

Carlton Colville Primary School Handwriting Policy

Aim

To acquire a legible, fluent, fast and joined-up handwriting style by developing the following skills:-

- Good gross and fine motor control
- A recognition of pattern
- A language to talk about shapes and movements
- The main handwriting movements involved in the three basic letter shapes exemplified by: l, c, r.
- Secure use of the four main joins [see Nelson Handwriting materials].

Shape families for teaching letter formation – a common handwriting language to be used across the school.

- Long ladder [l] – down and off in another direction i, j, l, t, u.
- One-armed robots [r] – down and retrace upwards b, h, k, m, n, p, r; numbers 2, 3, 5 follow a clockwise direction.
- Curly caterpillar [c] – c, a, d, e, g, o, q, f, s; numbers 0, 6, 8, 9
- Zigzag letters – v, w, x, y, z; numbers 1, 4, 7.
- Ascenders and descenders – the bodies [tummies] of letters sit on the lines and are the same size as letter x.
- Capital letters – sit on the lines and are the same size as lower case letters with ascenders [d].
- Exceptions – t is shorter than the other ascenders; f is an ascender and descender.

When do we teach handwriting?

Handwriting can be taught discretely, linked to phonics, so that we reinforce the movement of the letters while we work on the sounds and do activities as recommended in 'Letters and Sounds'.

However, the teaching of letters should occur at other times as well, allowing opportunities to practise fluency, accuracy and speed without the distraction of having to compose text or think about spelling.

How do we teach handwriting?

Teachers must model correct letter formation and joining at all times! Examples of correctly formed letters should be prominently displayed in every classroom and referred to constantly. The Nelson PreCursive font should be the default setting on all computers used by the children.

Early Years Foundation stage

- Encourage children to show a preference for the dominant hand.
- From phase 2 in 'Letters and Sounds' children will need to learn the letter shapes alongside letter sounds using kinaesthetic methods and beginning to introduce the language associated with letter families e.g. 'curly caterpillar'. [Use anti-clockwise movement and retrace vertical lines].
- Teach correct pencil grip – pencil held between thumb and forefinger with the pencil resting on the third finger. The grip should be relaxed so that the fine movements required for writing are possible.

- Encourage good posture for writing activities- chair pulled under table; paper tilted slightly; not being jostled by someone else's arm; non-writing hand steadies paper and bears some body weight.
- Teach activities designed to develop gross motor control :- long slow/ quick, jumpy body movements; ribbons on sticks; body shapes/ actions to music; sky writing; patterns in the air or on each other's backs; letter shapes in damp sand, out of string etc
- Teach activities designed to develop fine motor control:- patterns on pegboards; sewing and weaving; finger rhymes playing with numbers and sounds; making patterns based on curly caterpillar, long ladder and one-arm robot groups etc
- Teach pattern making which encourages left to right direction and spaces between words [pattern then gap].

Children must be supervised when practising handwriting until letter formation is secure and any difficulties identified and addressed quickly before bad habits creep in.

Key Stage 1 [see statutory requirements from National Curriculum in Appendix 3]

- As above where appropriate
- Encourage good posture for writing.
- Introduce lines to write on as children become secure in letter orientation, formation and proportion. [Year 1]
- When children are secure in their letter formation, teach them to join up their handwriting using the four joins as exemplified in the Nelson Handwriting Scheme.
- Practise on white boards under teacher supervision and follow up with worksheets when secure and where appropriate.
- Give opportunities to make a 'best copy' so that handwriting can be practised without concerns over composition – line guides can be clipped to 'special' paper.
- Begin to experiment and practise using ink pens as children achieve a fluent joined up style. [Year 2]

Key Stage 2 [see statutory requirements from National Curriculum in Appendix 3]

- As above where appropriate
- Increase legibility, consistency and quality of handwriting
- Downstrokes are parallel and equidistant
- Spacing ensures that ascenders and descenders of letters do not touch
- Choosing writing implements suited to a task
- Increasing speed and accuracy

When children in Key Stage 2 achieve a fluent, legible, joined up style they will be awarded their 'Pen Licence' and encouraged to write in ink [free flowing –no ballpoints]

Left-handed children

- Be aware of who they are!
- Model letter formation etc specifically for them.
- Sit them to the left of right handed children or on the ends of tables so writing arms don't clash.
- Remind them to have paper to the left of centre and tilted to the right.
- Position fingers about 1.5 cm from the end of the pencil to avoid smudging.

Special Educational Needs

- Children who experience difficulties in developing the necessary skills will be supported in small groups or individually, with targets as specified on their IEPs.
- Interventions such as Hand Gym are used to support children with poor fine motor skills.
- Left handed resources are available e.g. pencil grips and scissors.

Parental involvement

Parents will be informed of the school's policy on handwriting at New Intake meetings and it will be available on the website. Sheets with letters showing the correct formation will be distributed as necessary and to all parents as part of induction.

And finally.....

We have worked hard to improve standards of writing across the school and to encourage our children to be confident, effective writers who enjoy the writing process. Handwriting is just one element of this and should not in any way impede our children from expressing themselves on paper and loving writing.

Date: July 2014

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Appendix 1

The letter 'groups'. These should be photocopied and displayed in classrooms (lower school).

Appendix 2

The Nelson reference guide.

Appendix 3

Handwriting requirements from the new National Curriculum.