

Chalk Ridge Primary School



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Headteacher: Miss Sue Jackson

This is a school policy using guidance from Letter Join

Handwriting Policy

Teaching and Learning Handwriting

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.

An effective handwriting policy is based on a style that is quick and easy to learn. It should be neat, legible and fluent. 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, therefore reducing cognitive overload. At Chalk Ridge we use Join-it script (Letter Join) to support our teaching of handwriting. Handwriting should be taught alongside phonic and spelling knowledge at all stages.

Effective teaching of handwriting can only be achieved through high quality 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 and joins correctly.

Handwriting Principles

- Handwriting should be taught explicitly, in short, frequent sessions.
- **It should be modelled by the Teacher or Learning Support Assistant and then supervised.**
- Children should be self/peer assessing, looking for consistency.
- Where possible, it should be linked to phonic and spelling patterns. This will help with handwriting and with the 'muscle memory' of spellings.
- While learning how to form letters correctly, children will use handwriting books which support them to do this.
- When ready, pupils should be practising on the lines they are going to use in their writing books.
- High expectations of writing are needed. Children need to repeat work that is not satisfactory.
- High quality presentation in written work reflects the pride with which a child has taken in their work.
- From year 3 all children will write using a handwriting pen.
- Teachers and Learning Support Assistants need to model good handwriting at all times, e.g. when writing on the whiteboard and when marking books.

Handwriting in the Foundation Stage

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

- 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.

Throughout the Foundation Stage, children need lots of opportunities to develop:

- Physical control through large-scale movement such as outdoor play, balancing, climbing, marching, moving to music and during PE sessions.
- 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.

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.

Foundation Stage/Reception should be taught:

- Pre-writing stage patterning.
- Individual letter formation – facilitated through phonics teaching, using the Little Wandle scheme.
- Word formation based on letter groups - facilitated through phonics teaching, using the Little Wandle scheme.

The National Curriculum English Programmes of Study provide guidance on teaching handwriting:

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 – linked to teaching of Little Wandle phonics scheme

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
- Use some of the diagonal and horizontal strokes needed to join letters

Year 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 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 and 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

At Chalk Ridge Primary we introduce joined up handwriting from Year 3 upwards.

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 are able to write at a faster pace.
- Lessens the chance of reversing letters.
- Spaces between words become more obvious.
- Upper and lower case letters are clearer.

Supporting individual children:

- Children should be encouraged to use the correct pencil grip and sit with a good posture.
- Left handed children should sit to the left of right handed children to avoid their writing arms from bumping each other. The angle of the paper depends on the handedness of the pupil. Left-handers should sit with their body and paper at a slant to the right. This enables them to see their pencil tip, prevents them smudging their work with their writing hand and allows the pencil to move more freely. A left-hander may also benefit from holding the pencil higher up.
- Some children with specific difficulties may benefit from using a sloping surface and special equipment e.g. triangular pencil grip for a short period of time.
- It is important to use appropriate writing materials at each stage of writing development.
- A sharp pencil is essential for all early handwriting activities.
- All children will move on to using a pen from Year 3 upwards but children can choose to use pencil if they wish.
- Children need to see good examples of handwriting in classroom displays. In EYFS and Year 1, English displays will use a printed font in line with the Little Wandle phonics scheme. From Year 2 all writing/English displays will use Join-it script for text.
- Key Stage 1 children should practice their handwriting skills in the appropriate handwriting books. When Year 2 pupils are ready they can practise in their writing books.
- Key Stage 2 children should practise handwriting skills in writing books or handwriting books, where necessary.

It must be emphasised that the teacher must model handwriting and observe as pupils form letters and joins as this is crucial to successful learning, ensuring pupils acquire the appropriate skills.

We can check that this is working by:

- By checking in children's books to analyse the development and progression of handwriting.
- Observing children as they practice and develop their handwriting.
- Reviewing the effectiveness of this policy on a regular basis with the Governing Body Curriculum and Standards Committee.