

CHINTHURST SCHOOL



Handwriting & Presentation Policy

TB/SN/WB February 2016 (REVIEW DATE February 2017)

AIM

It is the aim of this policy to help to foster throughout Chinthurst, an awareness of the elements, which contribute to 'good' handwriting, and to encourage and develop quality in all the written work, which is produced in the school.

INTRODUCTION

Children are surrounded by many different styles of writing and print, and are aware of them from a very early age. Nonetheless, they do not seem to be confused by the wide range of print that they experience in books.

The letters of their own name are normally the first letters that a child learns to recognise, and they should be encouraged to develop this interest. When children learn to write and are experimenting, they usually use capital and lower case letters and even invent letters and numbers for their own writing.

The National Curriculum prescribes what children are expected to attain regarding their handwriting skills, during their school career:

- **At Level One / Two**

Pupils are expected to: 'Begin to form letters with some control.'

- **At Level Three**

Pupils are expected to: 'Produce clear and legible joined up writing.'

- **At Level Four**

Pupils are expected to: 'Produce fluent joined up writing.'

PRINCIPLES OF 'GOOD' HANDWRITING

- Good handwriting is based on a pattern of 'ovals' and 'parallel lines'

o l o l o l o

- All small letters start at the top

b m c s

- All down strokes are parallel

m h n d f t

- All similar letters are the same height

s r o c n e l h b k d

- All down strokes are equidistant

hnuhnuhnuhnu

- The spaces between words is regular and is the width of the small letter

willoyouogoohome

- Ascenders and decenders are no more than twice the height of small letters

h l p d b

- Capital letters are no higher than the ascenders

Ch Br Dl Ph Th

GOOD POSTURE

How a child sits affects their handwriting. It is essential that children adopt an appropriate posture when sitting to write at school and at home. If a desk or chair is too high or too low this will have an adverse effect on a child's handwriting and presentation.

From the earliest age when children begin to write, they should learn to sit properly. This importance to posture should be continually reinforced until it becomes a habit

PENCIL OR PEN GRIP

Children should be taught to hold their pencil and later their pen lightly, and also to press lightly on the paper or the book. It is very important that from their early experiences of writing and drawing, children learn to hold their pencil and pen correctly. All teachers should help to reinforce this technique.

Children should be taught to hold the pencil/pen between their thumb and forefinger about 2-3 cm from the point. The middle finger should also rest lightly on the pencil/pen. As a guideline, the pencil/pen should slant backwards slightly pointing along the forearm.

PRACTICE AT CHINTHURST

In the Main School at Chinthurst, all the pupils have regular handwriting practice. The handwriting techniques, which are practised through a programme of exercises and worksheets broadly based on the 'Nelson' approach to handwriting, are also reinforced through the pupils' regular written work.

The policy from Early Years to Year 4 is for all written work to be carried out using a pencil. At this stage it is important to remind the pupils about a relaxed pencil grip and good posture. Studies have shown that 7-8 year olds are the most likely age group to adopt awkward positions when writing

In Year 4, during the Christmas Term pupils are introduced individually to using a pen. The transition from pencil to pen does depend on the individual. Some pupils are working regularly with a pen by Christmas, whereas others may not be ready for this until the Summer Term. The aim by the end of Year 4 is for all pupils to be writing with a pen and joining letters appropriately.

Ball point pens / biros are not to be used.

By Year 5, the pupils should be writing in a fluent 'cursive script'. Formal handwriting lessons do not take place in Year 5, and handwriting skills are reinforced and further developed in normal subject lessons. Therefore, all Teachers should encourage neatness in handwriting, and reinforce the guidelines of 'good handwriting' as well as posture in class and the correct 'pen grip'.

We have found that in Years 6 to 8 many pupils experience a phase when they are 'developing' their own style of writing. This is not discouraged and the pupils are not forced to conform to one single 'clone' style. Children should be made to feel positive about their work and their writing. This is a crucial period in the development of a child's handwriting style, which may stick with them for life. It is essential that all staff encourage neatness of presentation of work, and reinforce the basic guidelines for 'good' handwriting, which can be applied to the child's individual style. This is particularly important during these years, because it is at this stage that the volume of work increases and many pupils feel the need to write more quickly. Consequently, this is a period when handwriting styles and presentation can vary greatly.

OBSERVATIONS AND ADVICE

- **Right Handers**

In the natural 'tripod grip', the pencil, pen is held lightly between thumb and forefinger about 3 cm from the point, with the middle finger providing additional support. It is important that the pencil/pen is held lightly.

- **Left Handers**

The method of holding is the same, but the grip needs to be about 4 cm from the point, so that what is written may be more clearly seen, and any ink is not smudged.

Special care should be taken to prevent left-handers from holding the pencil/pen too tightly.

The paper needs to be on the left side of the mid-line of the body. The paper could be slightly tilted to make it easier for the writer to see what they are writing.

Pens for left-handers need to be more 'free flowing', as the pen is being pushed towards the nib.

- **Diagnosis of Problems**

Children's writing must be checked by watching them write.

Constant criticism only makes matters worse. Try to be constructive.

- **Things to Observe**

- Does the pupil sit comfortably, facing the desk?
- Is the paper / book correctly positioned?
Left-hander on the left side / Right-hander on the right side (at a slight angle)
- Is the non-writing hand placed on the paper / book?
- Is it legible?
- Are the letter forms complete?
- Are the letter heights equal?
- Are letters joined consistently?
- Is there consistency in the letter size / slope / spacing?
- Is the size of the writing appropriate? Or too small, too large?
- Can the pupil write on lines?
- Correct grip used – right or left hand?
- Posture – appropriate and comfortable?
- Too tense? Does the pupil need to relax?
- Can the pupil write fluently and at speed?

-Look for odd signs eg. Badly formed letters
Difficulty keeping on lines
Difficulty copying from the board
Shortening of words: rember-remember
Capitals in the wrong places
Etc.

If a pupil has several of these problems, it could be an indication that they may be dyslexic.

- **Remedial Aids**

An alternative grip could help.

Triangular grips can be bought.

A simple rubber band wound around the pencil can stop fingers getting too near the point.

Help should be regular – a short period each day and closely supervised.

- **Purposes of Handwriting**

Children need regular practice, and preferably in the context of their class written work.

At an early stage, practice exercises are useful on an early basis.

Children should be made aware of the importance of writing:

- Communicating
- Making speedy notes
- An art form in itself
- Reinforcing spelling patterns

- **REMEMBER**

- Handwriting is not a natural skill, it needs to be taught carefully.
- Poor handwriting is not the child's fault.
(Do not confuse 'neatness' with 'handwriting')
- The earliest lessons are the most important.
- Once handwriting habits become established, they are hard to change. The imposition of a completely 'new' style is not usually recommended.

'PRACTICE MAKES PERMANENT'

PRESENTATION OF WORK

**All work is to be set out in line with specific Departmental Guidelines
(See individual Departmental Handbooks)**

Even dating back to the Plowden Report in 1966, neatness and presentation was acknowledged as an important aspect of a child's education:

'The old virtues as they are usually called, of neatness, accuracy, care and perseverance..... are genuine virtues, and an education which does not foster them is faulty.'

At Chinthurst, there is an agreed policy that all work will be set out in a uniform way throughout the school. (Each individual department has its own clear guidelines set out in the Departmental Handbook, explaining any variations applied within their department for specific tasks)

All new pieces of work should be set out as follows:

<u>C/W</u> Or <u>PREP</u>	<u>TITLE</u>	<u>DATE</u>

- Mistakes and crossings out should be dealt with neatly, and either crossed out neatly with 1 line using a ruler, or corrected with an eraser pen. Errors should not be scribbled out.
- Each complete piece of work should be ruled off using a ruler and a pencil.
- Pupils should be encouraged to take care and pride in their work, and shown the importance of neatness.
- Rushed or untidily presented pieces of work should be returned to the pupil so that it can be done again neatly.