Hamsterley Primary School Handwriting Policy reviewed 2011

Mission statement:

‘Opening minds, unlocking potential, celebrating success together’

Hamsterley Primary School Handwriting Policy

Our aim is for children to develop legible, fluent, efficient handwriting.

Handwriting is not just a motor skill – it combines visual skills, cognitive skills, and motor skills, and must be taught in specific handwriting lessons if children are to develop efficient handwriting skills. In handwriting, as in other skills, children will develop at different rates; for that reason, it is important that there is a consistent style of handwriting throughout the school, and that all staff consider themselves to be teachers of handwriting, with a clear understanding of the progression of skills, and of how to remedy errors. It is not sufficient to tell children that their handwriting is untidy or needs improving – specific faults should be identified and dealt with as they arise, clearly explained and demonstrated to the child, and praise given for success.

Research has shown that “little and often” is the most effective strategy, so handwriting lessons will take place daily, immediately after registration. In Class 1, the Reception children will be taught letter formation as part of their Jolly Phonics learning.

The school handwriting style is based on Penpals for Handwriting which is available for reference in each class. A reference sheet showing an alphabet of capital, lower case and joined letters is included in the Appendix and should be available to children in every classroom, and to parents. Children who join the school with established fluent joined handwriting will be allowed to continue with their current style of handwriting.
The following is a brief outline of our agreed policy:

**Language of handwriting:** See appendix 1

**Gross and fine motor skills:** Activities to develop gross and fine motor skills are essential to the development of good handwriting. Pattern sheets are included in the Appendix; and in the Penpals materials. Many other materials and suggestions for activities are available in school. We use "Write from the Start" for identified children who need additional support with motor skills.

**Posture:** Children should be taught the importance of sitting upright and correctly on their chair, with their feet on the floor. We use the Penpals video guides to reinforce good posture before starting handwriting.

**Pencil grip:** Children should use a tripod grip, and be given constant reminders until this is established. Stabilo pencils will be introduced in Class 1 as children are ready for them. Triangular section pencils and shaped pencil holders are available in school for children who find them helpful. Children should be shown how to place their pen before them and pointing towards them, and then to pick it up and allow the pen or pencil to fall back into the tripod grip.

**Position of paper:** Left handed children should be encouraged to tilt their paper slightly to the right to improve their view of what they are writing, and to reduce smudging later on when they write in ink. Right handed children may find it helpful to tilt the paper slightly to the left. Paper should be steadied with the free hand. Slopes are available for children who need them to help with posture and positioning.

**Paper:** Early writers will write on unlined paper so that they are able to write at a size appropriate to their needs. As soon as children are beginning to control the size of their writing, they will be given lined paper and exercise books, to encourage the correct placing of letters on the line. Lines at an interval of 15mm will be standard in KS1, and 8mm or 10mm in KS2, although some children may have different needs. Where work is redrafted and presented for display, children may use plain paper and guidelines, with the same line spacing. A photocopiable master is included in the Appendix. For the teaching and practice of handwriting, it may sometimes be helpful to use handwriting exercise books or "handwriting paper" to give further support for the relative heights of parts of the letters; photocopiable masters are included in the Appendix.
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**Correct letter formation:** children are taught to form letters correctly, paying attention to the starting point for each letter, the direction of pencil movement, the shape and orientation of the letter, and the relative heights of the body of each letter, and any ascender and descender. Teaching will be multi-sensory and appropriate to the needs of the child. Our policy is to teach a letter shape which closely resembles print for early readers, and which will not need to be changed as handwriting becomes joined. The “patter” used in Reception to accompany correct letter formation is included in the Appendix. This is based on the Jolly Phonics letters.

**Joining letters:** Children should be introduced to joined handwriting as soon as they have mastered the shape of individual letters. They will begin by joining vowel and consonant digraphs, to facilitate the recall of spelling patterns. In Class 2, the four basic handwriting joins will be taught systematically (see the outline in the Appendix, and see scheme for more information) and then practiced in regular short handwriting sessions, linked to spelling patterns.

**Correcting mistakes:** use of rubbers is discouraged except in the case of work in pencil for display. Otherwise, mistakes in pencil or ink should be crossed out using a single horizontal line, and the whole word rewritten. Using double line spacing for work in draft allows the children space to improve their own work.

**Fonts:** materials prepared in school for children in KS1 will use Comic Sans, or the Sassoon Cambridge Primary Font - the latter is licensed for use on 5 computers in the school, and is installed on each class computer and on the three teachers’ laptops.

**Writing implements:** when children have achieved legible joined handwriting in pencil, they will progress to a Stabilo “school handwriting pen”, which will then be used for all written work in school. This will have the child’s name on it and their registration number in permanent marker, and will match their handedness. Children must be shown how to grip the pen correctly, and this message reinforced during handwriting lessons. Children will use a checklist to assess and improve their own work, and achievement of these milestones will be celebrated.
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In the case of Stabilo pens the first pen in any school year will be provided by the school, but parents will be asked to purchase replacements for lost or damaged pens during the year from the school office. Children should not use their own writing implements from home unless they are able to make a convincing case of special need; for example parents of some left handed children may prefer to provide a more expensive specialist left handed pen if their child finds that helpful.

**Ink:** Blue ink will be used throughout the school.

**Assessment:** Children will use the check list for their own self-assessment. Handwriting should be assessed termly for each child, and any child who shows slow acquisition of skills should be considered for individual support. See the assessment checklist in the Appendix.

**Further help and guidance** can be sought from the English Subject Leader.

This policy was updated in July 2011 in consultation with children, school staff and was adopted by governors on Date:

Lynn Cowans Headteacher
Signed
Date:

School Council
Signed
Date:

Stephen Lee Chair of Governors
Signed
Date:
Appendix

1 Language of Handwriting

2 Alphabet of capital, lower case and joined letters

2 Pattern sheets for letter families

3 Guidelines
   KS1  15mm
   KS2  8mm and 10mm

4 Handwriting paper
   KS1
   KS2

5 YR “patter” for correct letter formation

6 Outline of the four basic joins

7 Self assessment check: “What makes handwriting good”

8 Assessment for handwriting and examples
   KS1
   KS2
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**Up and down, left and right**

Teachers of young children will need to check whether their pupils understand the concepts of 'up' and 'down' as it is used when working with pencil on paper. Otherwise children who have only encountered these concepts as in 'look up' and 'fall down' may find instructions they are given impossible to understand. Rather than using the words 'left' and 'right' when giving instructions to young children, teachers may find that providing a reference point, e.g. 'towards the window', or 'towards the bookshelf' is more helpful at first.

**Cursive or joined up**

Experts in the field of handwriting disagree as to whether these words are synonymous or not and government documents are not consistent in their use of the words either. Schools should discuss this and agree a strategy for both the staff and pupils.

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**The language of handwriting**

In order for staff to communicate precisely with one another and with their pupils it is important for everyone to be familiar with the vocabulary of handwriting and to use the same words.

- **Capital or upper case letters/small or lower case letters**
  - Staff need to decide which terminology they will use with their pupils.

- **The base line**
  - This is the continuous line upon which the main bodies of all letters rest.

- **Ascenders and descenders**
  - These are the correct terms for what children often call the 'stems and tails' of the letters. The staff need to decide which terms they will use and be consistent. Some teachers think that 'stems and tails' is more accessible for young children. The important thing is that staff and children all use the same words and understand what they mean.

- **x-height letters**
  - These are letters without ascenders or descenders, such as m, n, x, k and j.

- **Letter bodies**
  - The parts of the letters which are neither ascenders nor descenders e.g. the round parts of b, d, and a and the 'arches' of m and n.

- **Entry and exit stroke**
  - Some schools teach their pupils to begin every letter from the base line; this is called an entry stroke. Most schools teach their pupils not to finish their letters by stopping short at the base line but to finish with a final 'kick' in a forward direction, preparatory to joining the next letter; this is called an exit stroke.
Curly “c” letters:
- c over the top and round
- o curly “c” all the way round
- a curly “c” up, down, flick
- d curly “c” all the way up, down, flick
- g curly “c” up, down, give it a tail
- q curly “c” up, down, kick
- s curly “c” and round the other way

b straight down, up to the middle, round to the bottom
h straight down, up to the middle, over and flick
l straight down, flick
k straight down, up to the middle, loop and a kick
p straight down, up to the top, round to the middle
t down and round, take your pencil off, and across

f over the top, straight down, round the other way and across
j straight down, round, give it a dot
i short down, round, give it a dot

m down, up, over, up, over and flick
n down over and flick
r down, up and over

u down, up, down, flick
y down, up, down, give it a tail

v down, up
w down, up, down, up
x across and across
z straight, across, straight
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Basic handwriting joins

There is no join after capital letters, or the following lower case letters: b, g, j, p, q, s, z

Horizontal join (from a letter which finishes at the top to a letter which starts at the top)

on on on on on on

Diagonal join from a letter which finishes at the line to a letter which starts at the top

in in in in in in

Diagonal join from a letter which finishes at the line to a letter with an ascender

it it it it it it it

Diagonal join from a letter which finishes at the top to a letter with an ascender

ot ot ot ot ot ot ot

It also helps to teach separately horizontal and diagonal joins to “c” family letters, which require a reversal in the direction of movement:

og og og og og

ad ad ad ad ad
Good Handwriting...

...is readable!

...has careful clear letters.

...sits on the line.

...starts at the margin.

...goes to the end of the line.

...has a finger space between each word.

...has the same letters the same height.

...is not too big, and not too small.

And when you have learnt how to...

...is joined up!
Good handwriting

Even better handwriting...

...has all the letters the same regular size

...has the ascenders and descenders clearly distinguished

...has all the correct joins

...is consistent.
Even better handwriting

Beautiful handwriting...

...is fluent

...has ascenders and descenders parallel to each other

...has a personal style and is stunning to look at

...gives displayed work the “wow” factor.

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Your reward for this will be the presentation of a special handwriting award in assembly.
Handwriting

Mark schemes

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Handwriting

Make this judgement based on a few lines of writing chosen to represent the child's best performance, looking across both pieces.

Band F1

- Writing is legible, letters are usually correctly formed and orientated. Generally, upper and lower case letters are not mixed within the word.

1 mark

Band F2

- Letters correctly formed and orientated.

- Writing may be a controlled printed style, with letters generally neat and regular in size, ascenders and descenders usually distinguished. Alternatively, there may be evidence of the ability to join letters, although this detracts from the overall regularity of the handwriting.

2 marks

Band F3

- Letters correctly formed and orientated.

- Handwriting is neat and regular in size, with ascenders and descenders usually distinguished.

- There is evidence of fluency and the ability to join letters.

3 marks
Examples of handwriting

It is a good time you wear a grey in class 2 a.
When you get der you saw sum guns.

0 marks

We took the register best or
We wreck. We have break at
12:00 clock we have wack
in the how and Out side.
We have crack at 10:00 clock

1 mark

at Playtyme. If we are thirsty we can
have a drink we have a water bottle
and you can take your water bottle home.
on Friday if you do good work you can
get ago for good. At lunch time we have

2 marks
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2 marks

I hope you are happy and feel welcome in this class. There are five tables in this class. There are 32 children and one teacher. We are going to be kind to you. Be helpful, we are going to make you feel welcome and we will help you.
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SECTION F

HANDWRITING

All children need to develop a serviceable handwriting style which is legible, clear and encourages the reader to engage with what has been written.

This assessment of handwriting is based on children’s ability to write legibly and fluently in a sustained piece of writing.

Judgements will be made on the basis of the legibility and clarity of the handwriting throughout the longer piece, supported by a closer look at the size and position of words and letters.

Band F1 The handwriting is legible and shows some features of regularity in size and spacing. However, overall the script is disjointed and uncoordinated.

1 mark

Band F2 Overall, the handwriting is regular with some flow and movement. Letters and words are usually appropriate in size and position, but there is some variation.

2 marks

Band F3 The handwriting is consistent and fluent with letters and words appropriately placed. The handwriting maintains a personal style to engage the reader.

3 marks
Handwriting examples

Example awarded 1 mark

The handwriting is legible and shows some features of regularity in size and spacing.
However, overall the script is disjointed and uneven.

I don’t think you will be waking up at a reasonable time. Therefore having a P/E session will make you fit for lessons on breakfast.

Then they will not be late and have less time to work.

Against waking you up to lessons and including breakfast and not seeing your parents until 1.30pm is unacceptable.

The parents will miss them having said that going to school with an empty stomach is not good.

And the parents if they are still asleep will think they have been kidnaped by someone.

The children will call as sleep during lessons and breakfast.

I think we should have the children’s opinion don’t you?
7.00 am is only to get to school even if you get to go home early because you are still tired.

I am very unhappy because every morning we have to get to school at 7.30 am. It is very early and I am for the sports. I think that we should have them in the afternoon because if you have the sports in the afternoon because if you are doing all your lessons in the morning then in the afternoon you can go and run. Wired at 1 pm. I think we should have dinner so that we don't starve and sport or homework club. You can have it at 2 pm and school closes at 3 pm still but it is like an after school club so you can do it if you want but if you don't want to you can go home from 12:30 pm to 1:00 pm we have something called golden time which is where over the weeks if someone has been naughty then they lose a golden warning and then if you mis-behave again you will lose minutes of your golden time.

It keeps going up until it is 30 mins and then you get sent to the head teacher's office and have to spend half an hour sitting silently and getting told off and
I believe the new school timetable has some great ideas, but there are some worse ideas of it. Many pupils and teachers may disagree with me on this. Many people who dislike the idea of coming to school at 7:00 am, which would mean getting up very early. On the other hand, I think having an exercise session in the morning would be a healthy way to start the day.

Also, having breakfast at 8:00 am at school would result in pupils getting to know each other and make friends with one another. I'm not the only one who doesn't agree with having all lessons crammed together in the morning. In the middle, it would cause becoming pupils to become bored and not being able to produce the best of their abilities.

On the contrary, it may agree and relieve themselves. The children if they have a report on homework club, already after their long hard lessons.

But many children may state...
Assessment Criteria:

Letter formation and joining - This is paramount.

Letter shapes (even if properly formed, letters may still be misshapen)

Letter size - consistency, overall size not too big nor too small, ascenders and descenders not too short nor too long.

Slant / slope - consistency (especially parallel ascenders and descenders), and not too extreme

Alignment - properly placed with reference to the base line - descenders below the line, not on it.

Spacing - between words and between letters.

Posture

Pen grip

Paper position

Pressure and fluency

Speed (Y5/6)