Wilkinson Primary School

Handwriting

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Introduction

This policy sets out the approach to the teaching, practice and assessment of handwriting at Wilkinson Primary School. It reflects the expectations of the 2014 National Curriculum for English in key stages 1 and 2 and the wider expectations of inspection that pupils develop fluent, legible and increasingly automatic handwriting as part of a coherent writing curriculum.
Handwriting is taught as a fundamental transcription skill that supports composition, spelling, presentation, stamina and pupils' readiness to write at length across the curriculum. It is taught explicitly, reinforced consistently in all subjects and adapted where needed so that all pupils can access learning successfully.

Aims

The aims of handwriting teaching at Wilkinson Primary School are to:

- develop fluent, legible and efficient handwriting for all pupils
- ensure pupils learn correct letter formation, size, orientation, spacing and joins
- build secure early motor control, posture and pencil grip from the earliest stages
- promote a consistent whole-school handwriting model
- enable pupils to write with increasing speed without losing legibility
- support pupils to transfer handwriting skills into independent writing across the curriculum
- ensure handwriting expectations are ambitious but accessible for all pupils, including those with SEND, disadvantaged pupils and pupils with handwriting difficulties
- foster pride, care and attention in written work
- ensure pupils are able to adapt their handwriting for different purposes as they progress through the school

Statutory Requirements

Wilkinson Primary School will deliver the handwriting requirements of the 2014 National Curriculum for English in key stages 1 and 2. These include the expectation that pupils learn to:

- sit correctly at a table and hold a pencil comfortably and correctly
- form lower-case letters in the correct direction, starting and finishing in the right place
- form capital letters and digits
- understand letter families and practise letters formed in similar ways
- form lower-case letters of the correct size relative to one another
- use diagonal and horizontal strokes needed to join letters
- understand which adjacent letters are best left unjoined
- write capital letters and digits of the correct size, orientation and relationship to lower-case letters
- use spacing between words that reflects the size of the letters
- increase the legibility, consistency and quality of handwriting
- ensure downstrokes are parallel and equidistant
- space lines sufficiently so ascenders and descenders do not touch
- write legibly, fluently and with increasing speed
- choose which shape of a letter to use when given choices
- decide whether or not to join specific letters
- choose the writing implement best suited to a task

The school also recognises that in the early years, children need strong provision for physical development, gross motor skills, fine motor control, hand-eye coordination, early mark-making, writing their name and forming recognisable letters as preparation for later handwriting success.

Curriculum Coverage

Handwriting at Wilkinson Primary School covers the following broad areas:

- *physical readiness for writing, including posture, control, coordination and stamina*
- *mark-making and early letter formation*
- *correct pencil grip and writing position*
- *formation of letters, capital letters and digits*
- *recognition and practice of letter families*
- *spacing, sizing and placement on the line*
- *joining patterns and fluent joined writing*
- *consistency, legibility and presentation*
- *fluency, speed and sustained writing*
- *adaptation of handwriting for different purposes and audiences*
- *selection of suitable writing tools and recording methods*

Provision is sequenced from early mark-making and controlled letter formation through to fluent, joined, purposeful writing. Teaching is cumulative and revisited regularly so that skills become secure over time. Handwriting is reinforced in handwriting and writing lessons and across the wider curriculum so that pupils apply what they learn in everyday writing.

Curriculum Implementation

Wilkinson Primary School follows The Flow Letter Technique as its agreed handwriting model. This model is used consistently by teachers and support staff across the school and is expected in pupils' written work, in books and in displays, apart from occasions when different styles of writing are being taught for specific purposes.

Implementation includes the following features:

- handwriting is taught explicitly and systematically
- adults model the agreed handwriting style consistently
- pupils are given regular opportunities to practise handwriting in short, purposeful sessions
- handwriting teaching is reinforced during teacher modelling and in pupils' independent writing
- specific handwriting practice is planned for twice a week
- additional time is provided where pupils need further practice to develop secure handwriting
- the school expectation is that handwriting is used across all subjects so that pupils transfer skills into every area of learning
- pupils are taught to notice and apply correct letter starting points, baseline placement, ascenders, descenders, spacing, size and capital letter use
- staff reinforce correct directionality from the early years onwards
- practice is matched to pupils' developmental stage so that accuracy comes before speed

The school emphasises the following teaching considerations:

- pencil grip and tension
- writing pressure
- clarity of stroke
- paper position for left-handed and right-handed pupils
- body position and posture
- gross and fine motor development

The school teaches pupils to understand:

- where letters start
- where letters sit in relation to the baseline
- ascenders and descenders
- spacing between words
- consistent size
- appropriate use of capital letters

Provision in the early years includes opportunities for gross and fine motor development through tactile and practical activities, including mark-making experiences that help children move towards recognisable letters.

Assessment

Assessment in handwriting is ongoing and based on pupils' everyday writing rather than isolated handwriting tasks alone. Teachers assess handwriting through:

- observation during handwriting practice and independent writing
- scrutiny of books and written work
- checking letter formation, spacing, size, joins and presentation
- observing posture, grip and pencil control
- evaluating fluency, legibility and speed over time
- checking whether pupils apply handwriting skills across subjects

Assessment is used to identify whether a pupil needs:

- further consolidation
- additional practice
- targeted intervention
- adaptation of resources or recording method
- extension through increased speed, stamina or more independent control

In line with the school's approach to presentation, pupils are encouraged to take care with written work and to correct errors appropriately. Errors should be corrected by placing a small cross by the error and rewriting the word or letter accurately, rather than crossing out.

Pen and pencil use is managed as part of assessment of handwriting readiness and consistency:

- Foundation Stage pupils use pencils for written work
- Key Stage 1 pupils use pencils for all written work
- Pupils may use pens at the teacher's discretion, including for WOW writes, display pieces or where a pen licence has been awarded
- Year 6 pupils are expected to use a pen to support their transition to secondary school with few exceptions
- Pupils who consistently demonstrate neat, legible handwriting will retain the opportunity of using a pen.
- A pen licence reflects a pupil's ongoing commitment to high presentation standards and will continue into the next term or class where these standards are maintained.
- class teachers should inform the next teacher of pupils who have already obtained a pen licence

Roles and Responsibilities

Headteacher and senior leaders

- ensure handwriting remains a high priority within the school's writing curriculum
- maintain a consistent whole-school approach to handwriting
- monitor the quality of handwriting across the curriculum
- ensure resources, training and time are in place to support effective implementation
- ensure the policy is followed consistently by all staff

Subject leader for English or writing

- oversee the implementation of the handwriting policy
- support staff in delivering the agreed handwriting model
- monitor progression, consistency and impact
- review handwriting practice in books, classrooms and across subjects
- identify areas for staff support or further development

Class teachers

- teach handwriting explicitly and regularly
- model the agreed handwriting style in all written presentation
- correct errors promptly and consistently
- ensure handwriting is reinforced in all subjects
- adapt practice where pupils need additional support or challenge
- inform the next teacher of pupils who have been awarded a pen licence
- maintain high expectations for presentation, accuracy and effort

Support staff

- follow the agreed handwriting model
- reinforce correct formation, directionality and posture
- support pupils during handwriting practice and in class when directed by the teacher
- help pupils use agreed resources and adaptations appropriately

Pupils

- take care with handwriting in all written work
- use the agreed handwriting model
- listen to guidance and respond to corrections
- maintain high standards of presentation appropriate to their stage of development

Parents and carers

- support children by encouraging good handwriting habits at home
- help pupils value practice, presentation and perseverance
- follow school guidance where handwriting support or equipment is shared

Inclusion

Wilkinson Primary School is committed to ensuring that all pupils can access handwriting teaching and make progress. Expectations are ambitious, but support and adaptation are provided where needed.

For pupils with additional needs, including weak hand-eye coordination or motor control difficulties:

- handwriting support is adapted to the pupil's needs
- the school considers whether handwriting practice is appropriate in its usual form
- the SENDCo or outside agencies will assess the learning environment where a preferred recording method may be needed
- pupils may be offered alternatives such as laptops, specialist software or touch typing where these support access to the curriculum
- resources may include pencil grips, sloping boards, specialised pencils or pens, enlarged fonts and different coloured paper
- fine motor support may include adapted activities to build the fine motor, hand eye coordination, and visual perception skills needed for clear and flowing handwriting
- pupils are supported to record their ideas without being unfairly limited by handwriting difficulty

The school also supports pupils who are confident and fluent writers by providing:

- greater challenge through a wider range of tasks
- opportunities to work at a faster pace
- opportunities to move through curriculum content more quickly where appropriate
- opportunities to refine and adapt handwriting for different purposes

Additional inclusion principles include:

- left-handed pupils are taught with appropriate paper positioning and support
- pupils with fatigue or physical difficulty are not penalised for handwriting needs
- alternative recording methods are considered through normal inclusion processes where handwriting would otherwise prevent a pupil from showing what they know
- access arrangements and adaptations are made in line with individual need

Professional Development

Staff receive support and training to ensure the consistent teaching of handwriting across the school. Professional development includes:

- training in the agreed handwriting model, The Flow Letter Technique
- guidance on correct letter formation, joins, spacing and presentation
- support for teaching posture, grip, pencil control and paper position
- advice on supporting left-handed pupils
- strategies for identifying and correcting insecure handwriting habits early
- understanding of when and how to adapt provision for pupils with additional needs
- guidance on maintaining handwriting expectations across subjects and in all books

Support staff are included in relevant training so that the whole school approach remains consistent.

Quality of Teaching and Learning

This policy reflects the expectations associated with Ofsted inspection of curriculum intent, implementation and impact.

Curriculum intent

- *handwriting is sequenced from early mark-making to fluent, joined writing*
- *the school has a clear and consistent handwriting model*
- *provision is ambitious for all pupils*
- *handwriting is part of a coherent writing curriculum rather than an isolated activity*

Curriculum implementation

- *handwriting is taught explicitly and systematically*
- *pupils are given regular opportunities to practise and consolidate*
- *adults model handwriting consistently*
- *handwriting is reinforced across the curriculum*
- *pupils are taught to apply handwriting skills in everyday writing*

Curriculum impact

- *pupils' work shows increasing legibility, consistency and fluency over time*
- *handwriting supports composition and written stamina*
- *by the end of Key Stage 2, pupils can write with increasing speed and legibility and adapt handwriting for different purposes*
- *books and classroom practice show pride, accuracy and secure application*

Common inspection indicators addressed by this policy

- *clear progression from the early years to Year 6*
- *consistent whole-school handwriting expectations*
- *strong early foundations in physical development and writing readiness*
- *effective support for pupils with additional needs*
- *handwriting maintained in all subjects*
- *evidence of pupils' improving fluency, control and presentation*

Monitoring and Review

The implementation and impact of this policy will be monitored through:

- *book scrutiny across subjects and year groups*
- *learning walks and classroom observations*
- *review of pupils' handwriting in independent writing*
- *pupil voice about handwriting confidence and expectations*
- *monitoring of support for pupils with additional needs*
- *review of the consistency of the agreed handwriting model*
- *evaluation of the impact of handwriting teaching on presentation, legibility and fluency*
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The headteacher, senior leaders and subject leader for English or writing will review the policy and its implementation regularly. The policy will be updated when needed to reflect school practice, curriculum developments or identified areas for improvement.

The current review date is September 2027.