



BLOUBERG
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL
SOUTH AFRICA

“A South African School with an International Perspective”

BLOUBERG INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL HANDWRITING POLICY

Introduction:

Handwriting is a key Literacy skill that needs to be taught actively, not just practiced.

The child's own natural rhythmic movements should be developed and guided to become rhythmic writing movements. Rhythm in handwriting is essential for legibility, neatness and eventually speed.

We believe that a flexible, fluent and legible handwriting style empowers children to write with confidence and creativity. This entitlement needs skilful teaching if each individual is to reach their full potential at primary school.

Purpose of Handwriting:

- At the end of Key Stage 2 the student should be able to write legibly, neatly, at a reasonable speed and with ease.
- The student should be constantly encouraged to write attractively and to take pride in their handwriting.
- This pride should be reflected in all the written work of the student and in the care the student takes of their books in which they write.
- Orderliness in the setting out of the work is essential as it is a distinctive feature of all good written work.
- Letter formation, spacing and direction are the fundamental principles children must learn.

Principles

HANDWRITING IS AN EXPLICIT SKILL – i.e. it is practiced during development and must be explicitly taught.

- ***Joined – up handwriting has the following advantages:***
 - ***Speed:*** students are suddenly, at high school, required to write almost twice as fast as primary school. The speed demands of note-taking, exams, etc. increase as the student progresses. Although it may be adequate at the lower levels, 'ball-stick' printing increasingly restricts students as they grow older.
 - ***Spelling:*** the ability to see the whole word is crucial in learning to spell accurately. Students who print reduce the task, not just to letter-by-letter copying/writing, but to a string of meaningless circles and lines ('balls' and 'sticks'). 'Joined-up' handwriting forces the student to appropriately ('visualise') the word as a whole, and to write it as one object. Also, writing the word as a whole word, commits the word to the student's 'motor memory' (as well as their visual and auditory memory) – it adds to the student's chances to remember the word, especially if he/she has a kinaesthetic learning style.
 - ***Letter-knowledge:*** it helps to prevent confusions - for instance, dyslexic students are confused by 'b' and 'd' when they write them using the ball-and-stick method.

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- **Handwriting involves the following sub-skills:**

- **Motor co-ordination:** poor motor skills are typical of dyspraxia AND dyslexia children. This is not 'carelessness, but a motor barrier.
- **Motor memory:** letter-formation must be automatic – the muscles need to remember the shapes-information and be able to replicate them without thinking. This holds back many dyslexic/dyspraxic students because they often have a motor memory barrier – i.e. they need to practice for much longer to correct (if at all) the instinctive movement.
- **Visual perception:** a student with visual discrepancies is likely to have problems with handwriting, because they find it hard to set up the work spatially.
- Left-handed writers have a whole range of extra problems when writing – not least that they cover up the words as fast as they write them. **Left-handed students need individual help in handwriting.**

Teaching Handwriting:

In some cases it may be necessary to re-teach handwriting skills 'from the beginning'. If this is the case, the following strategies can be applied:

1. Tripod pencil grip

Where pencil grips are incorrect, students may need to learn how to hold the pencil properly:

- For right-handers, the pencil should rest on the side of the middle finger, into the crook of the thumb, while the thumb and the first finger clasp it gently, but firmly into place. The side of the hand rests on the paper. Make sure the student is not gripping the pen too near the tip, or too far from the tip. This is called the tripod grip.
- Left-handed students need to hold the pencil a little higher up the barrel so they can see what they are writing.

2. Posture and Paper

Where posture is incorrect, students may need to be told how best to sit and write:

- All students need to sit more-or-less straight-on to the table, upright holding the paper with the non-writing hand.
- Right-handers angle the paper slightly to the left.
- Left-handers angle the paper slightly more, and to the right.
- Posture, as grip, should not be too tense.

3. Developing motor control

The following exercises will develop motor control:

- Writing much bigger than normal (e.g.) on the board), or much smaller than normal.
- Tracing letter shapes – e.g. on a piece of velvet, in a sand tray, using shaving cream, etc.
- Skywriting or writing on another student's hand or back (and guessing the letters).
- Tracing over shapes, patterns and letters.

4. Letter-formation

When teaching letter formation:

- **ALL LETTERS HAVE A SPECIFIC FORMATION. This is the essential rule.**
- Use a piece of paper with *sets of three lines* to learn and practice the shapes.
- Do **NOT** try too much at once. Learn the letters, and then **practice** writing words which only use those letters, until they are embedded in your memory.
- Teach upper-case letters as printed letters (A,B,C,D,E, etc.) to 'join-up'.
- If the student is motivated and the home is supportive, it is possible to teach lower-case letters easily – and with successful results in 4 to 6 sessions.

Teach lower-case letters in the following order, as the following shapes:

Firstly, teach the 'up, back and round' letters (c, a, d, g, q and perhaps later – o) and write words such as; dad, dog, doc, cad, etc.

When joining letter-to-letter, 'o' requires the student to start the next letter half-way up. This skills may, but it may not, be appropriate automatically. You may wish to leave the 'o' out at first, and introduce it later. Whatever you decide to do, the concept of starting the ext letter half-way up after certain letters (o, w, r, f and v) ***must be explicitly taught.***

Secondly, teach the anti-clockwise letters (l, t, l, u, y, w and e) and write words such as; cell, wool, loot, gate, well, cool, etc.

Thirdly, teach the up, down, up-and-around letters (n, m, h, k, b, p and later r) and write words such as road, name, robber, hopper, problem, etc.

Lastly, this leaves difficult letters (s, f, j, v, x and z) to introduce gradually.

Of these, 'f' and 's' are the greatest problem (since j, v, x and z are not often used). Tell the student that 'f' and 'x' are the **ONLY** letter where they are allowed to lift the pen off the page. Excepting 's', discuss/allow alternative forms for these letter.

The students will now be able to write any words. They can practise writing out the alphabet in joined-up writing sentences.

Teaching by Example:

The teacher's board-work should use neat, cursive script, and be an exemplar of handwriting.

Scope and Sequence:

Pre-Reception:

Use art, music, pattern and play to introduce the language and movement of letter shapes.

Reception:

Prepares students for handwriting, consolidating motor control and introducing letter shapes though enjoyable activities.

Year 1:

Consolidates letter shapes and begins a systematic introduction to joining.

Year 2:

Continues the joining progression from Year 1, revising and developing joins.

Year 3:

Provides valuable revision of more complex joins, reinforcing links with spelling and supporting the move towards fluency.

Year 4:

Reinforces joins with a word investigates size, proportion and space, emphasising the need for speed and fluency.

Year 5 and 6:

Explores an independent approach to writing through project work and self-assessment – developing appropriate styles for speed and fluency.

Handwriting Progression:

In writing development the emphasis falls on:

- Exploratory handling of the materials
- Muscular development and co-ordination
- Eye-hand co-ordination

Pre-Reception pre-writing activities:

This stage is very important and should not be omitted. At the beginning the teachers encourages the student to use the materials freely. Gradually the teacher teaches the student to hold his/her paint brush or crayon correctly for writing.

The student practices on:

The whiteboard/chalkboard and or newsprint, using soft black board chalk, paint and thick brushes, thick crayons (crayons should be long enough to be handled correctly).

At the same time muscular control is developed during the following Activities:

- Ball games, catching and passing
- Threading beads, bottle tops, cardboard discs
- Paper tearing, cutting and pasting
- Use of Paper Mache
- Starch work and finger painting
- Modelling with dough and clay
- Fastening buttons, buckles, hooks and eyes, press-studs, lacing shoes, opening and closing zips
- Use of jigsaw puzzles, constructional toys and blocks
- Paging through books

The students free scribbling and play activities later change to carrying out of definite introductions. These activities will help to promote control of movement ad the correct handling of media.

- Drawing and painting – free illustration of a story;
- Cutting out pictures and paper cutting for picture making.
- Finger painting in starch – free or rhythmical movement;
- Modelling an identifiable object with dough/clay e.g. animal
- Threading beads according to a given pattern; and
- Paper Mache, paper tearing and modelling of e.g. fruit in season
- Introduction of ball and stick letter formation

Pre-Reception: Pre-writing skills

- Fine motor activities e.g. peg board, tricky fingers, paper tearing, crumbling of paper
- Finger plays and finger rhymes
- Tracing activities
- Crossing the midline activities
- Dot-to-dot
- Play dough activities
- Writing patters: using shaving cream, sand, starch, paint, crayons, finger paint
- White board, easel and chalkboard activities
- Scribbling first, imitation of vertical strokes second, horizontal strokes next, then circular motions, and finally, copying a circle.

Reception:

- Writing patterns
- Ball and stick letter formation

- Students write on a base line, if students are confident and letter formation is correct, students will be extended to fat lines.

Year 1:

- **Term 1:**
 - Beginning to write on fat lines and introduce the flick.
- **Term 2 onwards:**
 - Beginning to write in feint and margin lines
 - Students progress to writing letters with a leading out arm

Year 2:

- **Term 1 and 2:**
 - Students continue to write letter with a leading out arm in feint and margin lines
- **Term 3:**
 - Students are introduced to the leading in arm of individual letters
- **Term 4:**
 - Students begin joining letters

Year 3:

- **Term 1 and 2:**
 - Students continue with joined letter writing using feint and margin lines
- **Term 3 and 4:**
 - Students continue with joined handwriting – linking letters and writing in feint and margin lines

Year 4:

- Students continue using joined handwriting on feint and margin lines – linking letters and writing

Year 5 & 6:

- Students continue using joined handwriting on feint and margin lines – linking letters and writing.
- Students will be issued with a pen certificate at the end of Year 6 when their handwriting is legible, neat and consistent.

Handwriting Lessons:

Handwriting lessons should take place:

- **Pre-Reception & Reception:** writing and activities should take place daily
- **Year 1 & 2:** One and a half hours per week (Monday, Wednesday, Friday)
- **Year 3:** One hour per week (Tuesday and Thursday) consisting of 2 half hour handwriting periods
- **Year 4:** One ½ hour lesson per week

Stationery:

Pre-Reception & Reception:

- HB: Triangular pencils

Year 1 to 5:

- HB: Staedtler & triangular pencils

Year 6:

- Blue ball point pen and HB Staedtler pencil