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## Boarshaw Community Primary School Handwriting Policy

### Introduction

At Boarshaw Community Primary School, we believe that handwriting is a skill which needs to be taught explicitly. It is a movement skill which affects all areas of written communication for all children. We therefore feel that these writing movements need to be practised correctly and regularly so as to avoid ineffective handwriting styles that will be harder to correct as the child becomes older.

In this school, we teach a handwriting style through the Achieving Excellent in Handwriting as we believe that this style will establish a systematic and consistent style of writing throughout the school. The following policy is aligned with the guidance provided to ensure we consistently deliver this scheme of handwriting throughout our school.

*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.

### General Aims

We aim to provide effective handwriting lessons and activities so as to:

- provide equal opportunities for all pupils to achieve success in handwriting
- produce clear, concise, legible handwriting
- develop accuracy, fluency and speed as the children progress through the scheme
- present work neatly and appropriately to a variety of audiences
- promote confidence and self-esteem in writing
- support the teaching and learning of spellings
- encourage children to take pride in their work
- build in cross curricular links to broaden experience

- help children recognise that handwriting as a life-long skill and will be a fundamental element of all forms of written communication throughout their lives
- display neatly presented work around the school as a model of excellence

### **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**

*For example, when 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 for example skills work in a literacy lesson; exercises on prefixes, suffixes, comprehension work, how to write extended sentences. Here 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.

#### **1. Top level of handwriting**

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

#### **2. 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.

### 3. **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 pacy. 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.

## **Essential habits for developing excellent handwriting**

The following habits should be taught, encouraged and reinforced in all year groups not only in handwriting lessons but in all lessons throughout the working day.

1. Two hands.  
Insist on children always using two hands when writing. *One hand to hold the paper and one hand to write with.*
2. Six feet.  
Children must always 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.
3. BBC. Ensure that children 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.
4. 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.
5. 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 posture and correct seating position are vital components of developing good handwriting. The habits above must *not* be seen just as *good habits for handwriting*. They must be insisted upon in all subject areas, throughout the school day, otherwise their impact is reduced. It has to be seen as the correct way, indeed the only way, rather than what is expected merely in handwriting lessons.

## **Subject Organisation**

Initially as a school which aims to drive up standards of presentation, handwriting has to be taught intensively for a sustained period, if the initiative is to have the required impact. **'Do a little and do it often'** is a key phrase. *Doing a little* means lessons of 15/20 minutes. *Doing it often* means doing at least four handwriting

lessons per week, using the programme of lessons we provide. If this level of intensity is maintained for the equivalent of half a term, i.e. 6 or 7 weeks, a dramatic rise in standards will be seen very rapidly, not just in handwriting lessons, but in the way, children present their work across the curriculum.

Once the initiative is re-established following COVID, as a school we will complete a scrutiny of writing samples from various year groups. At this point the classes would be able to reduce the frequency of lessons; with one lesson per week in KS2 (with a big emphasis on applying skills from handwriting lessons in writing tasks of varying length, across the curriculum) and regularly lessons in Year 2 to help bridge gaps due to the pandemic school closures. Year 1 and Foundation Stage will continue to have focus on daily handwriting, either in focused handwriting sessions or during the phonics/English lessons. Emphasis will continue to be to develop gross motor skills, finger strength, fine motor skills and pencil control.

When children return from the longer holidays there needs to be a 'topping up' in order to re-establish good habits and good attitudes which are required for excellent handwriting. After a summer holiday, it is important that strong foundations are laid for the year ahead. Following a staff session led by a SLT member in which reasons why the school really values good presentation of work are stated, every class should do a handwriting lesson every day for the first three weeks in order to set the standards which are to be maintained throughout the year. Year one classes will need to continue teaching handwriting intensively during the first half of the autumn term. Other classes will be able to scale back on lesson frequency.

After Christmas and Easter holidays, there should be a week where handwriting is taught daily in each class, in order to re-establish high standards.

Within the framework above, there should be a degree of flexibility. A teacher who recognises that handwriting standards have slipped in their own class, should have the freedom use their own professional judgement, perhaps after consultation with SLT, to re-establish high standards by having a week of daily handwriting lessons.

### **Classroom Organisation**

- Ensure that all children have 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. School furniture is not set in concrete.
- Children need to have enough desk space when they are writing. Ensure that desks are uncluttered.
- Take left-handed children 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.
- Ensure that there is sufficient natural light in the classroom. Open the blinds. They should only be closed if sunlight is shining directly into children's eyes.
- Ensure that children's writing is clearly visible in the classroom.

### **Handwriting tools**

In order to produce excellent handwriting, children must have good quality tools. This includes the following:

### **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**

- Give children the opportunity to use pen, first of all in handwriting lessons, when they have shown consistently that they are able to write really neatly in pencil. *Do not be in too big a rush to do this.*
- Where pens are used, give children their own pen with their name on it, rather than have the pens in a communal pot in the middle of the table. *The pens will be better looked after this way. Also, all pens do wear according to the handler.*
- Use pens only for writing tasks where good presentation is required.

The pen has to be seen as a very special tool. The pen has to be seen by pupils as the most important tool they will use in school. The pen has to be seen as very precious. *If the child looks after the pen, the pen will look after the child!* Positive attitudes to the pen will only come if adults constantly reinforce these positive messages.

### **Adults**

Teachers and all adults will model the correct handwriting formation and skills needed for the children throughout the school, during all lessons and in all written feedback to the children as mentioned above. The correct handwriting guides should be used for each year group and used when modelling handwriting on the board.

### **New members of staff**

At the beginning of an academic year, most schools will have a number of new staff. This can also happen during the school year. Newcomers need a comprehensive, thorough period of induction to the teaching of handwriting. This should consist of the following:

- Observing colleagues teach handwriting lessons, followed by paired discussion on teaching strategies modelled and how the lesson was structured.
- Team teaching with more experienced colleagues.
- Meeting with SLT members, focusing on the principles behind the whole school ethos of good presentation of work.
- 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.

### **Cross curricular - transferring skills from handwriting lessons to other writing tasks across the curriculum**

Schools do 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 to 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 copious amounts of 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.**

The same lines for writing tasks as the ones used in handwriting lessons should consistently be used at all times. This plays an enormous part in helping children to transfer handwriting skills to written work across the curriculum.

### **Assessment**

When children are engaged in handwriting activities teachers and teaching assistants constantly observe the children and offer continuing support, identifying, intervening and addressing any misconceptions or bad habits.

Assessments include:

- observation of the children and correction at the time of writing
- marking of handwriting books
- marking of presentation in cross-curricular books
- individual discussions with children in order to review their handwriting and set new targets

Formative assessments are continuous, enabling the teacher to plan and adapt appropriately. We recognise that effective marking and the inclusion of the assessment of handwriting within writing assessments and are important features of ongoing formative assessment.

### **Inclusion and Equal Opportunities**

All children have an equal opportunity regardless of gender, race or ability, to progress and succeed in their learning and understanding. We pay particular attention to ensuring there is no gender bias in materials or in access to resources, including ICT. Teachers should pay attention to the equal distribution of their questions across all groups. Any displays and references to this subject in society should show positive role models of gender, race, ethnicity and disabilities.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

Provision for handwriting is monitored and reviewed on a regular basis.

This is achieved by:

- the English Coordinator will monitor resource provision, identifying shortfalls, identify aspects within curriculum subjects to be included in teacher planning.
- The SLT shall have oversight of this policy and monitor the provision of handwriting.

We believe that school self-evaluation is a necessary prerequisite for school improvement and we place high importance on our monitoring and evaluation procedures. Teachers keep their own running records which are kept in line with the English and Assessment policies. Examples of children's written work, showing progression through the levels, are kept in the assessment books.

The class teacher, head teacher and SLT members monitor the approaches outlined in this document, in line with school policy. Monitoring includes:

- lesson observations
- work scrutiny to include presentation and handwriting
- moderation of writing to include general class work, cross-curricular work and optional SAT writing assessments

The SLT team must provide Governors with an annual report outlining how English in school is placed currently and their intentions over the year. If writing is the focus then this will be the school's assessment and monitoring priority.

Progress is discussed twice a year at parents' evenings and a written report is provided annually at the end of the year in line with DfES statutory requirements. If children have specific problems or targets associated with handwriting, then these will be addressed at the parents' meetings.

In-service training and staff meeting time is provided for staff in order to inform them of any writing developments or changes, to discuss any queries or concerns, and to moderate written based work.