



Frieth C.E.C. School

Handwriting Policy

Date implemented: December 2015

Member of staff responsible: English Subject Leader

Governor responsible: Policy and Curriculum Working Group

Headteacher's signature .....

Chair of Governor's signature .....

Review date:                                  signed:                                  date:

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### **Vision statement**

"We are a close Christian community; nurturing, inspiring and celebrating all individuals. Through creative learning we encourage greatness by developing potential without limitations."

### **Values**

*These are the Christian Values that you believe are both taught and learnt in our school. To be:  
Sharing and caring  
Gentle and Kind  
Honest and Truthful  
Challenging and Responsible*

### **Principles**

- The skill of handwriting needs to be taught.
- It is not a natural skill that will grow and develop like speaking or walking.
- Handwriting is a motor activity. The movement is stored in the body rather than in the conscious memory.
- Our hands and fingers control the movements involved in handwriting. It is in our hands that the kinaesthetic memory lies. This controls the direction and shape of each letter.

### **Handwriting in the National Curriculum 2014**

The programmes of study for writing at key stages 1 and 2 are constructed similarly to those for reading:

- transcription (spelling and handwriting)
- composition (articulating ideas and structuring them in speech and writing).

It is essential that teaching develops pupils' competence in these two dimensions. In addition, pupils should be taught how to plan, revise and evaluate their writing. These aspects of writing have been incorporated into the programmes of study for composition.

Writing down ideas fluently depends on effective transcription: that is, on spelling quickly and accurately through knowing the relationship between sounds and letters (phonics) and understanding the morphology (word structure) and orthography (spelling structure) of words. Effective composition involves forming, articulating and communicating ideas, and then organising them coherently for a reader. This requires clarity, awareness of the audience, purpose and context, and an increasingly wide knowledge of vocabulary and grammar. Writing also depends on fluent, legible and, eventually, speedy handwriting.

## Year 1

Pupils should be taught to:

- sit correctly at a table, holding a pencil comfortably and correctly
- begin to form lower-case letters in the correct direction, starting and finishing in the right place
- form capital letters
- form digits 0-9
- understand which letters belong to which handwriting 'families' (i.e. letters that are formed in similar ways) and to practise these.

## Year 2

Pupils should be taught to:

- form lower-case letters of the correct size relative to one another
- start using some of the diagonal and horizontal strokes needed to join letters and understand which letters, when adjacent to one another, are best left unjoined
- write capital letters and digits of the correct size, orientation and relationship to one another and to lower case letters
- use spacing between words that reflects the size of the letters.

## Years 3 and 4

Pupils should be taught to:

- use the diagonal and horizontal strokes that are needed to join letters and understand which letters, when adjacent to one another, are best left unjoined
- increase the legibility, consistency and quality of their handwriting (for example, by ensuring that the downstrokes of letters are parallel and equidistant; that lines of writing are spaced sufficiently so that the ascenders and descenders of letters do not touch).

## Years 5 and 6

Pupils should be taught to:

- write legibly, fluently and with increasing speed by:
- choosing which shape of a letter to use when given choices and deciding whether or not to join specific letters
- choosing the writing implement that is best suited for a task.

## Continuous cursive style

Continuous cursive handwriting teaches pupils to join letters in words as a series of continuous flowing movements or patterns. With the exception of words containing 'x', all words can be written without taking the pencil off the page. The style is quick and easy to learn, particularly when it is practised from an early age. The final product is neat and fast.

Pupils with specific learning difficulties find continuous cursive useful because the pencil stays on the page throughout every word, thus simplifying the movement. Children with motor problems learn a series of easy rhythmical movements, which help to improve their fine motor co-ordination.

- The motor memory of the child's hand and fingers helps him to spell, as each word becomes one movement and not many.
- Ideas and concepts, images and descriptions can flow more swiftly from the pencil or pen of the child as he is making fewer decisions about where each letter starts and how letters are formed.
- Children are introduced to a joined hand at the earliest stages. Thus the pupil avoids learning two different styles of writing i.e. unlearning one in order to write the other.
- The continuous style provides a directional left-right movement. This flowing rhythmical movement aids speed and fluency.
- This style lessens the chance of reversing letters by eliminating need to lift the pencil between letters. The spaces between the words become distinct.
- The best style forms loops only on letters which descend below the line. This encourages a fluid movement and makes a distinction between ascenders and descenders.
- Distinction between upper and lower case letters are clearer.
- Results are easy to read, good to look at and quick to execute, particularly for pupils with special needs.

### **Pre-writing stage**

In the early stages of handwriting development, children are introduced to activities which establish fine motor skills. Patterning precedes letter formation, to establish the feeling of continuous flow and to teach the hands the most frequently used movements. Multi-sensory experiences ensure that the techniques are not only fun to learn, but that the skill is learnt effectively by pupils with alternative learning styles.

- Create patterns using a variety of tools e.g. felt-tips, chalks, paint, glitter pens.
- Go outside and use playground chalks or water in squeeze bottles to recreate patterns on the concrete.
- Introduce art activities such as finger painting, painting over pre-drawn spirals and wavy lines. Develop fine motor control by embellishing the finished patterns with felt-tip pens.
- Use a variety of surfaces e.g. white boards, black boards, different coloured paper on a horizontal or vertical surface.
- Stimulate touch by using different materials e.g. textured boards made of velour, carpet, sandpaper.
- Use trays containing sand, salt, shaving foam to practise patterns.
- Encourage motor memory by using eye patches and blindfolds, tracing in the air or on children's backs.

- Verbalise the movements with the children to encourage auditory and kinaesthetic links in memory.
- Encourage the children to produce big patterns. Large movements relax the hand and arm muscles and release a tense tight grip. With practice movement scan reduce in size.
- Trace large patterns on the floor in P.E. using hands and feet.
- Develop physical strength and co-ordination by teaching finger rhymes and games e.g. Tommy Thumb. Introduce play-doh activities involving shaping, squeezing and pulling.
- Strengthen pencil grip by tearing paper to create collages.
- Develop confident pencil control through fun activities e.g. dot-to-dot, tracing driving through mazes.

Once good pencil control and a confident left-right flowing style is established, these skills should be continued throughout the teaching of the letters to keep the idea of a continuous flow.

### **Letter formation**

Letters are introduced individually in the following groups:

1. Straight letters: i, l, t, u
2. 2 o'clocks: c, a, d, g, q, s
3. Tunnel letters: n, m, h, b, p
4. Top joiners: o, r, v, w
5. Square letters: x, z
6. Odd letters: f, k, j, y, e

This is the recommended order of introduction, but is open to individual interpretation. For example, 'e' can be taught earlier to give a wider variety of words for practice.

*Letters are **introduced** using the following sequence:*

1. **Look:** at the teacher who demonstrates the correct letter formation.
2. **Trace:** over the examples, repeating the sound/name.
3. **Copy:** underneath the examples, repeating the sound/name.
4. **Write:** from memory.

*Letters are **practised** using the following sequence:*

1. **Trace:** over the examples.
2. **Write:** underneath the examples.
3. **Copy:** complete a row of examples.
4. **Write:** from memory.

Letter formation can still be practised through creative areas of the curriculum using examples given in the early stages. Some children have difficulty interpreting verbal or visual instructions. In these cases, the teacher can hold the writer's hand until he/she becomes familiar with the movements.

As each group of letters is introduced, words containing those letters are practised. Children begin to make the link between handwriting, writing and spelling.

### **Pencil hold, seating & paper position**

At this stage of development, there are important issues relating to physical environment.

- Children often find sitting at a desk or table to write a physical strain. It is important that they are taught to sit correctly. Children who cannot find a steady writing position may benefit from a sloping writing surface or tilted seat/cushion.
- Children should be encouraged to use a correct pencil grip. If they find this very difficult, even after practising with a triangular pencil, try placing the pencil between the index and middle finger as an alternative pencil hold. If an incorrect grip is very well established in older pupils, and they can control the pencil adequately, it may be best to leave their incorrect grip, but spend time on the letter formations.
- Left-handed children should sit to the left of right-handed children, to avoid their writing arms from bumping each other. The angle of the paper depends on the handedness of the pupil. Left-handers should sit with their body and paper at a slant to the right. This enables them to see their pencil tip, prevents them smudging their work with their writing hand and allows the pencil to move up and down without a feeling of having to continually push it. A left-hander may also benefit from holding the pencil further up the shaft.

### **Materials**

It is important to use appropriate writing materials at each stage of writing development.

- Very sharp pencils should be used at all times so that the child can see clearly what the pencil point is doing. In KS1 some teachers prefer to start with a chunky triangular pencil to encourage the correct pencil grip. Standard 'HB' may then be used until the letters are well formed, completely joined, neat and fluent.
- Once children have earned their 'Pen Licence', a pen with a fine nib is best as it grips the page and prevents loss of control often experienced when using biros.
- Plain paper is best for the initial stages of writing patterns, progressing to paper that is ruled with wide-apart lines. Double or triple lines are used to familiarize the pupil with the correct writing zones and the appropriate length of ascenders and descenders.

### **Assessment**

When children are engaged in handwriting activities, teachers and learning support assistants constantly observe them and offer continuing support: identifying, intervening and addressing any misconceptions or bad habits. Formative assessments are continuous, enabling teachers to review and adapt their teaching.

### **Monitoring**

Monitoring the standards of children's work and the quality of teaching in handwriting is the responsibility of the subject leader and the Senior Leadership Team. The role of the English Subject leader also involves supporting colleagues in the teaching of handwriting, being informed about current developments and providing a strategic lead and direction for the subject in the school. The governor responsible for English meets regularly with the English Subject Leader to review progress in the subject.