

# St. Monica's Catholic Primary School Handwriting Policy



‘Let Trust, Respect and Love live here.’

Approved: Spring 2024

Review Due: Spring 2026

## **Mission Statement**

At St Monica's we believe that handwriting is a priority. Children need to be able to write without thinking about **how** to write, this enables them to concentrate on **what** to write. Handwriting is a skill like reading, spelling and mathematics, which must be taught to enable children the opportunity to become automatic writers in order to access all forms of written communication across the curriculum. Our aim is for every child to develop a legible and fluent style of handwriting which can be used at speed.

We understand that handwriting is a movement skill and thus best taught by demonstration, explanation and practice. For this reason we follow a systematic and consistent approach of good teaching, modelling and practise of Handwriting from Nursery to Year Six.

We recognise that for many of our children English is not the only language whose script they are learning to write. Whilst the development and use of fine motor skills are common to all scripts, there may be factors which influence the child's ability to form letters (e.g. scripts which are written from right to left) consequently we show sensitivity in valuing writing forms other than English.

## **Strategy for Implementation**

Handwriting is taught regularly in every class through short, focused sessions and may be linked with spelling, grammar or phonic objectives. The teaching of handwriting may be undertaken as a discrete session, although shared and guided writing also provides additional opportunities for the modelling and monitoring of handwriting. However, handwriting is a cross curricular task and will be taken into consideration during all lessons.

## **Foundation Stage**

- The emphasis at this stage is with movement rather than neatness. Letter formation learned at this early stage becomes automatic and has a profound influence on later fluency and legibility.
- To aid movement, close attention is given to pencil grip, correct posture, the positioning of the paper and the organisation of the writing space. Teachers are vigilant to ensure that bad habits do not become ingrained and that the specific needs of left-handed children and those with special educational needs are met.
- Pupils are given the opportunity to experiment with a range of writing materials and implements.
- Tracing under/ over patterns and shaped are an important stage of development.
- Children should also spend time making large marks and the sizes should decrease as they become more accurate with mark making.

- teachers should regularly check that children are holding a pencil correctly. Pencil grips are provided as soon as possible to support the development of a tripod pencil grasp. We use the term “pinch and flick” with the children to encourage them to pick up the pencil and hold it in the correct position.
- After letters have been introduced in Phonics teachers will re-teach using letter families.
- A focus will be on writing their own name.
- Letters should be formed correctly, and children should leave spaces between words, form capital letters and begin to use them where appropriate. Children should also be taught to form numerals that are consistent in size and orientation.

### **Key Stage 1**

- Building on the Foundation Stage, pupils at Key Stage 1 develop a legible style and begin to learn precursive letters in Year 1 and how to join by the end of Year 2.
- Teachers should continue to regularly check that children are holding a pencil correctly. Pencil grips are provided as soon as possible to support the development of a tripod pencil grasp. We use the term “pinch and flick” with the children to encourage them to pick up the pencil and hold it in the correct position. (See Appendix 1)
- Teachers should monitor and ensure children are sitting at the correct posture for writing during handwriting lessons but also throughout all other lessons of the curriculum.
- Correct letter orientation, formation and proportion are taught in line with the schools agreed handwriting style.
- Children will write legibly using upper and lower-case letters with correct orientation.
- Letters should sit on the baseline and be consistent in size with ascenders and descenders that are the correct length and formation.
- Children should continue to leave spaces between words, form capital letters and use them where appropriate. They should also be able to form numerals that are consistent in size and sit on the baseline.
- Children will improve the speed of writing and begin to write automatically thus promoting creativity in their independent writing.

## **Key Stage 2**

- Building on Key Stage 1 children will continue to build their natural ability to write using the correct letter orientation, formation and proportion are taught in line with the schools agreed handwriting style.
- From Year 3, once children are writing using the correct letter formation and proportion a handwriting pen will be introduced.
- Children will continue to build their ability to write automatically and therefore develop their ability to write fluently and for more sustained periods of time.

All children with legible, joined handwriting or have work hard on making an improvement in their handwriting can be nominated to receive the 'Handwriter of the Week' award during the week celebration assembly.

## **We ALL have high expectations for handwriting**

Children need to be taught to **look carefully** if they are to become good at handwriting. They should look at a letter shape for a long time, analysing it so they are able to get it exactly right. Children tend to exaggerate the non-essentials. **As teachers we should be very picky about what children produce.**

During Handwriting sessions, children should be taught to compare their results very critically with what the teacher has modelled. Older children can also be taught to constructively criticise each other's efforts (peer assessment). Essentially the approach adopted by teachers to this key skill should be characterised by rigor.

Teachers will focus on a small group of children and delegate another group for the TA/HLTA linked to your class. When reviewing handwriting, look at the child's efforts and provide feedback to them. Assist the children to pay attention to detail. They should be aiming to produce an exact copy of what has been modelled on the board. Picking out their inaccuracies, whilst of course remaining positive and encouraging, will prevent the development of bad habits. **Be very meticulous with children and teach them to be meticulous too.**

## **Resources are accessible and used to support the teaching and learning of handwriting:**

- In Nursery, children are provided with pre-writing experience and learn the basic skills of handwriting. They take part in many fun gross motor and fine manipulative skills activities.

- All teachers have copies of formation letter ditties and templates to model cursive script.
- Good quality writing instruments are provided. Children are taught and follow the rule that a pencil must be sharp before use and must be longer than 8cm. In Year Three, handwriting pens are introduced.
- Writing instruments are varied in children's free time, such as writing areas and in some literacy sessions to provide opportunities for children to practise and experiment with different writing tools.
- Claw pencil grips are provided as soon as children are displaying an inefficient pencil grip.
- Lower case cursive letter formation strips are provided on tables for children to refer to when writing, where necessary.
- Handwriting books are provided **without tram lines**, as to not confuse the children. Research suggests that lines do help children, but they should not be too close together until children enter Key Stage 2. Children are taught to write on lined paper. As soon as they are ready to revert from lines that are broader (between 11mm to 14 mm) to ones that are narrower (8 mm), the change should take place.
- Handwriting books with tram lines are only used for intervention when a child is finding it difficult to differentiate between ascenders and descenders.
- Computer software that prints in cursive style is available to all staff to make resources to support the teaching and modelling of handwriting.

### **The environment is supportive to handwriting**

A clutter free table is required with adequate space for a number of children to write. Notices, displays, titles and signs in the classroom and around the school should be in joined script if they are hand written. We have purchased computer software that prints in a cursive style. More examples of cursive script around the school environment – including word joined word processing - will assist pupils to appreciate this writing convention.

### **Differentiation is used to support those with differing needs, difficulty or to challenge others that may be ready for new skills**

**Left handers-** There is no doubt that it is harder to learn to write left handed, as during the act of writing you are covering what you are writing. Our writing system favours the right handed child. Teachers are aware of any left-handed children in their class and ensure that teaching and learning is modified for those children to ensure they are not disadvantaged in any way when writing. The following guidelines are adhered to:

- Left handers tend to write lower down, so they should tilt their page to the right. To stop them tilting too far, masking tape can be used to provide an

outline for their book position. A mat can always be provided to support children with this.

- Left handers will often kneel at the desk: this is because they need to write lower down. Often a left hander may be too low down. To correct this either a cushion, a lower table or a higher chair can be used.
- Left handers tend to need a slightly longer stem to write with.
- Letter formation is modelled specifically for left-handed children, as well as right-handed children.
- Left handed children should always sit on the left hand side of the desk. This makes writing infinitely easier for them. They must sit on the left of right-handed children, otherwise their arms will clash.
- Sometimes a mark is made at the left side of the page to indicate where writing begins.
- The pencil/pen should sit in the 'v' between the thumb and forefinger (tripod grasp) and the wrist should be straight when writing.
- To avoid smudging their work children are encouraged to position their fingers about 1.5cm away from the end of their writing instrument.

### **Children with Special Educational Needs**

We recognise that all children are unique and will acquire the skill of handwriting in different ways. Some children develop handwriting skills with relative ease, while others struggle and need further support. As a result:

- Handwriting lessons are differentiated to support the needs of all children in the class and target groups are generated to provide additional support for children who are not responding to teaching targets.
- Handwriting targets are often documented and reviewed on SEN Support Plans and used as a working document to support individual children's learning.
- Parents are informed of any concerns teachers have with regard to the handwriting development of their child.
- Extra resources are available for teaching assistants to conduct small handwriting groups or one to one sessions to focus on specific handwriting targets. Some children may need to use pencil grips or special writing instruments, these can be provided as and when teachers identify difficulties. Other pieces of equipment, such as: special seating, sloping boards, special paper, will be purchased if needed.
- We appreciate the role of outside professionals in relation to meeting the needs of the pupils within our school. Therefore in our work with SEN children we will contact, communicate and liaise with external agencies in supporting the learning of SEN pupils.

## **More Able Pupils**

Children with very mature handwriting are challenged: all their down strokes should be equidistant, for example: can children do this with a word like **minimum**?

Children can be assisted to become more reflective about handwriting and different handwriting styles. They will further develop their ability to discriminate between handwriting that is of a high quality and that which is of an inferior quality. One way to assist them to do this is to get them to look at a sentence written in two different ways and appraise the sentences critically. These pupils are also invited to use handwriting for a range of purposes and discuss expectations for different pieces of writing e.g. note-taking/formal letter.

## **Regular assessment of handwriting supports progression**

The assessment of handwriting is important to ascertain whether pupils are ready to move on to the next stage in learning.

Informal assessment of handwriting is carried out by the class teacher in their marking of written tasks, scaffolding of children's learning during writing sessions and weekly teaching and marking of handwriting lessons. Extended Writing is a fantastic tool in monitoring the progress of handwriting and setting specific handwriting targets.

Formal assessment is conducted at the start of every term using the sentence- 'the quick, brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.' At the end of KS1 and throughout KS2, teachers also have SATs assessments which will enable them to review each child's handwriting ability in relation to national standards.

Assessment of handwriting is used to give children immediate, specific and positive feedback. It is also used to ascertain differentiated teaching groups e.g. joiners and letter formers and also for generating target groups for children that need extra support.

Assessment and targets are shared with parents at parent consultations and in reports.

## **Parental Involvement**

Parental involvement is of great importance in the development of handwriting. The methods of teaching handwriting need to be consistent at school and at home to ensure children do not develop any bad habits or learn incorrect formation of letters or pencil hold.

St Monica's aim to include parents in the teaching and learning of handwriting by sending home informative letters at the start of each school year to inform parents about how they can help with handwriting at home.

Class teachers use parents as another tool in the teaching and learning of handwriting. Handwriting is sometimes sent home as homework with clear instructions of how children should be forming letters/completing basic joins. Parents are also informed if teachers have any concerns about a child's handwriting and are given advice and additional resources for how they can help support their child at home.

Written by: Jennie Nicholls

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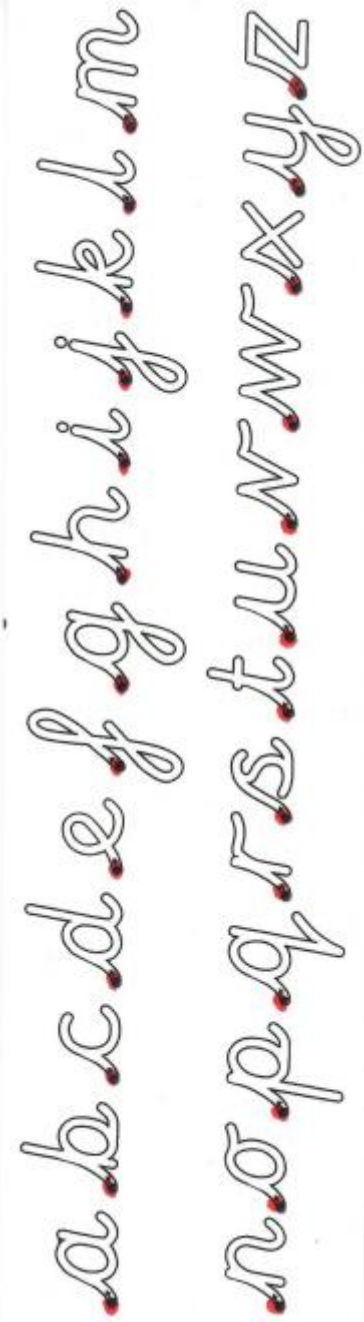
## Appendix 1

### **Good posture and position of paper is modelled and encouraged by all staff**

The following rules are taught to children, monitored and encouraged by ALL members of staff:

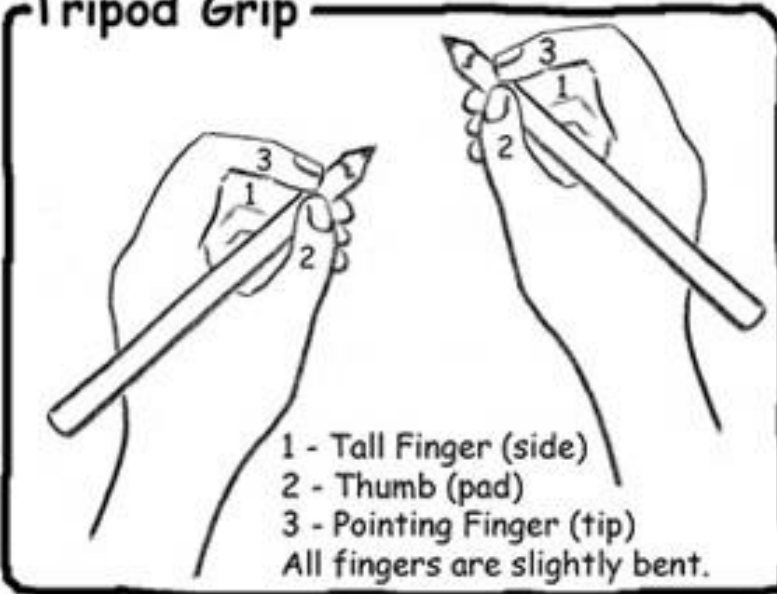
- How to sit on a chair properly (not slouch), sitting up, with a straight back, the chair pushed in a comfortable amount and both legs under the table. The child's thighs should be parallel and their feet flat on the floor.
- All four chair legs must be on the ground – children should not be rocking.
- The non-writing hand (left for right handers; right for left handers) should be on the paper in front of the child in a supportive position.
- 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.

Appendix 2

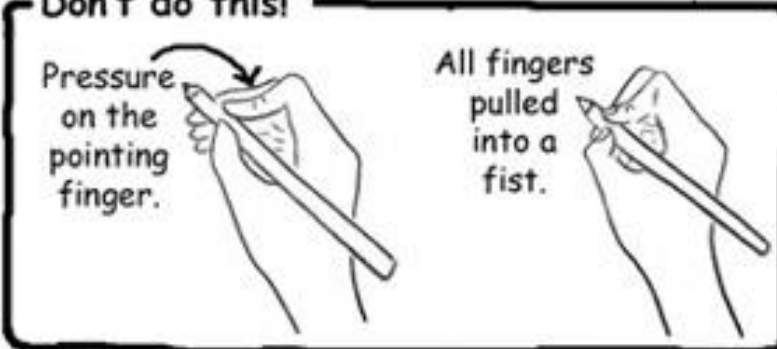


Appendix 3

## Tripod Grip



## Don't do this!



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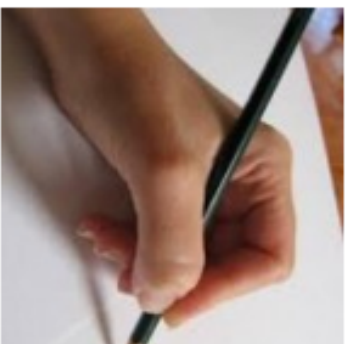


# Get ready to write...

## Are you sitting appropriately?



- ✓ Feet flat
- ✓ Back straight
- ✓ Head up
- ✓ Bottom back on chair
- ✓ Non-writing hand on table, keeping my paper steady



## Are you holding your pencil correctly? pencil correctly?



## Appendix 5

### Cursive Letter formation rhymes

a - up and around the apple, down the leaf. *a*

b- up then down the laces to the heel, round the toe. *b*

c- up and curl around the caterpillar. *c*

d- up then around his bottom, up his tall neck, down his feet. *d*

e- up and lift off the top and scoop out the egg. *e*

f- up and then down the stem, and draw the leaves. *f*

g- up then round her face, down her hair and give her a curl. *g*

h- up tall, then down the head to the hooves and over his back. *h*

i – up then down the body, dot for the head. *i*












j- up then down his body curl and dot. *j*

k- up then down the Kangaroo's body, tail and leg. *k*

l- up tall, then down the long leg. *l*

m- up then Maisie, mountain mountain. *m*

n- up then down Nobby and over the net *n*

- o- up then all around the orange. 
- p- up then down the plait and over the pirates face. 
- q- round her head, up past her earrings and down her hair. 
- r- up then down his back, then curl over his arm. 
- s- up then slither down the snake. 
- t- up then down the tower, across the tower. 
- u- up then down and under, up to the top and draw the puddle. 
- v- up then down a wing, up a wing. 
- w- up then down up, down up. 
- x- up then down the arm and leg and repeat the other side 
- y- up and then down a horn, up a horn and under his head. 
- z- up then zig-zag-zig 