

# Pixmore Junior School

## Handwriting Policy

### Aims and rationale

***Our aim is for children to develop legible, fluent, efficient handwriting.***

In handwriting, as in other skills, children will develop at different rates. Therefore, it is important that there is a consistent expectation of handwriting across the school, and that all staff consider themselves to be teachers of handwriting, with a clear understanding of the progression of skills, and of how to remedy errors.

- Teaching staff take care to ensure that they model fluent and legible handwriting with correct letter formation during their teaching and marking of children's work.
- Handwriting needs to be taught and practised, with an emphasis on legibility and fluency.
- Early intervention that is targeted and timely is regarded as essential at every stage in order to prevent the acquisition of bad habits which are difficult to correct.

Prior to the implementation of this policy, staff and pupils, via a whole school audit, were consulted in order to determine priorities and advice sought from the National Handwriting Association and the Grange SpLD Base in Letchworth. The final document, therefore, has been informed through the consultation process and best practice advice offered in the National Literacy Document *Developing Early Writing* (DfEE, 2001) (available to view on our school website), and *Handwriting – A Teacher's Guide* by Jane Taylor (2002).

#### **Acknowledging Prior Learning:**

Children at Pixmore School will already have developed a style of handwriting when they arrive and will be at different stages in the process of handwriting development in terms of fluency and legibility. In order to reflect the stages, children will be taught basic letter formation (see Appendix 1) as a first step towards legibility, moving onto a cursive (joined up) style as their skills progress (see Appendix 2). Children who join the school with established fluent joined handwriting will be allowed to continue with their current style of handwriting. We believe that *letter legibility and fluency* are the key aims of our handwriting teaching practice and that children will naturally develop their own style of handwriting over time.

The school cursive handwriting style is based on "The Development of Handwriting Skills" by Christopher Jarman. A reference sheet showing an alphabet of capital, lower case and joined letters is included in the Appendix and should be available to children in every classroom, and to parents. Where Jarman offers a choice of letter shapes (for example, for the letter f, or for a joined s), the school style is shown in the reference sheet.

## Policy outline:

The following is an outline of our agreed strategies to implement the policy:

**Gross and Fine Motor Skills:** Activities to develop gross and fine motor skills are essential to the development of good handwriting. Pattern sheets are included in the Appendix; many other materials and suggestions for activities are available in school.

**Posture:** Children should be taught the importance of sitting upright and correctly on their chair, with their feet on the floor. Posters are available in classrooms to visually demonstrate and remind children how to sit correctly in order to promote good handwriting practice.

**Pencil Grip:** Children should use a tripod grip, and will be given reminders until this is established. Triangular section pencils and shaped pencil holders are available in school for children who find them helpful. Further writing aids are available as required via the school SENCo. Occasionally, where writing or other fine motor skills present persistent difficulty, in spite of support, the SENCo may refer to the Occupational Therapy service to seek an assessment as to the most appropriate intervention.

**Position of Paper:** Left handed children should be encouraged to tilt their paper slightly to the right to improve their view of what they are writing, and to reduce smudging later on when they write in ink. Right handed children may find it helpful to tilt paper slightly to the left. Paper should be steadied with the free hand.

**Paper:** Early writers will write on unlined paper so that they are able to write at a size appropriate to their needs. As soon as children are beginning to control the size of their writing, they will be given lined paper and exercise books to encourage the correct placing of letters on the line. Lines at an interval 8mm or 10mm are standard, although some children may have different needs.

Where work is redrafted and presented for display, children may use plain paper and guidelines, with the same line spacing. A photocopiable master is included in the Appendix. For the teaching and practice of handwriting, it may sometimes be helpful to use handwriting exercise books or "handwriting paper" to give further support for the relative heights of parts of the letters; photocopiable masters are included in the Appendix.

**Correct Letter Formation:** children are taught to form letters correctly, paying attention to the starting point of each letter, the direction of pencil movement, the shape and orientation of the letter, and the relative heights of the body of each letter, and any ascender and descender. Teaching will be multi-sensory and appropriate to the needs of the child. Our policy is to teach a letter shape which closely resembles print for early readers, and which will not need to be changed as handwriting becomes joined. Letters are taught in families, according to their start point (see *Developing Early Writing* document p. 156).

Children should be introduced to joined handwriting as soon as they have mastered the shape of individual letters.

**Correcting Mistakes:** Use of rubbers is discouraged, except in the case of work in pencil for display. Otherwise, mistakes in pencil or ink should be crossed out using a single horizontal line, and the whole word rewritten. Using double line spacing for work in draft allows the children space to improve their own work.

**Fonts:** materials prepared in school for children will use XCCWjoined font, which includes the same letter shapes as Jarman script. A joined Jarman script is also available in school and to view on the school website.

**Writing Implements: Linked to Assessment:** When children have achieved legible joined handwriting in pencil, they will progress to a fibre tip “school handwriting pen”, which will then be used for all written work in school. Children will use the checklist displayed in all classrooms (copy in the appendix) to assess and improve their own work, and achievement of this milestone will be celebrated. Samples of children’s handwriting are also displayed in all classrooms to demonstrate progression and to celebrate improvement. Most children will have successfully obtained their ‘pen license’ by the end of Year 4. However, all children in Years 5 and 6 will be given handwriting pens, with individual support given to those children who still require it. In the case of left-handed children, or those with fine motor difficulties, additional writing aids will be provided as required with the emphasis always being placed on the primary aim of achieving a writing style that is legible and fluent.

Copies of KS1 and KS2 mark schemes for handwriting, and examples, are included in the Appendix.

**Ink:** blue ink will be used throughout the school.

### **Assessment and Monitoring:**

Regular monitoring and work scrutiny by SLT and teachers will take place to ensure the policy is being implemented consistently across the school. Teachers will feed back to children through verbal or written comments. Classroom displays of graded and improving handwriting samples from children’s own work will guide and encourage children to monitor their own handwriting.

### **Equal Opportunities:**

All children will have an equal opportunity to work within this policy area. Account will be taken of specific needs, and where appropriate, support will be accessed through the policy for Special Educational Needs and Disability. Alternative methods of recording, such as the use of ICT or scribe, will be encouraged where handwriting skills acquisition falls well behind verbal skills. Parents and children will be consulted at all stages in this process.

**Curriculum Links:**

This policy is supported by the range of school policies, including assessment, teaching and learning, spelling, writing and presentation.

**Roles and Responsibilities:**

This policy has been developed through consultation with staff, pupils and external professionals. The Head Teacher, SLT and SENCo will monitor the teaching of handwriting and evaluate the quality and progression of handwriting across the school. Through this process, areas for development can be identified, resources identified and standards moderated to ensure continuity and consistency.

Further help and guidance can be sought from the English Subject Leader or from the SENCo.

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