

## Handwriting at Westlands

### Handwriting in the classroom

*The skill of handwriting needs to be taught. It is not a natural skill that will grow and develop like speaking or walking. Handwriting is a motor activity. A movement stored in the body rather than in the conscious memory. Our hands and fingers control the movements involved in handwriting. It is in our hands that the kinaesthetic memory lies. This controls the direction and shape of each letter. An effective handwriting policy is based on a style that is quick and easy to learn. It should be neat, legible and fast. Pupils should eventually develop the ability to produce letters without thinking. An automatic style releases the brain to concentrate on other ideas i.e. spelling, grammar, syntax, style and content.*

At Westlands we use Collins Handwriting Scheme to support our teaching of handwriting. Handwriting should be taught alongside phonic and spelling knowledge at all stages. Effective teaching of handwriting can only be achieved through modelling. Teachers must demonstrate letter formation and joins regularly, and children must practice by carefully copying and repeating. It is important to observe children writing to ensure they are forming letters correctly.

### Handwriting Principles

- Handwriting should be taught explicitly, in short, frequent sessions. ***It should be modelled by the teacher then supervised.*** Children should be self/peer assessing, looking for consistency
- Where possible, it should be linked to phonic and spelling patterns. This will help with handwriting and with the 'muscle memory' of spellings
- When ready, pupils should be practising on the lines they are going to use in their writing books
- High expectations of writing are needed. Children need to repeat work that is not satisfactory
- In Key Stage 2 children can gain a 'pen licence' for correct formation of letters, consistent fluidity and correct joins.
- Teachers need to model good handwriting when appropriate.

### Handwriting in the Foundation Stage

Good handwriting relies on secure motor control and hand-eye coordination. Children in the Foundation Stage should learn handwriting through movement with the actual writing of letters as the ultimate aim. Children will:

- Engage in activities requiring hand-eye coordination
- Use one-handed tools and equipment
- Draw lines and circles using gross motor movement
- Manipulate objects with increasing control
- Begin to use anticlockwise movement and retrace vertical lines
- Begin to form recognisable letters
- Use a pencil and hold it effectively to form recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed

### **Reception Pupils will be taught:**

- Pre-writing stage- patterning
- Individual letter formation and word formation based on letter groups (both of which are taught as part of our phonics lessons)

### **The National Curriculum English Programmes of Study provide guidance on teaching handwriting:**

#### **Year 1 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
- Understand which letters belong to which handwriting 'families' (i.e. letters that are formed in similar ways) and to practise these
- Make links with phonics and spelling

#### **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 not 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

#### **Year 3-4 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 not joined
- Increase the legibility, consistency and quality of their handwriting, e.g., 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.

#### **Year 5-6 pupils should be taught to:**

- Write legibly, fluently, with increasing speed and personal style by:
- Choosing which shape of a letter to use when given choices and deciding, as part of their personal style, whether to join specific letters
- Choosing the writing implement that is best suited for a task (e.g., quick notes, letters)

## **Joined up handwriting style**

At Westlands we introduce joined up handwriting at an early stage of a child's development: from Year 1 upwards.

Learning a series of early rhythmical movements can help children with specific learning difficulties improve their fine motor coordination.

### **Advantages**

- The motor memory of the child's hand and fingers helps them to spell as each word becomes one movement and not many
- Children can write at a faster pace
- Lessens the chance of reversing letters
- Spaces between words become more obvious
- Upper- and lower-case letters are clearer.

### **Supporting individual children:**

- Children should be encouraged to use the correct pencil grip and sit with a good posture.
- Lefthanded children should sit to the left of right-handed children to avoid their writing arms from bumping each other. The angle of the paper depends on the handedness of the pupil. Left-handers should sit with their body and paper at a slant to the right. This enables them to see their pencil tip, prevents them smudging their work with their writing hand and allows the pencil to move more freely. A left-hander may also benefit from holding the pencil higher up.
- Some children with specific difficulties may benefit from using a sloping surface and special equipment e.g., triangular pencil grip for a short period of time.
- It is important to use appropriate writing materials at each stage of writing development.
- A sharp pencil is essential for all early handwriting activities.
- Fluent and neat writers should move on to pen from Year 5 upwards
- Children need to see good examples of handwriting in classroom displays.
- Key Stage 1 children should practice their handwriting skills in the appropriate handwriting books.
- Key Stage 2 children should practice handwriting skills in grammar books.