

Melbourne Infant School

Handwriting Policy

Rationale

All children need to learn to write legibly, fluently and with reasonable speed and although it is only one aspect of the writing process, it is an important skill.

Children need to develop their fine and gross motor skills before they can be successful hand writers. Children need to be shown how to hold a pencil with a comfortable grip and how to form letters correctly. Correct letter formation is extremely important- children allowed to invent their own ways of forming letters may find it difficult to unlearn these habits. Then without the correct formation of letters it will be very difficult for them to develop a fluent, joined handwriting style. The correct formation of all letters needs to become automatic, and this may require frequent practise. Once children confidently recognise and form the letters of the alphabet through a precursive style, they then need encouragement to develop a 'clear, fluent, legible and fast style of joined writing' in a cursive style (Collins Primary Focus: Handwriting, 2011).

All staff member's own writing should always provide a good model for the children.

Below are the Expected standard interim statements children are required to achieve by the end of Year 2:

- Use the diagonal and horizontal strokes needed to join letters in some of their writing.
- Write capital letters and digits of the correct size, orientation and relationship to one another and to lower case letters.
- Use spacing between words that reflects the size of the letters.

Aims

- To provide systematic, consistent teaching of handwriting.
- To enable children to write in a clear, fluent, legible, fast style.
- To ensure letters are correctly formed to enable a fluent, joined style.

Guidelines

- At Melbourne Infant School, we base our scheme of work on the '*Collins Primary Focus*' programme for handwriting.

- Letter formation and order of teaching is closely linked to the guidelines in this programme.
- When planning handwriting lessons, teachers will refer to the school's scheme of work.
- Handwriting lessons will involve whole class interactive teaching, with a high emphasis on class participation and effective pupil/teacher demonstration and modelling.
- Each lesson will involve independent handwriting practise, in order for children to apply the skills taught.
- Children will be given immediate feedback and ways to improve during handwriting lessons.
- Teachers will identify assessment for learning information to inform their future planning.
- There must be a consistency of approach throughout the school in order for handwriting to be taught effectively. This will involve ensuring all teachers, teaching assistants and supply staff are fully clear of the policy of the school.
- Learning objectives will be identified from the scheme of work, and shared with the class in a child-friendly way.
- Lessons will be differentiated by activity and support given, in order for all children to access the learning at a challenging yet achievable level.
- Children will initially be taught in a precursive style which will then be developed into a cursive, fluent style.
- Children are expected to apply the handwriting skills they have learnt to their writing activities. Children need support and reminding to do this initially, with praise for efforts made. It is not expected that children will produce their 'best' handwriting in all writing activities, but that they will use the style they have learned without losing the main purpose of their written work.
- Children are given opportunities to practise their handwriting skills independently in writing learning choice areas.

Handwriting in the Foundation Stage

- Initially, pupils will explore mark-making using a range of media.
- Then emphasis will be on co-ordination and control in letter-like movements.
- The development of fine and gross motor skills will be focused upon, through a range of activities indoors and outdoors. This will include 'Dough disco'.
- Pupils will be shown how to hold a pencil correctly in order to form marks in a comfortable and fluent way.
- Pupils will be encouraged to recognise upper and lower case letters, and link each upper case letter to its lower case equivalent.
- Pupils will learn to write upper and lower case letters in a precursive style, where letters are clearly identifiable.

- Pupils will also be taught the correct formation of the numerals 0 to 9.
- Initially, children will experiment with shapes and movements at different scales. Eventually and when appropriate, children will be encouraged to start writing on lines.

Handwriting development across the school

- Initially, each individual letter shape and movement is taught with a lead-in and lead-out stroke, beginning from the writing line. This helps to prevent any inappropriate or incorrect movements.
- Letters are grouped according to the main movements involved so that children gain extra reinforcement of the shapes and movements involved, and avoid confusion between letters that look very similar in print (eg. b/d, p/q, n/h).
- Children will then begin to join these precursive letters, focusing on each join on its own and then within words.
- The teaching of joins is linked to spelling patterns within words and the spelling of high frequency words.
- The handwriting style learned is then reinforced through practise of sentences, spelling patterns and rhymes.
- Handwriting is practiced on staved lines, and other writing should be completed on lined paper or with guidelines.
- Staff are encouraged to model the handwriting stage the children in their class are working at when writing.
- Staff are encouraged to print out text using a cursive font- for homework, letters, powerpoints, etc, to allow children to become familiar with the cursive text.

Structure for teaching handwriting

School:

Monday:	Handwriting input whole class lessons
Tuesday:	Independent writing session
Wednesday:	Independent writing session
Thursday:	Independent writing session
Friday:	<u>Assessment and Consolidation session</u> - usually in handwriting books.

Handwriting whole class lesson: This lesson teaches the skills to be achieved this week in handwriting. It involves teachers modelling the skills to be learnt, and children practising them, first in the whole class situation interactively, and then independently. Teachers will observe and give feedback to pupils, and correct any misunderstandings.

Independent writing session: In these sessions, children practise the skills taught this week in an independent handwriting task. This may use a variety of different media, such as whiteboards and pens, chalk, felt tips, pencils.

Assessment and Consolidation session: During this session, children self-assess their handwriting and are given feedback by adults on their handwriting this week. Handwriting is usually recorded in handwriting books. They then have the opportunity to practise and consolidate the skills they have learnt.

Interventions

There are a variety of interventions used across the school to support children with their handwriting development. These include: Physical Literacy; Dough Disco in the Foundation Stage; Jungle Journey in the Foundation Stage. Some staff members are trained in the scheme Every Child a Mover. These interventions focus on fine and gross motor development, which is a pre-requisite for handwriting.

Points to remember

Seating

Children should be encouraged to have the correct sitting position for writing, with two feet on the floor, their back straight and their bottom pushed to the back of the chair.

Many children feel more comfortable slanting their work to the side away from their writing hand. Therefore children need to be allowed plenty of space to write.

Left-handed children may need to be seated at the left-hand side of a table. They may also require a cushion or pad for extra height, or a sloping surface.

Pencil control

The pencil should be gripped loosely between the first and thumb finger, using the second finger as a rest. The non-writing hand can be used to support and guide the paper. Children may need to be taught this.

Even at a very early stage, children may have learned an inappropriate grip. Before intervening and correcting, the teacher should make several judgements:

- It may be the most comfortable grip achievable if the child suffers from a manual difficulty.
- If their handwriting is clear, fluent and reasonably legible and fast, attempting to change their grip may do more harm than good.

If a change in grip is the best option, the child may benefit from recapping on previous units as an additional activity, in order to help them relearn the correct movements.

Pencils

Pencils should be sharp, but not so sharp that the point breaks on use. Some children may require a triangular or wedge-shaped pencil for a more comfortable grip.

The writing environment

To enable children to distinguish between and be able to read writing in both printed and joined styles, the classroom should have writing, signs and labels displayed using both styles. Children should also be able to see the upper and lower case letter styles displayed close to where they write.