

Helping with Handwriting



“My pencil is my friend. Our letters curl and bend, And when ideas refuse to come I chew the other end.” In Praise of Handwriting, by Julia Donaldson

At St Alphege we are implementing a handwriting policy which encourages cursive letter formation and has lead-in and lead-out strokes in preparation for joining, once formation is correct.

Fine Motor Skill Development

Through Sunbeams and Year R we develop finger strength and a pincer grip through lots of fun activities inside and outdoors. The programme we use is called Clever Fingers, and the children really enjoy the huge variety of activities. Further information can be found by clicking on the Clever Fingers tab.

Some examples of activities to help develop finger strength at home are:-

- Using play dough
- Squeezing water from sponges (especially at bath time)
- Scrunching paper balls
- Throwing objects
- Bead threading
- Popping bubble wrap
- Playing games with clothes pegs
- Tearing paper into strips
- Lacing and sewing boards
- Picking up small objects such as marbles, raisins or beads between the thumb and forefinger and placing them into containers
- Drawing in shaving foam or whipped cream with a finger
- Playing with finger puppets
- Using a typewriter, keyboard or piano
- Doing up buttons, zips or laces
- Pressing beads or poking holes into Playdough using each finger in turn
- Cutting Playdough using a knife or pizza slices

Mark-making

The children are given lots of pre-writing experience involving mark-making for fun, and opportunities to practice the patterns that they will need to form the letters in writing.

Correct formation of letters is taught explicitly, carefully and slowly, and we acknowledge that for some children this can take longer than for others. Additional support and time is given to ensure success and progress at every stage.

A grid of cursive lowercase letters from a to z. The letters are arranged in two rows: the first row contains 'a b c d e f g h i j k l m' and the second row contains 'n o p q r s t u v w x y z'. Each letter is written in a consistent, flowing cursive style with clear entry and exit strokes.

Ideas for Writing at Home

Send a Message

Frequently leave notes on pillows, desks, mirrors, wherever. Read these back together until your child can have a go at writing you a note in return. A family chalkboard or message board is a great tool for encouraging your child to write messages, and to model adult writing when we so often rely on 'screen-based' communication of writing.

Letters

Make letter writing a habit for your child. Write letters together to family members. Have your child write their own letters to family and friends.

"Journal" Notebook

Keep an ongoing record of your family's life. Every family member can add to your family's story. Include important events that happen during the year. On New Year's Eve, sit down and read through your "Year in Review" and start a notebook for the next year. To add to your story, include family photos whenever possible. Encourage everyone to take part, even recording a funny saying or event will be fantastic to look back on together.

Give Writing Gifts

For birthday presents or for other gifts, give writing sets, pencil cases, note books etc..

Postcards

Have your child write and mail postcards on family vacations or special outings.

Say "Thank You"

Let your child get in the habit of writing "Thank You" notes for gifts or whenever it is appropriate to do so.

Journals/Sketch books/Scrap books

On your child's birthday, give him/her a special book for mark-making, writing and recording. Encourage your child to write in his/her journal as often as possible.

Make a Menu

Let your child design and write the menu for a family dinner. This is a great activity that will give your child a real purpose for writing.

Annotate Photos

Let your child take their own images and encourage them to write captions.

Use Writing Prompts.

In school we use a method of scaffolding for the children. If some of the words are difficult, write them down for your child and then let them continue.

If your child has a special interest then use this as a 'hook' to write about eg a model they have made.

Praise

Praise all your child's efforts at writing. For every error your child makes, there are a dozen things done well. Resist the tendency to focus only on errors of spelling, punctuation, and other mechanical parts of writing. Just celebrate and model the correct spelling or spacing etc by writing alongside your child. If you are spelling out words remember to use the shortest sound...

'sss' rather than 'suh' etc.

