

Policy and Procedure: Handwriting

Date of Board Approval: April 2018

Review date: February 2019



Introduction

At Khalsa Science Academy we believe that legible, economical handwriting is an essential tool that facilitates the entire manual writing activities children and adults undertake. We aim to teach the children to write in a style that enables the letters to be joined up easily. If they find the physical act of scribing achieving and comfortable, they will be likely to develop into confident effective writers.

Guidance

Schools are provided with guidance to help in the effective teaching of handwriting.

Early learning goal for handwriting:

Use a pencil and hold it effectively to form recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed.

What does the practitioner need to do?

- Give children extensive practice in writing letters, for example labelling their work, making cards, writing notices;
- Continue writing practice in imaginative contexts, joining some letters if appropriate, for example “at”, “it”, “on”;
- Intervene to help children hold a pencil effectively, use pencil grips to support this where necessary;
- Use opportunities to help children form letters correctly, for example when they label their paintings.

Source: The Foundation Stage

English Key Stage One

Handwriting: In order to develop a legible style, pupils should be taught:

- How to hold a pencil/pen;
- To start and finish letters correctly;
- Intervene to help children hold a pencil effectively;
- To form letters of regular size and shape;
- To put regular spaces between letters and words;
- How to form lower – and upper-case letters;
- How to join letters.

Our Handwriting Style

As a staff we decided that the handwriting style we have adopted has to meet a number of criteria:

- All teachers and Teaching Assistants should be familiar with and happy to use the agreed style to ensure consistent adult handwriting models throughout the school;
- To avoid confusion in the early stages of learning to read, children’s handwriting should be reasonably similar to the print style children meet in published books;
- It should be a style that is rational and consistent for ease of learning;
- It should demonstrate ease of performance and economy of effort, so writing is an enjoyable and pleasurable experience;
- It should lead smoothly into a joined up style as soon as children are secure in the movements of each letter;
- It should be legible and attractive, so children can feel pride and pleasure in the appearance of their finished work.

Our agreed style forms part of policy, and includes letter “shape families” and examples of good starting points for joining up letters, that is, some two-letter words.

School Guidelines

In order to perform the mechanics of writing confidently, children must develop good hand control. To this end, we promote the development of both gross and fine motor control through a variety of ongoing opportunities.

Having introduced the skills for handwriting from a very early stage, through play and cross-curricular opportunities, we allow children to pick up writing implement themselves and decide which hand they prefer. Only then are they given help with the pencil hold, and pencil grips provided if appropriate. Once they are confidently using flowing movements, the children are introduced to smaller, more controlled activities, and left to right, top to bottom and anti-clockwise movements are reinforced.

Left-Handed Children

These children are noted, and given guidance to ease the process of writing, by the implementation of these simple strategies:

- They are seated on the left of right-handed children, so their arms do not clash;
- Their paper is tilted clockwise so they can see what they have written;
- To avoid smudging their work, they are encouraged to position their fingers about 1.5cm away from the end of writing implement.

The Learning Environment

We provide an environment which is conducive to good writing by ensuring that tables and chairs of a suitable size and height are available for the children’s use; that there is adequate space and good lighting; that the atmosphere is calm and purposeful; and materials are accessible, suitable and varied, and of good quality.

Children are introduced to a variety of writing tools and equipment as they progress through the school: pencils, felt pens, handwriting pens, biros, chalk, crayons and paper of different colours, shapes, textures and types. Each classroom when possible also has an informal writing area, equipped with a variety of materials and writing tools, to encourage and motivate children to write for their own pleasure and enjoyment, and to give the opportunity to practise handwriting skills.

Introducing Handwriting

As children are taught to recognise and hear each letter's name and sound, and are introduced to both capital and lower case letters, they are taught how to form them correctly. In addition to letter formation, children are taught about spacing of words, and of ascenders and descenders.

As they begin to write letters, we provide them with a large piece of paper with a single line, as well as plain paper, leading to the regular use of lined and squared paper. This helps to establish the letters' orientation to the line and the relationship between the positions of the letters.

Children's names are useful source of learning for handwriting. Some children come to school already able to write their names, but may associate the wrong movement with certain letters. We find the common error is forming "o" and "a" using clockwise movement, and in these cases we sensitively teach the correct anticlockwise movement, giving them acquisition of over a third of the alphabet.

Introducing Joined Up Writing

We introduce joined up writing as soon as possible once children are secure in the movements of each letter – usually this is end of Year 1. For joined up handwriting practice, we distinguish between the letters that join with a diagonal line, those that join with a horizontal line and those which do not join. We also encourage the use of joined writing for practising some of the high frequency words, to help reinforce the fact that these words need to be remembered as wholes, e.g. the, little was and one.

How we Teach Handwriting

The following identifies specific teaching action and progression across the school.

Foundation Stage (Reception)

In the Foundation Stage classes we prepare the children for the fine motor skills required for good handwriting in practical and appropriate ways. We believe that children who have experienced the multi-sensory approach to learning letter shapes are less likely to develop bad writing habits. During physical development activities, which enhance gross motor control, we consolidate the vocabulary of movement by describing the children's actions, and we explore shape and direction using the whole body. We specifically aim to develop letter shapes through sky writing, and by making patterns in the air and on children's backs.

We focus on patterns, which build on the three basic letter shapes: "l", for example leg; "c", for example caterpillar; "r", for example robot. We include patterns that move across the body from left to right, we talk about the movements we make in patterns and we draw patterns in time to music. We give the children opportunities to practise letter shapes by drawing in the sand and by using large brushes for painting with on paper, and with water on the playground.

We encourage children to improve their fine motor control through activities, which involve small-scale movements, such as pegboards, sewing and weaving, chopping and peeling, finger rhymes, counting fingers, structured sand and water play involving sieving and pouring, easiform, clay and finger paints. Alongside this children trace, copy and practise patterns of circles, vertical, horizontal and leaning lines, wavy lines and "growing patterns".

As children discover their preferred hand for holding a pencil, thick and thin pencils are available for their use and they are given help with their pencil hold, if necessary, to ensure the correct and comfortable grip.

As the children are introduced to letter shapes, they learn alongside the letter sound, making use of the kinaesthetic channel to help them internalise the letter shapes that go with the sounds. The teachers also write new key words on the board, as they are introduced at whole class times as a shared writing activity through Read Write Inc.

Post Foundation Stage

Many of the physical activities from the Foundation Stage are continued in Year 1. Pattern work develops to include flowing patterns and more intricate shapes and figures. This refines hand control further and is a link with aesthetic and creative activities.

The preferred writing style is Nelson Handwriting. The course takes children from the earliest stages of developing motor skills through to developing a confident, legible, personal style.

Both lined and unlined paper is used for handwriting, with the more able progressing to a double line. Children's method of pencil hold is regularly checked so that a comfortable hold is maintained, and a commercial grip supplied if necessary, and their use monitored.

Children who demonstrate legibility, consistency and quality of handwriting, for example, by ensuring that 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 may use a handwriting pen.

Children who write legibly and fluently, with increasing speed by choosing which shape of letter to use when given choices and deciding whether or not to join specific letters; choosing the writing implement that is best suited for the task, may also use a handwriting pen.