



Warwick Academy

'so much more than a place to learn'

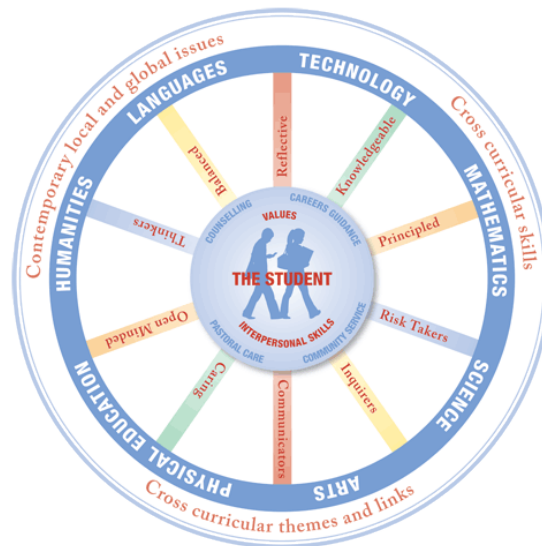
Primary School

Handwriting Policy

MISSION STATEMENT

Building on centuries of excellence, we provide an international educational environment designed for our diverse student body. Our innovative curriculum is delivered with a commitment to personalised pastoral care and enhanced by a dynamic co-curricular programme. We strive to create a culture of collaboration so that our students can become lifelong learners, global thinkers and successful leaders.

CURRICULUM MODEL



NOTES

To be reviewed:

Staff involved:

Dated:

Rationale

At WA handwriting is taught with a sequential and progressive approach.

Handwriting is a taught skill which, like reading and spelling, affects written communication across the curriculum. Given effective teaching, handwriting can be mastered by most pupils by the time they are seven or eight years old enabling them, with practice, to go on to develop a faster and more mature hand ready for secondary school and adult life.

Handwriting is a movement skill and needs to be firmly established as a 'movement memory' through the practising of handwriting movements correctly and often.

First handwriting lessons are vital and the most important thing is to ensure that the children learn the letters of the alphabet with the correct sequence of strokes from the beginning. Children who have been allowed to invent their own ways of forming letters will find it hard to change the longer they are allowed to persist. Unless incorrect formation is corrected or 'unlearned' (often at great effort since the movement memory is very retentive and will tend to revert to old habits) it will be impossible for a child to learn a fluent, joined hand. Learning to join writing (cursive) offers an incredible array of well-documented benefits (see appendix 1)

Aims

Our aim in this policy is to teach children correct letter formation, joining and good handwriting habits. To achieve this we develop 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 according to Nelson Handwriting scheme.

Guidelines

At W.A. we use the Nelson Handwriting font (see appendix 2)

We use shape families for teaching letter formation – a common handwriting language to be used across the school:

- Long ladder letters – (l) down and off in another direction i, j, l, t, u,
- Curly caterpillar letters– (c) c, a, d, e, g, o, q, f, s numbers 0, 6, 8, 9
- One-armed robot letters – (r) down and retrace upwards b, h, k, m, n p, r, numbers 2, 3, 5 follow a clockwise direction
- Zig-zag letters 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 – the ascenders and descenders go up or down from the body of the letter.
- 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.

The Nelson scheme introduces four joins and the concept of ‘break letters’ that do not join (see appendix 3)

Five stages are identified and these form the basic organizational structure of the scheme:

1. Readiness for writing: gross and fine motor skills leading to letter formation (Reception)
2. Beginning to join (Y1 and Y2)
3. Securing joins (Y3 and Y4)
4. Practicing speed and fluency (Y4 and Y5)
5. Presentation skills (Y5 and Y6)

When do we teach handwriting?

Handwriting is taught discretely in R – Y4 and also linked to phonics in R – Y3 so that we reinforce the movement of the letters while we work on sounds and do activities as recommended in ‘Letters and Sounds’. The discrete teaching of handwriting is important as it allows opportunities to practise fluency, accuracy and speed without the distraction of having to compose text or think about spelling.

Reception

- Encourage children to show a preference for dominant hand.
- From Phase 2 in Letters and sounds children will need to learn the letter shapes alongside letter sounds using kinesthetic methods and beginning to introduce the language associated with letter families e.g. ‘curly caterpillar’.
- Teach the ‘tripod 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 handwriting are possible. If children struggle with the tripod grip other effective grips can be encouraged (two finger on side of pencil for example). The aim is that movement of pencil is created through the movement of the fingers and not the wrist or whole arm.
- Encourage good posture for writing activities- chair pulled under table, paper tilted slightly, not being jostled by someone else’s arm; non writing arm 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 backs, letter shapes in damp sand, on sandpaper, out of string.

- 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-armed 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.

Year 1 & 2

- As above where appropriate
- 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 (Year 2)
- 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 practiced without concerns over composition (Year 2)

WHEN CHILDREN ARE USING AN EFFECTIVE GRIP IN Y2 THEY WILL BE REWARDED WITH A 'GOLDEN PENCIL' AWARD.

Year 3 – 6

- As above where appropriate
- Begin to experiment and practise using ink pens as children achieve a fluent joined style
- Increase legibility, consistency and quality of handwriting
- Teach that down strokes are parallel and equidistant
- Ensure that spacing ensures that ascenders and descenders of letters do not touch
- Allow choice writing implements suited to a task
- Increase speed and accuracy

WHEN CHILDREN ARE USING AN EFFECTIVE GRIP THEY WILL BE REWARDED WITH A 'GOLDEN PENCIL' AWARD.

WHEN CHILDREN ACHIEVE A FLUENT, LEGIBLE, JOINED UP STYLE THEY WILL BE AWARDED THEIR 'PEN LICENCE' AND ENCOURAGED TO WRITE IN INK (FREE FLOWING NOT BALL POINTS)

How to provide for 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 do not clash
- Remind them to have paper to the left of centre and tilted to the right
- Position fingers about 1.5cm from the end of the pencil to avoid smudging.

What about children that struggle with joining?

If a child has learning differences that mean joining their writing makes any written communication become laborious and slow (and frustrating) for them, then a conversation should be had with the Learning Enrichment Department and an exception made for this child and something added to their Individual Learning Plan to indicate that this is the case (for future teachers).

Parental Involvement

Parents will be informed of the school's policy on handwriting at Orientation /Induction Meetings and information will be available on FROG (the VLE). Sheets with letters showing the correct formation will be distributed as necessary and to all parents as part of induction (see appendix 4). Information on the important benefits of using joined writing can also be passed to parents (see appendix 1)

Appendix 1 - Top 10 Reasons to Learn Cursive

Appendix 2 – The Nelson reference guide

Appendix 3 – The letter 'groups'

Appendix 4 – Handwriting help sheet for parents



Top 10 Reasons to Learn Cursive

Iris Hatfield, Handwriting Coach

Learning cursive offers an incredible array of well-documented benefits.

Below are ten reasons all children should be encouraged to learn cursive:

1. Improved neural connections in the brain. Cursive handwriting stimulates the brain in ways that typing cannot. It improves the dynamic interplay of the left and right cerebral hemispheres, helps build neural pathways, and increases mental effectiveness. According to Virginia Berninger, a researcher and professor of educational psychology at the University of Washington, "Pictures of brain activity have illustrated that sequential finger movements used in handwriting activated massive regions of the brain involved in thinking, language, and working memory. Handwriting differs from typing because it requires executing sequential finger strokes to form a letter, whereas keyboarding only involves touching a key."

2. Increased ability to read cursive. Learning to write in cursive improves a student's ability to read cursive. Many high school students cannot read cursive. They are cursively illiterate in their own language.

3. Increased speed. The connectivity of a simple cursive style is faster to write than the stop and start strokes of printing.

4. Improved fine motor skills. "Cursive handwriting naturally develops sensory skills. Through repetition the child begins to understand how much force needs to be applied to the pencil and paper, the positioning of the pencil to paper at the correct angle, and motor planning to form each letter in fluid motion from left to right. This physical and spatial awareness allows them to write, but more importantly, builds the neural foundation of sensory skills needed for a myriad of everyday tasks such as buttoning, fastening, tying shoes, picking up objects, copying words from blackboards, and most importantly, reading. To quote first-century Roman writer, Marcus Quintilianus, 'too slow a hand impedes the mind,' and we cannot afford to have our children be any slower." *Cutting Cursive, The Real Cost.* Candace Meyer, Minds-in-Motion, Inc.

5. Improved continuity and fluidity of written communication. Cursive handwriting involves connecting letters, which has been shown to increase both speed of writing and attention span during writing. This increases continuity and fluidity in writing, which in turn encourages greater amounts of writing.

6. Ease of learning. Printing is more difficult due to the frequent stop and start motion when forming letters. In addition, some printed letters look similar and are easily reversed, like the 'b' and 'd', which is often confusing to children. This is of particular value to children with learning challenges like Dyslexia and A.D.D.

7. Improves reading and spelling ability. When printing, some children write so erratically that it is difficult to determine where one word ends and another begins. Cursive, on the other hand, requires children to write from left to right so that the letters will join in proper sequence; therefore, it is easier to read. It also aids with spelling through the connectivity of the letters. This helps the child to see words as a whole instead of seeing separate letters (as in printing). Additionally, the hand acquires knowledge of spelling patterns through movements that are used repeatedly in spelling. This is the same phenomenon that occurs when pianists or typists learn patterns of hand movements through continued repetition.

8. Self-discipline. Cursive handwriting is complex, and is inherently associated with the development of fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination. Learning cursive prompts children to also develop self-discipline, which is a useful skill in all areas of life.

9. Higher quality signature. Cursive handwriting can improve the attractiveness, legibility, and fluidity of one's signature.

10. Increased self-confidence. The ability to master the skill to write clearly and fluidly improves the student's confidence to communicate freely with the written word.

Handwriting is still a vital life-skill.

THE NELSON HANDWRITING SCHEME – used at W.A.

OUR SCHOOL HANDWRITING SCHEME

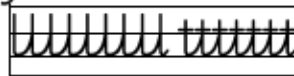
We begin at school with letters being written separately (not joined up yet) although you'll see that all our letters have the flicks on them so children are ready later.

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

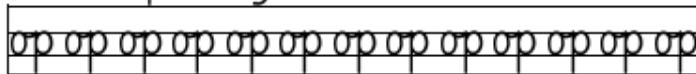
a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t
u v w x y z

By the **end of Y2** we aim to get all of our children to join up their letters correctly. If there's a capital letter at the start of the word we don't join that.

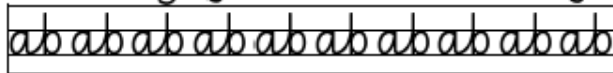
Some pairs of letters join on the line:



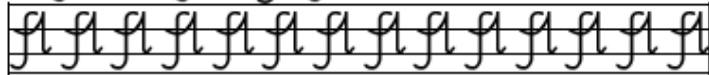
Other pairs join in the middle:



Others go from the bottom of the line the middle:



A final few go from the middle towards the top:



ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

When our children are in Y6 and they are fluent and confident handwriters, we encourage them to develop their own, consistent style:

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz |

Nelson Letter Formation & Letter Joins

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

ABCDEFGHIJKL MNOPQR STUVWXYZ

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

The Four Joins

1. to letters without ascenders
2. to letters with ascenders
3. horizontal joins
4. horizontal joins to letters with ascenders

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

The break letters (letters that aren't joined from) are:

b g j p q x y z s

The joining sets

Set 1

a c d e h i k l m
n s t u

Twelve letters with exit flicks plus s.

Set 2

a c d e g i j m n o
p q r s u v w x y

Nineteen letters which start at the top of the x-height.

Set 3

b f h k l t

Six letters which start at the top of the ascender.

Set 4

f o r v w

Five letters which finish at the top of the x-height.

The break letters

b g j p q x y z

Eight letters after which no join is made. Joins are not made to or from the letter z.



Warwick Academy

How you can help your child improve his/her handwriting A HELP SHEET FOR PARENTS

Overview

With the telephone, fax machine and e-mail is handwriting now outdated? By no means! The need to be able to write well and quickly is greater today than it ever was. This article looks at ways in which you can help your child to get better at handwriting. You will see that we have used 'he' for children – this is just to make it easier to read.

Although children in schools everywhere now spend a lot of time learning how to use computers and electronic gadgets, after speech, handwriting is still the most accessible, versatile and creative way of getting and keeping in touch. It holds its place as a basic skill in the primary school curriculum, allowing children to express themselves and enriching all areas of learning. It becomes a life-long source of pleasure to all who master it, and gives delight to all who receive or read it.

How can you help?

Most importantly, you can show your child that you value and admire the skill. At the end of this guide is a guide to our handwriting scheme so you will know how your child knows how to 'form' their letters. We use the 'Nelson' handwriting scheme.

Help your child establish an effective and efficient grip. At the end of this guide there is information on the 'grip' we recommend and encourage at WA.

Have a small selection of handwriting materials readily available at home. The class teacher may be able to advise you about this, but soft pencils (B Grade), fibre-tip pens and some sheets of white paper are enough for a start.

Let handwriting play a part in your family's daily life, for example.....

- making lists and labels
- keeping a family diary
- leaving notes for each other in busy households
- keeping in touch with distant friends and relatives
- designing and making home-made notelets and greetings cards.

Display your child's work – if you haven't got a noticeboard, you could use the fridge door. After being on display, favourite pieces could be pasted into a scrap book to build up a unique record of progress and achievement.

Encourage your child to sit properly when he/she is writing. He will get the best results if

- he/she is in a good light
- he/she sits on an upright chair
- he/she sits at a comfortable height
- he/she keeps his/her back straight
- his/her head is high enough to see the point of the pencil forming the letters

Good posture is vital for any child, but it is particularly important if your child is left-handed, because people who are left-handed have a tendency to develop a cramped, curled hand position which makes writing very hard work. Sitting properly helps to prevent this. So do your best to provide somewhere where your child can work, even if it's the end of the kitchen table.

Many children like to do their homework lying on the floor, but don't let them! They can't develop good handwriting that way and they can't present their work in a way that does them justice.

What materials are needed?

You can make a start with whatever pens, pencils and paper are to hand, but, as your child gets better, he will begin to have particular preferences, and you might need to widen the choices available.

Remember though that you can produce beautiful results with the simplest materials. A soft pencil and a sheet of inexpensive plain writing paper can produce a page of beautiful calligraphy as surely as the most expensive materials.

We'll be able to tell you what we use at various ages and stages and a look around the nearest large stationery store will show you what is available. The range of choice has never been wider and most products are carefully designed to suit the needs of young children.

If you're choosing pens, remember that young children get on best with those that have a bit of 'bite'. Ball points tend to run too easily over the paper and this is a particular problem for left-handed children. Fibre-tips and felt-tips are easier to control.

Learning to write well can use up quite a lot of paper, so it is sensible to save the better quality sheets for final drafts and special assignments. You can use cheaper recycled or re-used paper for daily practice and it's a wonderful way to make use of junk mail.

Guidelines can help your child to produce regular, well-sized writing. You can easily make a set of guidelines from a sheet ruled in black fibre-tip with the lines 1cm apart. Draw a margin round the page and encourage your child to decorate each piece of work with a handwriting pattern. Border patterns are more than just decoration. They help to develop a feel for the rhythm of

fluent writing, establish basic hand and arm movements and also encourage regularity in the size and shape of letters.

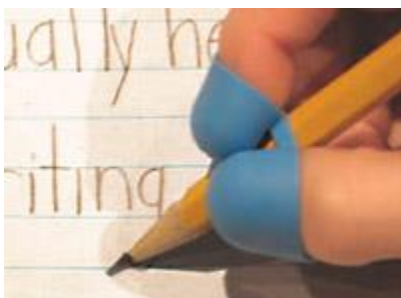
The Tripod Grip (the grip we recommend)

The pencil should be positioned so that there is equal pressure between the thumb, the side of the middle finger and the tip of the index finger. All fingers are bent slightly. This is called a "tripod grip" or "tripod pencil grasp".

If your child struggles with this [We recommend slipping a pencil grip](#) onto the child's pencil. A pencil grip positions the fingers correctly and helps the fingers stay in the position as they write. Pencil grips come in several styles.



Pencil grips



THE NELSON HANDWRITING SCHEME – used at W.A.

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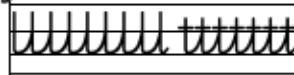
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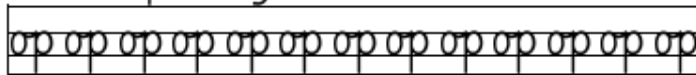
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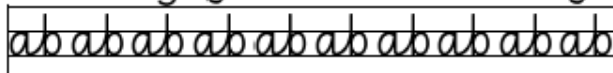
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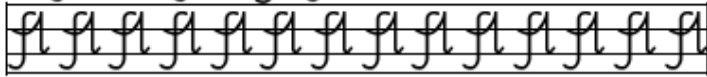
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