

## Developing Good Handwriting Techniques - Information for Parents

### Introduction

The following information is designed to help provide parents with useful advice for how they can support their child to develop a consistently neat style of handwriting, with effective and comfortable pen control. It also suggests some strategies that can be applied for those children who may find it difficult to hold a pen or pencil or who may write with their left-hand.

### Why is it important that my child develops a good pen grip?

At Bushy Hill Junior School, we actively encourage children to develop a range of approaches for communicating in different ways, such as developing their speaking and listening skills, using modern forms of technology to record and improve their ideas, as well as more traditional written methods across all subject areas.

As part of our School Curriculum, children are taught to develop a fluent and consistent style of handwriting, inclusive of their own cultural background or ethnicity. We ensure that children have regular opportunities to practise holding a pen correctly and to develop letter formation and joins between letters, in order that they can develop their own individual fluent style of handwriting.

The way a child grips the pencil will affect the quality, speed and flow of the handwriting and it is very important that every child is able to write neatly and legibly across a range of different genres or formats. We believe that with regular practise in school and at home, this skill can be effectively developed by children as they progress through Key Stage 2.

### What is the correct technique for holding a pen correctly?

If you have difficulty reading your child's handwriting, the following steps can be taught to ensure the **3 finger grip** is used for holding a pen or pencil correctly:

- The pen or pencil should be held with the middle finger resting underneath the pencil and the first finger and thumb on top – this is called a **“tripod grasp”**. (See picture below)
- The pen or pencil should be held about one to three centimetres from the writing tip, so that there is control over its movement.
- The grip should be relaxed, without pressing too hard on the page.
- Ideally, your child should be sitting upright, not hunched over the paper. It is also helpful to angle the piece of paper to the right or left, depending on which hand your child is using.
- The hand should be holding the pencil at an angle of about 60 degrees.
- The 'non-writing' hand should be used to hold the paper still, so the writing arm is free to move.



Please note, that these steps are only a suggested guide. If your child has already established their own neat style of handwriting using their preferred pen grip, there is no need for them to make any changes.

### **What type of pencil or pen should my child use?**

As children start in Year 3, they continue to use pencil so that they can easily correct their mistakes in their work. At Bushy Hill, the aim is for all children to be using pen by the end of the spring term in Year 4. We reward children with a 'Pen Licence' once they have developed a consistently neat style of handwriting and can confidently move onto using a pen for their writing. (Please note that in all instances, we request that children use pencil only for any aspect of mathematics, so that calculations can be more easily corrected.)

As a parent, you may like to encourage your child to experiment with using different pens that they feel comfortable with. We try to discourage the use of biro's to start with because young children's hands are still too small to hold a biro at the correct angle – biro's force them to hold the pen upright in order to get the ink flowing properly.

At Bushy Hill, we provide a standard handwriting pen to every child, however if you feel your child may benefit from using a different pen, please ask to speak to your child's class teacher to discuss this.

### **What if my child is left-handed?**

If your child is left-handed they may require a little extra support to develop the techniques needed to compensate for the fact that they must push the pencil rather than pull it (like a right-handed person). Also, if the hand covers what has been written, the left-handed writer will have to stop more frequently to review the content of what they have written, whereas a right-handed writer can maintain the flow of writing whilst reviewing what has been written.

Parents of children who are left-handed must not try to correct their handwriting style by forcing them to use their right hand instead. The following steps can provide a guide for developing writing with the left-hand:

- Ideally, the **3 finger grip** is still used (see picture below), and the wrist should be straight, not bent in an attempt to mimic the style of right-handed people. Other writing grips such as 'the hook' can also be used.
- Be aware of your child's body position. Ideally light coming from the right-hand side is best to avoid the child working in the shadow of their hand.
- Ensure the best possible space to avoid clashing of elbows with other children using their right hand.
- Position the paper at an angle, in the opposite direction of that used by a right-handed writer.



### **Additional support for children who find writing difficult:**

- Does your child complain that it hurts to write for any length of time?
- Do they have to stop frequently when writing?
- Would they like to write faster?
- Does the way they hold their pen restrict the movement of their hand and arm, or results in their letters being distorted?

If you have answered yes to any of these questions, we may be able to offer additional support or guidance for helping your child to comfortably develop a fluent style of handwriting. Special resources such as sloping desks, ergonomically designed pen grips or Occupational Therapy exercises may help your child and which can all be discussed with our Special Educational Needs Coordinator, Mrs Jane Dawson.