



Birchington CE Primary School Policy for Handwriting

Learning and Growing; Safe in God's Love

Our Christian Vision:

To strive to ensure everyone in our happy, inclusive school flourishes and feels valued and safe. Our peaceful learning environment and aspirational curriculum enables everyone to grow from their unique starting point, giving them a hopeful future. Following Jesus' example, we forgive, respect, love and care for everyone.

Our Christian Vision and School Values of peace, hope, forgiveness, love and respect impacts the approach our school takes to all pupils, staff and visitors to our school.

Introduction:

At Birchington CE Primary, we understand that the process of holding a writing implement correctly is an incredibly complex life skill. We are also aware that once the initial dynamic tripod grip is fully mastered, the art of handwriting beautifully requires fluidity, speed, accuracy and the ability to maintain all of these over longer periods of time. Before children are able to even hold a pencil, they need to have developed enough gross and fine motor control. From the moment that a baby begins to reach for their toys and crawl, they are beginning to develop the postural stability and visual motor skills that they will require in order to be able to write.

At Birchington CE Primary School we recognise that handwriting and physical development is not a one size fits all plan. Instead, children will need to develop and extend both their gross and motor skills through effective and regular rehearsal and handwriting is a staged process.



Gross Motor Control refers to the development of controlled large movements of the whole body or limbs. Activities such as dance, football, use of small and large apparatus, cycling, gripping and building large-scale construction kits, while encouraging the use of both sides of the body at the same time, all help to support this development and aid the specific Gross Motor foci for handwriting, which is primarily, the development of good posture and balance.

Fine Motor Control refers to the development of smaller movements usually of the hand or fingers, and are commonly needed to use pencils, scissors, construct with bricks, do up buttons and open up lunch boxes. Until children have gained a reasonable fine motor control through art, mark making and other 'clever hands' activities, a formal handwriting programme is not deemed appropriate. Increasing a child's fine motor skills can significantly improve the quality of their written outcome as well as the speed with which they write.

Once the child has established a strong level of Gross Motor Control (they can sit correctly for extended periods of time) and Fine Motor Control (they can hold and control the pencil and manipulate the paper as they write), they will need to have also developed Motor Memory Skills (to recall how to form letters), Visual Memory Skills (to recall what a specific letter looks like), Spatial Awareness Skills (to place the letter correctly on the paper and in relation to one another), Eye Tracking Skills (the ability to scan from left to right so that letters are formed and placed correctly); it is unsurprising this takes both time and rehearsal to master.

If a child is struggling with their pencil grip or the process of handwriting, it is important to take a closer look at their physical abilities including gross and fine motor skills.

Writing is a life-skill and an essential part of enabling children to express themselves, both as learners and as individuals. As humans, we have an inbuilt need to make our mark. We write to express ourselves, to find meaning, to change the world or to create an entirely new world. At Birchington CE Primary School, the teaching

of writing is a thorough, well developed and thought-out process. The following Handwriting Progression document lays out how we will approach the teaching and progression of handwriting across the school considering a child's development.

Following the introduction of the updated curriculum in 2014, there were a number of changes to the curriculum including a renewed focus on handwriting. Below are the requirements for handwriting teaching in Y1-6 in England quoted directly from the curriculum.

Quotes concerning handwriting taken from the text:

- Pupils who do not learn to read and write fluently and confidently are, in every sense, disenfranchised ('Purpose of Study' p13)
- Pupils should develop the stamina and skills to write at length, with accurate spelling and punctuation. (6.3 Language and literacy - Reading and Writing)
- Writing also depends on fluent, legible and eventually, speedy handwriting. (Programmes of study and attainment targets - Aims of English p15)

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 or too heavy (pencil toppers are not conducive to developing handwriting skills) 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. It is essential that the writing implement chosen/used is comfortable for the child as this will lead to increased flow when writing.

The skill of handwriting is best observed as a process rather than a finished product; a child may produce a beautifully finished product but may be forming letters incorrectly, adding in joins and taking additional time rather than having a fluent style. Observing the child in the process of writing will help with guiding their next steps for handwriting and this process is far more important than simply looking at the end piece of writing produced.

Progression and Aims

Stage 1: (Pre-school/EYFS)

Pre-writing development:

Posture and Postural Control -

In order to write a child needs to be able to keep their balance when sitting without using their hands to support themselves. They need to have strong control of their core muscles, their trunk and their shoulder muscles in order to be able to reach forward in a controlled manner.

When sitting on a chair, the child's feet should be flat on the ground, their bottom should be square in the chair and be right back in the seat with their knees and hips being bent to approximately 90°. The desk should be just above the height of the child's elbows. The paper should be tilted to the side rather than straight on in front of the child (for RH children the page should be closer to their right hand and titled to the left, for LH children the page should be closer to their left hand and tilted to the right).

Signs of poor postural control include: fidgeting constantly, wrapping feet/legs around the chair, sliding forward in their seat, leaning to the side, leaning forwards onto the desk, resting their head on the desk, using their arms to prop themselves up or keeping their arms pressed into their sides.





A sloping board can support a child who leans, this may also help wrist position.

Activities to improve postural control include: playing on large equipment like swings, obstacle courses including crawling and climbing, playing with balls/beanbags while sitting, kneeling, squatting, freeze games where a child needs to stop quickly, rolling out dough with a rolling pin and using cutters to shape dough, hand prints, cleaning tables, painting on large easels/walls, chair press ups or wall sitting.

Fine Motor Skills including Developing Finger Strength, Grasp, Pincer Movement –

A child needs to have a well-developed hand use, grasp and fine motor skills in order to manipulate and control a pencil accurately. Signs that this is developed effectively include that they are able to grasp objects with their whole hand, manipulate objects by turning them over and moving them over their fingers, pick up small objects using a pincer grip (tips of thumb and index finger), pick up object and manipulate them using a tripod grip (thumb, index and middle fingers).

There are four main grasps that a child will likely progress through including: **Palmar Supinate Grasp**, **Digital Pronate Grasp**, **Static Tripod Grasp** and finally, the **Dynamic Tripod Grasp**. A child will need to be able to use either the Static Tripod or the Dynamic Tripod Grasp in order to write.

			
1-1½ years	2-3 years	3½-4 years	4½-6 years
Palmar Supinate Grasp	Digital Pronate Grasp	Static Tripod Grasp	Dynamic Tripod Grasp

This means that they:

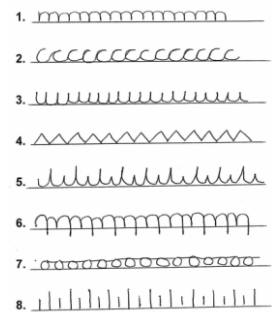
- Hold the pencil between the tips of the thumb, index and middle fingers
- Hold the pencil in a relaxed way without too much pressure being applied
- The pencil rests on the hand between the thumb and the index fingers (on the webspace)
- The webspace gap should be rounded and open like a circle
- The ring and little fingers are held away from the pencil and lightly bent into the palm.

Should they find it difficult to correct their grip, pencil grips may help.

Activities to support the pencil grip development could include 'Clever Hands' activities such as playing tiddlywinks, sorting coins, playing connect four, placing clothes pegs or bulldog clips around a container, picking up small objects using tweezers, threading beads, picking up cards, filling a dropper with paint and dropping it out, playing with a triggered water gun, using sticker, popping bubble wrap, making paper clip chains, colouring with very short crayons (cannot use a whole hand grip on this). These activities, once set up and introduced by an adult, can be child led.

Activities to improve fine motor control include: building blocks, lacing or threading, puzzles, marbles, keyboard activities, origami, using a pegboard to develop a pattern, sewing and weaving activities, chopping, peeling and cooking activities, woodworking including using pliers, screwdrivers and hammers, finger rhymes, counting using fingers, play with small construction toys, sand and water play including sieving, pouring, picking up things using tools, tweezers to pick up beads, pom poms etc., finger painting, clay, playdough for modelling and tracing. These activities, once set up and introduced by an adult, can be child led.

Children should be taught to follow basic patterns for handwriting development. Children should be helped to understand subtle oval shapes, and the proportions of the ascenders and descenders in relation to the body of each pattern.



As children develop pencil control, the movement changes from large shoulder movements to controlled finger movement with their forearm resting on the writing surface. This can only be achieved when shoulder stability has been established.

Pencil control begins with shoulder strength and moves down the body from the shoulder to the wrist to the hand to the fingers.

Stage 2: (EYFS)

Learning to Print:

Letters are modelled and taught in print alongside the phonetic order using Set 1 of Read Write Inc.

Children are offered a regular choice of implements that vary shape, size and colour.

Children often use a triangular pencil and are guided in using a tripod grip in regular writing practice.

At this stage, developing and maintaining Gross-Motor, Fine-Motor and Core strength is essential for the continued improvement of handwriting. At Birchington CE Primary School, this is supported through daily shoulder and arm strengthening activities and dance.

Stage 3: (Last term of EYFS)

Pre-cursive Introduction:

Pupils should be taught and encouraged to sit in a posture which is conducive to cursive letter formation:

- how to sit correctly (bottom back in the seat, square in the chair, feet flat on the floor)
- how to hold a pencil both comfortably and correctly
- forearms on the table
- non-writing hand supporting the paper
- begin to form lower-case letters in the correct direction, starting and finishing in the right place and following the order set out in the Scheme of Work so that children understand which letters belong to which handwriting families and are formed in similar ways (i l e t, c a d g q, b h p k, m n, o r s, u v w y j f, x z)
- form capital letters following the order set out in the Scheme of Work
- form digits 0-9, starting from the top

Stage 4: (Year 1 leading into Year 2)

Pre-cursive consolidation:

As above, children must be taught to write pre-cursively. At the start of Year 1, this may be consolidated on a whole class basis, and then through interventions for specific groups of children to ensure:

- they have learnt to form all 26 lower-case letters correctly using pre-cursive
- letters are of a consistent and suitable size (not necessarily the perfect size, remember big is beautiful)
- letters are positioned appropriately on the writing line as well as in relation to one another

In order for children to achieve the expected standard as outlined in the English Programme of Study for 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
- write capital letters and digits of the correct size, orientation and relationship to one another and to lower case letters
- use spacing between words that reflects the size of the letters
- revise and practise correct letter formation frequently
- to write with a joined style as soon as they can form letters securely with the correct orientation.

Children should be taught to join lower-case letters in the correct direction, starting and finishing in the right place and following the order set out in the Scheme of Work so that children understand which letters belong to which handwriting families and are formed in similar ways (i l e t, c a d g q, b h p k, m n, o r s, u v w y j f, x z).

Stage 5: (Year 2 onwards)

Cursive Rehearsal:

As per the English Programme of Study for Year 2, pupils should be taught to:

Pupils should continue to:

- rehearse 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, e.g. by ensuring that the downstrokes of letters are parallel and equidistant; that lines of writing are spaced sufficiently so that the ascenders and descenders of letters do not touch other letters.

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. Joined handwriting should be becoming the norm; pupils should be able to use it fast enough to keep pace with what they want to say.

Stage 6: (KS2)

Cursive Mastery:

As per the English Programme of Study, by the end of Year 4 children should be able 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 unjoined
- increase the legibility, consistency and quality of their handwriting [for example, by ensuring that the downstrokes of letters are parallel and equidistant; that lines of writing are spaced sufficiently so that the ascenders and descenders of letters do not touch]

As per the English Programme of Study, by the end of Year 6 pupils should be able to do the above as well as:

- write legibly, fluently and with increasing speed
- choose 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 (e.g. quick notes, letters)

Pupils should continue to practise handwriting and be encouraged to increase the speed of it, so that pupils are able to precise longer passages. They should be clear about what standard of handwriting is appropriate for a particular task (e.g. quick notes or a final handwritten version).

To have mastered cursive handwriting at Birchington CE Primary, handwriting will have the following characteristics:

- All letters are formed correctly with clear descenders and ascenders which are consistent in size.
- Handwriting is neat, joined and legible.
- All capital letters must be taller or the same height as ascenders and must not be joined.
- All capital letters and lower-case letters are clear and used correctly. Letters are joined appropriately.
- All letters are written on the line with a regular space between words.
- Punctuation is the correct size in relation to the text.
- The writer writes with good pace.
- Titles use capital letters correctly.
- All written work starts from the margin.
- Any mistakes are neatly crossed out with one line, not rubbed out so that there is evidence of editing and revising.

Teaching

Handwriting should be taught weekly, in its own discrete lesson. Class teachers must use their assessment of writing and professional judgement to ensure that children have sufficient handwriting practise, which enables them to meet the expectations set out in the Progression and Aims. Class teachers should also consider their timetabling to ensure children are given an opportunity to apply their skills after the lesson. For example, a handwriting lesson should take place before an independent writing session or a foundation subject which will require the children to write.

A handwriting lesson may follow the structure of:

WARM UP 3 minutes	Gross Motor and Fine Motor Warm Up	Examples might include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Funky fingers- Dough disco- Dot to dots- Finger warm up- Sky writing- Patterns- Scribbles- Tracing
MODEL 4 minutes	Teacher model the new learning, join etc. Model sizing	Examples might include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Writing on the whiteboard- Writing repeater programme on the IWB- Tracing
REHEARSE 8 minutes	Pupil rehearsal of new skill	This may be tracing/copying the letters on the worksheets in the Scheme of Work, in independent handwriting books, or lined practice books.
APPLY After the lesson	Look for evidence of pupils applying their new learning in their handwriting opportunities in other subjects.	

Writing Implements

At Birchington Church of England Primary school we understand that every person is unique and will have different experiences of writing. We know that some children struggle to grip and/or use a pen comfortably for a wide range of reasons and because of this, we strive to offer a range of writing implements to make it easier for every child to achieve their potential. As part of our Christian Vision we want to ensure all pupils grow in skill from their unique starting point. We will encourage **all** children to write using a blue ink pen. The school will provide a basic pen for children to use at school and will have a small stock of alternatives for children to try as well as some pen grips that could also help. However, parents are very welcome to provide their child with a pen that better suits them if needed. Please see below for alternative options.



Left-handed pupils

Left-handed pupils should receive specific support to meet their needs. Left-handed people make up approximately 15% of the population. They often have to face equipment and techniques that are designed solely for right-handed users.

The key principles when teaching left-handed pupils are:

- Reassure them that left-handed is ok!
- Pencil grip and paper placement will need to be different – ensure the child is supported in how to write.
- Ensure a variety of left-handed implements (pencils, scissors etc.) are available for the child to experiment with.
- Consider desk positioning, especially where a left-handed child might knock elbows with a right-handed child.

**FD and ME October 2023
To be reviewed October 2025**

This policy has had an EIA and has not identified any adverse impact at this point.