

Handwriting In Year 1

Before the move to Nelson Handwriting developing skills Red level. The following guidance should be followed.

Using 'shape families' to teach letter formation

Using the RWI techniques eg "all around the apple..." , the letters of the alphabet can be sorted into four main movement groups.

The advantage of aligning letters with a key letter is to help children to remember the starting point and subsequent movement of the letter. This is particularly effective in discriminating b from d.

The four groups are:

1. down and off in another direction, exemplified by the letter l (long ladder): letters i, j, l, t, u (v, w with rounded bases)
2. down and retrace upwards, exemplified by the letter r (one-armed robot): letters b, h, k, m, n, p, r; (numbers 2, 3, 5 follow a clockwise direction)
3. anti-clockwise round, exemplified by the letter c (curly caterpillar) letters: c, a, d, e, g, o, q, f, s; numbers: 0, 6, 8, 9
4. zigzag letters: letters: v, w, x, z; numbers: 1, 4, 7.
- 5.

Preventing confusion between the letters 'b' and 'd'

Why is a good pencil grip important?

If children are to develop a fluent and fast handwriting style, they must learn to hold a pencil with a grip that is relaxed but allows for efficient control of the pencil. If children grip a pencil too tightly, they won't develop a free-flowing movement and they will tire very quickly. Experts agree that children should be encouraged to hold the pencil between the thumb and forefinger with the pencil resting on the third finger. The thumb and forefinger should also be able to move slightly so that very fine movements required for writing are possible.

Commercial pencil grips, or triangular pencils, can be used to encourage this pencil hold but their use must be monitored as they can be misapplied. Care should be taken that children do not grip the pencil too tightly, as this produces tenseness in the arm and shoulder and also increases pressure on the paper.

Left-handed children

At least ten per cent of the population is left-handed – a slightly higher proportion of these are males. There is no need for left-handed children to be disadvantaged when writing, if a few simple strategies are employed:

- Model letter formation, skywriting, etc. specifically for left-handed children, with your left hand.
- Make sure that left-handed children sit on the left of right-handed children, otherwise their writing arms will clash.
- Put a mark at the left side of the page to indicate where writing begins, as some left-handed children mirror-write from the right.
- Left-handed children usually need to have the paper slightly to the left of the centre of their body and should be encouraged to tilt their work clockwise so they can see what they have written.
- Experiment with seat height – some left-handed children may need a higher seat to view their work clearly and to prevent the elbow locking into their side as they work across the paper. To avoid smudging their work: left-handed children should be encouraged to position their fingers about 1.5cm away from the end of their writing implement the pencil should sit in the 'V' between thumb and forefinger, sitting parallel to the thumb the wrist should be straight.
- Writing from left to right is more difficult for left-handed children. They should, therefore, be given more attention in the classroom to ensure that they do not learn bad habits of position, posture and pen hold which will hinder the development of a fast, fluent and legible hand.

Ascenders and descenders

Getting the movement of the letter right is one aspect of securing good handwriting. Establishing the relationship between the position of the letters is another. Lined paper is essential. Show the children that the 'body' of the descenders (g, j, p, q, y), the part which sits on the line, is the same height as the x letter (a, c, e, i, m, n, o, r, s, u, v, w, x, z). In most styles, the letter t is shorter than the other ascenders b, d, h, l. The letter f is distinguished by the variety of ways in which it is written.

When should I introduce joined up writing?

As soon as possible once children are secure in the movements of each letter.

When children are confident with single letter formation staff should then move to the Nelson Developing handwriting skills- Red level.