



Spotlight on ... Handwriting



This term we have started to teach the children to use a cursive handwriting style. A copy of the letter formation used can be found in your child's red bag.

What is Cursive Handwriting?

Cursive, is a handwriting style in which letters are written and joined in a flowing manner, generally for the purpose of making writing faster. All the letters begin in the same place with a 'lead in' stroke from the bottom.

What are the advantages of writing this way?

Using a 'lead in' stroke that enables all letters to begin in the same place helps to remove the difficulty many children have in knowing where to start when writing a letter. Joining letters in a cursive way helps to ensure a natural flow to writing. Research shows that cursive handwriting helps children to learn to spell as words are written with a continuous hand movement. It is particularly good for dyslexic pupils for this reason.

How is cursive handwriting introduced?

In Year R there will be lots of opportunities for the children to practice making patterns using a continuous hand movement with the correct pencil grip. They will also be taught to form all the letters of the alphabet correctly. By Year 1 all children should be ready to learn how to join letters using a lead in stroke. They will be taught how to join letter families and how to join to ascending letters [e.g. t and l] and to descending letters [e.g. g and y]. This will be consolidated and refined in Year 2.

So, just how is handwriting taught?

In Year 1 and 2 all classes have dedicated 'handwriting' sessions where the teacher demonstrates the correct letter formation and the children then practise this in their handwriting books or on whiteboards. This is reinforced during daily phonics sessions. In Year R the children are taught the correct letter formation during phonics sessions and are given the opportunity to practice on whiteboards and during small group sessions.

What about those children who find handwriting difficult?

Some children find handwriting very difficult. This is often because they are not holding a pencil correctly, are not using the correct pressure, or have poor fine motor control. Very occasionally there may be other underlying reasons such as dyspraxia. If a teacher decides that a child needs extra help then the school uses a programme called 'Write from the Start' which is a specialist programme that helps to develop the correct, precise hand movements and pencil control that is needed to make handwriting easier. We also use thicker, triangular pencils for some children or provide pencil grips.

Unfortunately many children have overlearned the incorrect way of forming letters, often before starting school. It is only through daily practice that the correct way of forming letters is slowly retaught.

So how can I help at home?

One of the simplest and most enjoyable ways to help to improve your child's handwriting is to provide lots of opportunities for drawing and colouring. This helps to develop the fine motor control that is needed for good handwriting. Similarly, anything that requires small pincer movements is beneficial. For example: building with lego, using tweezers to pick things up just like in the game 'Operation', or threading beads.

You can also help by making sure that your child holds a pen or pencil correctly. The best way to ensure this is to place the pencil on the table with the point aiming towards the child's tummy. Then ask you child to make 'snappy, crocodile fingers' using their thumb and first finger, with the other fingers tucked behind. Get your child to place the 'snappy' fingers just behind the point of the pencil, snap it up, and then push the pencil back to rest naturally in the join between the thumb and index finger, with the other fingers still tucked behind.

Your child's class teacher may also give you handwriting sheets to practise at home, and for Year 1 and 2 there are some examples of how to form letters using a cursive handwriting style attached to this edition of Spotlights.

So, now you know all about handwriting and how it is taught at Oakwood. Enjoy helping your child to use a cursive handwriting style at home and remember

Practise makes perfect!