

Handwriting at Hartford Primary School

Handwriting is an essential skill that requires careful and consistent teaching. Legible, neat handwriting takes lots of practice and it isn't just about learning letter shapes – fine motor skills, hand eye co-ordination and an interest in putting pen to paper are essential as your child develops their skills. The final goal is for handwriting to become an automatic skill, so your child can concentrate on what, and not how, they are writing. Our aim is that all pupils will be supported to develop a handwriting style which is clear, joined and fluid. Inevitably some will be neater than others, but each child can acquire a consistent and fluid style, given plenty of opportunity to practise.

At Hartford Primary School, handwriting is taught from reception to year 6 during dedicated lessons - the length and frequency of which varies depending on the age and competence of the children. There are also plenty of opportunities to practise handwriting skills throughout the other curriculum subjects. In order to provide a systematic approach, we have chosen to use the Nelson scheme of handwriting. Outlined below is the approach we take throughout school to achieve this, so that you can support your child at home in developing this important skill.

Handwriting in Reception

During their time in reception, children practise their gross motor control (large movements of shoulders, arms and hands) and fine motor control (precise movements of wrists, hands and fingers) so that they can develop strength and precision in their mark making. They learn letter formation as they learn their letter sounds - this helps them to make strong connections between the movement and the sound which will in turn help them with their spelling as they progress through the school.

Handwriting in Keystage 1

The National Curriculum sets out the following expectations for the end of Keystage 1:

- form lower case letters that are all the same size
- use diagonal and horizontal strokes to join letters
- know which letter are break letters
- write capital letters, lower case letters and numbers the right way, the correct size relative to each other
- use spacing between words which fit the size of the letters

Throughout year 1, children continue to practise letter formation and those that are ready are taught how to join letters together. All children are taught these joins in year 2 so that by the end of Keystage 1, most children should have achieved the objectives listed above.

Handwriting in Keystage 2

The National Curriculum sets out the following expectations for the end of Key Stage 2:

- shape their letters correctly
- produce legible joined writing
- maintaining legibility, fluency and speed in handwriting through choosing whether or not to join specific letters

In year 3 and 4, children continue to refine their joined handwriting, so that by the time they start in year 5, they should have a fluent and legible, joined handwriting style.

In year 5 and 6, children work further on presentation skills to maintain this standard of handwriting.

How you can help...

For children in EYFS and Keystage 1:

- encourage children to use monkey bars and take part in wheelbarrow races - this strengthens arm and shoulder muscles;
- draw letters in the air with your child, making them as big as possible - these large movements reinforce letter formation and also strengthen muscles;
- practise pattern making and letter formation by drawing in sand or flour with fingers;

1) Straight lines



2) Upward loops



3) Downward loops



4) Circles



5) Zig-zags



6) Eights



7) Spirals



- encourage your child to use a tripod grip and sit with good posture when writing at home;



- write shopping lists with your child or leave notes for other family members to find;
- if your child is in year 2, encourage them to join any handwriting they do in their homework;

For children in Keystage 2:

- encourage your child to sit at a table to do their homework, using correct seating position (lots of children like to do their homework lying on the floor but this makes it much harder for them to write neatly);
- remind your child to join their handwriting throughout their homework;

Left Handed Children...

Children who are left handed will be taught the same letter formation and joins as those who are right handed. Teachers are aware of the difficulties that left handed children face but by using the same posture (mirrored) and a few minor changes, left handed children should be able to develop the same consistent and fluent joined handwriting as right handed children.

Letter Formation

The following diagram shows how each letter should be formed. Several letters end in a flick which prepares children for cursive writing:

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
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

In order to teach handwriting to children systematically, the letters of the alphabet are organised into groups:

Set 1:

a c d e h i j k l m n s t u v

Set 2:

a c d e g l j m n o p q r s t u v w x y

Set 3:

b f h k l t

Set 4:

f o r v w

Break letters:

b g j p q x y z

Letter Joins

Letters joins between each group are taught in the following order:

The first join:

Set 1 to Set 2

an co he ku te ag

The second join:

Set 1 to Set 3

ch ib ul ck al et

The third join:

Set 4 to Set 2

ws rm on we va fu

The fourth join:

Set 4 to Set 3

ok fl wh ol ff

The break letters:

These are letters that don't lead in to a join.

band gate jar pencil quite
foxes yacht zebra

Links to useful websites:

Teach Hand Writing:

<http://www.teachhandwriting.co.uk/>

A really useful website with lots of tips and guidance for parents on how to support their children with their handwriting. Please note that some of the letter formations and joins may be different to those in our scheme (please help us by encouraging children to use the ones they have been taught).

The School Run:

<http://www.theschoolrun.com/21-things-every-parent-needs-know-about-cursive-handwriting>