

# Hill Top Academy



*'Every child, Every chance, Every day!'*

## Handwriting Policy

**Hill Top Academy**

**Compiled by Mrs N Clark: September 2019**

**Reviewed and updated by Mrs K Sutcliffe: September 2021**

**This policy was reviewed by Governors**

**To be reviewed:**

## Hill Top Academy Handwriting Policy

### Aim

At Hill Top Academy, cursive handwriting is taught with a sequential and progressive approach. Children are introduced to this style from the early years as it is considered to be the most natural development of children's earliest attempts at writing. Teachers and Support Staff are expected to model this handwriting style.

Handwriting is a taught skill and it is important that teachers are seen to put a high value on teaching and sustaining good handwriting. We believe that children's self-esteem and pride in their work can be raised by good quality presentation.

Our aim in this policy is to teach children correct letter formation, joining and good handwriting habits, so that they can write fluently and legibly and by the end of KS2 to begin to develop a distinctive style.

### Essential skills for handwriting

Handwriting is an incredibly complex skill. Before children can hold a pencil, they need to be able to sit up and move their arm independently of their body. They need to be able to isolate their fingers to hold their pencil. To write, they first need to visually understand the difference between letters. And, then they need to remember how to form the letters. Before this they also need to have success with pre-writing shapes.

### Gross and fine motor skills form the foundation

Handwriting with fluidity, speed, accuracy and over longer periods of time requires a complex range of whole body and hand strengths and skills. So it is not surprising that many children find handwriting challenging.

For a good handwriting style children need to develop their:

- Gross Motor Skills – so they can sit correctly for periods of time.
- Fine Motor Skills – so that they can hold and control the pencil and move the paper up the table as they write.
- Motor Memory Skills – so they can recall how to form the letters.
- Visual Memory Skills – so they recall what a particular letter looks like.
- Spatial Awareness Skills– so they can place the letters correctly on the paper and in relation to one another.
- Eye Tracking Skills– scanning from left to right so that the letters are formed and placed correctly.

If a child is struggling with handwriting it is important to take a closer look at their physical abilities. If they do not have all the appropriate key physical strengths to support their handwriting development getting them to do more of the paper and pencil activities is not the answer.

If intervention is required to support children's handwriting, a variety of exercises and games will be put in place to aid this..The following website provides numerous activities to support with the development of different skills

<https://teachhandwriting.co.uk/gross-and-fine-motor-skills-games.html>

### Activities to improve core strength for handwriting

Example: Tummy Skittles

**You need** A large/medium sized ball, skittles or empty 1 litre or 2 litre plastic drinks bottles and space enough for your child to lay flat on their tummy and the skittles to be about 2 metres away.

**How to do it** - Get the child to lie on their stomach, lift their head up and then lift their arms above their head. Throw the ball at the skittles, then lower the body gently back to the floor, ready to throw again.

## Activities to improve in-hand manipulation skills for handwriting

**Example:** Pinch Pots

**You need** - Play dough, plasticine or air drying clay.

**How to do it** - Ask the child to roll the clay into a palm size ball and hold it in the palm of their hand. Next get them to stick their thumb of the other hand into the middle of the ball and use two fingers (usually the index and middle fingers) on the outside of the ball to help pinch the ball into a pot shape. Move the thumb and fingers around the edge of the ball as well as slowly moving the ball/pot around in the palm of the hand until the pot has been made. Try making them with the ball of dough/clay held in the palm of the other hand.

## Teaching and Organisation

We seek to fulfil the requirements of the New Curriculum. The scheme of work follows a progressive structure, which Teachers follow to ensure that specific objectives for groups of children and individuals are covered in order to ensure progress.

We use the Letter-join handwriting programme throughout academy to model cursive script to the children. Teachers use Letter-join resources which include editable sheets, Interactive Whiteboard resources and an i-pad app.

It is important for teachers to set a good example to children by modelling good handwriting when writing on the board, IWB or when marking children's books. Teachers strive to model cursive script and use the appropriate joins, demonstrating the fluency and legibility of the style. Children are expected to show care for their work-books, present their work with care, date work, underline where necessary and not make any marks on the covers.

Joined up writing will begin in Year 1, when it is assessed that the children are consistently forming letters correctly.

### **A typical handwriting session typically includes:**

- A quick physical warm-up to prepare the body (arms, shoulders, elbows and fingers) for handwriting.
- A reminder of the Helpful Handy Hints for Handwriting, ensuring readiness to write.
- A clear description of the skill being taught.
- Teacher modelling using the Interactive whiteboard or whiteboard.
- Children to practice using the skills modelled by the teacher.
- Where possible, instant praise or correction of the children's work.
- An element of evaluation – how have we coped using the skill taught?

## Handwriting in the academy time-table

Handwriting is taught frequently and regularly throughout the academy. Children participate in at least one explicit handwriting practice session per week. However, it is recognised that, especially in the early stages of learning, children will learn faster from short practice sessions than from longer weekly sessions.

A number of regular sessions each week lasting approximately fifteen to twenty minutes are ideal to sustain handwriting development and improvement, the number of which depends on the needs of the class.

Longer sessions could also be used when handwriting teaching is being linked to another skill such as spelling.

Throughout the academy, phases decide how the provision of handwriting teaching input and practice is provided in their classes.

### Guidelines for Good Practise linked to Handy Handwriting Hints

- Prior to the start of the lesson, the room needs to be organised accordingly. It is suggested that all children face the board/Interactive Whiteboard.
- Correct posture with the child sitting comfortably with feet flat on the floor with body upright (BBC – Bottom, Back, Chair).
- The paper should be positioned to a comfortable angle and moved up as the page is filled.
- Adequate space is needed so that the children are able to write without their elbows touching.
- Correct light in order to see without eyestrain.
- Pencil grip should be firm but relaxed. The children need to be aware that they should not grip so that their hand aches but need to be able to apply some pressure.
- Handwriting sessions should be short and regular.

### Handwriting and Text in the Environment

- A model cursive alphabet will be on display in each classroom.
- Handy Hints for Handwriting will be on display for easy reference.
- Teaching and support staff will model cursive script, when writing in front of the children.
- Foundation Stage: To use **Letterjoin Air 8 (pre-cursive script)** in class displays. Displays to incorporate writing patterns such as zig zags or curly shapes.
- Key Stage One: : To use **Letterjoin Air 8 (pre-cursive script)** used alongside other fonts that do not contradict the handwriting being taught to the children. Letterjoin 8 to be introduced in Year 2.
- Lower Key Stage Two: Children introduced to a variety of different fonts although care is taken not to confuse children by contradicting handwriting taught. Letterjoin 8 to be used on handouts/displays.
- Upper Key Stage Two: A large range of fonts to be used in classroom display. Letterjoin 8 to be used for resources,

### The language of Handwriting

In order for staff to communicate precisely with one another and with our pupils we need to be familiar with the vocabulary of handwriting. We all use the same words in front of the children when talking about handwriting.

Vocabulary to aid letter formation:

- Long ladder letters
- One-armed robots
- Curly caterpillar letters
- Zig zag letters
- Up and down
- Start on the line
- Round in a curve
- Hook
- Right to the top, nearly to the top (long ladder letters)
- Up in a loop
- Up and over
- Dot (i, j)
- Kick (k)
- Down under
- A little way over (r)
- Cross the t
- Slope down, hook and lift - go to the top and slope back down (x)

## **Line guides**

In handwriting sessions children will work in books ruled with handwriting lines. These will be introduced in Year 1. For presentation work (including Big Writes) lines guides are in use as appropriate to handwriting ability.

## **Pencil/pen grip**

All children should be taught to hold their pencil or pen comfortably and appropriately. Without this, a child will find it harder to develop a quick and efficient (fluent) style of writing. The pencil should usually be held between the thumb and the first finger and should rest on the middle finger. It should be held about 2-3 centimetres from the point to avoid covering the writing. We provide practice and support to help children to do this.

## **Posture – BBC (Bottom, Back, Chair)**

Children need to be sat in appropriate positions where they can see the board. Left-handers should not sit on the right of right-handers. They should be sat 'comfortably', making sure that they are doing the following: feet flat on the floor, chair tucked under the table and arms placed on the table.

## **Paper Position**

The paper should be slanted parallel to the writing arm, and positioned for the right-handed child just to the right of the centre of the body and for the left-handed child just to the left of the centre of the body. The paper should be at a comfortable distance from the edge of the table top allowing the table top to support the writing arm. Children should be encouraged to move the paper **up** as writing progresses down towards the edge of the paper. Children should be taught to hold the paper still with their non-writing hand.

## **Crossing out errors**

Children should be taught to cross out mistakes in their writing with one, single line.

## **Left-handed provision**

To ensure that left-handed children are not disadvantaged when writing, a range of strategies will be employed. Letter formation and skywriting will also be completed with the left hand to provide these children with a model. Left-handed children will sit on the left of right-handed children to ensure that their arms do not clash, and they will also be encouraged to tilt their work clockwise so they can see what they have written. To avoid smudging their work, left-handed children will be encouraged to position their fingers about 1.5cm away from the end of the writing implement, and their wrist should be straight. As writing from left to right is more difficult for left-handed children they should be supported to ensure that they do not learn bad habits of position, posture, pen hold which will deter them meeting the aim of developing a fast, fluent and legible handwriting style.

## **Scheme of Work**

### **Foundation Stage**

Children will develop the fine and gross motor skills needed for handwriting as part of the Early Years Curriculum.

Activities will develop gross motor control for example, rolling hoops and running with a hoop, ribbon movement, chalking, painting on a large scale, writing in sand and using the Interactive White Board.

Activities to develop fine motor control, e.g. tracing, colouring within guidelines and pictures, pattern work, using glue spreaders in small pots, painting with the tips of fingers, cotton buds, play dough and threading.

All these will develop spatial awareness 'PE on paper'.

In addition to practising letter formation in a range of contexts, children will begin to work in group and individual sessions on handwriting. Children will be taught the movement of each of the four letter families. They will visit each series of letters on a termly rotation basis.

Families:

1. Long ladders (down and off in another direction) – l, l, j, t, u, y.
2. One armed robots (down and retrace upwards) – b, h, k, m, n, p, r.
3. Curly Caterpillars (anti-clockwise round) – c, a, d, e, g, o, q, f, s.
4. Zig Zag letters- v, w, x, z.

### **Year 1**

Children will revisit all letters, in their appropriate families to reinforce and practise formation.

When this is secure, children will begin to work on baseline joins:

in, un, um, am, ine, ime, an, ar, aw, ir, hu, ti, ki, du,

ey, ay, ip, up, it, nt, ent, ant, ill, all, ib, if, ub, th, ck, ch.

Children will also be taught:

- the formation of capital letters
- the formation of digits 0-9

All children will write in pencil.

In Key Stage 1, joining will be used to reinforce the work completed through phonics and spellings.

### **Year 2**

Children will continue and practise the joins started in Year 1. The focus to begin with will be on diagonal joins, first to the letters without ascenders then those with. Once the children are confident with this, they will be encouraged to apply these skills to their independent writing.

As appropriate the children will be introduced to horizontal joins (top joins), first to letters without ascenders and then those with:

op, ou, ow, ov, ri, ru, ve, we, re, fe, fu, fi, ob, ol, wh, rk, rt, ot, of, fl, ft.

Children will also be taught to:

- write capital letters and digit s to the correct size, orientation and relationship to one another and to lower case letters.
- to use finger spaces correctly between words that reflects the size of the letters.

Children will continue to write in pencil and will progress to writing with pen at the teacher's discretion (they will obtain a pen licence through neat handwriting).

### **Year 3/4**

Children will practise and consolidate the joins introduced in Year 2. They will also be taught about the way to present their work in books. They will be encouraged to use a joined script in their independent writing to enable them to build a fluent and clear style.

Children will be taught to increase the legibility, consistency and quality of their handwriting, e.g. by ensuring that the down strokes of letters are parallel and equidistant; that lines of writing are spaced sufficiently so that the ascenders and descenders of letters are clear.

Year 4 children will continue to build on their work from Year 3 and be taught more about a variety of presentation methods through Literacy lessons. In addition to using and practising the known joins, children will also be taught more complicated anti-clockwise joins in handwriting sessions:

ac, ca, da, ha, ad, ag, ea, ed, va, wa, oa, oo, od, fa, fo.

Children will continue to write in pencil, with the majority progressing to writing in pen (they will obtain a pen licence through neat handwriting).

### **Year 5/6**

In handwriting sessions, children will learn and practise patterns involving all three joins.

They will reinforce previous work, especially considering the spacing and size, distinguishing ascenders and descenders, reinforcing that the capital letter is not joined.

Children will be taught to write legibly, fluently and with increasing speed.

All children should be writing in pen by this phase.

### **Special Educational Needs/Additional Support**

Interventions will be timetabled for pupils in need of additional support including gross and fine motor skills activities.

In addition to this progression, provision will be made for children with Special Educational Needs. This will include individual/small group sessions at the appropriate level, use of pencil grips and opportunities to practise using a range of media

(I-pads).

This policy was reviewed by Governors on 10/01/2017 and agreed to be reviewed on a 3 yearly basis

Signed: Principal

Signed: Chair of Governors

Dated: 23/10/2019

Reviewed September 2021

To be reviewed

It is important to hold a pencil correctly to allow the fingers and wrist to move freely without putting strain on the hand, helping to improve correct letter formation ability and making handwriting a more comfortable experience.

## **5 Pencil Grip Developmental Stages**

### **Foundation Stage (4 - 5 year olds)**

There are 5 pencil grip developmental stages, that a child needs to go through, before they can successfully use a mature/dynamic tripod grip. They need to work through each stage and as their hand, shoulder and arm strength and mobility increases so does the ability to move to the next developmental stage of the grip.

There are principles of development called "big to small" and "proximal to distal" - basically this means that children develop the larger muscles of the trunk and arms before the smaller muscles of the hands and that the proximal muscles closer to the body centre (shoulder muscles, upper arm muscles) develop before the distal muscles which are further away (hand muscles).

The Tripod Pencil Grip is considered the most appropriate grip for handwriting, for both right and left-handed writers. This is because it allows the fingers and wrist to move freely without putting strain on the hand, helping to improve correct letter formation ability and making handwriting a more comfortable experience.

### **Foundation Stage (4 - 5 year olds)**

When children start in Foundation Stage (4 - 5 year olds) they will be at different pencil grip development stages, this is what we would normally expect:

A few children will be at Stage 1.

Most will be at Stage 2 with some moving to Stage 3 but not confident in its use.

A few will have reached and be comfortable at Stage 3.

By the end of Foundation Stage, the children will still be at different pencil grip development stages, this is what we would normally expect:

Some will be at Stage 3.

Most will be at Stage 4 with some moving to Stage 5, but not confident in its use.

A few at Stage 5.

### **Stage 1 – Palmer-supinate grasp**



Holds the crayon/pencil in fist (whole hand) like a dagger. They use whole arm movements from the shoulder to mark-make. Due to this whole arm movement they prefer to work on a vertical surface.



## Stage 2 - Palmer or digital- pronate grasp



Holds a crayon/pencil with the palm of the hand facing down towards the paper. The crayon/pencil is held by all the fingers and the thumb. The movement comes from the shoulder and elbow. Again due to the way the arm moves a vertical surface is preferred.

### **Key Stage 1 (5 - 7 year olds)**

The Tripod Pencil Grip is considered the most appropriate grip for handwriting, for both right and left-handed writers, however not all children find this the easiest grip to learn.

It is important to hold a pencil correctly to allow the fingers and wrist to move freely without putting strain on the hand, helping to improve correct letter formation ability and making handwriting a more comfortable experience.

### **Year 1 (5 - 6 year olds)**

As children move from Foundation Stage (4 to 5 year olds) to Year 1 children may be at different pencil grip development stages, this is what we would normally expect:

A few children will be at Stage 3

Most will be at Stage 4 with some moving to Stage 5, but not confident in its use.

A few will have reached and be comfortable at Stage 5.

### **Year 2 (6 - 7 year olds)**

As children move from Year 1 to Year 2 we would expect the majority of children to be at stage 5 in their pencil grip development.

## Stage 3 –Four finger and thumb grip



Holding the crayon/pencil between the thumb and four fingers with the crayon/pencil in a nearly vertical, upright position. Movement comes from the elbow and wrist.

### **Year 3 (7 - 8 year olds)**

As children move from Key Stage 1 (5 to 7 year olds) to Year 3 children may still be at different pencil grip development stages, this is what we would normally expect:

**A few children will be at Stage 4;**

The majority will have reached Stage 5; some may not be confident in its use however, most should be comfortable and naturally use the tripod grip for handwriting.

## Year 4 to 6 (8 - 11 year olds)

It would normally be expected for children in year 4 and upwards to be confident and naturally using the tripod grip for handwriting tasks. For some children who have developed a poor pencil grip and find it difficult if not near on impossible to change, then developing the adaptive tripod grip may prove to be a more appropriate option (suitable for both left and right-handed writers).

### Stage 4 - Static quadruped or tripod grip



Holding the pencil in very nearly the correct position however the web space is narrower than it would be if held in a mature tripod grip. This means that the movement is coming from the wrist and large finger movements.

### Stage 5 - Mature / Dynamic tripod grip

Right-handed



Left-handed

This is traditionally considered the most appropriate handwriting pencil grip for both left and right-handed writers. Holding the pencil between the thumb and index finger with pencil supported on the middle finger. The ring and little fingers are gently curled inwards. This gives an open wide web space which means the movement comes from the fingers.

# Handy Hints for Handwriting

## You will need:

- To have a nice, sharp pencil or a working pen to begin.
- To do a quick warm-up to prepare your bodies for writing.
- To sit correctly – Remember BBC (Bottom, Back, Chair).
- To hold your pencil correctly.
- To position your paper correctly.
- To put a line through any mistakes that you make.
- To use your lines correctly.
- To make all your tall letters the same height.
- To leave finger spaces between words.
- TO TRY YOUR VERY BEST!



**BBC**



Cursive Script letter formation

Aa Bb Cc Dd

Ee Ff Gg Hh

Ii Jj Kk Ll

Mm Nn Oo Pp

Qq Rr Ss Tt

Uu Vv Ww

Xx Yy Zz