

Bell's Brae Primary School

Handwriting Policy

November 2000

Forward

The 5-14 Guidelines on Language identify a separate strand entitled Handwriting and Presentation. This philosophy is found in other recent publications, including Foundations of Writing, which identify handwriting as one of the secretarial skills which children need to be taught and to practise until they become proficient. Children need to be able to write legibly and quickly with minimal effort so that most of their efforts can go into the composition of the writing itself.

Rationale

As "Foundations of Writing" points out "Handwriting is a subskill that cannot be taught effectively unless there is a policy that embraces the whole school". A Handwriting policy is necessary to ensure continuity - teachers are able to build on what children already know. There must be consistency of teaching within the school so that children are not confused by different styles of writing used by different teachers. There must be progression throughout the school so children develop a linked style of handwriting. Children must be taught the correct formation of letters from the beginning - children allowed to copy writing without adequate teaching beforehand very quickly develop bad habits which are difficult to correct later.

At all stages the teacher's own writing within the classroom should be of the highest standard so that pupils can use it as a model.

Home/School Links

Handwriting is not taught in the nursery but if children are keen to write their names they will be shown how to write them correctly. Children's names will be written in the nursery in the same way as in P1.

At an information evening before children start school parents will be given a booklet outlining how the lower case letters are written in P1 and showing the correct formation of these.

Assessment

The main aim of any assessment of handwriting is to identify any difficulties which are preventing the child from developing a legible and fluent style of handwriting. Most teacher assessment of handwriting will be informal and be based on classroom observation. However, occasionally the teacher might formally assess handwriting according to a stated aim. Twice per year should be sufficient for this formal assessment. During the assessment it is important that the teacher observes how the children write as well as assessing the finished product. The children's examples should be dated and stored in their language folders.

Regardless of the child's stage of development the following criteria should be applied when assessing a child's handwriting.

- Is the child's pencil grip correct?
- Is the child forming the letters correctly?
- Is the child writing fluently and rhythmically?
- Is the writing legible?

More detailed criteria can be used in assessing a piece of writing. Considerations should be given to the following (when appropriate):-

- the shape and size of the letters
- the relative sizes of the letters (ascenders and descenders)
- the joins between letters
- the slope of the writing
- the spacing between the letters and the words.

The children should be made aware of the criteria being used to assess their handwriting. Self assessment of handwriting should be encouraged from the early stages. Self assessment is built into the New Nelson Scheme from Pupil's Book 1.

Attempts should be made to remedy any faults identified in the child's writing. The most significant faults are:-

- faulty pencil grip
- incorrect formation of letters
- reversals and inversions
- mirror writing.

Some suggestions for remedying these can be found in the New Nelson Teacher's Manual chapter 11.

Pupils coming from another school may have learnt a different style of writing. There is no need to change this if the child is able to write quickly and legibly in a linked style. However if the child is forming a number of letters incorrectly and is not joining the writing it may be necessary to remedy the defects. The decision to change a child's handwriting style should only be taken after considering the child's general ability, motivation and other factors. Additional advice is available from the promoted staff.

Resources

"Foundations of Writing " Part 1

"New Nelson Handwriting ". Manual Copy Masters Pupils books

"Handwriting; a new prospective" by Rosemary Sassoon Stanley Thornes 1990

"Handwriting: the way to teach it" by Rosemary Sassoon Stanley Thornes 1990.

Appendices

Appendix 1 lower case letters

Appendix 2 upper case letters

Guidelines

P1/2

All the activities undertaken by children in the nursery and infant classrooms help to develop their hand control. The Foundations of Writing drawing programme provides an excellent preparation for children before they embark on a more formal handwriting programme. Having enjoyed such experiences children have no need to work through meaningless pre-writing sheets. On entry to P1 the teaching of handwriting is more successfully achieved in group settings using whiteboards and markers. Later in P1 class handwriting lessons can be introduced using pencils and prepared sheets. Although children should be encouraged to "write" freely in the house corner, they should not be asked to copy writing before they know how to form all the letters correctly. By the end of P1 children will be using small blank jotters for handwriting copying letters and words from the blackboard.

Formal handwriting lessons will continue with the introduction of capital letters. Blank paper is still used at this stage. Speed practice is provided using timers and writing cards which children trace first to establish the correct formation and then copy quickly. Self assessment is introduced at this stage as children must decide which letters have been formed correctly and are acceptable.

P3

Immediately on entering P3 joined writing will be introduced with all the joins being taught during the year. It is very important that children are taught the correct way to join the letters and are given sufficient time to practise these joins so they become automatic. Lined paper should be introduced in P3.

P4 - 6

Handwriting should continue to be taught at these stages in order to consolidate previous teaching. The teacher should assess handwriting regularly in order to identify any difficulties and correct them. Children should also be encouraged to assess their own writing. (For more information refer to the section on Assessment.) At these stages children should be given the opportunity to write with various pens and pencils. Presentation of work should be considered as well as handwriting with opportunities provided for pupils to produce a good copy of a piece of writing suitably decorated for display.

P7

By the time pupils reach P7 most have developed their own individual style. However this should be a linked style and pupils should be discouraged from reverting to printing.

At all stages from P3 - P7 pupils should be given opportunities to practise writing at speed whilst maintaining legibility.