

## Rothersthorpe CE Primary School

### How can you help to improve your child's handwriting?

#### Overview

With the telephone, fax machine and e-mail is handwriting now outdated? By no means! The need to be able to write well and quickly is greater today than it ever was. This article looks at ways in which you can help your child to get better at handwriting.

Although children in schools everywhere now spend a lot of time learning how to use computers and electronic gadgets, after speech, handwriting is still the most accessible, versatile and creative way of getting and keeping in touch. It holds its place as a basic skill in the primary school curriculum, allowing children to express themselves and enriching all areas of learning. It becomes a life-long source of pleasure to all who master it, and gives delight to all who receive or read it.

#### How can you help?

Most importantly, you can show your child that you value and admire the skill. At the end of this guide is a guide to our handwriting scheme so you will know how your child knows how to 'form' their letters. We use the 'Nelson' handwriting scheme, like many schools.

Have a small selection of handwriting materials readily available at home. The class teacher may be able to advise you about this, but soft pencils (B Grade), fibre-tip pens and some sheets of A4 paper are enough for a start.

Let handwriting play a part in your family's daily life, for example.....

- ✓ making lists and labels
- ✓ keeping a family diary
- ✓ leaving notes for each other in busy households
- ✓ keeping in touch with distant friends and relatives
- ✓ designing and making home-made notelets and greetings cards.

Display your child's work – if you haven't got a noticeboard, you could use the fridge door. After being on display, favourite pieces could be pasted into a scrap book to build up a unique record of progress and achievement.

Encourage your child to sit properly when he is writing. He will get the best results if

- ✓ Is the lighting good?
- ✓ Is the chair upright?
- ✓ Is the chair a comfortable height?
- ✓ Ensure your child keeps their back straight

Many children like to do their homework lying on the floor, but don't let them! They can't develop good handwriting that way and they can't present their work in a way that does them justice.

Good posture is vital for any child, but it is particularly important if your child is left-handed, because people who are left-handed have a tendency to develop a cramped, curled hand position which makes writing very hard work. Sitting properly helps to prevent this. So do your best to provide somewhere where your child can work, even if it's the end of the kitchen table.

### **What materials are needed?**

You can make a start with whatever pens, pencils and paper are to hand, but, as your child gets better, he will begin to have particular preferences, and you might need to widen the choices available.

Remember though that you can produce beautiful results with the simplest materials. A soft pencil and a sheet of inexpensive plain writing paper can produce a page of beautiful calligraphy as surely as the most expensive materials.

We'll be able to tell you what we use at various ages and stages and a look around the nearest large stationery store will show you what is available. The range of choice has never been wider and most products are carefully designed to suit the needs of young children.

If you're choosing pens, remember that young children get on best with those that have a bit of 'bite'. Ball points tend to run too easily over the paper and this is a particular problem for left-handed children. Fibre-tips and felt-tips are easier to control.

Learning to write well can use up quite a lot of paper, so it is sensible to save the better quality sheets for final drafts and special assignments. You can use cheaper recycled or re-used paper for daily practice and it's a wonderful way to make use of junk mail.

Guidelines can help your child to produce regular, well-sized writing. You can easily make a set of guidelines from an A4 sheet ruled in black fibre-tip with the lines 1cm apart. Draw a margin round the page and encourage your child to decorate each piece of work with a handwriting pattern. Border patterns are more than just decoration. They help to develop a feel for the rhythm of fluent writing, establish basic hand and arm movements and also encourage regularity in the size and shape of letters.

We would not recommend you try to teach your child to join their writing before they are ready. This would normally be in YEAR 2. By the end of this most children should have developed this habit. If not it should be addressed in Year 3 unless your child has particular difficulties.

### **To Sum Up...**

Good handwriting is still a vital accomplishment, and practice doesn't have to be a chore. Make sure your child has somewhere to work, a small collection of varied writing implements and an interesting reason for getting started. That way you're laying the foundations for a skill that will be valuable all his life.

Remember though that although handwriting is important, it is not the 'be all and end all' and certainly not as important as the content of what is being written.

## APPENDIX

### The Nelson Handwriting Scheme (used at Rothersthorpe CE Primary)

We begin at school with letters being written separately, (not joined up yet), although you'll see that all our letters have the flicks on them so children are ready later.

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ  
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

By the **end of Y2** we aim to get all of our children to join up their letters correctly. If there's a capital letter at the start of the word we don't join that.

Some pairs of letters join on the line:

llllllll tttttt

Other pairs join in the middle:

op op

Others go from the bottom of the line the middle:

ab ab ab ab ab ab ab ab ab ab

A final few go from the middle towards the top:



ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

*When our children are in Y6 and they are fluent and confident handwriters, we encourage them to develop their own, consistent style:*

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz