

Closing the gap project on improving handwriting in year 1

Background to the “Closing the gap” project

- Ofsted report 2011 identifies that while the children were “successfully engaged” during the lesson, “handwriting skills and their ability to write at length are less well developed”.
- School Development Plan October 2017 for English identifies the need for short handwriting sessions in all Year groups each day, ensuring key children are targeted and supported.
- Prior to February 2018 formal handwriting sessions were not a teacher led activity.

Relevant research and reading

- Wyse et al. (2013) *Teaching English, Language and Literacy*.
- Dinehart, L. (2014) Handwriting in early childhood education: Current research and future implications. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy* 15(1) 1-22.
- Handwriting Development. South Warwickshire Foundation Trust—Children, Young People and Families Occupational Therapy Team.
https://www.swft.nhs.uk/application/files/5614/5995/2571/handwriting_development.pdf

Key project activities

- Reviewed handwriting February 2018 in Literacy and Topic books and found that presentation was untidy; letters did not have the correct formation; there was a lack of ascenders and descenders and letters were ‘floating’ above the line rather than on the line.
- Introduced new Handwriting books to pupils. Guided handwriting sessions taught 5 times a week for 15 minutes.
- To encourage engagement children sing a song to ‘start on the line’ for each entry stroke.
- Handwriting modelled with pupils watching, then they write the word three to six times while I review the class and correct any errors.
- For children particularly struggling with letter formation, the handwriting is modelled in their books in yellow pen with dots for entry strokes for pupils to go over.
- Introduced self assessment for pupils to circle their best work.

Impact of the “Closing the gap” project

- Teachers across the school report an overall improvement of handwriting across their classes.
- My class handwriting books were reviewed comparing the pupils work from their first entries to their most recent (12.06.18). The following was found:
 - ◇ letter formation had improved by 78%.
 - ◇ the use of diagonal entry strokes had increased by 67% and horizontal exit strokes were up by 30%.
 - ◇ there was a 59% improvement in writing size.
 - ◇ the ability to write on the line had improved by 41%.
- Finally an analysis was made of the pupils literacy books to see if their improved handwriting ability had transferred into their most recent piece of work. 78% of pupils had transferred their skills.