



St Mary Magdalene Academy

Primary Handwriting Statement

It is the aim of our school that all children develop fluent, legible and consistent handwriting. We use **cursive handwriting** as this style facilitates increased speed, fluency and legibility, whilst also aiding in developing spelling and presentation. Throughout their time at St Mary Magdalene, children are provided frequent discrete opportunities to practice the skills that have been carefully modelled and explained by their teachers. From Foundation stage up, children are taught to form cursive letters before beginning to join in year 2.

Advantages of Cursive Writing:

- Letters are produced in a flowing movement, which helps the development of a physical memory of how each letter is written
- Letters all start in the same place and flow from left to right, which reduces the likelihood of reversal mix-ups such as b/d and p/q
- Because of the smooth flow, writing soon becomes quicker and easier
- There is no potentially problematic transition stage when children move from print to a joined style
- Cursive writing has been shown to improve spelling

Posture and Grip:

Children should sit comfortably in the middle of their chair with their back straight and both feet on the floor for support. Their forearms should be resting on the table and their non-writing hand must be used to hold the book or writing paper in place. Both left and right handed children should use the tri-pod grip with the pencil between the thumb, index and middle finger. Left handed children should, if necessary, tilt the paper rather than adopt an awkward posture or grip.

Good handwriting is based on the following conditions:¹

- Consistent patterns of ovals and parallel lines
- Similar letters being of equal size and proportion
- The distance between words being approximately the width of a lower case letter 'o'
- The length of the long vertical strokes (ascenders) and (descenders) above and below the base line, being no more than twice the height of the small letters
- Capital letters being no higher than the ascender strokes, and not joined to the lower case letters
- All letters being 'seated' on the base line

Style and Resources:

There are various different styles of cursive writing; here at St Mary Magdalene we use the style recommended by the **British Dyslexia Association**. This offers consistent letter formations from Reception up to the end of Key Stage 2. As a resource, we use **The Handwriting Rescue Scheme**. This demonstrates each letter formation in both upper and lower case and models how to make the joins between the different lower case letters. The scheme does not teach the letters in alphabetical order but is based on letter family groups. Letters with similar formation are introduced in sequence so that handwriting skills develop and progress systematically. We also use **Handwriting for Windows** which is a piece of handwriting software that allows teachers to model the cursive style on the interactive white board whilst also producing handwriting exercises in the appropriate font. The cursive style is embedded into daily practice by teachers adopting it when they write on the board and within the marking of children's work. However, it is also important that pupils do see other fonts around the classroom on displays etc. This is so children realise that letters can be formed in different styles dependent upon purpose.

¹ The MSL Handwriting Rescue Scheme

Handwriting across the School:

Reception

In Reception, children are introduced to cursive style as soon as they begin to write letters. This immediate introduction facilitates the use of correct form and reduces the risk of children falling into incorrect letter formation habits. Although they learn to form each letter in the correct cursive style, they are not yet taught to join the letters.

Key Stage 1

After the solid base provided in Reception, KS1 is an opportunity for children to refine their skills and increase their pencil control. From year 1 on, **the teaching of handwriting is frequent, discrete and direct**. Children will work on their posture at the table, form capital letters, form digits 0 – 9 and will begin to understand which letters belong to which handwriting ‘families’. We aim for children to leave year 1 being able to form their letters correctly and confidently. At the end of year 1, some children may begin to be taught how to join their lower case letters.

From the beginning of year 2, all children will be taught to join their lower case letters. There will be a focus on appropriate letter sizing and using spacing between letters that reflects the size of the letters. By the end of year 2 we aim for children to have significantly increased their fluency when writing in the joined cursive style.

Lower Key Stage 2

By this stage, joined cursive handwriting will be the norm. Year 3 will provide opportunity for children to continue to work on their fluency whilst also increasing their speed. The expectation is that children should be able to write to keep pace with what they want to say. Throughout this stage, children will work on ensuring that the downstrokes of letters are parallel and equidistant and that lines of writing are spaced sufficiently so that ascenders and descenders of letters do not touch. By the end of year 4, we aim for children to have significantly improved the overall quality of their writing and to now have a consistent and fluent cursive style that allows them to write at a reasonable pace.

Upper Key Stage 2

Now that children have had three years previous learning and practicing the letter formation and joins, upper key stage 2 is an opportunity for children to further refine their style and fluency and utilise the increased speed of their writing in extended composition pieces. The teaching of handwriting will continue to be **frequent, discrete and direct** right up until the end of year 6.

End of year expectations:

It is expected by the end of each year that most children will have met these expectations.

Year Group	End of Year Expectations
Reception	Children can write most lower case letters using the correct cursive style.
Year 1	Children can form continuous lower case letters using the correct cursive style ready for joining. They can also form printed upper case letters.
Year 2	Children are joining their cursive handwriting with appropriate spacing between words.
Year 3	Children's cursive handwriting is legible and consistent.
Year 4	Children's cursive handwriting now has increased quality in relation to downstrokes of letters being parallel and equidistant and ascenders and descenders of letters not touching.
Year 5	Children have increased speed suitable for writing at length whilst also being able to adapt their handwriting for different purposes e.g. being able to neatly print when appropriate.
Year 6	Children have developed fully legible, fluent and consistent handwriting in keeping with the cursive font taught, whilst also incorporating elements of personal style.