

# St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Wallasey



## Handwriting Policy 2022/2023

### Mission Statement:

*"Love one another as I have loved you"*

### School Values:

<i>Service</i>
<i>Justice</i>
<i>Love</i>

### School Vision:

We seek to build a welcoming, caring community of faith, where we love and serve our children to support them to gain all the necessary spiritual, academic, personal and social skills to succeed in our local and global community.

**Written: October 2022**

**Adopted by Governors: November 2022**

**To be reviewed: July 2024**

Our curriculum ensures that all children have plenty of opportunities to write for different purposes. We encourage writing through all curriculum areas and use quality reading texts to model examples of good writing. Writing is taught through a number of different strategies. We believe that children need lots of rich speaking and drama activities to give them the imagination and the experiences that will equip them to become good writers.

There are regular timetabled slots for handwriting to ensure that children build up their handwriting skills every day. We make the Physical process of writing - handwriting - enjoyable from the start, so children see themselves as 'writers'. We use mnemonics - memory pictures - to help children visualise the letter or join before they write it down. Children need to practise handwriting under the guidance of a teacher so they do not develop habits that will be difficult to undo later.

### **Aims**

It is our aim to encourage the progression and development of each child's handwriting throughout the schools into a fluent, legible and individual style. One that can be adapted for a range of purposes and will support both their spelling and composition.

### **Methodology**

The schools uses an agreed writing style to support children from developing a print handwriting style through to a cursive un-looped, exit stroke but no entry stroke style. This ensures that there is a continuity of handwriting style from Early Years Foundation Stage through to the end of Key Stage 2.

The latest DfE guidance on teaching phonics states: 'At first, children should not be taught to join letters or to start every letter on the line with a lead-in, because these practices cause unnecessary difficulty for beginners. Children may be taught to join the letters in digraphs, but this is optional.'

The cursive handwriting style (Dyslexia Institute) teaches children to join with fluency. It enables them to develop a neat style with the added benefit of encouraging accurate spelling. For dyslexic children, it promotes making links to words as whole units, and in their experience it has been fully beneficial to children with dyspraxic and dyslexic difficulties.

### **Disabilities & Equalities Statement**

All children are given full access to the National Curriculum. Staff will endeavour to ensure that all children reach their potential, irrespective of race, gender, age, home-background or ability.

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School is committed to promoting equality. When planning and teaching handwriting, staff will make reasonable adjustments to promote equality of opportunity.

## Organisation

Handwriting objectives are from the National Curriculum English Programme of Study and form part of the class teachers' and children's continuous work. Handwriting is taught in explicit, regular sessions focussing on letter formation, consistent size and shape of letters, as well as accurate joining. Learning is **adjusted** based on the needs of the child. Handwriting is applied in all writing and modelling, as well as in displays, where appropriate, and is a consistent marking focus.

## What is good handwriting?

Good handwriting is legible, fluent and efficient

- **Legible:** adhering to the characteristic letter shapes
- **Fluid:** writing with an even, quick writing rhythm
- **Fatigue-free:** writing with little and balanced pressure
- **Efficient:** quick and yet fatigue-free writing
- **Individual:** a personal writing style

## Our handwriting sessions...

- Taught in regular short bursts
- Have a clear learning focus for the lesson, linking to spelling patterns where possible in KS2
- Start with a warm up
- Have clear modelling - show/model/support with letter height
- Guided groups to support children who are struggling
- Practise in Handwriting books on appropriate lines

## Exercises include...

**Shoulder shrugs** - Face forwards, both shoulders x 5, alternate shoulders x 5

**Table sit ups** - Two flat hands on the table, straighten elbows then bend x 5

**Hand flips** - Hands flat on the table, spread fingers with thumbs touching and flip x 5

**Pencil slide** - Hold pencil with end on table. Slide fingers down then walk back to the top x 5

**Pencil walk** - Hold in tripod grip. Walk fingers to top and back maintaining grip

**Pencil Fist** - Pick up pencil in fist. Change to tripod and back x 10

**Thumbs up** - Two fist on table. Thumbs in and out x 5

**Arms Cross** - Arms out in front, palms down. Cross arms onto shoulders x 5

## Handwriting warm up exercises

Before starting to work on letter formation, joins or even the pre-handwriting patterns it is a good idea to help focus a child's body on the activity that it is about to be performed in a fun and relaxed way.

The exercises only take a couple of minutes to do. Not only can they be done at the beginning of the session but throughout and at the end to help relax muscles and release tension that may build up over the session. Tense muscles can make handwriting activities difficult and tiring for a child.

Five areas to support the body with handwriting are covered in the warm up exercises:



### Shoulder stability and strength

When we talk about the shoulder, we are actually referring to the shoulder girdle a number of bones, ligaments, muscles and tendons that work together to support arm strength and give the full range of arm movements.



### Crossing the mid-line

To make handwriting comfortable the writing arm has to be able to cross the vertical central line of the body (crossing the mid-line). It is a key skill that enables us to write comfortably with the paper positioned appropriately and to sit at a desk correctly.



### Wrist strength and flexibility

Having the full, pain free, range of wrist movements and the strength to hold the correct, slightly extended, position for handwriting is important. In this position the tendons, which run over the wrist bones, can work the finger muscles more easily giving better finger control for handwriting.



### Thumb and finger strength and dexterity

Thumb and finger strength are important for the coordinated movements and strengths required to hold and maintain an efficient pencil grip as well as to move the pencil effectively for handwriting and drawing.



### Whole hand strength and dexterity

Whole hand dexterity and strength is important for in-hand manipulation, grip and grip release skills as well as being able to judge the appropriate amount of pressure required to hold and release items safely, all required for handwriting.

Try to do the exercises before starting handwriting. During or after a handwriting task, and depending on the area of the body which a child may say is aching or tired, repeat the appropriate exercise. For instance, if they say their shoulders or neck are aching repeat the 'Hand Pushes' exercise from the Shoulder Stability section.

Remember tense muscles can make handwriting hard work and will tire a child more quickly.

Handwriting is to be modelled to all children ALL THE TIME through marking, teaching and displays.

Linkpen font 2b Mini pack will be installed on the school drive and staff laptops for staff to create their own resources in our school specific handwriting style.

F2 and Year 1 Font - Linkpen 2b print

Y2- Yr6 Font – Linkpen 2b join

## **RWI and handwriting**

### **Stage 1**

Stage 1 lessons are taught while children read the Red, Green, Purple, Pink and Orange Storybooks.

Stage 1a: Children practise correct letter formation.

Stage 1b: Children learn where to place the letters on the writing line.

### **Stage 2**

Stage 2 lessons are taught while children read the Yellow, Blue and Grey Storybooks. Children learn a mature style of writing that will lead to joined-up writing.

### **Stage 3**

Stage 3 lessons are also taught while children read the Yellow, Blue and Grey Storybooks. Children learn the two basic joins: the arm join (diagonal) and the washing line join (horizontal) and the two variables for each join.

## **Handwriting position**

Teach children that when you use the RWI 'silent handwriting signal' they automatically go into the perfect handwriting position:

- feet flat on the floor
- bottom at the back of the chair
- body one fist from the table

- shoulders down and relaxed
- back leaning forward slightly
- left/right hand holding the page
- left/right hand ready in a tripod grip

### **Individual and Group Support**

At all stages, teachers are aware of the specific requirements of individuals and will adapt lessons to meet individual needs. Individuals and groups pinpointed as needing further support are given extra time to practise handwriting. Opportunities to continue to develop fine motor skills are planned and provided as appropriate. Teachers also give further support to children who still have not established correct letter formation and may need to include this on a support plan. When marking, teachers offer opportunities to practise specific letters that children are struggling with. Pencil grips and ergonomic pens are provided for children where required.

### **Handwriting and Dyslexia**

#### Advantages

- The flowing action of cursive handwriting can be less fatiguing for dyslexic pupils, so improves writing speed.
- As all cursive letters start on the baseline and move from left to right, this prevents letter reversals, common with dyslexia.
- The joining of cursive letters allows the brain to maintain a thought without interruption.
- As the letters are joined, the spacing of letters within a word is more consistent and the spacing between words more even.

The British Dyslexia Association states: 'It's recommended that children learn to write using continuous cursive handwriting so they don't have to learn how to form letters twice when they need to write more quickly later on.'

Dr Daryl Brown, head teacher at Maple Hayes Dyslexia School, states: 'Writing in cursive makes every letter feel different, so is a form of kinaesthetic learning. A child with dyslexia can learn correct spellings by the feel of each letter.' 'Cursive handwriting also keeps the pen in contact with the paper through the word. Once a child has learnt cursive writing they

do not have to focus their attention on visually forming and placing each letter. This enables them to write faster.'

For children with dyslexia, decoding these patterns and making these links can often be very difficult. As a result, they frequently fail to develop the automatic flow of writing which will help them to express themselves clearly and easily in writing.

Handwriting advice for children;

- The key to learning is practice, practice, practice!
- Keep to short timed sessions so the child is able to maintain concentration in a comfortable position.
- Make sure the child is sitting comfortably and appropriately when they write, with their feet firmly on the floor. Adjustments can be made for individual children for example using a sloping board, pencil grips etc.
- Help the child to learn to grip the pencil properly using the tripod grip. This allows the fingers and wrist to move freely without putting pressure on the hand. Our expectation is using the tripod grip but it won't suit all children so if children have developed their own grip more comfortable for writing stamina this is acceptable.
- Use exercises to strengthen the muscles in the children's hands.
- Encourage starting letters in the correct position and sitting on the line

### **Terminology**

Cursive: Joined-up handwriting style

Print: letters standing alone on the line

Pre-cursive: exit strokes to develop lead-ins for transition into cursive

Capital and lowercase: The names of capital and lowercase letters (rather than 'big and small'). Ascenders and Descenders: Letters that go above the usual letter line and below the base line

Letter bodies: The main body of letters, which are neither ascenders or descenders (e.g. the rounded parts of 'b', 'd' and 'a' and the arches of 'm' and 'n')

Entry and exit strokes: Entry stroke starts on the line and exit strokes generally end on the line (with the exception of 'o', 'v', 'w', 'r' and 'x')

### **Assessment of writing**

Writing is assessed as part of the English Curriculum. These include an evaluation of letter formation and joining, letter shape, letter size, slant/slope, alignment, spacing and orientation. Teachers also observe posture, pen grip, paper position, pressure and fluency and speed.



## Appendix

### EYFS

Development Matters and National Curriculum Handwriting Programme of Study

Physical Development 40-60 months

- Negotiates space successfully when playing racing and chasing games with other children, adjusting speed or changing direction to avoid obstacles.
- Shows increasing control over an object in pushing, patting, throwing, catching or kicking it.
- Uses simple tools to effect changes to materials.
- Handles tools, objects, construction and malleable materials safely and with increasing control. •Shows a preference for a dominant hand.
- Begins to use anticlockwise movement and retrace vertical lines.
- Begins to form recognisable letters.
- Uses a pencil and holds it effectively to form recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed.

### Physical Development Early Learning Goal

Children show good control and co-ordination in large and small movements.

They move confidently in a range of ways, safely negotiating space.

They handle equipment and tools effectively, including pencils for writing.

### **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.

### **Notes and guidance (non-statutory)**

Handwriting requires frequent and discrete, direct teaching.

Pupils should be able to form letters correctly and confidently.

The size of the writing implement (pencil, pen) should not be too large for a young pupil's hand. Whatever is being used should allow the pupil to hold it easily and correctly so that bad habits are avoided. Left-handed pupils should receive specific teaching to meet their needs.

**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 un-joined e.g. x?
- write capital letters of the correct size and orientation in relationship to one another, and to lower case letters
- Write digits of the correct size and orientation in relationship to one another
- use spacing between words that reflects the size of the letters.

**Notes and guidance (non-statutory)**

Pupils should revise and practise correct letter formation frequently. They should be taught to write with a joined style as soon as they can form letters securely with the correct orientation.

**Year 3 & 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 un-joined
- increase the legibility, consistency and quality of their handwriting (for example, 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).

**Notes and guidance (non-statutory)**

Pupils should be using joined handwriting throughout their independent writing.

Handwriting should continue to be taught, with the aim of increasing the fluency with which pupils are able to write down what they want to say. This, in turn, will support their composition and spelling.

**Year 5 & 6 Pupils should be taught to:**

- write legibly, fluently and with increasing speed by:
- choosing which shape of a letter to use when given choices and deciding whether or not to join specific letters
- choosing the writing implement that is best suited for a task.

### **Notes and guidance (non-statutory)**

Pupils should continue to practise handwriting and be encouraged to increase the speed of it, so that problems with forming letters do not get in the way of their writing down what they want to say. They should be clear about what standard of handwriting is appropriate for a particular task, for example, quick notes or a final handwritten version.

They should also be taught to use an un-joined style, for example, for labelling a diagram or data, writing an email address, or for algebra and capital letters, for example, for filling in a form.