

St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School



Handwriting Policy

Rationale

At St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School, all children are introduced to Cursive Handwriting from the start. We believe this raises standards in the Early Years which has impacted throughout the whole school, developing confidence, accuracy and fluency and improved presentation.

The rules of the Cursive Style help:

- to minimise confusion for the child as every letter starts on the line with an entry stroke and leads out with an exit stroke
- with the flow of Cursive Writing as letters naturally flow into each other, it is impossible to write separate letters without joining.
- form spacing between words as the child develops whole word awareness
- develop a child's visual memory
- all children's writing skills regardless of academic ability
- to develop skills of punctuation and grammar

All children write with a pencil, although older pupils are introduced to blue ink pens.

Aims

- To provide equal opportunities for all pupils to achieve success in handwriting
- To produce clear, concise, legible handwriting
- To present work to a variety of audiences neatly
- To develop accuracy and fluency
- To help children recognise that handwriting is a form of communication and as such should be considered important in order for it to be effective
- To promote confidence and self-esteem
- To encourage children to take pride in their work
- To build in cross curricular links to broaden experience
- To help children recognise that handwriting as a life-long skill and will be a fundamental element of all forms of written communication throughout their lives
- To display neatly presented work around the school as a model of excellence for others to aspire to.

Development of learning and teaching handwriting **Reception**

On entry, Reception children are involved in a variety of activities to develop essential pre-writing skills in line with the Early Learning Goals of the Foundation Stage.

Activities to develop gross motor control, for example rolling hoops and running with a hoop, ribbon movement, chalking, Jedi writing with light sabres, painting on a large scale, Interactive White Board.

Activities to develop fine motor control: e.g. tracing, colouring within guide lines and pictures, pattern work, using glue spreaders in small pots, painting with the tips of the fingers, cotton buds, plasticine, threading. All these develop spatial awareness "P.E. on paper." Children develop the basic handwriting patterns found in letter formation in the order found in the Handwriting Programme. Children are introduced to actual letter formation in conjunction with the introduction of phonic skills. Sounds are closely linked in handwriting patterns and the children's visual awareness of words is harnessed e.g. 'cat', 'hat'. Practise of particular High Frequency Words helps to develop good visual and writing habits e.g. 'the', 'and'. Usually by the end of the Reception Year all children will have been introduced to all letters of the alphabet through patterns as shown above and introduced to more independent writing. Children practise their names in cursive script by tracing over in the first instance and then underneath and then using motor memory.

Year 1

As the children move to Year 1 so these skills acquired in the Foundation Stage are continued, consolidating correct formation, concentration and accurate precision work.

All children write in pencil.

Again spellings are closely linked with handwriting activities assisting the children with phonic skills required for successful reading.

Year 2-6

The Cursive style continues to develop through close links with the Primary Framework for Literacy. Phonic, spelling and awareness of grammar are all taught through handwriting practise and as fluency and accuracy develops, pupils are encouraged to write with an ink pen. (Usually in Year 4, although exceptions may be made for younger, more able pupils as appropriate.)

Handwriting is timetabled in short, regular sessions and where possible is integrated across the curriculum, e.g. practising scientific vocabulary, cloze procedure linked to history.

All handwriting activities are undertaken as class activities for the following reasons:

- to develop effective and efficient pen hold
- to develop the habit of concentration which is crucial to good handwriting
- to place a strong emphasis on the insistence of perfection
- to provide the class teacher with the opportunity to help assess individuals' progress and monitor areas requiring reinforcement.

Lessons usually begin with a warm-up activity (e.g. exercising hand/fingers to music, 'air-writing'), including writing patterns or phonemes, etc which is led by the teacher modelling writing on the board. Children copy into their books, applying the same techniques, closely monitored by the teacher. In some lessons, it is also appropriate to practise speed-writing (usually written at the back of their book), which also helps them to think quickly and remember spellings.

Handwriting books have coloured lines to assist with accuracy and consistency in size

and form, although other exercise books are either blank or have one line only. Where pages are blank or when children write on to A4 paper, they are expected to use a line guide and paperclips to hold the guide in place.

For those children who have mastered a fluent, neat cursive style continual practise will not be necessary and alternative provision will be made for these pupils.

The use of Computing

All teachers use the Interactive Whiteboard in direct teaching: use of the lined writing templates are an essential tool for learning, as the teacher can demonstrate the correct letter formation and joins clearly to the whole class at once if necessary. Younger children rehearse 'large letters/joins' on a blank screen, using different colours and thicknesses of line.

Handwriting and Reading

In school, children are exposed to both cursive and print styles as well as commercial print. They develop awareness for reading in print and writing in cursive side by side in their learning, such as prompts around classrooms/school – teachers lettering, labels on displays/teaching aids e.g. alphabet on tables and through teachers modelling of writing.

Left Handed Children

Each left-handed child is identified and closely monitored by the class teacher to ensure success. The following guidelines are useful to help left-handed children.

Guidelines for writing left-handed:

- The writing surface and chair are suitable for the child's own height
- The child sits towards the left of their partner leaving plenty of space for writing on the left side of his/her – mid line (this allows maximum space for arm movement)
- The writing paper is to the left of the child's body midline.
- The paper is tilted up to 32 degrees in a clockwise direction
- A writing tool which moves smoothly across the paper is used
- The paper is supported with the right hand
- The writing forearm is parallel with the paper edge as the child writes
- The writing tool is held sufficiently far from its point to ensure that the child can see what he/she is writing.

Children with difficulties

Sometimes some children may experience difficulties but this is often due to a coordination problem or adapting a left handed style. Activities to develop 'gross motor skills' can be promoted as these will assist fine motor skills, as will plenty of pre-writing activities to loosen up the wrist and upper arm. Older children needing additional support are given short bursts of handwriting practice, one -to-one with a Teaching Assistant, as often as possible (daily preferably.) Use of a small whiteboard

and pencil/pen is often the most successful aid as they are less restrictive and enable the child to feel less inhibited.

Monitoring

The presentation of all work is monitored through regular work scrutinies.