

# **Whetley Academy Handwriting Policy**





## **Rationale for High Standards in Handwriting**

The several advantages of aiming high in handwriting standards are:

All children can aspire to and achieve good presentation in their work regardless of their age and academic ability.

Children understand the importance of good presentation skills in the wider world.

Children who develop an effortless, fluent style of writing are free to focus on the composition of their work and other technical skills. Therefore the physical nature of writing does not become a barrier and children can become more creative writers.

Research supports the theory that children consolidate common spelling patterns when they can join them fluently.

Children can write at greater speed and produce more work when required.

## **Whole School Aims**

All children to develop a confident, fluent and neat style of handwriting. All children to join their writing by the end of Year Two.

(Allowances made for children with a physical disability and children who join later in their school career)

All children to take a pride in their writing and to present their work to their highest possible standard as appropriate to the task in hand.

To teach consistent letter and number formation throughout school on a regular basis.

To plan and teach handwriting skills that meets the needs of all children.

## **Strong Foundations**

The most intensive focus on letter and number formation will take place in Foundation Stage One and Two and into Key Stage One, where it is taught daily. Not all our children master the necessary handwriting skills in their early education despite our efforts. Due to our high mobility at Whetley and the number of children who join late in their school career we have many children who simply miss out on this aspect of their learning. Therefore it is important that we teach and revise correct letter and number formation and joins throughout all Key Stages, including Year 6. For the vast majority of children handwriting practise will take place daily.

## **Foundation Stage One and Two**

The Foundation Stage is fundamental in introducing children to their first letters and numbers. They make this experience a multi-sensory one where children are exposed to the recognition, sounds and formation of letters and numbers. The Foundation Stage staff work hard to

develop the children's motor skills such as hand-eye co-ordination, balance and spatial awareness which are both precursors to developing the fine motor skills needed for good handwriting. This is why physical aspects of play are so important in preparing our children for more formal learning later in life. Developing these motor skills is achieved through providing children with a wide range of kinaesthetic activities that focus more and more on modelling the good formation of letters and numbers including:-

Painting/drawing large scale letters and numbers in different media. Writing letters and numbers in sand.

Making letters and numbers out of modelling clay.

Using special actions to write letters and numbers in the air.

Writing letters and numbers on a friend's back with their fingers.(Guessing Game) Tracing finger over sand paper/other tactile letters.

Writing fun letter patterns that will help with letter and number formation.

Although a lot of this work is carried out in the Foundation Stage, for many children the larger scale activities will be appropriate for older children in Key Stage One and even into Key Stage Two.

When children are ready they will practise using a range of writing equipment and will be ready to form letters and numbers on a smaller scale.

### **Preparing the Climate for Successful Writing**

To remove any simple barriers to learning consider the following practical issues. They will have to be explicitly taught to children if not already being done.

Do you know which children in your class are left handed and right handed? (Very young children may not have a preference yet.)

Is the child sitting comfortably with both feet on the floor? Is the child sitting up straight?

Does the child have enough space to work?

Has the child slanted their paper/book slightly so that it is positioned in the right place for them? (Generally tilted to the left for right handed children and to the right for left handed children.)

Can the child see what they are writing? (See above.)

Does the child need to hold their paper/book to keep it steady? Is the child relaxing their arm and hand?

Is the child using an appropriate and preferred writing implement that works correctly?

Is the child holding the pencil lightly in a comfortable way? (Focus on comfort and end product rather than a uniform grip for all.) Does the child need glasses?

Does the child need an additional support such as a tilted writing block?

## **Writing Implements**

Although it is good for children to experience a range of writing tools, please be flexible and allow children to choose their preferred tool for at least certain tasks. Also advise on the best tool for the job. E.g. Left handed children often more confident with a pencil or specific pen to avoid smudging.

Train children to discard pens that don't work and sharpen pencils properly.

Speak to the SEND Lead if you need to provide a child with a specialist writing implement. E.g. a thicker pencil, a pencil grip, a raised, tilted block, left handed or easy grip scissors etc.

Has the child got the appropriate paper/book/board to work on? Consider using no lines/width of lines/margins/different colour of paper for children with Dyslexia and Irlen's Syndrome etc. NB. Some children really struggle to write with slippery white board pens.

## **Focussing the Brain**

Focussed handwriting sessions should be a calm and quiet experience but not necessarily silent. Some evidence suggests that calming music can help focus the brain for learning correct formation.

You can also try certain Brain Gym Activities prior to teaching handwriting that activate the brain to increase body co-ordination. These include the exercises where there is body 'cross over' such as the Lazy 8.

## **How Should Handwriting be Taught?**

Through good, explicit modelling of individual letter/number formation and joining by adults and children.

Through regular reminders to children through the use of verbal and visual prompts.

Through regular revision of previous learning, particularly at the start of each half term.

Through little and often revision using a variety of interesting activities/resources.

Ongoing AfL - Through observing children make errors and correcting immediately.

It is often impossible to detect where a child has used incorrect formation unless you see it happen before your eyes. Also most effective to re-teach on the spot.

Display, reward and make a big fuss of excellent examples of handwriting and well presented work. Display 'Wagolls' of what a well presented style of writing should look like, e.g. a letter.

## **Variety**

We do not need a published handwriting scheme to teach good handwriting skills.

Working laboriously through a series of work sheets is very boring and repetitive.

Our whole school agreed formation and joins is all we need. Joins are best taught in the context of whole words and sentences.

To add interest consider using:-

Different writing tools – pens, pencils, paint, felt tips, crayons, paper, whiteboards etc. Different sizes and colours of paper.  
 Don't always use the Smartboards and if you do, use a coloured background to help children with Specific Learning Difficulties, e.g. Dyslexia or visual difficulties.  
 Most children prefer a work card near to them or a traditional flip chart nearby.

### **Targets**

These targets may vary according to individual needs but this guide gives us a high standard to aim for.

Key Stage	Minimum Target
FS 1 (N)	Children to form circles, lines and some letters and numbers confidently and correctly.
FS2 (R)	To hold a pencil comfortably. To form all lower case, upper case letters and numbers correctly and confidently.
KS1	To write all numbers, lower case and upper case letters correctly and confidently. To join their writing by the end of Yr2.
Lower KS2	To write fluently and neatly in joined writing with increasing confidence and speed.
Upper KS2	As Lower KS2 plus develop a unique and neat joined style of handwriting.

### **Agreed Whole School Letter and Number Formation**

The Academy has an agreed cursive formation that is taught to all children for the purposes of handwriting. Staff should ensure they are very confident in modelling this formation in preparation for teaching children.

Lower case letters, upper case letters and number formation is displayed in all learning areas and smaller formats must be available to support learning. The specific joins are also displayed as a prompt for pupils.

Left handed children can be helped by showing them how to write horizontal lines from right to left instead of left to right.

Upper case letters never join up. Letters g, j, q, x and y do not join up to another letter, although letters do join to them. Once a very confident, neat and fluent style has been established g, j and y could be looped and joined to the next letter. Letter f joins with the horizontal line to the next letter.

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Signed: *Steve Allan*

Chair of AAB