



# Lady Margaret Primary School

## Handwriting guidance

**Handwriting is an imprint of the self on the page. Dr Rosemary Sassoon.**

**Teaching handwriting is a priority.** Children need to learn to:

- Write cursively with efficiency and speed, without having to think hard about **how** to formulate letters and join their writing
- This enables them to concentrate on **what** to write.

### Essential points

By the age of 8, most children have adopted a pencil grip, formed a style and developed habits which are hard to change. It is essential that they have been taught the correct habits by this stage. **It is in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 that these should be taught: teachers in this part of the school should regularly check that children are learning the right habits from the start, such as holding a pencil correctly.**

Joined handwriting should be taught as soon as they have learnt to form and orientate their letters correctly. Isolated letters should only be taught when problems arise. This does not mean that children can't practise writing one letter on its own in reception class, but if a child is writing a short word like *cat*, the letters should be joined as soon as possible.

Children should be taught to write quickly, but accurately, before leaving primary school. This is a key life skill that will help them in secondary school and beyond.

### Fundamental issues which must be taught to children

- An orthodox pencil grip.
- The fact that a pencil must always be sharp before you use it.
- Tiny pencils, less than 8 cm. long should be discarded.
- How to sit on a chair properly (not slouch), sitting up, with a straight back, the chair pushed in a comfortable amount, with both legs under the table. The child's thighs should be parallel and their feet flat on the floor.
- All four chair legs must be on the ground – children should not be rocking.
- The fact that the non-writing hand (left for right handers; right for left handers) should be on the table, with palm flat, in front of the child in a supportive position.
- When writing books should be fully open, not folded over. Children should be

sitting in such a way that their books are not overlapping another child's book when they are writing.

- Right handers can tilt their book to the left. Left handers can tilt their book to the right. In each case the amount of tilt should be no more than 45 degrees. Quite simply, children should not be allowed to write at a 90 degree angle.
- To assist a child who has a problem with the amount of 'tilt' a right angled corner of tape can be stuck onto the desk where he sits so that he can see where to put the corner of his book.
- A clutter free table is required with adequate space for a number of children to write.
- All small letters start at the top with the exception of d and e (which conveniently happen to be next to each other in the alphabet). These two letters start from the middle.
- Capital letters can start from anywhere: the most economically efficient starting point should be found: for most people this is at the top.

#### **Above all, avoid the creation of the following four ingrained habits**

- ❖ Faulty pencil grip
- ❖ Poor posture
- ❖ Poor book/paper positioning
- ❖ Incorrect letter formation (for example, starting letters at the bottom)

#### **Teaching methodology & time each week**

Research shows that children make most progress when they have short, focused handwriting sessions.

- In the **Early Years Foundation Stage, staff should focus closely upon the formation of correct habits.** They should closely observe what children do with a writing implement and teach children the correct conventions to follow.
- In **reception frequent opportunities are needed for child initiated writing.** These should be established within a rich and stimulating play based learning environment. **Alongside this there should be short, focused, Whole class handwriting sessions.**
- In **Year 1, three 15 minute handwriting sessions** are needed each week.
- In **Years 2 to 6, two 15 minute handwriting sessions** are needed each week. It may also be useful to create other opportunities for the children if and when appropriate. One specific issue should be concentrated on in each session. Looking at more than one issue is potentially confusing to the children.

The essential qualities of good handwriting are fluency, neatness and speed.

### Christopher Jarman's 12 rules for handwriting

1. Good writing is based on a pattern of ovals and parallel lines	<i>o i o i o i o i o</i>
2. All small letters start at the top	<i>a b m c s</i>
3. All the downstrokes are parallel	<i>m h n a d f t</i>
4. All similar letters are the same height	<i>r o n c e u l h b k d</i>
5. All downstrokes are equidistant	<i>minimum</i>
6. The space between words is the width of the small letter o.	<i>will o you o be o mine</i>
7. Ascenders and descenders are no more than twice the height of small letters, preferably less.	<i>h g l p d</i>
8. Capital letters are no higher than the ascenders, preferably less.	<i>Ch Br Dl Ph</i>
9. Lines of writing are far enough apart for ascenders and descenders not to touch	<i>you go joy get pit home back doll</i>
10. Letters which finish at the top join horizontally	<i>o r v w l f</i>
11. Letters which finish at the bottom join diagonally	
12. Letters which finish on a stroke moving left, are best left unjoined	<i>b g j p s y</i>

**Nelson Levels**

<p>EYFS</p>	
<p>Reception/Year 1</p>	
<p>Year 1 and 2</p>	
<p>Year 3 and 4</p>	
<p>Year 5 and 6</p>	

## Pen License

In KS2, pen licenses will be awarded to those pupils who consistently demonstrate good handwriting in every subject. A certificate and pen will be handed out by the year leader and this achievement will be acknowledged and celebrated in the year group specific newsletter.



Pen licenses **will not** be awarded to KS1 pupils, therefore when a child has shown improvement in their handwriting they will be rewarded with a glitter pencil. A certificate and sparkly pencil will be handed out by the year leader and this achievement will be acknowledged and celebrated in the year group specific newsletter.

## Handwriting Heroes



To further promote neat and cursive handwriting, all classrooms display a handwriting heroes poster. The class teacher will write down the names of the children in their class who have neat handwriting. This is added to throughout the year.