



Handwriting policy

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Next review due

August 2024

Handwriting at St. John's Preparatory School

We aim for our children to leave in Year 6 with the ability to write using their own style of fast, fluent, legible and sustainable handwriting, as well as other styles of writing for specific purposes. In addition to teaching handwriting during our regular handwriting lessons, we have high expectations that what is taught and practised in handwriting lessons will be used in all writing activities. We believe that handwriting is integral to a child's personal development and know that children's engagement and self-esteem can be improved by their satisfaction and pride in high-quality presentation.

Penpals for Handwriting (Cambridge University Press) is our chosen scheme. The particular joins of *Penpals* will be seen gradually through the school as the youngest pupils, who have not experienced another approach, progress.

Aims of the *Penpals for Handwriting* scheme

Handwriting is a taught skill that develops at different rates for different children. All of the teachers in the school put a priority on teaching handwriting and have high expectations for handwriting across the curriculum.

Our school uses *Penpals for Handwriting* to ensure that:

- the importance of handwriting is recognised and given appropriate time
- the progression of children's handwriting is consistent across the school
- handwriting is acknowledged to be a whole body activity and emphasis is placed on correct posture and pencil grip for handwriting
- expectations of left-handed children are equal to those of right-handed children, and appropriate advice and resources are available to ensure that they learn to write with a comfortable, straight wrist
- children learn to self-assess their own writing and develop understanding and responsibility for improving it
- children learn to write in different styles for different purposes such as print for labelling a diagram, illustrated capitals letters for creating a poster, swift jottings for writing notes, making a 'best copy' for presentation and fast, fluent and legible writing across the curriculum.

Progression of skills

Penpals for Handwriting enables us to teach and secure the development of handwriting throughout the school.

- First, children experience the foundation of handwriting through multi-sensory activities (EYFS, F1 and F2).
- Correct letter formation is taught, practised, applied and consolidated (EYFS F1/Y1).
- Joining is introduced only after correct letter formation is used automatically (Y1/Y2/Y3).
- Joins are introduced systematically and cumulatively (Y2–Y6).
- As children practise joining, they pay attention to the size, proportion and spacing of their letters and words (Y3–Y6).

- Once the joins are secure, a slope is introduced in order to support increased speed and fluency (Y5).
- Children are introduced to different ways of joining in order that they can develop their own preferred personal style (Y6).

In using *Penpals for Handwriting*, we ensure that our children follow the aims, requirements and recommendations of the National Curriculum. We share the aspirations that children's handwriting should be 'sufficiently fluent and effortless for them to manage the general demands of the curriculum' and that 'problems with forming letters do not get in the way of their writing down what they want to say'.

Handwriting tools

Throughout their time in school, children use a range of tools for different purposes and styles of handwriting including:

- a wide range of tools and media for mark-making in the EYFS
- whiteboard pens throughout the school
- fingers when writing on the interactive whiteboards
- art supplies including coloured pens and pencils for posters, displays and artwork
- sharp pencils for most writing until a 'pen licence' is awarded
- a fountain pen for when they sustain a good level of presentation.

Handwriting is always introduced and practised in the *Penpals for Handwriting* practice books and on lined paper so that children quickly learn about letter orientation including ascenders and descenders. Lined paper is important because so much about handwriting is to do with the letters' orientation to the line. As children's fine motor skills improve and their letter formation or joining becomes increasingly accurate, the width between the lines they write on gradually decreases.

The Sassoon font

All classes have the appropriate font (before or after joining) displayed in their classroom. It is cursive, but not fully cursive. This means it:

- does not start on the line with the lead in but the letters do have the exit flicks
- does not loop the f, g, j or y
- teaches the 'k' with a loop
- capital letters stand alone and are not joined to the next letter
- some letters never join, including g, j, x, y, z.

Penpals: Example Letter formation before joining

a b c d e f g h i j k l
m n o p q r s t u v w
x y z

Penpals: Example Letter formation with joins

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxy
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxy

Posture

Children will be able to sustain writing for longer if they become used to sitting comfortably. Tables and chairs are kept at the correct height, so children's legs do not come into contact with the underside of the desktop, and they do not need to lean over or stretch to write. Children are taught the importance of sitting upright and correctly on their chair, with their feet on the floor. Paper should be tilted slightly, and the non-writing hand must be used to steady the book or paper.

Pencil grip

Children should use a tripod grip. They should be shown how to place their pencil on the table in front of them with it pointing towards their bodies and to then pick it up and allow the pencil to fall back into the tripod grip. Commercial pencil grips, or triangular pencils, can be used to encourage this pencil hold but their use must be monitored as they can be misapplied.

Handwriting feedback

Teaching staff should give immediate feedback during handwriting lessons, modelling correct formation and joins in children's books before giving opportunity for them to practise.

Assessment and progress over time

For pupils in KS1 there is a beginning of year assessment which assesses the previous year's work and gives an indication of what needs to be consolidated before beginning new work. Teachers in KS1 use these at the start of the academic year. From Y3 onwards the final unit in each book can be used as the basis of a summative assessment. Teachers will make a summative assessment of pupils by answering these questions in relation to the end of year expectations for their year group:

- Are all letters formed correctly?
- Are letters consistently sized?
- Are the known joins used correctly?
- Are ascenders and descenders parallel?
- Are the spaces within and between words regular?
- Is good handwriting carried over into other areas of the curriculum?
- What are the next handwriting targets for this child?

Inclusion

All of our children have equal access to handwriting lessons and to the resources available. We recognise that some children take longer to develop the necessary skills and we cater for those children by providing additional opportunities for skills development. Children who need specific fine motor or handwriting interventions are identified early and the impact of interventions is carefully monitored.

Left-handed pupils

Writing from left to right is more difficult for left-handed children (approximately 10% of the population). They should, therefore, be given more attention in the classroom to ensure that they do not learn bad habits of position, posture and pen hold which will hinder the development of a fast, fluent and legible hand.

- Letter formation should be modelled specifically for left-handed children, by using the left hand.
- Left-handed children need to sit on the left of right-handed children, so their writing arms do not clash.
- Children should be encouraged to tilt their paper to the right rather than the left.
- Left-handed children should be encouraged to keep their wrist straight and their hand below the writing line.
- Some children might benefit from a mark being put on the left side of the page to indicate where writing begins, as some left-handed children mirror-write from the right.

Teacher handwriting

Teacher handwriting in children's books and during any modelled writing is expected to follow the Sassoon font at the expected stage for their year group. We expect all staff to work towards using the school font as consistently as possible.

Partnership with parents

Penpals for Handwriting provides information sheets for parents which we send home in accordance with the stage of their children's development, so that they can support at home.