



The Blue Coat School

HANDWRITING POLICY

Approved by the Governors' Teaching, Learning and Curriculum Committee on _____

Signed: _____

(A Poole – Chair of Teaching, Learning and Curriculum Committee)

This Handwriting Policy was devised by the Academic Lead and the Assistant Head (Learning and Teaching) in consultation with the Academic Team.

Date of Next Review: Trinity 2026

HANDWRITING POLICY

1. HANDWRITING RATIONALE

1.1

Handwriting affects written communication across the curriculum. It is a complex motor task accomplished by the action of coordinated finger, wrist and elbow movements in conjunction with stabilisation of trunk and shoulder girdle. It is also a perceptual skill requiring recognition and reproduction of different shapes together with an understanding of their orientation on a surface.

1.2

Handwriting is actively taught at The Blue Coat School. Even in this computer-literate age, good handwriting remains fundamental to each pupil's educational achievement. Pupils are empowered to write with confidence and creativity if they are able to use a flexible, fluent and legible handwriting style.

1.3

Associating handwriting movement with visual letter patterns and aural phonemes will help pupils learn to spell.

2. STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT

2.1

In the EYFS children practise gross and fine motor skills and begin learning correct letter formation and orientation using a correct age-appropriate grasp, with most children leaving the EYFS using a tripod grasp.

2.2

In Year 1, pupils are taught accurate letter formation with a focus on starting and finishing points. They will be able to form capital letters and lower-case letters of the correct size, orientation and relationship to one another, whilst using spacing between words that reflects the size of the letters. Pupils are shown how to sit correctly, hold a pencil properly, and position their paper appropriately. In Year 2, pupils are introduced to pre-cursive joins which leads to joining letters. Pupils develop their understanding of the use of diagonal and horizontal strokes needed to join some letters, including where each letter sits in relation to a line.

2.3

In Year 3, pupils continue to practise using a correct pencil grip and consolidate their knowledge of pre-cursive letter formation and joins, including where each letter sits in relation to a line. In Year 3, pen licences are awarded to some pupils who have achieved a consistently fluid script.

2.4

During Year 4, all pupils make the transition to writing in pen.

2.5

In Years 5 and 6, pupils improve the speed and fluency of their handwriting; some pupils will still focus on improving their letter formation and the overall presentation of their handwriting.

3. LETTER FORMATION (~~EYFS AND PRE-PREP~~)

3.1

Staff are aware that the letters of the alphabet are sorted into four main movement groups. Some letters have different forms – b, k, y, v, and so these fall into two groups. The four groups are:

- down and off in another direction, exemplified by the letter l (long ladder): letters i, j, l, t, u, y
- down and retrace upwards, exemplified by the letter r (one-armed robot): letters b, h, k, m, n, p, r;
- anti-clockwise round, exemplified by the letter c (curly caterpillar) letters: c, a, d, g, o, q, e, f, s;
- zigzag letters: letters: v, w, x, z.

4. PROVISION IN THE EYFS

4.1

In the EYFS, children are encouraged to work at a fine motor activity and gross motor activity every day for a specific length of time.

4.2

Until children have gained reasonable fine motor control through art, mark making and other activities, formal handwriting practice is not appropriate.

4.3

Each child should be allowed to pick up a writing implement themselves and decide which hand they prefer to use. As each child begins to discover their preferred hand for holding a writing implement, and once they are confidently using flowing movements, they can be introduced to smaller, more controlled activities.

4.4

Children in the EYFS are encouraged to progress from a Palmar or Digital grasp to a Pincer grasp. Children must learn to hold a pencil with a grip that is relaxed but allows for efficient control of the pencil. The dynamic tripod grasp is endorsed once the child is old enough to hold a writing implement. This minimises the risk of strain and offers the greatest control. Staff should ensure that they are encouraging the correct age-appropriate grasp.

4.5

In the EYFS, children are encouraged to skywrite with both hands; make patterns in the air, on a carpet or on a peer's back. In Nursery, children are also provided opportunities to make letter shapes in substances such as sand, foam or rice.

4.6

As children in the EYFS begin to write letters they should be provided with a large diameter hexagonal HB pencil and a large piece of paper (turned landscape) with a single line. Lines should be provided as a letter's orientation is generally associated to the line. As children progress, the width between the lines should decrease.

4.7

In Reception, any child who produces neat, well-formed letters will be provided with a regular sized HB pencil.

5. PROVISION IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

5.1

In Years 1 and 2, regularly scheduled handwriting lessons take place each week, with explicit instruction and modelling by the teacher. An example lesson structure includes:

- Brief warm-up exercises led by the class teacher
- Teacher models letter formation of letters in isolation, joins or words
- Teacher circulates and intervenes to secure understanding and progress

Handwriting practice is also incorporated across the curriculum, linking it to other subjects to give context and purpose. Tailored handwriting expectations and support is provided to meet the individual needs of pupils.

5.2

Letter-join is used to aid the delivery of handwriting teaching. Letter-join is a whole school handwriting scheme offering a combination of traditional and digital resources. Other handwriting schemes are investigated, evaluated and reviewed on a regular basis by the Head of English (Prep) and the English Subject Leader (Pre-Prep).

5.3

In handwriting lessons in Years 1 and 2, each pupil is given the opportunity to revisit and consolidate their growing knowledge of phonics and spelling while securing the kinaesthetic movements needed for a legible, fast and fluent handwriting style.

5.4

Teachers and Teaching Assistants act as a model when writing on the board or marking work, using a neat, fluent, joined style where appropriate: introducing pre-cursive joins in preparation for Prep when the pupils are ready.

5.5

Teaching the correct formation of letters should be given the highest priority and this should be achieved before any attempt is made at joining. Once pupils are secure in the movements of each letter then a joined pre-cursive script must be taught.

5.6

Pupils who find handwriting difficult should be targeted for ~~daily~~ intervention.

5.7

Pupils in Years 1 and 2 use a hexagonal HB pencil.

5.8

In Years 3 and 4, there is a 1 x 30 minute handwriting lesson fortnightly. The correct pencil grip and the use of pre-cursive letter joins are reinforced by the teacher on a regular basis in other lessons.

5.9

In Years 5 and 6, correct pencil grip and the use of pre-cursive letter joins are reinforced by the teacher on a regular basis in lessons.

5.10

In Years 5 and 6, handwriting intervention groups take place regularly for pupils who have been identified as requiring extra support within Learning Success sessions.

6. THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

6.1

Attention to posture and seating arrangements is important. Teachers need to ensure that the following are in place:

- Each pupil's chair and table should be at a comfortable height
- Each table should support the forearm so that it rests lightly on the surface
- The height of the chair should be such that the thighs are horizontal and feet flat on the floor
- Each table should be free of clutter
- Classrooms should be well lit
- Left handed pupils should sit on the left of their partners
- There should be ample space for both gross and fine motor skill warm ups
- Right handed pupils should tilt their book/paper to the left. Left handers should tilt their book/paper to the right. In each case the amount of tilt should be no more than 45 degrees.

6.2

Staff can access a pre-cursive and cursive font to create resources and enhance displays (in conjunction with other fonts).

7. TERMINOLOGY

7.1

Correct terminology should be used as soon as possible and displayed in the learning environment.

7.2

Terminology to be used includes:

- **Pre-cursive letter families:**
- **Straight letters** i l t u
- **2 o'clock letters** c a d g q s
- **Tunnel letters** n m h b p
- **Top joiners** o r v w
- **Square letters** x z
- **Odd letters** f k j y e
- **Lower case letter**
- **Capital letter**
- **Short letter** (describes a letter with no ascender or descender)
- **Letter with an ascender**
- **Letter with a descender**

8. HANDWRITING DIFFICULTIES

8.1

Pupils who display specific difficulties with handwriting will have these addressed through such interventions as slanted writing boards, rubber pencil grips, using alternative media etc.

8.2

Individual cases may be referred to the Director of Learning Success and SENCO where necessary. Targeted intervention, either from an occupational therapist, a physiotherapist or a specialist teacher will make a noticeable difference for most pupils.

8.3

Mild difficulties will be helped with quality first teaching and the maturation of the pupil.

8.4

Left-handed writers may develop fluency a little later than right-handers as they 'push' the pen across the page rather than 'pull' it. Specially designed resources and equipment are provided for left-handed pupils to use.

8.5

Many pupils with difficulties hold their pen or pencil in unconventional ways. If a pupil is writing neatly with appropriate speed and pressure, the grasp she or he is using may be fine. Pencil grips are only used effectively when combined with strengthening exercises. However, staff are aware that incorrect pencil grip may lead to problems when pupils transition to writing in pen, as steady ink flow can be dependent on the angle of the pen/nib; therefore age-appropriate pencil grips are encouraged from early stages.

8.6

Dysgraphia means "disturbance of or difficulty with orthographic-motor integration". The term describes purely the handwriting difficulty as it is possible for this to be an isolated problem and not associated with a more general disorder. There are sub-categories of dysgraphia, such as 'surface dysgraphia' or 'deep dysgraphia'. These recognize that weaknesses in different types of processing may be responsible for the problem, such as motor control, visual perception and spelling difficulties.

9. ASSESSMENT

9.1

All teachers at The Blue Coat School have high expectations of pupils in regards to handwriting and presentation of work in exercise books, and will encourage pupils to take pride in their work. Pupils' writing and presentation in exercise books will be monitored by teachers on a daily basis.

9.2

Pupils should be observed as they write during handwriting lessons. The teacher must circulate and intervene as necessary.

9.3

The Head of English (Prep) and the English / Literacy Subject Leaders (Pre-Prep) should monitor pupils' writing and presentation in books twice a year. The following should be considered:

- Is the writing generally legible?
- Are the letters correctly shaped, formed and proportioned?
- Are pre-cursive joins made correctly?
- Does each letter lead from the line and join, apart from when following a capital letter?
- Are the spaces between the letters, words and lines appropriate?
- Is the size of the writing appropriate?
- Is the writing properly aligned?

10. PARENTS AND CARERS

10.1

Parents and carers should encourage and support their child as they write at home from an early stage.

10.2

During an Information Morning/Parent Workshop parents/carers of children in Nursery are informed that they are expected to model good handwriting to their children.

10.3

Children in Nursery and Reception are given a handwriting pattern or letter formation sheet to take home each week.

10.4

Pupils in Pre-Prep are given letter formation, handwriting pattern(s) or a pre-cursive joining sheet to take home each week if they require additional practice. From Reception to Year 6, pupils are given log-in details for Letter-join to continue to develop neat, legible handwriting at home.

10.5

In Years 4, 5 and 6, when pupils write in pen, guidance is provided to parents regarding suitable pens for pupils to use in school.

11. RELATED POLICIES AND POLICY REVIEW

11.1

This Policy should be read in conjunction with other related whole school policies and documents including: Feedback and Marking Policy; Teaching and Learning Handbook; Curriculum Policy; Early Years Foundation Stage Policy; and English Handbook.

11.2

This Policy will be reviewed annually in the Trinity Term, or before if necessary. It will be presented to the Governor's Teaching, Learning and Curriculum Committee for approval. The minutes of this meeting will be presented to the Governors.