



South Street
Isleworth
Middlesex TW7 7EE
Tel: 020 8560 7166
Fax: 020 8232 8820
office@smi.hounslow.sch.uk
www.smi.hounslow.sch.uk

RE: Handwriting at St Mary's

Tuesday 21st January 2020

Dear Parents

At St Mary's we use a structured handwriting programme called New Nelson Handwriting. As with reading and spelling, handwriting can be practised at home as regular reinforcement of key concepts will support children's development in this area. Our partnership with Lionel Primary and Ivybridge Primary this year has shown us that children's handwriting and presentation could be even better. We have identified an issue with the standard and consistency of letter formation and joins within handwriting across the school and we want to take steps to improve sooner rather than later. This means that these changes are happening mid-year rather than for September. In order to improve we are making changes to the frequency of handwriting lessons. From January most classes will have a short daily handwriting lesson. We have reviewed our expectations regarding what a confident cursive (joined up) style looks like and how long children need to become proficient before they are awarded a pen licence. For most children this will mean that they will need to demonstrate confident flowing cursive handwriting for longer using a pencil before they are awarded a pen licence. We anticipate that most children will be ready by Y5.

We hope that you will support us in these strategies which we are confident will improve the children's presentation and enable them to write in a faster more confident way. Handwriting remains a key measure at Y2 and Y6 (as well as being a skill for life) and so it is important that we ensure that we address the problems we have identified.

Handwriting needs to be taught in a consistent way. From the earliest stages, children will be developing their fine motor skills when they pick up writing tools and make marks on paper. This should be encouraged and opportunities provided for children to scribble, draw, colour and develop other early writing skills. However, it is important for children to develop good habits with writing, and pencil hold and formation are important parts of this process.

With Christ in our hearts we grow in love to help others.

When your child starts to write, we would encourage you to reinforce the ‘tripod’ grip (correct pencil grip) through modelling and correction where necessary. This pencil grip gives children the most control over the movement of their pen or pencil. When children are beginning to form letters, we encourage children to follow set formation (generally starting at the top of the letters). Once a child can form their letters correctly, joined writing is introduced. When starting to join, we encourage clear joins, which aid fluency and accuracy in writing. Be careful – some letters (even when they are in the middle of the word) never join. Please get in touch for more information about letter formation and join. You can see examples of the 4 types of join and our letter shapes further down this letter. Note – we do not loop g or y.

In order for children to achieve their pen licence their letters must start in the correct place, they must be the correct size and aligned properly on the page and their joins must be accurate. Their handwriting must be flowing and confident. We anticipate most children needing more time practising with pencil. Fountain pens (cartridge pens) are now optional and children can use Berol Handwriting pens – please no other type of pen or biro. Fountain pens, cartridges and Berol handwriting pens can be purchased from the school office.

There are other ways in which you can be of help. These include:

- pointing out letters which have a similar formation e.g. the letters c a o d g q all start in the same way
- model writing key words (such as names) using correct letter formation and joins as appropriate for the level of your child’s progression e.g. your child’s name starts with a capital letter and capital letters do not join
- praising good effort in handwriting, especially if the error is a ‘reasonable’ attempt, before correcting any mistake
- encouraging other development of fine motor skills, such as colouring in, drawing, cutting, moulding playdough or cake mix as well as giving ample opportunity to write.

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If you have any queries about any of these matters please feel free to ask at school for more information. Below you can see some examples of un-joined (printed) handwriting and joined handwriting.

Yours sincerely

F Lloyd

English subject lead and leader for the Arts

The four handwriting joins

The first join

<i>ad</i>	<i>ce</i>	<i>cc</i>	<i>do</i>	<i>dy</i>
<i>ha</i>	<i>ki</i>	<i>lm</i>	<i>tu</i>	<i>uv</i>

The second join

<i>ab</i>	<i>ef</i>	<i>il</i>	<i>ik</i>	<i>ut</i>
<i>sh</i>	<i>nl</i>	<i>cl</i>	<i>ll</i>	<i>uk</i>

The third join

<i>fo</i>	<i>fa</i>	<i>og</i>	<i>om</i>	<i>rp</i>
<i>ve</i>	<i>rd</i>	<i>rn</i>	<i>wo</i>	<i>wi</i>

The fourth join

<i>ff</i>	<i>fl</i>	<i>ol</i>	<i>oh</i>	<i>rt</i>
<i>rf</i>	<i>rl</i>	<i>rb</i>	<i>wl</i>	<i>wk</i>

The break letters

<i>be</i>	<i>go</i>	<i>ju</i>	<i>pi</i>	<i>qu</i>
<i>xa</i>	<i>ye</i>	<i>zo</i>	<i>bb</i>	<i>gg</i>

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