

# Whitstable Junior School

## HANDWRITING POLICY



*Writing also depends on fluent, legible and eventually, speedy handwriting.*  
(National Curriculum 2014)

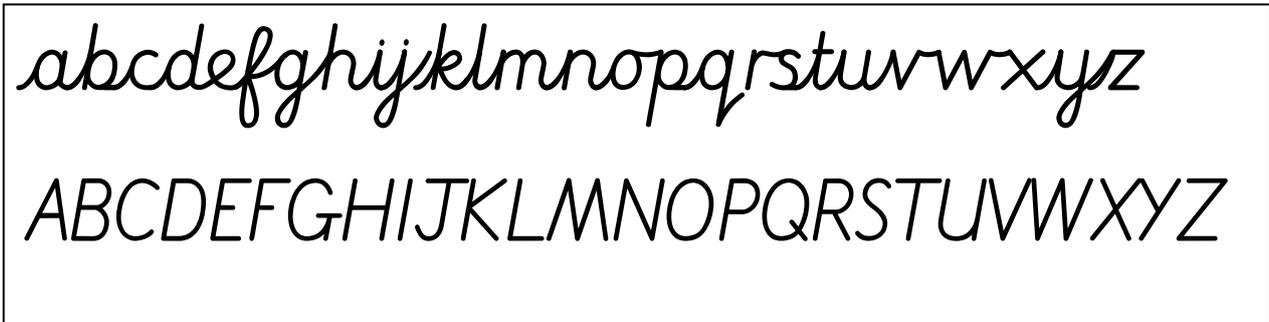
### Introduction

At Whitstable Junior School, we recognise that being able to write legibly and fluently is an important skill in being able to communicate language to readers. The National Curriculum 2014 contains statutory information and additional guidance on how this should be done, and we implement this throughout the year groups in Key Stage 2.

### Aims:

- To know the importance of clear and neat presentation in order to communicate meaning effectively
- To write legibly in both joined and printed styles with increasing fluency and speed by;
  - Having a correct pencil grip
  - Forming all letters correctly – both upper and lower case
  - Knowing the size and orientation of letters

At Whitstable Junior School, the agreed letter formation is as follows:



### Handwriting in the New Curriculum 2014

The following guidance contains the requirements for Handwriting for Years 1 and 2 as we recognise that as a junior school, some Year 3 pupils will still be working at Key Stage 1 levels on entry to the school.

#### Year 1

##### Statutory requirements

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 correctly
- 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**

### **Statutory requirements**

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.

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 and 4**

### **Statutory requirements**

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 and 6**

### **Statutory requirements**

Handwriting and presentation

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.

### Transition through the stages of handwriting

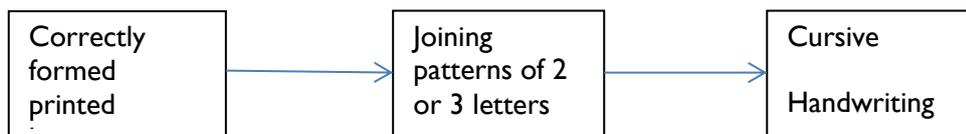
The acquisition of good handwriting skills follows a pattern, as recognised in the National Curriculum, but we realise that children will become competent in these skills at different rates. Children will move from printing, to joining 2 or 3 letters, to fully cursive handwriting depending on a range of factors, including maturity and fine motor control. Therefore, we aim generally to follow the yearly programmes in the National Curriculum but adapt this to the needs of different children. We expect all children to be able to write in a fully joined cursive script and aim to have achieved this with the majority of children by Year 4.

It is the responsibility of the class teacher, in liaison with other staff e.g. SENCO, Literacy Leader, to ensure that differentiation is dependent on each child's skills and abilities, and that appropriate interventions are put in place to support children if necessary.

### Feeder infant schools

We are currently developing our policy in liaison with both of our feeder infant schools. Currently, neither infant school has a cursive writing policy and as a result we assess handwriting at the beginning of Year 3 and generally follow the flow chart below aiming to work on cursive handwriting as soon as possible in Year 3.

The most important stage in the acquisition of fluent and legible handwriting is the correct formation of letters, and this necessarily falls within Early Years and KSI.



### Whole School target:

The school has used The Handwriting File as a guide to teaching handwriting since 2013/14 and as such all year groups have regular direct handwriting teaching using this resource. We are aiming to be meeting the Curriculum 2014 expectations outlined above by the end of 2015.

### Teaching time

There should be a minimum of one 15 minute handwriting lesson each week as well as time to practice. Children who find handwriting difficult should be targeted for regular intervention.

## **Handwriting is one of a range of writing skills**

Whilst we recognise the importance of handwriting in presenting written language, we also acknowledge that there are many other skills required e.g. spelling, punctuation, composition, use of vocabulary. Handwriting is therefore taught as a discrete activity and also alongside other writing skills e.g. in Year 3/4 children may rehearse sentences in cursive style on individual whiteboards at the same time as composing effective sentences, before writing them in books.

Children are encouraged to rehearse sentences aurally and in writing before committing them to paper, particularly those children who may have language processing difficulties.

Children are also encouraged to take responsibility for their own handwriting, showing initiative and also being pro-active in responding to adults' guidance.

## **Methods and Resources**

A variety of methods and resources are used to practise handwriting, and the emphasis is on repetition, especially for those children who have yet to master the vital Key Stage 1 skills.

These include:

- Use of the Read Write Inc rhymes, linked to phonics, to learn correct letter formation in sets of letters (see also section below).
- Use of the dyslexia friendly resource 'The Handwriting File' to engage children in analysing their own handwriting, set targets and revisit and reinforce correct letter formation.
- Interventions for older children if applicable, to develop gross motor skills and then refine them in improving fine motor skills linked to correct letter formation. E.g Fizzy Hands or Fingers
- Final drafts of Literacy work written up neatly in "Smart" books.
- Whole school handwriting competitions and focus on handwriting and presentation for displays / different audiences
- Children seeing a range of different fonts and styles of writing modelled by the adults and on display in the classroom.
- Use of the software programme Handwriting for Windows (HfW) to produce IWB pages, worksheets, templates and resources in each class for modelling of handwriting
- Handwriting master classes and class based rewards for the most improved or neatest handwriting – this is often delivered by the headteacher.
- Practice worksheets.
- Visual prompts including alphabet display with correct letter formation starting points, handwriting letter cards, and bookmarks showing correct formation of letters
- Use of line guides to help children achieve the correct letter size
- Reminders around the classroom about tricky letters or expectations
- Mini-alphabet strips modelling formation on desks

## **Read Write Inc**

At Whitstable Junior School we use Read Write Inc to teach children who are not yet at age expected standards in reading or who require additional support to catch up or keep up with phonics, reading or writing. Read Write Inc does not support cursive handwriting as it is primarily designed to be a whole school resource taught from Year R to Year 2.

At Whitstable Junior School we have adapted the way the RWInc letters are taught to add a joining flick that always starts on the line – letter / sound rhymes have also been adapted to support this.

## **The Handwriting File**

The principle resource used is The Handwriting File which contains information for teachers and pupils about handwriting along with practice sheets to establish correct letter formation, practice of this as single and joined letters and within words in a developmental sequence. The letters are taught in families and within words to support spelling and to make the transition from handwriting lessons to general work as quick and smooth as possible.

### **Teaching sequence – letter formation**

C shapes - *cagdoqpb*

N shapes - *nhm*

L shapes - *lituvwy*

Leftover shapes - *efjkersz*

**The Handwriting File** includes guidance on:

- Self review about handwriting
- Handwriting technique – posture and paper position
- Pen hold and pen angle
- The letter forest – positioning letters
- Analysing your own handwriting
- Letter formation

An example of high standard Year 3 and Year 6 handwriting can be seen in Appendix 1.

### **Additional Guidance for Teachers**

As a first resource, teachers should use the guidance – outlined above – in The Handwriting File. Additionally teachers may refer to the guidance below or the document Handy Hints for Handwriting – see Appendix 2.

Techniques for teaching letter formation

- Model good handwriting all the time
- Demonstrate
- Talk through through the process
- Encourage children to verbalise the process
- Children form letters in the air
- Finger trace over tactile letters
- Write over highlighter pen (or dotted letters)

- Draw round templates
- Write in sand with finger or stick
- Write with chalk on chalkboard
- Wax resist letters
- Form letters with pegs on pegboard
- Form letters with beads in plasticene
- Finger trace the outline of letters on the back of the person in front of you

### **Useful 'rules' to reinforce:**

- Lower case letters always start on the line with a lead in 'flick'
- Lower case letters always end on the line with a final flick
- Upper case / capital letters always sit above the line
- Capitals never join
- Numbers and capitals should be of a similar size and larger than lower case letters.

### **Getting ready to write**

#### Seating and posture

- Chair and table should be at a comfortable height
- The table should support the forearm so that it rests lightly on the surface and is parallel to the floor
- Encourage children to sit up straight and not slouch
- The height of the chair should be such that the thighs are horizontal and feet flat on the floor
- Tables should be free of clutter
- Rooms should be well lit
- Left handed pupils should sit on the left of their partners

### **Pencil grip**

Children should write with a pencil until the teacher assesses that they are routinely using a fully joined cursive script that is fluent, fluid and legible. The child should then be awarded a Pen Licence and can write in pen using a round nibbed blue ink pen – school will supply this.

Pencils should be reasonably sharp.

A range of pencils and writing pens and grips will be available in each class and children should be encouraged to find one that enables them to write comfortably and effectively.

A tripod grip is the most efficient way of holding a pencil

#### **For right handers**

- Hold lightly between the thumb and forefinger about 3cm away from the point
- The paper should be placed to the right tilted slightly to the left
- Use the left hand to steady the paper

#### **For left handers**

- Hold lightly between thumb and forefinger resting on the first knuckle of the middle finger
- Hold about 3cm from the tip
- The hand should be kept below the writing line

- The paper should be tilted slightly to the right at about 20 - 30°
- Use the right hand to steady the paper

**NB It is very important that a right handed child is NOT seated on the left hand side of a left handed child as their elbows will collide!**



When they meet with an obstacle, mount to the sky.  
So up to the house-top the coursers they flew,  
With a sleigh full of toys, and St Nicholas too!  
And then in a twinkling, I heard on the roof,  
The prancing and pawing of each little hoof.  
As I drew in my head and was turning around,  
Down the chimney St Nicholas came with a bound!  
He was dressed all in fur from his head to his foot,  
And his clothes were all tarnished with ashes and soot.  
A bundle of toys he had flung over his back,  
And he looked like a peddler, just opening his pack.  
His eyes - how they twinkled! His dimples how merry!  
His cheeks were like roses, his nose like a cherry!  
His droll little mouth was drawn up like a bow,  
And the beard of his chin was as white as the snow.  
The stump of a pipe he held tight in his teeth,  
And the smoke it encircled his head like a wreath.  
He had a broad face and a little round belly,  
That shook when he laughed like a bowlful of jelly!  
He was chubby and plump, a right jolly old elf,  
And I laughed when I saw him, in spite of myself.  
A wink of his eye and a twist of his head,  
Soon gave me to know, I had nothing to dread.  
He spoke not a word but went straight to his work,  
And filled all the stockings, then turned with a jerk,  
And laying a finger on the side of his nose,  
And giving a nod, up the chimney he rose!



## *HANDY HINTS FOR HANDWRITING!*

### *Do It Yourself!*

Set yourself the challenge of changing your handwriting with the children. Get them to evaluate how well you are doing!

Remember it takes 21 days to change a habit with the first 5 days the most challenging along with the last 5 days!

Set up support groups in your class with handwriting experts who can offer peer support, teacher prompting and general helpful hand writers! Who can be most helpful?

Don't expect your children to develop a neat, legible cursive script if you don't write this way every day or if they can't read your writing! Practise what you preach!

### *Be Prepared!*

Before any handwriting can take place effectively the child must be seated correctly:-



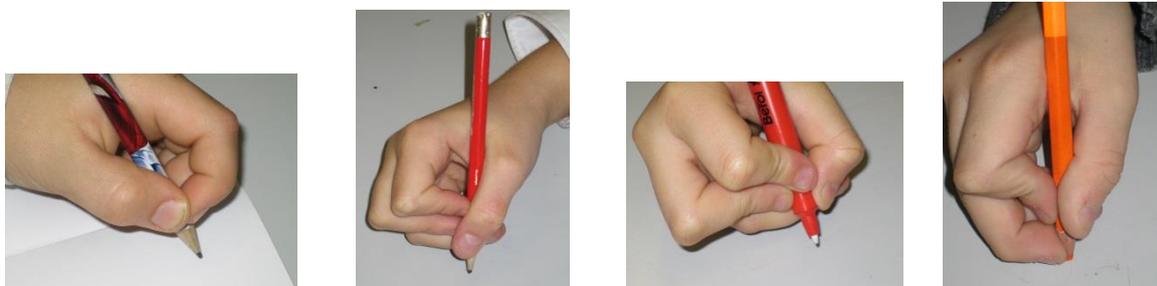
- bottom to back of chair
- back supported by chair back
- chair pulled into desk so that arms can rest on desk from elbows without body leaning forward too far

Depending on the child's preferred writing hand, the book should be slightly angled on the desk:



- book angled slightly - left side down, right side up for right handers, the opposite way for left handers
- non-writing hand to hold book/paper still

The pen or pencil should be held in an appropriate manner - make sure that writing can be fluid and fluent and the actual grip comfortable. It is probably too late to change a child's grip by the time they reach KS2.



- comfortable pen/pencil grip that allows easy fluid and fluent movement of the pen/pencil - it is not easy to change grip style once this has been used throughout KS1 - although there are optimum holds and pencils and pencil grips to encourage these.
- Pencils sharpened, pen nibs effective!

### Language!

Make sure you teach the children the correct terminology and use it:

- ascenders
- descenders
- joins
- flicks
- stick and ball

### Graphics!

Teach the children about the relative size, dimensions and angles of the letters.

Make them think about writing letters in terms of layout:

- all vertical lines should be parallel
- all horizontal lines should be at the same height between the lines and level with all dots
- all 'ball' parts of letters should be roughly the same size
- ascenders should be clearly taller than 'ball' parts of letters but not so high that they interfere with descenders from the line above
- descenders should hang far enough below the line to be clear but not interfere with letters on the line below.

You can achieve the above by drawing faint parallel guidelines for the vertical strokes to follow, add some horizontal lines to show approximate dimensions of ball parts of letters, indicate how high up the dots and crosses should be made.

Try using handwriting paper or use three lines in an exercise book - ball parts of letters on middle line, ascenders line above and descenders line below.

What makes neat handwriting is a fluid, fluent, consistent style where all of the above is achieved.

Handwriting should be a relaxed exercise which equates to a constant flow of fluid across a page with the pen being pulled smoothly from one side to the other. (NB left handers often find writing hard because they have to push the pen across the page - hence many twist their hands above the line to achieve the 'pull')

If their hands/fingers/arms hurt or if the page is indented then they are trying too hard! Pencil grips should be relaxed and the movement of pen across paper should be fluid and fluent - controlled but relaxed.

### Sequence!

- Always model the letter formation - make sure you face the same way as the children!
- Always start large and move to smaller size text.
- Always write large and then move to small.
- Only move to practising a letter once the child definitely has the correct formation - no point in practising the wrong thing.

### Individual letters or words?

Teach letters in groups of similar shapes, then put into word context - children can then use this immediately in their work.

Mark work for these words/letters only.

Teach in the groups specified in the Handwriting policy.

### Fact!

Handwriting uses gross motor muscles in the shoulders as well as fine motor muscles in the wrist/hand/fingers. Try writing a sentence or two whilst focusing on the parts of your body that are moving controlling this - you should feel this in your shoulder. Always get these muscles to rehearse shapes first - air writing! (see below).



*Rehearse & reinforce the correct letter formation by writing it as large as possible:*

Get children to feel the letter shapes by writing them as large as possible in the air - tell them why. Not only does this help the muscles learn the correct letter formation, but it allows you to check that each child is using the correct formation.

Make this fun - hold hands together interlocking fingers, extend index fingers to form a 'point' in Charlies Angels/Cagney & Lacey style !! You may feel the need to bring this into the current generations experience zone!



Make sure the children draw the letters in the air slowly and focus on correct formation.

Model the action yourself - use the shadow created from the projector to give a visual prompt too.

For dyslexic/dyspraxics or children with motor control issues repeat the above but with their fingers touching a door or chalkboard or wall. This introduces a kinaesthetic element -make it multi-sensory by getting the children to repeat the letter sound with the air writing.

*If they get really stuck:*

Chalk the letter shape onto the playground and get the child to walk the shape and then use a long handled floor brush and without lifting the brush from the floor, sweep the chalk lines away following the correct letter formation.

Use a large sheet of sugar paper and ready mix paint with a large paint brush - paint the correct letter formation - focus on fluidity & flow.

*Copying from the board is difficult for some children - try the following:*

Draw the letter shape on the child's back and then get them to write the letter as you repeat this - large letters first, reducing to normal size.



Chalk the letter onto a desk top - get the child to chalk over this repeatedly whilst saying the letter sound. The child then rubs the chalk off the desk by using the index finger. Make sure they follow the correct letter formation.

Repeat the above but use whiteboards and pens, cloth wrapped around finger.

Draw the letter onto a small sheet of sand paper - child (carefully!) rubs finger around correct letter formation.

Use a sand tray and get them tracing the letter shape into the sand.

Use dotted letter shapes for the child to trace over before trying the letter independently.

Stick a small strip of the alphabet onto the desk top - use red arrows to indicate direction of movement.

*Make it fun!*

*Do it regularly!*

*Keep practising !*

*Anyone can change their handwriting around in three weeks! .....  
.....even you!*