

Sacred Heart Hindsford R.C. Primary School

Handwriting and Presentation Policy



Policy written by S. Johnson

English Lead

Autumn 2024

Accepted by Governors:

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signed (chair)
signed (Head)

Shared with staff: date: November 2024

Consulted with parents: date November 2024

‘With Christ as our guide, we inspire and thrive’.

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1. Curriculum Statement

Intent

At Sacred Heart, the importance of children being able to write legibly, fluently and at a reasonable speed is recognised. With these skills, children have a much greater chance of being able to reach and demonstrate their true potential throughout their school careers and in their lives beyond school.

In the EYFS children are taught to use their phonic knowledge to write words in ways which match their spoken sounds, as well as some common words with irregular spellings. Planned opportunities are provided for the children to develop writing simple sentences which can be read by themselves and others. Children develop the use of effective pencil grip throughout their time in Reception.

In KS1, handwriting practice focuses on ensuring that children form lower-case letters of the correct size relative to one another. It develops their use of the diagonal and horizontal strokes needed to join letters and promotes an understanding of which letters, when adjacent to one another, are best left unjoined. Children also develop accuracy in writing capital letters and digits of the correct size, orientation and relationship to one another and to lower-case letters and use spacing between words that reflects the size of the letters. Children are taught to write with a joined style as soon as they can form letters securely with the correct orientation.

Throughout KS2, emphasis is placed on children's development of writing legibly, fluently and with increasing speed. Emphasis is placed on children being taught to choose which shape of a letter to use when given choices and deciding whether or not to join specific letters, as well as choosing the writing implement that is best suited for a task.

Implementation

At Sacred Heart, we follow the Martin Harvey method for teaching handwriting. This means that we do not follow a bought 'scheme'; rather we use a consistent approach of teaching handwriting throughout the school using Martin Harvey's guidelines and clear terminology. The approach progresses through the school with an emphasis being placed on the use of consistent language. Across the school, handwriting is carefully modelled by the teacher and outcomes are recorded by the children in their English books. The use of patterns to support letter formation and appropriate letter-joins is also embedded enabling children to also further develop their fine motor skills. High expectations are also communicated as part the success criteria for the lesson. Children's successes and improvements are recognised through the positive praise, the celebration of work and in some of our Friday Celebration Assemblies a 'Handwriting Hero' is awarded to those children who have been demonstrating excellence within their handwriting and presentational skills. A high standard of presentation is also encouraged and expected in children's written work across the wider curriculum.

Impact

This systematic approach ensures development in the skill of handwriting throughout each year group. Children take pride in their written work and achieve proficiency in their own handwriting using Martin Harvey's guidelines and clear terminology. Outcomes in children's wider curriculum work, as well as in their English books and school displays, evidence the progress that children make in this area, as well as the consistency of the approach across the school.

2. Teaching and Learning

To ensure that our children achieve a high standard of handwriting, they need to be explicitly taught the skills needed. At Sacred Heart we use and teach a printed script (leading into a semi-cursive script), letter formations and joins in handwriting to ensure consistency across the school. The semi-cursive style is clear and it does not have 'loops' or 'lead-ins' which are features of more complex handwriting styles.

The style is relatively simple to teach and relatively simple to learn. However, like all handwriting styles, it is only as good as the way that it is taught.

(Handwriting style in printed form)

It is vital that teacher modelling is good, teaching language is appropriate and teachers have a clear understanding of how to structure a handwriting lesson and have effective strategies to use. These are of greater importance than the actual handwriting style itself.

(Handwriting style in joined form)

We have high expectations in handwriting lessons and make sure that children are expected to apply the same standards in other writing as well. Handwriting practice has a clear focus, with key teaching points demonstrated to the class. Each session provides allocated time for children to practise the specific handwriting skill. Extension activities will allow for further practice, development and challenge.

Prior to a handwriting session, staff will ensure that the children are prepared to write by:

- **Two hands.** Children will use two hands when writing. *One hand to hold the paper and one hand to write with.*
- **Six feet.** Children will keep six feet on the floor. *Their own two feet and the chair's four feet.* This means that the child does not kneel or sit cross legged on the chair. Neither do they rock backwards or forwards on the chair.

• **BBC.** Children will always sit in the BBC position – Bottom Back in Chair. This means that they never sit with the chair sticking out and their bottom on the front edge of the chair.

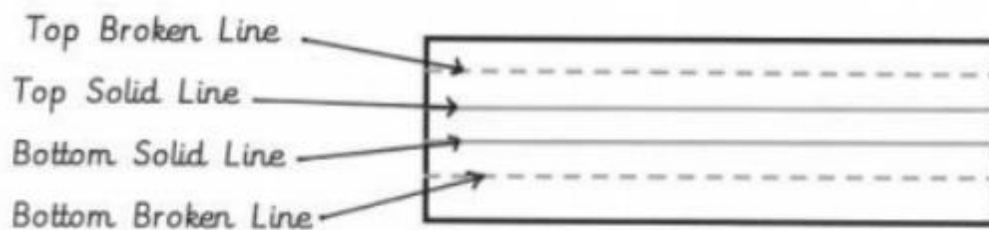
• **TNT.** *Tummy Near Table.* This ensures that the child is sitting with their body close to their work, instead of having to stretch forward to write.

• **Paper position.** *The paper should be upright when the child is writing or at an angle not greater than 45 degrees.* When children turn their paper to an angle greater than this, it is often because the pencil is being held with the thumb in a position which blocks the child's view of the pencil point.

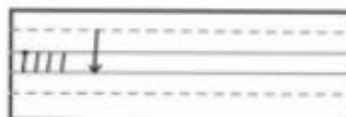
• **Good pencil grip:**

- Hold pencil between thumb and two fingers where black/yellow starts.
- Thumb helps fingers to hold a pencil
- Rest pencil on 'pencil bed'
- End of pencil points over their shoulder

During a handwriting session, staff will remind children of the following key elements of letter formation and where letters sit on the line by:



Short Lines



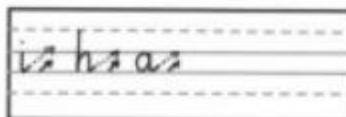
Tall Lines



Tail Lines



North-east Joining Line
or
Diagonal joining stroke





At Sacred Hearts we believe:

Consistency is a key word.

Consistency in terms of the handwriting style and letter shapes being taught.

Consistency in terms of how handwriting lessons are taught.

Consistency in terms of the way teaching materials and writing tools are used.

Consistency in terms of the teaching language which is used.

Consistency in terms of all members of staff supporting and believing in this drive for excellence in handwriting. It has to be seen that this is what **we** are doing as a staff. It has to be seen that this is something that is happening in every class. It has to be seen that this is something **we** all believe in. The more that teachers give strong messages to pupils, showing they are really passionate about high quality presentation of work, the greater the likelihood of high standards being achieved.

THREE LEVELS OF PRESENTATION FOR CHILDREN

There are occasions when writing tasks or handwritten recording of work in different curriculum areas should be presented beautifully and times where presentation is less important. This is best explained by the three levels of presentation shown below:

1. Highest level of presentation. For example, where the teacher says to the class, *“With the Science investigation we have just finished, we are going to write it up beautifully with written explanations in your finest handwriting, with well-constructed tables of results and carefully drawn diagrams. We are going to use plain paper of various sizes and line guides. I want you to feel really proud of your completed work and I want you to make your teacher very proud. I have a big, empty display board waiting for your work.”*

2. Lowest level of presentation. e.g. Children are working in small groups with large sheets of sugar paper and marker pens. Teacher says, *“You have two minutes to write a superb sentence about the way the bare tree across the playground is moving in the January breeze.”* Children are writing at speed, inserting extra words to improve their sentence and perhaps crossing out. Presentation does not matter at all in this type of task.

3. Middle level of presentation. This is where children work in exercise books e.g. skills work in a literacy lesson; exercises on prefixes, suffixes, comprehension work, how to write extended sentences. There should be clear evidence of the school's handwriting style, with finger spaces and correct joins where they have been taught. With this type of task, the high quality of the top level of presentation should not be expected or demanded, but the lowest level of presentation would be totally unacceptable.

ADULT HANDWRITING

As with the three levels of presentation for children, there are times when adults in school must produce their finest handwriting and times when good handwriting matters less.

Top level of handwriting. During handwriting lessons or when producing handwritten labels to go with displays of children's work.

Middle level of handwriting. Handwritten comments in children's exercise books. These should be neatly written, using the school's handwriting style. If they are written untidily, they can be inaccessible to the children, making the written comment worthless. Badly written comments give children mixed and contradictory messages. Due to the time required to write perhaps thirty handwritten comments, it is unrealistic for these to be written to the **top-level** standards. The same principles as the middle level of presentation for children's writing should apply here.

Bottom level of handwriting. This is where the quality of adult handwriting does not matter at all.

e.g. A guided writing activity. If a class or group of children are offering adjectives and adverbs in rapid succession to enhance a sentence, it would be counterproductive for the

adult to write slowly and meticulously in their most beautiful handwriting. Guided writing should be short, sharp and pacey. In this bottom level of handwriting, with crossings out, insertion of extra words and arrows to move sections of language within the sentence, the only criteria should be that the children are able to read what the adult has written.

TRANSFERRING SKILLS FROM HANDWRITING LESSONS TO OTHER WRITING TASKS ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

Sacred Heart does not pursue an initiative to achieve excellence in handwriting just so that it looks great in handwriting lessons; this would be teaching skills for the sake of teaching skills and totally worthless. The whole idea is for children to use the handwriting skills they have been taught in order to present work across the curriculum in an attractive way that develops feelings of personal pride.

How we achieve this

The three key words are: *insist* *motivate* *expect*

- *Insist* on correct posture and correct sitting position throughout the school day.
- *Insist* on correct letter formation and correct letter joins in cross curricular writing.
- *Insist* on children producing their very best whenever it is required,

- *Motivate* children by giving frequent praise when it is merited.
- *Motivate* children by telling them exactly what you are looking for.
- *Motivate* children by showing them exactly what you are looking for.
- Motivate children by celebrating their efforts and achievements with displays of their written work, showing it is really valued.

- Make it clear to children that what you expect from them is their very best at all times.
- Make it clear to children that nothing less than their own best is acceptable.

- Children will use the same lines for writing tasks as the ones used in handwriting lessons. This plays an enormous part in helping children to transfer handwriting skills to written work across the curriculum.

3. Assessment Teacher assessment:

Teachers will assess children's handwriting progression during lessons as they write as well as once they have completed their writing.

Criteria for assessment may include:

- Does the child adopt the correct posture?
- Does the child hold the pencil correctly?
- Does the child use the correct movements when forming/joining?
- Does the child write fluently?
- Is the writing legible?
- Is the writing appropriate?

- Is the child's handwriting developing in-line with statutory curricula?

Pupil assessment:

Throughout the writing process, children are encouraged to assess their handwriting. The expectation for a high standard of handwriting is also communicated prior to writing tasks. When explicitly indicated in the children's success criteria, this is an aspect of the outcome which is reviewed and assessed by each child on completion of the task. Neat presentation is always recognised and praised by the class teacher and children are encouraged to review their handwriting as part of the writing process.

Whole-school assessment:

The subject leader for English will regularly assess handwriting across the school. Criteria for whole-school assessment may include:

- Is the handwriting generally legible and pleasant?
- Are letters being shaped correctly?
- Are joins being made correctly?
- Are spaces between letters, words and lines correct?
- Is writing size appropriate?
- Are the writing standards demonstrated by the majority of children in line with statutory curricula?

4. Planning and Resources

At Sacred Heart, we will teach the children to write by using a consistent approach of teaching handwriting throughout the school using Martin Harvey's guidelines and clear terminology. The most up-to-date edition of the 'Martin Harvey approach' guides children through carefully structured stages from pre-writing patterns all the way to the development of the semi-cursive joined style.

- Teachers can use the Martin Harvey script and resources to deliver high-quality handwriting lessons.
- Semi-cursive font is also available on all school laptops so that communication can be presented to children using the semi-cursive digital font.
- Handwriting pens will always have black ink and children will own their own pen. They will be encouraged to 'stroke the paper' with the pen to ensure that they do not press too hard.
- The rate of transition from pencil to pen will be determined by the class teacher, on an individual-basis and in consultation with each pupil.
- Reception and KS1 children will write in HB pencil in all exercise books. KS1 children may be awarded a special 'Handwriting Pencil' when they are demonstrating excellence in handwriting and presentation.
- Year 1 to Year 6 will use the new style exercise books that are pre-printed with the correct guidelines (four different widths – sizes 1, 2, 3 and 4). Teachers will choose the most appropriate pre-printed exercise book with the correct guidelines to meet the child's handwriting needs.

NEW MEMBERS OF STAFF

For new members of staff, training will include:

1. Observing colleagues teach handwriting lessons, followed by paired discussion on teaching strategies modelled and how the lesson was structured.
2. Team teaching with more experienced colleagues.
3. Meeting with SLT members, focusing on the principles behind the whole school ethos of good presentation of work.
4. The new member of staff being provided with the *Excellence In Handwriting* booklet and all teaching materials, with clear explanation of how to use them.

5. Organisation

Structure and progression through school

EYFS

On entry to Reception, children will secure gross motor skills. As the Reception children progress, any name writing or more 'formal' writing will be written on the new style paper which is pre-printed with the correct guidelines. Children will be introduced to the correct terminology for the line guides and letter formation (this will be subject to the individual child's rate of progress). To ensure correct pencil grip and good fine motor skills, children will have regular practise at the activities in Martin Harvey's Fine Motor Skills document.

Key Stage 1

During the initial phase, children in Years 1 and 2 will have a minimum of 4 handwriting sessions per week. This may rise to daily sessions if class teachers feel that the children would benefit from a brief intensive period. Sessions will be no longer than 20 minutes and will always start with a warm-up activity taken from the *Achieving Excellence* document. Handwriting practice will use new style exercise books that are pre-printed with the correct guidelines.

Key Stage 2

During the initial phase, children in Years 3-4 will have a minimum of 3 handwriting sessions per week. This may rise to daily sessions if class teachers feel that the children would benefit from a brief intensive period. Sessions will be no longer than 20 minutes and will always start with a warm-up activity taken from the *Achieving Excellence* document. During the initial phase, children in Years 5 and 6 will have a minimum of 2 handwriting sessions per week.

General

Children will have a good viewing of teacher modelling during handwriting lessons. Children must be either facing the board or sideways on to it. No children should have their backs to the board. *In a good Primary classroom, seating arrangements will be organised according to the nature of the task children are engaged in.*

- Children will have enough desk space when they are writing.

- Left-handed children are taken into consideration. Where children are sitting in pairs, the left- hander should be sitting to the left. *This ensures that both left and right-handed children have sufficient space to work comfortably.*
- There is sufficient natural light in the classroom.
- Children's writing is clearly visible in the classroom. Work is celebrated through short term displays of children's handwriting practice, which can be rotated every few weeks, act as a reward, motivation and examples of quality.

HANDWRITING TOOLS

In order to produce excellent handwriting, children must have good quality tools:

HB Pencils

- Pencils must always be sharp. *A pencil is not a pencil unless it has a point.*
- Pencils must never be sharpened at both ends. *This is dangerous and also shows complete disrespect for the writing tool.*
- Pencils must not be too small for the child's hand.
- Pencils do not go in children's mouths!

Pens

Children are provided with handwriting pens which are conducive to achieving excellence in handwriting.

- Children will be given the opportunity to use pen in handwriting lessons first, when they have shown consistently that they are able to write really neatly in pencil.
- Where pens are used, children are provided with their own to keep in their drawer, rather than have the pens in a communal pot as we believe all pens do wear according to the handler.
- Pens are used only for writing tasks where good presentation is required.

6. EYFS

It is important for children to understanding the importance of clear and neat handwriting from an early age. Correct letter formation is taught in Reception and children are given opportunities to independently practise their handwriting. Children are also given plenty of opportunities to develop the fine motor skills they need for accurate handwriting through continuous provision in the EYFS setting. In Reception, formal handwriting lessons are introduced and during these handwriting lessons, the children will learn to write legibly in a pre-cursive style with increasing fluency and speed by:

- Having a correct pencil grip, posture and paper position.
- Knowing the correct way each letter and numeral is formed (lower case letters).
- Forming all letters correctly (including size and orientation).

7. **KS1 and KS2**

In KS1 and KS2 handwriting continues to be taught discretely using the Martin Harvey Handwriting scheme.

In **Year 1** the children will continue to develop their pre-cursive handwriting with increasing fluency and speed by:

- Having a correct pencil grip, posture and paper position.
- Knowing the correct way each letter and numeral is formed (lower case letters and capital letters).
- Forming all letters correctly (including size and orientation).

In **Year 2** and **KS2** the children progress to write legibly in a cursive style with increasing fluency and speed by;

- Using the 4 joins.
- Knowing which letters are the break letters.
- Writing in a joined style.
- Practising skills of printing, slanting and speedwriting.
- Progressing to an individual joined style.
- Considering handwriting styles for different purposes.

8. **Equal Opportunities**

All children have equal opportunities to reach their full potential in handwriting, regardless of their race, gender, cultural background, and ability, or of any physical or sensory disability.

9. **Inclusion**

Children with English as an additional language

Children with EAL are encouraged to make the same outstanding progress in handwriting as their peers. To support their understanding of letter formation handwriting should be consistently modelled by the class teacher.

Children with Special Educational Needs

Some children experience difficulties making good progress in their handwriting development. They may need additional support with their fine motor development, pencil grip or letter formation. The class teacher should liaise with the English subject leader and SENDCo to put into place the most appropriate form of support. This could include:

- Pencil grip or jumbo triangular pencil.
- Fine motor skills intervention.
- Additional handwriting group.
- Additional handwriting homework.

High Achievers

Children with advanced skills in handwriting will be supported and given opportunities for extension work.

10. Role of the Subject Leader

The role of the subject leader is to coordinate the teaching of handwriting across all phases of the school. This is to ensure that we secure a consistent approach across the school and to ensure progression in handwriting is outstanding. Some key duties that the English subject leader should undertake over the course of the year include:

- Monitoring of handwriting in English books.
- Monitoring of the application of handwriting across other exercise books, such as topic books and Reading Journals.
- Helping identify and facilitate the professional development needs of staff.
- Liaising with the school SENDCo to best support children with handwriting difficulties.
- Organising, maintaining and cataloguing handwriting resources.
- Keeping abreast of new initiatives in the teaching of handwriting.

11. Parents

We recognise how important the home-school link is for children to make outstanding progress in all areas of learning – including handwriting. Parents will be informed of their child's standards of presentation during Parents Evenings and will be encouraged to support with any additional handwriting practice where necessary.

Policy written by S. Johnson – English Lead

Date: Autumn 2024

Review date: Autumn 2026

