



Rationale

At Charnwood Primary School children begin the process of learning handwriting from EYFS (Foundation Stage- Reception). This starts with developing motor skills and learning basic letter formations. We believe these raise standards in handwriting throughout the whole school, developing confidence, accuracy, fluency, writing stamina and presentation.

The Teach Handwriting Scheme continuous cursive font letters have been specifically chosen because they all join and are created using fluid motions, encouraging a fully joined, free flowing handwriting style which helps to build speed.

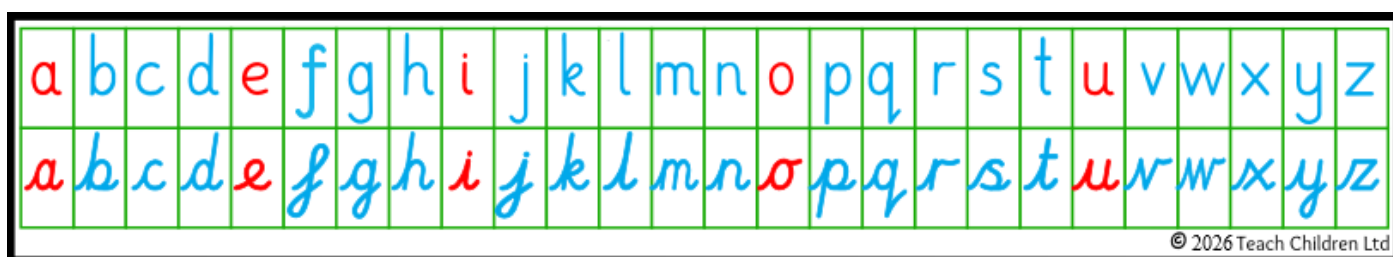
We believe the skill of handwriting needs to be taught, unlike speaking it is not a skill that grows and develops naturally.

We aim:

- to make handwriting an automatic process that does not interfere with creative and mental thinking.
- for our pupils to develop a neat, legible, speedy handwriting style using a Continuous Cursive font style that leads to producing letters and words automatically in independent writing.
- to have a consistent approach to the teaching of handwriting across the whole school.
- for all teachers and teaching assistants to take responsibility in modelling and teaching consistently the stated Continuous Cursive handwriting style in this policy throughout the curriculum and when writing in children's books, on the whiteboard or on displays/resources.
- 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 help children recognise that handwriting is a life-long skill and will be a fundamental element of all forms of written communication throughout their lives.

The Teaching of Handwriting

At Charnwood Primary School we teach the Print version 5 starting in Foundation Stage and continuing into Year 1. In the Summer Term of Year 1 or Autumn Term of Year 2 (ability dependant the following version of a Continuous Cursive font style is taught throughout the school (Teach Handwriting Scheme – Route B, Letter Version 3).



What are the benefits of Continuous Cursive handwriting?

- The starting point for all the letters is the same; on the writing line.
- The finishing points for all the letters is also at the writing line; except for o, r, v and w which have a top exit stroke.
- The single letter formations are taught with the entry and exit strokes, this makes the transition from single letter formation to joined handwriting very straightforward and allows it to occur sooner.
- Words are written in one set of movements without the pen being taken off the paper, this helps the motor memory to store spellings. This is especially important for those irregular spellings which so many children find hard to commit to memory.
- The result is easy to read, good to look at and quick to produce.

Teaching and learning

Handwriting is a skill which needs to be taught explicitly. Since handwriting is essentially a movement skill, correct modelling of the agreed style by the teacher is very important. Consistency in the attitudes displayed, the methods employed and the models provided is the key to effective learning. A mixture of whole class, small group and individual teaching is planned.

Handwriting will be taught in every year group, beginning in the Foundation Stage using the school's handwriting scheme – **Teach Handwriting** and the Teach Handwriting website. Teaching style, nature and frequency of handwriting lessons will be dependent on the Teach Handwriting Scheme timetables and the needs of children in individual classes, but should comprise of discrete handwriting lessons and those embedded within English, Phonics and PE.

Gross and fine motor skills

Activities to develop gross and fine motor skills are essential to the development of good handwriting. This is of particular importance in EYFS and KS1, but requires continued development and refinement throughout KS2 (Check the Teach Handwriting Scheme for year group appropriate activities).

Posture

Children should be taught the importance of sitting upright and correctly on their chair, with their feet on the floor and their chair tucked in from the earliest stages. As the amount of time spent by pupils in writing increases throughout the years, sitting in an awkward position can cause headaches and fatigue or pain in the shoulder arm or hand. Poor posture can also slow down a child's writing (Check the Teach Handwriting Scheme for year group appropriate activities).

Pencil grip and hand dominance development

Every child is different, developing the skills needed to hold a pencil in the tripod grip for handwriting, for both right and left-handed writers, at different times to their peers.

How a child holds a pencil is dependent on their age and the stage of their development. There are 5 developmental stages, that a child needs to go through, before they can successfully use a mature tripod grip. So, it is important to check a child's grip against the '5 developmental stages of pencil grip', as it maybe they are holding the pencil correctly for their current level of ability (Check the Teach Handwriting Scheme for information on the stages and appropriate activities to develop pencil grip).

We often talk about the most appropriate grip for handwriting being the tripod grip; but this usually only refers to finger position. It is easy to forget the importance of the actual hand position in relation to the pencil and paper for handwriting.

The ideal position is for the hand, wrist and elbow to be below the tip of the pencil and under the writing line for both left and right-handed writers

Children tend to develop hand dominance between the ages of 3-5 years old, for some it may be slightly later and for a few it does not become a subconscious decision until they are 8 or 9 years old.

Some children can develop a mixed dominance, this is where a child finds they have more control and greater skills for handwriting with say the left hand but prefer and display more precise skills with the right hand in tasks such as using scissors. This is perfectly normal and doesn't need changing.

The important thing is not to force particular hand dominance on a child. It will never feel natural for them and the acquisition of gross and fine motor skills will feel awkward and may well appear clumsy, delaying their development, skills ability, confidence and self-esteem (Check the Teach Handwriting Scheme for year group appropriate activities).

All children begin by writing with a pencil, as their fine motor skills develop and they move from forming all their letters correctly to joining them correctly, they may move to pen.

Position of paper

The paper position and tilt on the desk, for both right and left-handed writers, can make a big difference to a child's handwriting experience and comfort and yet it is an element which is often neglected.

By positioning and tilting the paper correctly the writing hand stays in one comfortable position on the table and the non-writing hand moves the paper diagonally up the table (while maintaining an appropriate paper tilt angle). With the non-writing hand moving the paper up the table the writing line stays in the same place which means eye movements are less, helping to make the writing experience less tiring and stressful.

If the paper is positioned and tilted correctly, with their writing hand under the writing line, they will also be able to see more easily what they have just written and where to place the next letter, word or section of text on the page. This is especially important for left-handed writers.

Paper Type

Just as the writing tool used by children changes as they develop, so does the paper they write on.

Young children, due to the stage of their physical development, draw from the shoulder rather than the elbow and wrist using large arm movements. At this stage they often prefer vertical drawing and painting surfaces as it allows a free range of movements. Therefore, any type of plain paper (no ruled lines) is considered the best option, as many children find it less restrictive.

When the children are ready to refine their pre-handwriting pattern skills, or move on to forming letters, it is a good idea to use plain paper. The aim at this stage is to learn how to form the letters correctly, not size or neatness as that comes later.

Before moving to lined paper, to help children to start to appreciate the letter proportions and positioning, paper with picture clues can be used.

The **Teach Handwriting Scheme** worksheets, writing paper and animations reinforce the idea of letter proportions and positioning by splitting the backgrounds into three colour zones to represent the sky, grass and earth. There are a number of reasons why this can be beneficial:

- It can create a sub-conscious memory in a child's mind of where particular letters sit in relation to others without the constraints of lines or obvious boundaries, especially as the picture can be any size. Children remember where to place the sun, grass or worms in their drawings; so why not letters?
- It can be easier to talk through the formation of how a shape or letter is formed with pictorial and colour clues to guide and inform the direction of the movements required.
- As a child's fine motor skills develop so the size of the picture/colour clues can be reduced to match their progress.

As a child's fine motor skills develop it enables them to form smaller more refined versions of the letters and this is when it is more appropriate to use lined paper.

The aim is to try and move children off the worksheets as soon as possible by encouraging them to transfer their skills to plain or lined paper which is appropriate for their ability.

How:

Use a combination of worksheets and plain/lined paper in each handwriting session with a child:

1. Use the colour worksheet, or a greyscale version, and complete one or two rows.
2. Then encourage the child to try the same patterns or letters on appropriately lined paper, again try one or two rows only.

This way the worksheet will last over a couple of handwriting sessions and you and more importantly the child will see an improvement in a short period of time. The sooner they learn to transfer their skills to plain/lined paper the better.

Pre-handwriting Patterns - The first step to handwriting

Pre-handwriting patterns are the first step in helping a child to learn how to form letters for handwriting. They help the child to learn the shapes and directional pushes and pulls required to form letters. As well as understand and use the language needed to describe pencil movements in preparation for letter formation. All letters are a combination of these shapes and lines.

These handwriting patterns do not need to be taught as worksheet activities (though they do help to perfect shape and pattern formation), drawing pictures and patterns in sand, paint and with other writing tools are all fun ways to practise.

Teaching the handwriting patterns in groups helps to further develop the specific movements (pushes and pulls) required to form them and help commit them to the motor memory. A child can then recall these motor memories to support them as they begin to form letters (Check the Teach Handwriting Scheme for appropriate activities and the school's animation channel for animations:

Correct letter formation (in family groups)

For children to develop a good handwriting style it is important to learn how to form letters correctly to begin with as this makes the transition from single letter formation to joined letter handwriting much easier. This enables them to develop a speedy, fluid and legible handwriting style.

Letters are created through joining lines and curve shapes in a particular way. They have a designated start point and set directional pushes and pulls of the pencil to reach the designated finish point.

The **Teach Handwriting Scheme** teaches letter formation in families/groups rather than in alphabetical order (in-line with the National Curriculum). Certain families use the same, or similar, shape and directional pushes and pulls of the pencil to form the letter, for instance the letter c has the same start point and anti-clockwise directional movement shape that is needed to create the letters a, d, g, o and, though a little more complicated, the letters s and e. Teaching letters in families/groups can also help to limit letter reversals such as b and d (Check the Teach Handwriting Scheme for appropriate letter families/groups and teaching order, check the school animation channel for letter animations).

Once a child has mastered and is able to form lower-case letters of a consistent size, and have them correctly positioned in relation to one another, they are ready to learn how to join their writing.

Teaching Letter Joins – A Systematic Approach

Teaching the join types in their groups helps a child to understand the directional pushes and pulls required to successfully join the different letter combinations.

There are 7 distinct types of cursive letter joins: Bottom Exit Letters joining with the Group 1 Letters; Bottom Exit Letters joining with the Group 2 Letters; Bottom Exit Letters joining with the Curves to Start Letters; Bottom Exit Letters joining with the letter 'e'; Top Exit Letters joining with the letter 'e'; Top Exit Letters joining with the Group 1 Letters and Top Exit Letters joining with the Group 2 Letters. (Check the Teach Handwriting Scheme for appropriate join groups and teaching order, check the school channel for join animations).

Helping left-handed children to write

It is important to talk through with the child the fact that you use a different hand to do tasks, like write, draw and cutting out, making it clear that that is normal and people just do things differently. Learning to write is the same for left and right-handed children except for a few minor adjustments in the pencil grip and paper tilt.

- Show them the correct paper position and tilt for them, explain that the paper is positioned this way so that they can see the paper and their writing as they write, which they could not do if they use a right-handed writer's position.
- The mature tripod grip is considered the best grip for all writers to use; it is easy to show and help a child to do. The only difference is that for left-handed writers they hold the shaft a little higher up and they angle the tip of the pencil towards the elbow rather than the shoulder. These small adjustments allow them to see what they are writing without affecting the free-flowing movements of the hand.
- When writing the writing hand should be below the writing line for both left and right-handed writer.
- A left-handed child's natural instinct is to write right to left rather than left to right. Use a range of pre-handwriting patterns that help a child to practise and get use to the feeling of the left to right pencil pushes and pulls they need for forming letters.
- Left-handed pupils should sit to the left of a right-handed child so that they are not competing for desk space.

Handwriting and Reading

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

Not all display materials will be expected to appear in Continuous Cursive writing (children should be exposed to a wide range of fonts as in the real world). However, there must be a clear display to support handwriting in EYFS and KS1; it is also appropriate to use table top mats as further support.

Continuous Cursive writing should be limited to the actual handwritten word/work (either in book or on the IWB when in handwriting mode).

An easily recognisable plain, evenly spaced sans serif font ought to be used where possible when typing on IWBs and in printed materials (such as slips in books) to ensure that all children can read the type clearly. A sans serif font (such as Comic Sans, Arial, Verdana, Century Gothic etc.) is recommended by the British Dyslexic Association.

It is also recommended that a white background should not be used, as it can be too dazzling. A cream or soft pastel is easier on the eye. Use dark coloured text on light and avoid green and red/dark pink for colour-blind individuals.

SEND support

Children who find handwriting difficult will be assessed (Teach Handwriting Scheme assessment section) and appropriate tuition supporting their specific needs provided to help them achieve their optimum handwriting level (Check the Teach Handwriting Scheme for SEND advice and activity programs).

Pupils transferring from other schools

In the case of pupils transferring from other schools in which a different style of handwriting has been taught, the class teacher will assess the pupils' handwriting and a decision will be made as to whether or not the pupil should continue with this style. Factors to be taken into account will include the age of the pupil and the extent to which a fluent, joined and legible style has already been established.

Homework

Pencils should be used for homework books unless children have been given permission by the school to use a pen or pen licence. Children are encouraged to use the Continuous Cursive script in all written home learning.

So that parent can support their child's handwriting at home the link below is for the Teach Handwriting website and takes them to the page for the animations and additional worksheets for the lower-case cursive letter version 2 taught at 'name of school':

Print (V5) lower-case letters: <https://www.teachhandwriting.co.uk/print-letters-v5-beginners.html>

Continuous Cursive lower-case letters (V3): <https://www.teachhandwriting.co.uk/continuous-cursive-beginners-choice-3.html>

Capital letter: <https://www.teachhandwriting.co.uk/capital-letters-beginners.html>

Numbers: <https://www.teachhandwriting.co.uk/handwriting-numbers-beginners.html>

Teach Handwriting website link for the animations and additional worksheets for Pre-handwriting patterns: <https://www.teachhandwriting.co.uk/foundation-stage-handwriting-routes.html>

Monitoring and assessment

The presentation of all work is monitored through work scrutinise, learning walks and lesson observations. All staff assess pupils' handwriting as part of their Writing Assessments criteria. Samples of work are retained and kept. Where there is any cause for concern more detailed assessment will be undertaken (see SEND support above).

Staff Development

Staff are encouraged to identify areas in which they feel they may benefit from further training. Training needs may also be identified by SLT or subject Co-ordinators.

Training may be provided in a number of ways including staff provision and attendance on courses. The subject leader will ensure that staff are aware of training opportunities related to handwriting.

The Role of the Headteacher/SLT/Governors

- To monitor the implementation of the handwriting policy.
- To support staff with new ideas, resources and materials relevant to the policy.
- To support standards and to lead work sampling sessions where staff look at handwriting across the school.
- To make recommendations for further improvement.
- We would like to thank **Teach Handwriting** for their contribution to this handwriting policy and for providing the resources and guidance that underpin our approach to handwriting at Charnwood Primary School.
- This policy has been developed using the **Teach Handwriting Scheme** and has been adapted to reflect the needs and context of our school. We gratefully acknowledge the contribution of Teach Handwriting and respect their copyright. Schools using or adapting this policy are asked to retain this acknowledgement and recognise the contribution of **Teach Handwriting** when making amendments to meet their own school's requirements.

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