



Glenwood Primary School

Handwriting

'Together we aim to develop confident, compassionate, and resilient learners who are equipped to thrive in an everchanging world'.

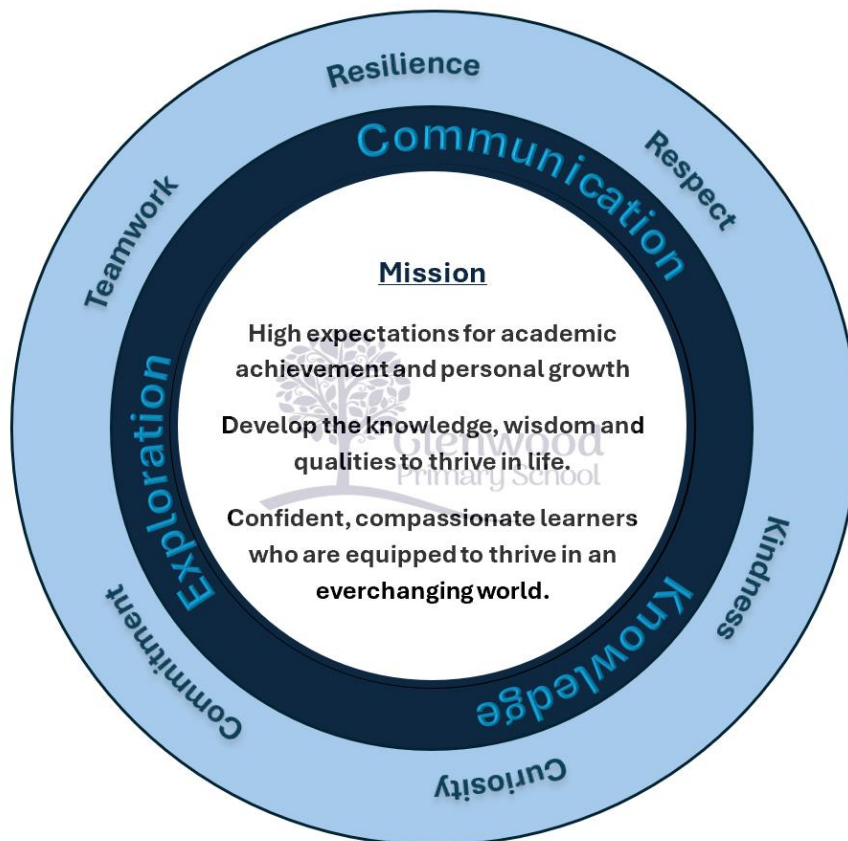
Policy update:	September 2025		
Policy to be reviewed by:	June 2028		
Signed by Principal:		Date:	
Signed by Chair of Governors:		Date:	

Ethos statement

Glenwood Primary School is a nurturing and enriching environment where we foster a culture of kindness, empathy and mutual respect. Together we build a safe and caring school where everyone belongs and thrives.

Vision

At Glenwood Primary School we are dedicated to fostering an empathetic and inclusive atmosphere where every student is valued, inspired, and challenged to achieve their fullest potential.



We help live our ethos and vision through the Glenwood Way

Move Calmly - Speak Nicely - Listen Carefully - Act Kindly - Do Your Best

Glenwood WISDOM qualities

TEAMWORK

RESILIENCE

RESPECT

KINDNESS

CURIOSITY

COMMITMENT

Aim

In Glenwood, our aim is to foster a progression from early handwriting skills to continuous cursive writing, enabling students to develop a clear, legible, and fluent style of writing. By integrating handwriting development into our academic framework, we aim to cultivate not only the technical skills necessary for effective written communication but also the personal growth of each student.

Our approach links directly to the school's mission of high expectations for academic achievement and personal growth, ensuring that every child is equipped with the knowledge, wisdom, and qualities needed to thrive in life. The mastery of handwriting serves as a foundation for the development of self-discipline, perseverance, and attention to detail. These qualities extend beyond the classroom and contribute to the holistic growth of our students. Through consistent practice and refinement of their handwriting, students will be empowered to express themselves with confidence, supporting their academic and personal journey toward success.

Our handwriting policy aims to support our broader commitment to high academic standards and personal development. By developing handwriting from pre-cursive to continuous cursive, we emphasize the importance of progress, effort, and mastery. The policy reflects our belief that every student can reach their full potential when provided with the right environment and support. Handwriting, as a skill, is a powerful tool for personal expression, and the development of this skill is a key part of the holistic education we strive to provide, one that values, inspires, and challenges each student to thrive both academically and in life. Handwriting is more than just about learning to write; it's about instilling the values of persistence, attention to detail, and self-expression that equip students with the skills they need to succeed in the world around them. The children are taught the conventional ways of forming letter shapes, both lower case and capitals, through purposeful guided practice in order to foster a comfortable and legible handwriting style as laid down in the Northern Ireland Curriculum.

Early Years (Pre-Cursive):

In the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), children will begin by developing fine motor skills and learning the correct formation of individual letters. Pre-cursive writing will be introduced, where letters are taught with the initial strokes needed for cursive but without the full joins. This stage focuses on:

- Developing hand-eye coordination.
- Learning basic letter formation.
- Encouraging correct pencil grip and posture

P1- The focus is upon correct letter formation as this is very important. All lower case letters will be addressed during the P1 year. Letter flicks will be taught from the start.

P2- Develop towards cursive handwriting (lower case letters and regular capitals). Lines introduced when children are ready.

Key Stage 1 (Introduction to Cursive):

During Key Stage 1 (Years 1 and 2), students will begin to connect letters, forming simple cursive joins as part of their handwriting practice. The focus will be on:

- Introducing cursive joins between lowercase letters.
- Developing consistent letter size and spacing.
- Practicing writing both printed and cursive letters.
- Reinforcing correct posture, pencil grip, and fluid movement

P3- Develop towards cursive handwriting until end of October and then begin teaching cursive script after half term. Regular capitals.

P4- Perfect cursive writing of lower case letters. Regular capitals. Handwriting lines used in T4W classwork books

Key Stage 2 (Fluent Continuous Cursive):

By Key Stage 2 (Years 3 to 6), students will be expected to write using continuous cursive. The aim is for students to achieve fluency in handwriting, where each letter is joined, and writing is smooth and consistent. The focus will be on:

- Developing speed and fluency in cursive writing.
- Reinforcing neatness and legibility.
- Encouraging the use of cursive in all written work across subjects.
- Refining the personal style of writing, ensuring it is legible and consistent

P5- Continue focus on full cursive script- introducing cursive capitals.

P6 and P7- Full cursive script. Children will need reminders about joins and any inconsistencies of style should be worked on. It is recognised that older children like to develop a more personal style. However, this should be consistent with the joined handwriting style adopted by the school.

Handwriting Implements

- P1 – Variety of suitable implements e.g. crayons, large felt pens.
- P2-4 – Pencils only.
- P5-7 may introduce the use of pens at teacher's discretion for particular pieces of written work.

Teacher's Handwriting

The teacher's handwriting is the model for the children. All teachers should aim to produce quality writing at all times. It is pointless to provide the children with handwriting lessons if the teacher model does not match the required Cursive style – it should at all times.

Classroom Assistants

Support staff should use the Cursive script when writing in the children's books (P4 – P7) so that the models offered to the children are consistent.

Work on worksheets and whiteboards should match the style and stage of development of the year group.

SEN./ Gifted and Talented

In Glenwood we endeavour to ensure that all students, regardless of their abilities, are given the necessary support and challenge to develop their handwriting skills. For SEN students, teachers should provide individualised support through personalised pacing, multisensory approaches, and assistive technologies. For Gifted and Talented students, it fosters an environment of challenge and extension, offering opportunities for independent exploration and leadership.

By supporting both SEN and Gifted and Talented students, we ensure that the development of handwriting aligns with our school vision of valuing, inspiring, and challenging every student to reach their full potential. In doing so, we maintain high expectations for academic achievement and personal growth, helping all students to develop the skills, knowledge, and qualities needed to thrive in life. All students should receive the appropriate support and challenge in their handwriting development. Teachers will need to be sensitive to the needs of children with Special Educational Needs and developmental needs.

Support for SEN Students:

- Students with SEN, such as those with dyslexia or fine motor difficulties, will receive tailored support to develop their handwriting. This may include additional practice time, modified materials (e.g., larger writing paper), and alternative methods such as using assistive technology.
- Handwriting activities will incorporate visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic methods, such as tracing, sandpaper letters, or using tactile surfaces to aid learning.
- Handwriting tasks will be broken down into manageable steps, and more frequent feedback and encouragement will be provided to boost confidence and motivation.

Support for Gifted and Talented Students:

- Gifted students will be provided with opportunities to extend their handwriting skills beyond the basic requirements.
- These students will be encouraged to set personal handwriting goals, fostering independence and challenge in their handwriting development.

Essential points

By the age of 8, most children have adopted a pencil grip, formed a style and developed habits which are hard to change. It is essential that they have been taught the correct habits by this stage. It is in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 that these should be taught: teachers in this part of the school should regularly check that children are holding a pencil correctly.

When writing comments in children's books (P4 – P7) always write in a cursive hand that the children can read. It is crucially important that they can read your handwriting: if it isn't legible to the child, what kind of message are you giving to him or her?

Don't praise children for neat printing – it encourages children to print, neatly!

The teaching of handwriting is essentially a non-creative activity which involves training, tracing, copying and practising (remind the children: practise makes perfect!). It is essential that they watch the teacher demonstrating how to write and subsequently try it for themselves. As handwriting is a movement skill, demonstration by a competent teacher is essential.

Children should then be taught to compare their results very critically with what the teacher has written.

Older children can also be taught to constructively criticise each other's efforts (peer assessment).

Assist the children to pay attention to detail. They should be aiming to produce an exact copy of what you have done on the board. Picking out their inaccuracies, whilst of course remaining positive and encouraging, will arrest the development of bad habits. Be very meticulous with children and teach them to be meticulous too.

Fundamental issues which must be taught to children

- A tripod pencil grip.
- The fact that a pencil must always be sharp before you use it.
- Tiny pencils, less than 8 cm. long should be discarded.
- How to sit on a chair properly (not slouch), sitting up, with a straight back, the chair pushed in a comfortable amount and both legs under the table. The children's thighs should be parallel and their feet flat on the floor.
- All four chair legs must be on the ground – children should not be rocking.
- The fact that the non-writing hand (left for right handers; right for left handers) should be on the table in front of the child in a supportive position.

Above all, avoid the creation of the following four ingrained habits

- Faulty pencil grip
- Poor posture
- Poor book/paper positioning
- Incorrect letter formation

Left handers

- There is no doubt that it is harder to learn to write left handed, as during the act of writing you are covering what you are writing. Our writing system favours the right handed child.
- Left handed children should always sit on the left hand side of the desk. This makes writing infinitely easier for them. Children must be taught this and continually reminded of it.

A few technical terms to teach children

- The word cursive means joined.
- The correct name for the joining bits between letters is 'kicks'.
- The technical name for a tail is a 'flick'.
- The letters b, h, k, l, f and i are called loopy letters. The tops of the letter should reach the top of the line. The letters t and d are not loopy letters.
- The letters g, j, p, q and y are called descenders. The flourish these letters have goes below the line.

Teaching methodology & time each week

Research shows that children make most progress when they have short, focused handwriting sessions. In the Foundation Stage, staff should focus closely upon the formation of correct habits. They should closely observe what children do with a writing implement and teach children the correct conventions to follow.

- Short handwriting sessions are needed every day in the Foundation Stage.
- In P3 – P7, two 15 minute handwriting sessions are needed each week, or three 10-minute sessions. It may also be useful to create other opportunities for the children if and when appropriate. One specific issue should be concentrated on in each session. Looking at more than one issue is potentially confusing to the children.

At the start of an academic year, in particular, or the start of a new term or half-term, it is quite acceptable for teaching staff to spend more time than this on handwriting in order to obtain 'quick, positive gains' for the children which result in them being motivated to write due to the improvements they have made.

Research suggests that lines do help children (after the age of 5/6), but they should not be too close together until children enter Key Stage 2. There should be no inflexible rules about when a child starts using lines and when (s)he reverts from lines that are broader to ones that are more narrow. It is the teacher's decision when a child is actually ready to make these important transitions. When children are ready to write on lined paper provide them with a book containing lined paper. Similarly as soon as they are ready to revert from lines that are broader (between 11cm to 14 cm) to ones that are narrower (8 cm), the change should take place.

Handwriting is a movement and memory activity, rather than an explicitly visual activity. This can be proved to children by asking them to write their name with their eyes closed – they can do this, although perhaps not quite as neatly as with their eyes open.

Children can be assisted to improve by developing their ability to discriminate between handwriting that is of a high quality and that which is of an inferior quality. One way to assist them to do this is to get them to look at a sentence written in two different ways and appraise the sentences critically. Teachers should help children to see common errors. They should also exaggerate the errors children produce to make these

clear to the children. Allowing children to see errors beside a correct version helps develop the skill of discrimination.

Children need to be taught to look carefully if they are to become good at handwriting. They should look at a letter shape for a long time, analysing it so they are able to get it exactly right. Children tend to exaggerate the non-essentials. As teachers we should be very pernickety about what children produce.

Some strongly held convictions

In general, children who feel good about their handwriting are far more motivated to write. Those who have a negative self-image of themselves as a writer and are resistant to writing usually have poor handwriting that they are unhappy with.

As a general rule, children who have attractive cursive handwriting are better at spelling than children who have untidy handwriting, or those that print.

Underachievement in writing and all other curriculum areas which involve some form of writing is often the result of poor ability in handwriting often combined with poor layout and organisational skills (there appears to be a far higher prevalence of this amongst boys than girls).

The essential qualities of good handwriting are fluency, neatness and speed.

Conclusion

In Glenwood:

- We aim to support all students in developing clear, legible, and fluent handwriting. Students will progress from basic letter formation in the early years to continuous cursive writing by the end of Key Stage 2.
- Handwriting is an essential part of literacy. Teachers will seek to ensure that students' handwriting is an effective tool for communicating their ideas clearly and accurately.
- We aim to develop an enriching environment where students are encouraged to value their own work, take pride in their handwriting, and feel confident in their academic abilities.
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- Teachers will support students of all abilities, including those with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and those identified as Gifted and Talented, providing tailored support to help all students reach their full potential in handwriting.
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- All students will be encouraged to maintain high standards of presentation and legibility in their handwriting, ensuring that their writing is clear and easy to read. This includes proper letter formation, correct spacing, and consistent size.
- A consistent approach to handwriting will be maintained across all year groups. All teachers will model and encourage the use of a specific handwriting style to ensure continuity and progression.
- Students will progress from pre-cursive to cursive handwriting, with the goal of all students using continuous cursive by the end of Key Stage 2. Cursive writing will be taught in a structured, step-by-step manner, with appropriate resources and activities to support learning.