

Acquiring a Good Hand..

"Handwriting should be fluent, consistent, joined and legible"

The National Curriculum for England

At Gotham Primary we value and foster good handwriting skills because we believe that-

- Careful presentation enhances the content of written work.
- Properly formed handwriting is an aid to good spelling.
- Pride in well presented work is a powerful incentive.

Handwriting is essentially a physical activity which requires flexible hand movements, good hand-eye co-ordination and fine motor skills. Many of the activities offered in our Key Stage 1 classes are specifically planned to develop these skills - threading, puzzles, tracing and the use of construction toys.

We view handwriting as a craft which must be carefully taught, and obviously it makes good sense to teach the formation required to join result in good handwriting from the beginning of school.

We formally teach the skill of handwriting in short regular sessions throughout the school, beginning with individual letter formation, through groups of common letter chains within sets of words, to the copying out of short passages.



...a neat, proficient and accurate hand...

This provides us with consistency, continuity and progression throughout our school.

Writing is a vital skill for all children to acquire as it is one of the main ways in which they can record and communicate knowledge, learning and understanding in all other subjects. As so much of a child's education requires a neat, proficient and accurate hand the teaching of the different elements of writing is given the highest priority at Gotham Primary.

In this booklet we aim to outline our philosophies and methodology for the teaching of writing. Obviously we can only offer an overview of this complex area of our work, and as always we will be happy to clarify and elaborate on any points made here.

We hope that you will play an active role in supporting the development of your child's writing skills.

In order to help you understand the strategies employed at our school we have included sections on the main elements of writing tuition.

In all our interactions with children we actively demonstrate that we value and appreciate their efforts at communicating through print, regardless of the stage of their development.

Our message to our pupils is-

"We believe in you as writers, believe in yourselves and there will be no limit to what can be achieved!"

G O T H A M P R I M A R Y



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How we teach writing

Write On!



A Guide for Parents
and Carers

G O T H A M P R I M A R Y

Spelling Rules ~ OK!

The teaching of spelling is an important element of our teaching at Gotham Primary. We do not believe in defacing children's writing by correcting every error, but we do place great importance on equipping children with the tools for writing the words that they wish to use.

Initially we encourage the use of 'temporary spellings' in tackling unknown words, as we do not wish to stem the flow of the child's ideas as they write. We support our young writers with a highly structured phonics programme in order to familiarise them with the correct spelling of an increasing number of words.

Obviously we begin with the smallest unit - the letters of the alphabet. We teach sight recognition of each letter, its name and the sounds it commonly makes in the spoken form. We then provide small groups of words to be learned each week, and test and reward success in this activity. Our spelling programme is based on groups of words which feature common spelling patterns enabling children to apply these patterns to new words as they require them.



We test and reward success.

As parents and carers you will be able to actively support this activity at home. Help your child to adopt the 'Look, Cover, Write, Check' method of learning spellings!

Learning to Write ~ An Overview...

We need to be able to recognise the features of writing produced by children at different stages of development in order to assess progress and be sensitive to their readiness for skill-teaching at each stage. Children classically progress through several stages in their writing development, and as individuals they will need varying degrees of support at each stage.

Early 'scribbles' and mark making indicate that children perceive writing as a valued activity. They are quite clear as to the meaning intended in their marks and will 'read' what they have 'written'. They demonstrate a great deal of understanding about written convention; that we move across the page from left to right, from top to bottom and that writing consists of a special code of specific shapes that are organised into regular patterns. At this stage children will often produce large amounts of 'emergent' writing as they work towards readiness for 'real' writing.

Through our structured programme of teaching phonics and handwriting our children become aware that the shapes in writing are closely linked to the spoken word. At this stage they may begin to include recognisable letter shapes within their mark making. The amount of writing produced in the next stage of writing drastically reduces as they represent individual words with single letters- generally the initial sound of the word as it is spoken. This shows that they understand that spoken words are individual units which must be represented by specific groups of marks.

At Gotham we value the early attempts made by our children at spelling out words, and we refer to this as 'temporary' spelling. This is a sensible teaching strategy as the English language is comprised of so many words to be learned and we want our children to be confident and adventurous in their writing, and not to confine themselves to 'safe' or 'easy' words.

Our marking of pupils' writing concentrates on the content more than the spelling, although we do value and teach correct spelling too. In the very early stages of writing you will see that we try to 'translate' and record the intended meaning of your child's work through the use of written comments or questions and sometimes we will scribe the whole passage as they have recounted it to us underneath their initial attempts.

We also firmly believe that our time in school as teachers should be concerned with skill-teaching, so rather than act as human word banks we provide ample resources to aid writing, such as specific key word lists for topics, word banks, simple dictionaries and a wide variety of words displayed within the classroom. We always give the spellings of names, places and unusual words, but when asked for the spelling of common words we guide the children to a word bank or dictionary.

Children who are respected and praised for their attempts at writing will quickly absorb new skills as they are taught them, because they will view the activity of writing in a positive, uninhibited and confident way. Above all else we want our pupils to believe in themselves as writers and feel free to experiment and enjoy the use of the written word.