St Mary's C.E. Primary School, Islington

Whole School Handwriting Policy (Reception – Year 6)

Rationale

At St Mary's C.E. Primary School, we recognise that handwriting is a fundamental life skill that underpins children's ability to communicate, record ideas and succeed across the curriculum. Fluent, legible handwriting reduces the cognitive load associated with transcription, enabling pupils to focus on composing, editing and improving their writing.

We believe that successful handwriting begins long before children write letters on paper. It starts with developing the physical, cognitive and perceptual skills that enable children to become confident and fluent writers. Throughout the school, handwriting is taught explicitly, systematically and progressively so that all pupils develop pride in the presentation of their work and write with increasing fluency, stamina and automaticity.

In Reception, handwriting teaching follows the **Twinkl Early Handwriting Scheme**, which develops children's gross and fine motor skills before introducing formal letter formation. Children develop shoulder stability, hand strength, pencil control and correct letter formation through practical, engaging and multi-sensory experiences.

From Year 1 onwards, pupils continue to follow the **Twinkl Handwriting Scheme**, learning letters through carefully sequenced letter families before progressing to fluent, joined handwriting. For pupils who require additional support with letter formation, size or spacing, **Bubble Handwriting paper** is used as a temporary scaffold to enable pupils to access the same learning objectives while developing independence.

Handwriting is closely linked to phonics, spelling, reading and writing. It is taught as part of a broad and ambitious English curriculum and is reinforced across all curriculum subjects.

Policy Aims

At St Mary's we aim for every child to:

- develop the physical foundations required for successful handwriting;
- develop secure gross and fine motor skills;
- acquire an effective tripod pencil grip;
- learn correct letter formation from the outset;

- write fluently, accurately and legibly;
- develop consistent size, orientation and spacing;
- progress towards fluent joined handwriting;
- present work neatly and with pride;
- apply handwriting skills consistently across the curriculum;
- develop the stamina and automaticity required for extended writing.

Curriculum Progression

Reception

Children develop the physical foundations for handwriting through:

- Dough Gym and fine motor activities;
- threading, peg activities and construction;
- tweezers, playdough and finger-strengthening activities;
- large-scale movements and pattern making;
- mark making in a range of media;
- learning correct pencil grip using the Twinkl “Nip, Flip and Grip” approach;
- learning correct lower-case letter formation linked to phonics.

Year 1

Children continue to:

- secure correct letter formation;
- develop consistent letter size and orientation;
- improve spacing between words;
- increase writing fluency;
- begin to develop writing stamina.

Year 2

Children:

- consolidate correct formation;
- develop consistent sizing and positioning;
- begin joining letters where appropriate;
- increase handwriting speed while maintaining accuracy;
- apply handwriting consistently across subjects.

Years 3 and 4

Pupils:

- develop fluent joined handwriting;
- maintain consistent size and spacing;
- write legibly with increasing speed;
- present work neatly across the curriculum.

Years 5 and 6

Pupils:

- develop automatic, fluent and legible handwriting;
- adapt handwriting for different purposes and audiences;
- write with increasing speed and stamina;
- demonstrate pride and independence in presentation.

Teaching and Learning

Handwriting is taught regularly throughout the school through dedicated teaching and application across the curriculum.

Lessons typically include:

1. Physical warm-up where appropriate.
2. Adult modelling.
3. Explicit teaching of letter formation or joins.
4. Guided practice.
5. Independent practice.
6. Application within writing.

Teachers model high expectations for handwriting and presentation in every lesson.

Letter Formation

Children are taught letters in families following the **Twinkl Handwriting Scheme**:

- Curly Caterpillar Letters
- One-Armed Robot Letters
- Ladder Letters
- Zigzag Monster Letters

This sequence supports efficient motor learning by grouping letters that share similar movement patterns.

Posture, Pencil Grip and Paper Position

Children are explicitly taught to:

- sit comfortably with both feet on the floor;
- maintain good posture;
- stabilise paper with the non-writing hand;
- position paper appropriately according to handedness;
- develop and maintain an effective tripod grip.

Inclusion and Adaptive Teaching

At St Mary's we believe that all children can become successful writers.

Teachers use adaptive teaching to ensure every pupil can access handwriting teaching successfully.

Adaptations may include:

- Bubble Handwriting paper;
- pencil grips;
- sloping writing boards;
- enlarged writing materials;
- visual prompts;
- additional adult modelling;
- small-group or individual teaching;
- fine motor intervention programmes;
- Dough Gym;
- multi-sensory teaching approaches;
- Occupational Therapy or specialist advice where appropriate.

Support is planned through the school's **Graduated Approach (Assess, Plan, Do, Review)** and reviewed regularly to ensure it is having a positive impact.

Assessment

Teachers assess handwriting continuously through classroom observations, independent writing and curriculum work.

Assessment considers:

- posture and pencil grip;
- letter formation;
- letter size and orientation;
- spacing;
- joins;
- fluency;
- presentation;
- independence.

Feedback is immediate and constructive so that pupils develop accurate habits over time.

Presentation Expectations

Pupils are expected to:

- take pride in their work;
- form letters correctly;
- write neatly and legibly;
- use joined handwriting when appropriate;
- present work consistently across all curriculum subjects.

Teachers model and reinforce high expectations for presentation in every classroom.

Partnership with Parents

Parents and carers are supported through:

- information about the school's handwriting approach;
- guidance on correct pencil grip and letter formation;
- suggestions for developing fine motor skills at home;
- opportunities to practise handwriting in enjoyable and purposeful ways.

Monitoring and Review

The implementation of this policy is monitored by the English Leader, EYFS Leader and SENCO through:

- lesson visits;
- book scrutiny;
- pupil voice;
- staff discussions;
- assessment information;
- handwriting progression across year groups.

The policy will be reviewed annually to ensure that handwriting continues to be taught consistently and progressively across the school.

Conclusion

At St Mary's C.E. Primary School we believe that every child can become a confident, fluent and successful writer. Through high-quality teaching, a well-sequenced handwriting curriculum, adaptive practice and high expectations, we enable all pupils to develop handwriting that is fluent, legible and fit for purpose, preparing them for success throughout their education and beyond.