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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

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Handwriting is a complex skill that children learn at school. It involves many components including motor control, sensory, visual perceptual, cognitive skills and the integration of these skills. The ability to write fluently and legibly allows students to communicate their thoughts and ideas.

Baston House School recognise that many children and young people have difficulty mastering this skill and therefore this policy outlines the process of teaching this skill to meet the needs of the students.

**Implementation:** It is the responsibility of line managers to ensure that staff members are aware of and understand this policy and any subsequent revisions.

**Compliance:** This policy complies with all relevant regulations and other legislation as detailed in the *Compliance with Regulations & Legislation Statement*.

## 2.0 AIMS

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As a school, our aims in teaching handwriting are that the pupils will:

- Understand the importance of clear presentation in order for effective communication
- Take pride in the presentation of work, developing handwriting with a sense of enjoyment and achievement
- Be supported in developing correct spelling through a multisensory approach to handwriting
- Be able to record work with speed and for a range of purposes
- Develop a fluent, comfortable, legible handwriting style
- To build self-esteem and confidence when producing written work.

## 3.0 EXPECTATIONS

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The current National Curriculum sets out statutory requirements for the development of handwriting specific to each programme of study (year group). Research shows that students with Autism show overall worse performance on handwriting tasks than those of age – and intelligence – matched controls (Fuentes, Stewart, Mostofsky, & Bastian, 2009). Baston House School recognises that handwriting can be an area of difficulty for



some of our students and therefore targets are based on an individual need rather than class group when required.

#### 4.0 HANDWRITING PROGRAMME

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It is expected that a standardised way of teaching handwriting is used. Baston House School use the Handwriting Without Tears programme across primary classes and year 7 and 8 to promote consistency and repetition to reinforce learning. Teaching of handwriting will be differentiated to match the needs of the individual student.

Handwriting Without Tears is a programme developed in America by Occupational Therapist (OT) Jan Olsen. It uses multisensory techniques and developmental instruction for teaching handwriting. Printed letters and numbers is initially taught, and the program moves on to develop cursive writing if deemed appropriate by the class teacher in liaison with the onsite OT. It may not be suitable for every student to be taught cursive writing and therefore this is decided on an individual basis.

Each primary class has dedicated time in the morning registration to practice handwriting tasks. Fine motor skills activities advised by the occupational therapy team are included as part of handwriting development.

#### 5.0 POSTURAL CHECKING AND PREPARATION

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All students are taught how to prepare themselves and their workstations in readiness for writing tasks. Prompt cards and posters are used in each classroom to remind students and teachers. The onsite occupational therapy team work alongside the class teachers to advise on suitable workspace ergonomics. The OT will assess if any further adaptations or equipment is required for individual students to optimise seated posture for table top activities on a referral basis.

- The chair and table should be at a correct height for the individual student
- The paper should be positioned suitably (slanted to the right for left handed writers, slanted to the left for right handed writers)
- The paper should be stabilised/ supported with the non-dominant hand
- The pen should be held in a comfortable, functional grasp.

#### 6.0 CONSIDERATION OF LEFT HAND WRITERS

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Teachers should be aware of the specific needs of left-handed pupils and make appropriate provisions for these pupils:

- Paper should be tilted to the right at about 30-35 degrees
- Left handed pupils should sit to the left of a right handed child so that they are not competing for space (avoiding elbows knocking)
- Natural slant of writing is slightly to the left for left handed writers
- When preparing writing practice, place the sample at the top of the paper or on the right hand side, so that the sample is not covered by the writing hand
- Extra practise with left-to-right exercises may well be necessary before pupils write left-to-right automatically.

#### 7.0 PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

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Parents of primary aged pupils should be provided with a copy of the letter formation used in Handwriting Without Tears to promote consistency in teaching style of handwriting across home and school. Parents should be provided with an opportunity to attend training by the onsite occupational therapy team to equip them with knowledge and skills to assist the teaching of handwriting at home.



## **8.0 USE OF COMPUTER AND DEVELOPING KEYBOARD SKILLS**

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The onsite occupational therapist will assess those students in key stage 3 prior to sitting examinations, if handwriting has been identified as an area of difficulty by their teaching team.

The OT will assess to determine if another form of recording work is necessary for the student and, in liaison with their teaching team, a decision will be made to identify necessary access arrangements required (see access arrangement policy).

If it is deemed appropriate for the student to use a laptop as a means of recording work (for example), the OT will advise the teaching team and parents on how best to develop this skill.

As a universal approach all students will have the opportunity to practice keyboard skills within ICT lessons.

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