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Handwriting Policy

Introduction: The Importance of good handwriting and copybook presentation.

Handwriting is a skill, like reading and spelling which affects written communication across the curriculum. Careful presentation of handwriting and copybooks enhances the content of written work. The pride in well-presented work can be a powerful incentive to a child's overall learning. Clear writing and layout of copies also helps the retention, recall and understanding of concepts in both literacy and numeracy, specifically reading and spelling of words and carrying out procedures in mathematics. It is the aim of our school to raise the standards of handwriting and copybook presentation and thus improve the self - esteem of all pupils whom we teach. Handwriting is a movement skill and children need to practice handwriting movements correctly and often to develop mastery.

Handwriting Aim:

Our aim is for pupils to achieve legible, flexible and efficient handwriting at an early stage and to develop this skill through primary school.

Language:

It is important that everyone uses the same words when teaching handwriting to avoid confusion, particularly for students with handwriting difficulties. The following terminology will be used by all teachers:

Joined Writing	Style of joining letters together.
Capital Letters	A B C D E F G H I ...etc...
Lower Case Letters	a b c d e f g h i ...etc ...
Tall Letters	b d f h k l t
Small Letters	a c e i m n o r s u v w x
Underground Letters	g j p q y z
Tails	Exit strokes from letters
Upstrokes	Entry to letters

Essential Skills Emphasised:

1. The 4 P's for good handwriting:
 - a. Assuming the correct **posture**: (Back against backrest, two feet on the ground, elbows supported on table). Chairs and tables appropriate to child's size will facilitate this.
 - b. **Position** of paper: (Slanted left or right & helping hand holding the page).
 - c. **Pencil**: Good quality and well sharpened pencils.
 - d. **Pressure**: Children apply appropriate pressure to the paper.
2. Using **the correct formation of letters**, both print and cursive. See Appendix for verbal pathways to use to guide letter formation development for print and cursive. This stage of handwriting is the most important and care should be taken to ensure children use the correct sequence of strokes from the beginning.
3. Once correct formation has been achieved, then emphasis shifts to correct sizing and spacing of letters.
4. Use of pattern will be encouraged in all classes to develop personal handwriting speed and fluency.
5. In senior classes children develop their ability to write legibly at speed.

Hand dominance:

Children's hand dominance will not be influenced. The school recognises that left handers have different needs from right handers. During demonstrations of letter formation, it can be helpful to use your left hand to teach children who write with their left hand. Left handers should either sit next to each other or on the left side of a right hander to avoid elbows clashing. Left handers may benefit from having a slightly higher seat to make it easier to see what they are writing. A left hander should rotate their writing surface slightly clockwise when writing. The writing tool used by left handers needs to be comfortable to the hand and also one that will not smudge if the writing hand passes over it. When providing work for children to copy e.g words on a page it can be helpful to write the words in the middle of the page and left handers can copy in the left column and right handers can compete in the right column.

Organisation:

The following list is cumulative, that is, if you have Fourth Class, the child should be enabled to do everything up to and including Forth Class.

Class	Objectives / Content	Resources
Pre – writing Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide children with opportunities to develop their fine motor skills using appropriate resources, for example play - doh, threading activities, peg boards, etc.• Develop satisfactory grip (tripod grip) using a variety of good quality writing implements.• Develop an understanding of mark making	Appendix A: Pre – Writing Checklist
<u>Junior Infants</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Letter formation in the following order. Group 1: c, o, a, d, g, q Group 2: l, t, b, f, k,	Variety of pencils. Chalk boards, Blank copy & then a

	<p>Group 3: i, n, m, h, r ,p</p> <p>Group 4: The remaining alphabet as encountered.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formation of numerals: 1 2 3 4 5 0 • See teacher model writing as an enjoyable experience. Demonstrate, explain and practice letter formation using the verbal rhyme. • Write first name. • Print with tails, lower case letters only. 	lined copy
<u>Senior Infants</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise lower-case letters. Encourage children to describe the movements needed using the verbal rhyme. • Capital Letters • Formal instruction in letter sizing. • Greater emphasis on left right orientation. 	Variety of pencils, B2 Handwriting copy
<u>Middle Classes:</u> First Second Third	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joined writing will be introduced in first class • Handwriting Card practice will be used for development and consolidation of penmanship. • Joined writing in all regular copies by the end of Third Class. 	Appendix B: Joined Writing Script B4 Handwriting copy – middle line guide.
<u>Senior Classes:</u> Fourth Fifth Sixth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of pen will be introduced on an individual basis depending on each child's level of readiness. • Write for more sustained periods and writing at speed. • Encourage awareness of note writing and writing for presentation. 	B4 Handwriting copy Appendix C: Handwriting card master copies

Differentiation:

Our school recognises that a small proportion of children may find handwriting a challenge. Handwriting difficulties can occur right across the ability range. However children with physical, sensory and learning difficulties may find the task of handwriting particularly challenging for a variety of reasons A differentiated handwriting programme and/or accommodations will be used for children with handwriting difficulties in line with universal models of teaching. A child's progress using support strategies will be monitored continuously. Liaison with relevant professionals will be made if further support needs are identified in relation to handwriting challenges.

Assessment / Success Criteria:

Teachers will encourage a high degree of care, attention, tidiness and cleanliness in all written work.

Writing readiness will be assessed using Teacher Observation and the pre-writing checklist (see Appendix C).

Assessment of written work will be carried out by teachers on an ongoing basis through teacher observation. Samples of pupil's written work taken from their workbooks and copies will be included in their assessment folders

Appendix A: Pre Writing Checklist

Does the pupil; have sufficient pencil control to begin to form letters?

Demonstrate the following and ask the child to imitate freehand:

- *Horizontal lines-left to right, both straight and wavy.*
 - *Straight scribble*
 - *Round and round scribble*
 - *A diagonal cross*
 - *A horizontal/vertical cross*
 - *An anti-clockwise circle*
 - *A clockwise circle*
 - *A vertical line in a downward direction*
 - *A vertical line in an upward direction*
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If a child is able to complete these figures with a pencil on paper and follow the same movements as the adult it is likely that he or she is ready to begin learning to form letters.

Handwriting- Pre Cursive Lowercase Letters

- c** Start at the top, go halfway around
- o** Around like a c and all the way around
- a** Around like a c, up-down, and make a flick
- d** Around like a c, up-up and down with a flick
- g** Around like a c, up-down and curl around
- q** Around like a c, up-down and make a flick

- i** Down and flick, lift your pencil and dot
- r** Down, up and around
- n** Down, up around and down with a flick
- m** Down, up around and down, down, up around and down
- u** Down and around, up-down and flick
- y** Down and around, up-down and curl around

- h** Start at the top, down, halfway up and around and down with a flick
- b** Start at the top, down, halfway up and all the way around
- l** Start at the top, down, and flick
- k** Start at the top, up halfway, around and in, slide down and flick
- p** Down, down, up and around
- j** Straight down and curl around, lift your pencil and dot

- s** Curl around and curl back
- e** Start in the middle, curl up and around like a c

- f** Around, straight down, lift your pencil, straight across the middle
- t** Down and flick, lift your pencil and straight across the middle
- v** Slide down and slide up again
- w** Slide down and slide up again, slide down and slide up again
- x** Slide down, lift your pencil, slide back
- z** Straight across, slide back, straight across

Appendix C: Teacher Assessment Observations

All assessments should include an evaluation of

- Posture, pencil grip, paper position, pressure and fluency- How does a child sit, hold their writing implement, hold their paper and push on their pencil.
- Letter formation and joining- observe how a child forms each letter and join.
- Letter shape - letters can be formed using the correct movements and still be misshapen
- Letter size - consistency of size is important and relative size (e.g descender too short).
- Slant/slope - observe consistency of slant and any extremes of slope in either direction
- Alignment – are letters correctly positioned on the line
- Spacing- this should include correct spacing between letters and words.
- Speed – this is appropriate for older children.

A simple assessment for older children is to give each child a piece of lined paper with a sentence containing all 26 letters of the alphabet “The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.” Ask the child to copy the sentence in their best writing , and then give two minutes to copy the sentence as fast as they can as many times as possible.