth
- Rhymes with hand movements (round and round the garden etc)

Later on:

- Sit in the writing position but with arms dangling limply. While in this position let the hands flutter loosely
- Let the forearms lay limply on the table in the correct writing position. Raise and lower the elbows several times
- Place elbows on the table with the forearms held upright. Let the hands flap loosely backwards and forwards
- Clench and unclench the fists
- Drum lightly with fingers on the table
- Circle the hands, inwards, then outwards
- Hold the pen in the tripod grip lightly. With the forefinger tap the pencil lightly