GIGGLESWICK
SCHOOL

Prep School Handwriting Policy

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1 INTRODUCTION

Handwriting and the presentation of work is fundamental in pupils reaching their potential in literacy, with higher curriculum expectations across their learning. This policy aims to ensure that the pupils have the opportunity to *develop a confident, legible and personal handwriting style.*

2 AIMS

2.1 For Teachers:

- To know the correct style, letter formations and joins in handwriting to ensure consistency across the school (Pre-school to Year 6).
- To understand the progression in handwriting so that children are taught in every lesson and handwriting develops and improves.
- To ensure high expectations in handwriting lessons and that children are expected to apply the same standards in other independent writing.

2.2 For Children:

- To know the importance of clear and neat presentation in order to communicate meaning effectively.
- To write legibly in both joined and printed styles with increasing fluency and speed by:
  - Having a correct pencil grip
  - Forming all letters correctly
  - Knowing the size and orientation of letters.

3 TEACHING

Assessment Reporting

There should be a **minimum** of 1 x 20 minutes of handwriting session each week as well as time to practise e.g. this could be incorporated into daily Literacy lessons/Study Skills.

Children who find handwriting difficult should be targeted for intervention where possible. Pupils may join the school with a handwriting style that does not match the whole school, but follows the aims outlined above. In this case, the pupil will not be challenged and taught a different way, providing it remains fluent, consistent and legible. Personal handwriting styles are usually embedded by Year 5/6, when confident with joins.

The handwriting scheme will follow on from the letter formation used in phonics (RWI). The letter patter used in KS1 and EYFS will be adopted from RWI, to ensure consistency. When pupils are preparing to join, Nelson will then be adopted as Phonics is embedded and joining patter takes precedence.

Nelson Handwriting takes into account the current phonic and Literacy statutory curricula, and so aligns the teaching sequence and model to the phonic and spelling expectations of the NC 2014 and latest DfE guidance (Section 3, The Writing Framework July 2025).

Additional support and guidance is available from Nelson Handwriting to support the teaching of handwriting for left handed pupils. It is recognised that left-handed pupils would benefit from a differentiated approach to a number of handwriting rules such as pen grip, paper orientation, posture etc.

The letter formations, letter patters and general guidance will be provided to parents to ensure that they are aware of the teaching process and how to support their child with their handwriting at home. This will be useful in any independent work completed at home, project work, and in ensuring consistency in approach. There are also a number of online Nelson handwriting tools that pupils and parents can access at home.

4 MODELS

The school has adopted the Nelson Handwriting Scheme with the following letter formation (see Appendix 1 for the language used to pupils when forming letters, RWI):

READY REFERENCE GUIDE

The letter forms

The lower-case alphabet for Starter Level:

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z

The lower-case alphabet for Books 1 to 6:

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z

A letter slant of 8° from the vertical to the right is introduced in Pupil Book 3:

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z

The lower-case print alphabet:

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z

The capital letters and numerals:

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

These are the same throughout the scheme.

The letter groups

Letter families

In year one, *Nelson Handwriting* groups the letters into sets based on handwriting families. These are letters that are formed in similar ways.

Set 1

c a o d g q s f e

Set 2

i l t u j y

Set 3

r n m h k b p

Set 4

v w x z

Joining groups

The joining groups divide the letters according to how they will join to other letters.

Group 1

a c d e h i k l m n s t u

Thirteen letters with exit flicks plus **s**.

Group 2

a c d e g i j m n o p q r s u v w x y

Nineteen letters which start at the top of the x-height.

Group 3

b f h k l t

Six letters which start at the top of the ascender.

Group 4

f o r v w

Five letters which finish at the top of the x-height.

The break letters

b g j p q x y z

Eight letters after which no join is made. Joins are not made to or from the letter **z**.

The joins

	Group		Group	
The first join	1	→	2	in am
The second join	1	→	3	ab ch
The third join	4	→	2	oa wo
The fourth join	4	→	3	wh ob
The break letters				bigger

The joined style

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

Letter size

Book	***x-height of letter (mm)***
Starter Workbook A	10
Starter Workbooks B & C	8
Book 1A and 1B	6
Book 2	5
Book 3	4
Book 4	4
Book 5	3
Book 6	3

Guidelines are provided in the Resources and Assessment Books and printable versions are available online.

- The Resources and Assessment sheets for Starter have tramlines with an x-height of 8mm.
- The Resources and Assessment sheets for Books 1 and 2 have tramlines with an x-height of 6mm.
- The Resources and Assessment sheets for Books 3 and 4 have tramlines with an x-height of 4mm.
- The Resources and Assessment sheets for Books 5 and 6 have plain ruled lines.

5 THE HANDWRITING PROCESS

5.1 Writing Materials

Tools

Children should be encouraged to experience writing with different tools. Pens, pencils, chalks and crayons are available to experiment with. In the early stages of writing a soft pencil with a thick stem may be most appropriate – too thin a pencil, offered too soon, may result in a tight grip. The standard pencil should be introduced as child's motor skills begin to improve.

At the beginning of Giggleswick Preparatory School a child's main writing tool will be a standard pencil (Y1-3). During Year 3-4, when a child is ready, we encourage children to write in ink, using a handwriting pen not a biro or fine-pointed nib pen.

Paper

In the early stages of writing (Mill House, Pre-school), children are encouraged to make free-flowing movements and to produce large patterns, letters and words on large sheets of plain paper. As their motor skills increase, the size of the writing should decrease, and exercise books can be used (Reception and Key Stage 1). Pupils will practice letter formation, shape and directional flow using Nelson Handwriting practise sheets and online tools. These help pupils appreciate the relative proportions of letters and to understand how to position them.

Throughout school, all children should be encouraged to use unlined paper from time to time. This allows them to determine letter size, spacing and the arrangement of the page, and to consider other issues of aesthetics and presentation.

5.2 Getting Ready to Write

Seating and posture

The child's chair and table should be at a comfortable height. The table should support the forearm so that it rests lightly on the surface and is parallel to the floor. Children should be encouraged to sit straight and not to slouch. The height of the chair should be such that the thighs are horizontal and the feet flat on the floor. Tables should be free of clutter and there should be adequate light to allow children to see what they are doing. Ideally, left-handed pupils should sit on the left of their partners so that their movements are not restricted.

Pencil and pen grip

For all children, especially left-handers, a pen or pencil with a rounded nib or point is best for writing.

There are four grips that can be used: cylindrical, digital, modified tripod and tripod.

Both right-handed and left-handed writers need to be shown as early as possible how to hold a writing implement correctly. Bad habits are easily learnt, and many left-handers adopt a hooked pencil hold which can result in a tired grip which affects the quality of their writing. When they begin to use a pen, their hand can easily smudge the ink as they write.

Right-handers

For right-handers a tripod grip is generally accepted as the most efficient way of holding a pen or pencil. It should be held lightly between the thumb and forefinger about 3cm from the point. The middle finger provides the additional support. The book or writing paper should be places to the right, tilted slightly to the left. The left hand should be used to steady the paper.

Left-handers

Left-handers need plenty of encouragement and support as they are in the minority. When a left-hander makes joining strokes they are pushed, not pulled as they are by a right-hander. Left-handers should be encouraged to hold their pencils far enough away from the point to allow them to see what they are writing. The tripod grip should be much the same as for a right-hander. The book or paper should be positioned to the left and tilted slight to the right.

Helping the left-hander

If a child has developed a 'hooked' pencil hold, do not force them to change. It is very difficult to alter the way you have learnt to hold a pencil, and confidence can be destroyed. Encourage them instead to angel their paper 8° to the left (the same as a right-hander). The left-hander should hold the pencil in the left hand in the same way as a right-handed child (see above). The hand should be kept below the writing line. The left-hander often crosses the 'f' and 't' from right to left. Many left-handers therefore will find it easier to leave the 'f' un-joined.

6 HANDWRITING LESSONS

6.1 Patterns

Writing patterns reinforce handwriting movements which help to develop fluency, control and confidence. This technique is applied for all year groups. Patterns may be used purely for practice, or to decorate pieces of work. Fluent handwriting is writing in which the pencil literally flows from letter to letter in a smooth and almost continuous speed. Children should be encouraged to write at a reasonable speed in order to develop this skill. Handwriting patterns are a useful aid in this respect.

6.2 Focus

Each handwriting lesson should have a clear focus. This should be discussed and demonstrations given to emphasise key teaching points. Nelson Handwriting online is followed.

6.3 Practice

Motivated and directed handwriting practice is essential. The focus of each unit of work in the handwriting session is followed by purposeful practice of a specific handwriting skill. This may be sent home as additional practise to aid consistency and build muscle memory.

6.4 Writing for a purpose

All the exercise covered in handwriting lessons are designed to be as relevant to the curriculum as possible. These are designed to reinforce key English skills in spelling, grammar, vocabulary and punctuation. Children should be taught to adapt their writing according to the requirement of the task. The Nelson scheme teaches a print script in Reception, and children are encouraged to use it in a variety of situations, e.g. for labelling maps and diagrams. They are taught to write quickly,

without losing legibility, for making notes. The writing activities span a range of genres, including real-life writing situations.

6.5 Individuality

Children should not be expected to make exact reproductions of the letter forms as presented as models in Nelson. In due course it is likely that many will develop individual variations on this style. These variations will give their writing character, and, provided that the writing is legible, are to be encouraged.

6.6 Presentation

Children need to learn to consider the visual impact of their writing as well as its accuracy. Aspects of presentation (including spacing, margins, borders, illustration and calligraphic effects) are focused throughout handwriting lessons to all year groups. Not every occasion warrants 'best' writing. It is more helpful for children to write with a degree of care, at an appropriate speed, for most normal purposes, so that their writing is legible and fluent and not too painstakingly produced. 'Best' writing can be reserved for the occasions when attention can be concentrated on the mechanical skills of writing and where there is seen to be a clear purpose for producing aesthetically pleasing work. Older children should be helped to realise that some writing tasks require a draft version to be written first. Then after revision and editing, the draft can be re-written in 'best' writing. A frequently changed noticeboard (Headmaster's) will be used to display good work, as well as working walls in classrooms, and celebrated in achiever assemblies.

Some suggestions for encouraging aesthetic presentation of written work are as follows:

- Hold an annual or termly handwriting competition.
- Have a notice board on which frequently changed displays of good work are pinned.
- Write out work for wall displays in connection with other work being undertaken, after rough drafts have been corrected.
- Encourage children to compile individual anthologies of favourite poems and extracts which may be illustrated appropriately.
- Produce a class magazine in which individual contributions are handwritten.
- Produce handwritten, decorated programmes for bazaars, concerts and parents' evenings.
- Ask children to decorate their work with writing patterns.
- Encourage children to experiment with different ways of presenting writing:
- a poem or narrative which forms a shape relating to its subject
- curved or spiral writing
- decorated capitals
- writing in coloured ink
- writing over illustrations which have been lightly coloured
- experimenting with the relationship between writing and illustration

6.7 Handwriting across the curriculum

There are many opportunities to practise the skills of handwriting during the course of lessons in other subjects. As well as supporting the new National Curriculum and requirements in English (e.g. SPaG). Research has confirmed the natural link between spelling and handwriting. Computers offer exciting possibilities for the writing process and for the presentation of work. Children should be encouraged to experiment with a range of fonts available and with different sizes of print.

7 ASSESSMENT

Handwriting should be assessed at several levels:

- Whole school assessment
- Class assessment
- Individual assessment
- Self-assessment

7.1 Whole-school and class assessment

Periodically, a survey of children's handwriting allows for a general assessment as to the effectiveness of the school's handwriting policy. It is important that any weaknesses or problems indicated are followed up. Key criteria include:

- Is the writing generally legible and pleasant?
- Are the letters correctly shaped and proportioned?
- Are the joins made correctly?
- Are the spaces between letters, words and lines appropriate?
- Is the size of the writing appropriate?
- Is the writing properly aligned?
- Are the writing standards achieved by the majority of the pupils in line with the statutory curricula? (see Appendix 2)

7.2 Individual assessment

To assess the progress of an individual child, it is necessary to observe them as they write, as well as studying their finished writing. Key criteria include:

- Does the child adopt the correct posture?
- Does the child hold the pen/pencil correctly?
- Does the child use the correct movement when forming and/or joining letters?
- Does the child reverse or invert any letters?
- Does the child write fluently and rhythmically?
- Is the writing easily legible?
- Is the writing appropriate?
- Is the pupil's handwriting development in line with the statutory curricula?

Pupils will complete resource sheets when undertaking handwriting sessions. On occasions these which will be used as placement tests, general assessment and self-assessment.

At Giggleswick Preparatory School, the Oxford Writing Criterion Scale is used as a whole-school approach to writing assessment (in line with the expectations of the 2014 National Curriculum).

The Scale has been developed by Ros Wilson to assess all aspects of writing from Reception to Year 6, including handwriting. It also provides clear next-step targets for pupils.

Appendix 1: The language of letter formation

It is helpful that all staff and parents use a clear, consistent set of instructions for describing the correct letter formation.

Letter/ number	Language to use
0	Start at the top and go round.
1	Start at the top and go down.
2	Start at the top, curve round and down, and across.
3	Start at the top. Go round, and round.
4	Start at the top. Go down, across, lift your pencil up to the top, and across.
5	Start at the top. Go down, and round. Lift your pencil up to the top, and across.
6	Start at the top. Curve down, up, and till you touch.
7	Start at the top, across, and diagonally down.
8	Start at the top, go round, and curve back the other way, and up, cross, and up till you touch.
9	Start near the top. Go round, up and down.
a	Start at the top. Go all the way round, up to the top, down and flick.
A	Down, lift, down, lift and across.
b	Start at the top. Go straight down, back up, and all the way round.
B	Down, lift, and round till you stop, and round till you stop.
c	Start at the top, and go round.
C	Round.
d	Start at the middle. Go all the way round, all the way up to the top, straight down, and flick.
D	Down, lift and round.
e	Start near the bottom. Go up, around, and down.
E	Down, and across, lift, across at the top, lift, across in the middle.
f (print)	Start at the top. Go round, and straight down. Lift your pencil, and cross the 'f' in the middle.
F	Down, lift, across at the top, lift, across in the middle.
f (cursive)	Start at the top. Go round, straight down, and round. Lift your pencil, and cross the 'f' in the middle.
g	Start at the top. Go all the way round, up to the top, straight down, and round.
G	Round, up, and down.
h	Start at the top. Go straight down, up and over, down, and flick.
H	Down, lift, down, lift and across in the middle.
i	Start at the top. Go straight down, and flick. Lift your pencil and put the dot at the top.
I	Down.
j	Start at the top. Go straight down, and round. Lift your pencil and put the dot at the top.
J	Down, and round.
k (print)	Start at the top, and go straight down. Lift your pencil and place it next to the middle. Go into the middle, out from the middle, and flick.
K	Down, lift, out from the middle up, lift, out from the middle down.
k (cursive)	Start at the top. Go straight down, back up, over and round, down, and flick.
l	Start at the top. Go straight down, and flick.
L	Down, and across.
m	Start at the top. Go down, up and over, down, up and over, down, and flick.
M	Down, lift, down and across, up and across, and down.
n	Start at the top. Go down, up and over, down and flick.
N	Down, lift, down and across, and up.
o	Start at the top, and go all the way round.
O	Round.
p	Start at the top. Go straight down, up to the top, and all the way round.

P	Down, lift, and round till you stop.
q	Start at the top. Go all the way round, up to the top, straight down, and flick.
Q	All that way round, lift and down.
r	Start at the top. Go straight down, back up and over, and flick.
R	Down, lift, and round till you stop, out from the middle, and down.
s	Start at the top. Go round, down, and back round.
S	Round, and back round.
t	Start at the top. Go straight down, and round. Lift your pencil, and cross the 't'.
T	Down, lift, and across.
u	Start at the top. Go down, round, back to the top, down, and flick.
U	Down, round, and up.
v	Start at the top. Go down, and back up to the top.
V	Down, and up.
w	Start at the top. Go down, back up to the top, down, and back up to the top.
W	Down, up, down, and up.
x	Start at the top. Go down to the bottom. Lift your pencil to the top, and down across the other way.
X	Down and across, lift, down and across.
y	Start at the top. Go down and round, back up to the top, then straight down, and round.
Y	Down and across, lift and all the way down and across.
z	Start at the top. Go straight across, diagonally to the bottom, and across.
Z	Straight across, down and across, and straight across.

Appendix 2: Statutory Requirements – National Curriculum for English

The aims of the 2014 National Curriculum	How *Nelson Handwriting* delivers these aims:
Year 1	
Handwriting *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' (ie letters that are formed in similar ways) and to practise these*	***Nelson Handwriting*** supports children from the earliest stages of learning to write. Guidance is given in the Teacher's Book about how to create the conditions for good writing: atmosphere, seating and posture, and pencil and pen grip. Each Pupil Book has a flap on the front cover which reminds children how to prepare for writing. New videos show how children should sit, how they should hold their pencil and how they should position their paper on the desk. All of the lower-case and capital letters are covered in the Workbooks and online Teaching Software, with clear and consistent instructions about how to start and finish letters. The digits 0-9 are covered too. ***Nelson Handwriting*** groups the letters into sets based on how they are formed, and children practise these in a cumulative manner.
Notes and guidance (non-statutory) *Handwriting requires frequent and discrete, direct teaching. Pupils should be able to form letters correctly and confidently. The size of the writing implement (pencil, pen) should not be too large for a young pupil's hand. Whatever is being used should allow the pupil to hold it easily and correctly so that bad habits are avoided.* *Left-handed pupils should receive specific teaching to meet their needs.*	***Nelson Handwriting*** is designed to be used little and often. The Teacher's Book gives guidance on direct teaching, and the online Teaching Software gives animated demonstrations of each letter and join. The Teacher's Book also gives useful guidance about left-handed pupils and their specific needs in terms of grip, posture and paper alignment. A left-hander's version of the Pupil Book cover flap is available.
Year 2	
Handwriting *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*	In Year 2, ***Nelson Handwriting*** revises the previously-learned joins with an emphasis on relative height. Children re-cap their learning of lower-case and capital letters and practise forming them with consistency. Children are also given the opportunity to continue to practise using print letters, and are reminded that some letters are best left unjoined when next to other letters.
Notes and guidance (non-statutory) *Pupils should revise and practise correct letter formation frequently. They should be taught to write with a joined style as soon as they can form letters securely with the correct orientation.*	Frequent practice and repetition is at the heart of ***Nelson Handwriting***. The course provides ample opportunity for children to refine their writing skills as their motor control improves.

The aims of the 2014 National Curriculum	How *Nelson Handwriting* delivers these aims:
Year 3-4	
Handwriting *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, and that lines of writing are spaced sufficiently so that the ascenders and descenders of letters do not touch]*	Throughout Years 3 and 4, children continue to practise and develop their handwriting skills. The idea of writing with a slant is introduced for the first time. ***Nelson Handwriting*** provides practice in joining using diagonal and horizontal strokes as well as the 'break letters' that are best left unjoined. There is an emphasis on spacing letters consistently and on keeping ascenders and descenders in proportion.
Notes and guidance (non-statutory) *Pupils should be using joined handwriting throughout their independent writing. Handwriting should continue to be taught, with the aim of increasing the fluency with which pupils are able to write down what they want to say. This, in turn, will support their composition and spelling.*	Each of the ***Nelson Handwriting*** units is based on a context that links into areas across the curriculum, and/or picks up on a key spelling pattern, reinforcing the shape of the letters with the spelling pattern of the word. Guidance is given in the Teacher's Book about how teachers can best ensure that good handwriting is not just reserved for handwriting lessons, and about emphasising the importance of fluency, neatness and speed in writing across the curriculum.
Year 5-6	
Handwriting and presentation *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*	At Years 5-6, ***Nelson Handwriting*** continues to provide structured practice for the skills that have been developed so far. Children continue to practise the joins and the break letters, looking at consistency of sizing and spacing. Nelson Handwriting empowers children to develop their own style of handwriting from a secure base, choosing their writing implement and style as appropriate to the occasion.
Notes and guidance (non-statutory) *Pupils should continue to practise handwriting and be encouraged to increase the speed of it, so that problems with forming letters do not get in the way of their writing down what they want to say. They should be clear about what standard of handwriting is appropriate for a particular task, for example, quick notes or a final handwritten version. They should also be taught to use an unjoined style, for example, for labelling a diagram or data, writing an email address, or for algebra, and capital letters, for example, for filling in a form.*	***Nelson Handwriting*** continues to develop writing fluency. Speedwriting challenges help children practise automaticity and speed. Children are taught about the difference in expectation between informal jottings and final presented versions and given opportunities to practise these. A range of contexts, from writing addresses to labelling maps and diagrams, help them learn the contexts in which joined or unjoined writing is most appropriate.