

## Key issues

### Glossary of key terms

#### Talking about handwriting

Throughout *Penpals* it has been assumed that correct terminology should be used as soon as possible. In the Foundation phase, there is an emphasis on becoming familiar with the language of the hands and the language of movement as well as talking about the letter patterns and the formation of the letters.

Terms used in *Penpals* include:

- **Gross motor skills, fine motor skills.**
- **Lower case letter.**
- **Capital letter** is used in preference to 'upper case letter'.
- **Short letter** is the term used to describe a letter with no ascender or descender.
- **Letter with an ascender.**
- **Letter with a descender.**
- **Flick** is used to describe an exit stroke. (**t** finishes with a curl to the right rather than simply an exit flick.)
- **Curve** is used to describe descenders on letters (**y, j, g, f**).
- **Cross bar** is used to describe the left to right line on **t** and **f**. It may also be used in relation to letters which feature a left to right horizontal line (e.g. **e** and **z**).
- Other important terminology used throughout *Penpals* includes: **clockwise, anticlockwise, vertical, horizontal, diagonal, parallel, joined, sloped.**

#### Key vocabulary

The children must be able to use and understand the following words:

- top, bottom, up, down, horizontal, vertical, diagonal, clockwise, anticlockwise.

#### Activities

- **Warm ups** These activities may be linked to the focus of the unit but are generally just enjoyable movement activities to warm up the muscles. Warm-up activities are suggested prior to the whole-class teaching session and again prior to the independent work in case the sessions are split.
- **Sky writing** This means tracing patterns in the air, or on the carpet or table in front of you. Encourage children to use one of their fingers as a pointer for these activities.
- **Show Me** This is the term used to describe a practice activity. Children write on a dry-wipe board, sky write, trace on each other's back, etc.
- **Get Up and Go** This describes an activity where a child is asked to come up and point out a word or letter pattern in the Big Book.
- **Finger tracing** Children trace over the letter or letter pattern using the forefinger of their dominant writing hand. This gives the children a much better kinaesthetic memory of the movement than the smaller movement of a pencil.

In the Foundation books, certain apparatus is suggested for developing gross motor skills. Stilts, frisbees and streamers are all physical education apparatus commonly available from educational suppliers.

#### Oral patter for *Penpals*

At Foundation 2 we provide an oral patter for a representative letter of each letter family (**l, r, c** and **z**).

**l** – 'make a long ladder: start at the top, come all the way down and flick'. (For some letters in this family you will need to curve rather than flick.)

**r** – 'make a robot: start at the top, come down and bounce back up and over'.

**c** – 'make a caterpillar: start at the head, curve over the back and round'

**z** – 'make a zig-zag monster: start by going straight across to the head' (left to right like a cross bar) 'then go down the back and then straight across again' (again, left to right like a cross bar).

#### Capitals

It is generally agreed that there is no right or wrong way to form capitals. However, there is a general principle of forming them from top to bottom and left to right wherever possible. Guidelines on the formation of capitals are offered on the inside back cover of the Foundation 2 Big Book.

**Capital Y:** the use of a central stalk (as opposed to a slanting stalk) is recommended as once children have completed the 'v' form at the top of the letter, they have a clear starting point for the downwards stroke. This formation also distinguishes the capital letter from the lower case letter and retains its shape when written at speed.

**Capital G:** this form of **G** is recommended as the correct handwriting form of the letter. Variations which include a vertical line (**G**) are font forms.

**Capital H:** the formation of **H** using two down strokes followed by the horizontal stroke from left to right is recommended. The alternative (one down stroke followed by a horizontal and a further down stroke) can quickly resemble the letter **M** when written at speed.

**Capital K:** the formation of **K** with two pencil strokes rather than three is recommended as it is more fluently formed when writing at speed.

As skills and confidence develop, left-handers may well form capitals differently. This should not be an issue as capitals are never joined.

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