

Donabate-Portrane



Educate Together

Handwriting Policy for Donabate Portrane Educate Together National School

Introductory Statement & Rationale

The original school policy on Handwriting was formulated in line with the Revised Curriculum 1999. This current review took place in June 2016 to reflect latest best practice in the teaching of Handwriting. This policy will be implemented with immediate effect.

In D.P.E.T.N.S., we acknowledge that the developments of handwriting skills are important in our pupils' education. We support the current research which outlines the benefits of teaching cursive handwriting. These include:

1. Relative ease in introducing cursive penmanship to pre-schoolers.

Cursive handwriting requires three movements; undercurve, overcurve and up and down. Print handwriting necessitates an even more complex stroke of straight lines and perfect circles.

2. Prevents reversals and confusion of letters

The letters "b and d", "f and t", "g, q and p" are confusing for young children. In cursive, writing the letter "b and d" require a huge difference in directionality.

3. Enhances spelling ability.

Children learn to spell correctly because hand movements create muscle memory. This will help to retain the spelling patterns.

4. Develops internal control systems that can be used as tool for learning.

In cursive writing, the incorporation of movement, pressure and visual processing is a bit multifaceted. This augments visual spacial and coordination skills. In writing lowercase letters in print, six strokes are required against three movements in cursive writing. Fluent movement is developed. With cursive writing practice, the neuron connections in the brain, responsible for organizing other kinds of information and skills, are greatly strengthened.

5. Potential for errors is diminished.

Cursive handwriting reduces errors because of the continuous flow of writing. In print, the child picks up the pencil from the paper to start a new letter in a word, thus the potential for mistakes is higher.

6. Improved reading skills.

The goal when reading is to read words instead of one letter at a time. Cursive writing promotes reading words, instead of a distinct letter. After words, reading will move to sentences. Thus, learning support for comprehension and reading of words will occur less. The child will read what he or she writes as "whole words" rather than as individual letters.

7. Enforces the skills for patterns in reading and writing.

Unlike print writing, lower case cursive writing starts from the same beginning point. In

print, various letter start from the top, bottom, middle and many different positions. Letter inversions and reversals are eliminated.

8. Prevents erratic spaces between letters and words.

In cursive, the flow of writing moves from left to right. It teaches spatial discipline. In print, the child's handwriting is difficult to discern. The spaces between words may not be evident, at times, it can be hard to tell where the words begin and end.

9. Helps Left Handed Children.

In print, the left-handed child proceeds to write printing from left to right but will cover what he has written with his arms. This is called the hook position. In cursive writing, the left handed child learns to write from bottom up and turns the paper clockwise causing great comfort and legibility.

10. Use as a tool to put thoughts on paper quickly and easily.

Mastery of cursive will be to the advantage of any student in the long-run. The child will be able to write faster.

Aims of the Handwriting Policy

- To ensure good letter formation from Junior Infants to Sixth Class.
- To ensure that all children are using the correct pencil grip.
- To ensure legibility of all writing.
- To help develop speed, accuracy and writing fluency.
- To ensure uniformity and consistency in letter formation from class to class.
- To provide children with a relevant life skill.
- To develop and improve fine motor skills in the early years.
- To facilitate the neat presentation of all written work.
- To help in the improvement of spelling.

General Writing Guidelines

Before any writing begins make sure children are sitting comfortably, they are holding their pencil lightly and that they have most of the forearm of their writing hand resting on the table.

All classrooms should have a cursive handwriting frieze displayed in their room. At acquaintance meetings, all teachers should distribute a copy of the handwriting scheme (as found in Handwriting Today Books and on the website). Teachers should encourage children to keep a copy of the scheme in their journals as a reference tool.

Children will be encouraged to remember the **Four P's**- Preparation, Pencil Grip, Posture and Practice.

For left handers, writing from left to right can be difficult. If the child is left-handed they should hold the pen or pencil at least 2 cm away from the tip so that they can see what you are writing. It is also important that the class teacher ensures that the child is seated on the left side of the desk.

Handwriting Programme

Junior Infants

- Children in Junior Infants are encouraged to scribble and draw.
- Children in Junior Infants should begin handwriting lessons with warm up exercises (see handwriting folder on the network for resources).
- They complete various prewriting patterns to strengthen fingers and hands. These patterns will also create awareness of left-right, top bottom orientation. This will be practised through the use of Pre-writing Wave (Prim-Ed).
- In Junior Infants two alphabets will be taught: a reading alphabet (taken from The Jolly Phonics Programme) and a writing alphabet (taken from the Prim-Ed Handwriting Today Programme).
- Children are encouraged to find a hand dominance and pencil grip that is comfortable and allows good writing. They are taught and encouraged to have good posture for writing.
- The children in Junior Infants also use threading, clothes peg games, marla and a range of other activities to develop their fine motor skills in pre-writing activities and to practise letter formation.
- By the end of Junior Infants, children are expected to be able to write their first name, in cursive script.
- Teachers model good handwriting for the children in daily activities.
- Children are introduced to cursive writing in January. They learn the letter name and formation in tandem. Learning letter formation takes two lessons:
 - Lesson one involves learning the rhyme, exploring, watching and practising the cursive script on whiteboards (See Appendix 1).
 - Lesson two involves rehearsing the rhyme; tracing and independently forming the script in Handwriting Today A (Prim-Ed). Relevant rhymes for the letter formation are used. A number of other techniques are used, such as finger tracing on the table, in the air or in sand.

Senior Infants

- Children revise the formation of the lower case letters and they are introduced to the correct letter formation of upper case letters. Pupils use the workbook 'Handwriting Today A' (Prim-Ed) which will be carried forward from Junior Infants.
- Children will then be introduced to the cursive joins. Cursive joins will be introduced and practised through the use of marla, finger-tracing and whiteboards. Pupils use 'Handwriting Today B' to consolidate and reinforce the cursive joins.
- Children are encouraged to write and draw frequently throughout the year.
- Emphasis on proper pencil grip and good posture is encouraged.
- Children are made aware of the importance of putting a finger space between all words and are expected to keep all writing on the line.

- By the end of Senior Infants, children are expected to be able to write their first name and surname using capital letters at the beginning and cursive joins.
- Children are encouraged to engage in free writing.
- Teachers model good handwriting.

First Class

- Consolidation and reinforcement of Senior Infant work.
- There is a greater emphasis on proper letter formation, pencil grip, writing posture and on the quality of presentation.
- Children are expected to be able to use capital letters and full stops when writing.
- First Class will use 'Handwriting Today B' as we pilot our cursive writing scheme (carried forward from Senior Infants).
- Teachers may use handwriting copies or the Let's Join In software to create further worksheets to enable further practice of the letter formations and the joins.
- Teachers should model good hand writing at all times.
- By the end of first class all children should be using cursive script.
- The use of red pen is introduced in First Class – this is used for ruling the copies, titles, dates, underlining, correcting and editing.

Second Class

- Pupils use their handwriting copies/Handwriting Today C from Second Class to practise their handwriting.
- All children should be using cursive script.
- Teachers should model good hand writing at all times.

Third and Fourth Class

- All children should be using cursive script in all work.
- The children continue to refine and develop their handwriting skills. There is a greater emphasis on proper letter formation, pencil grip, writing posture and on the quality of presentation.
- Teachers should model good hand writing at all times

Fifth and Sixth Class

- Consolidation and reinforcement of handwriting skills.
- There is a continued emphasis on proper letter formation, pencil grip, writing posture and greater emphasis on the quality of presentation.
- Children develop a fluent personal style of cursive handwriting.
- Children write for more sustained periods.
- In Fifth Class, children work towards earning a Pen Licence which is achieved by a continued high standard of handwriting. Once they achieve their pen licence they

are allowed use a pen for certain writing exercises. (Template for Pen Licence on network)

Children with Special Needs

This handwriting policy aims to meet the needs of all the children in the school. This will be achieved by teachers varying the pace, content and methodologies to ensure learning for all pupils. The requirements of children with special needs will be taken into account when planning class lessons and related activities.

Pencil Grip

The pencil is grasped between the tips of the thumb and the index finger and is supported against the side of the middle finger (frog's legs over a log). The last two fingers are curved and rested against the table surfaces. The wrist is bent back slightly and the pencil is held about 1cm'' from the tip (slightly more for left-handed children).

Writing Instruments

The writing instruments that the children use will depend on their readiness.

- Junior Infants start by using chubby crayons. They progress onto the chublets (skinny crayons) during the year depending on readiness. The children will write with triangular shaped pencils.
- Senior Infants continue using triangular shaped pencils.
- In First Class the children will use a regular HB pencil using the triangular shaped pencils until they are ready to move onto the normal HB pencil. This is generally around January.
- The teacher introduces the children to using red pen when underlining, correcting or ruling their work.
- In Second/Third/Fourth Class the children continue using the HB pencil.
- By Fifth & Sixth Class the children will have been introduced to using pen. Children must continue to complete Maths activities in pencil.

Headings, Layout and Spacing

- Margins will be drawn down the left side of the page from First Class.
- The heading will be centred on the top line of the page. The date is to be used at the discretion of the class teacher.
- Children are taught to use the space of one finger between words.
- Please see presentation policy for additional information

Assessment and Success Criteria

- There will be constant teacher observation of pupils' handwriting in copy books at school and also in homework copies.
- There will be a focus on continual improvement.

- Teacher should display the children’s writing –emphasis should be placed on improvement made in handwriting. Children should be encouraged to write final pieces of work in their best handwriting.
- At the end of the year, for assessment purposes and for School Report comment, end of year handwriting should be compared with the handwriting the child was producing at the beginning of the year.
- Weekly Good Presentation Award - Each class teacher gives a certificate and prize/homework voucher

Resources

- Jolly Phonics
- Primed Handwriting Today A,B,C
- Let’s Join In software
- Cursive Handwriting Alphabet Wall Frieze
- Handwriting copies
- Chubby pencils and regular pencils – HB – H9
- Pen licence –print copies.
- Good Presentation Award

Implementation

The principal will co-ordinate the progress of the plan. Feedback will be sought on implementation of the plan and the special duties post holder will report the findings of this feedback to the staff at staffmeeting.

Timeframe

The revised plan will be implemented on ratification by the staff and the Board of Management.

Review

This plan will be reviewed by staff and pupils in June 2019. The Principal will conduct the review and lead the curricular team in implementing any changes. All changes will be ratified by the BOM and the staff.

Ratification and Communication

On ratification of this plan by the staff and the BOM, this plan will be communicated to all teachers through distribution and will become part of the Plean Scoile.

This plan was ratified by the BOM on

Appendix 1

Letter formation of Lower Case Letters

- Some letters should be made in one movement- without lifting the pencil from the page – c,o,a,d,g,r,n,m,h,b,p,u,y,v,w,l,k,s,z,e, while others require two movements of the pencil – i,j,t,f,x.
- Never start at the bottom of a letter.
- Start at the dot and follow the arrows.

Cursive Script Letter Formation Guide

Cursive Script Lower Case Letters

- Letters will be taught in sequence beginning with Anticlockwise letters: a, c, d, e, f, g, o and q.
- This will be followed by clockwise letters: s, h, k, m, n, p, r, x and z. Next follows downstroke letters: i, j, l, t, u, v, w, and y.
- To benefit the children the rhymes will be used to introduce, reinforce and practise each letter.

Letter Formation Rhymes

Anticlockwise Letters	
a	You go up the hill, tumble backwards, around in a circle, straight line down and a flick.
c	You go up the hill, tumble backwards, around in a half circle.
d	You go up the hill, tumble backwards, around in a circle, reach up to the sky, back down the same line and a flick.
e	You go up the hill, jump backwards, and follow around.
f	You go up the hill, tumble backwards, hit the floor in a straight line, make one ice-cream scoop and flick.
g	You go up the hill, tumble backwards, around in a circle, hit the floor in a straight line.
o	You go up the hill, tumble backwards, around in a circle, and flick.
q	You go up the hill, tumble backwards, around in a circle, straight line down like a number one under the line and a long flick.

Clockwise Letters	
s	You go up the slide, and make a big curvy tummy.
h	You go up the slide, tumble backwards into a straight number one. Hit the floor, bounce and flick.
k	You go up the slide, tumble backwards into a straight number one. Hit the floor, bounce up halfway, make a bubble, then a kick.
m	You go up the slide, hit the floor in a straight line, bunny hop once, bunny hop twice and a flick
n	You go up the slide, hit the floor in a straight line, bunny hop once, and a flick.
p	You go up the slide, hit the floor in a straight line
r	You go up the slide, hit the floor in a straight line, back up the same line and a wavy flick.
x	You go up the slide, and make a big curvy tummy

z	You go up the slide, and make a big curvy tummy then jump under the line make a bubble and a big flick up.
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Downstroke Letters	
b	You go up the slide, tumble backwards, hit the floor, bounce up and a flick
i	You go up the slide, hit the floor and a flick. Lift the pencil off the page and make a small dot.
j	You go up the slide, hit the floor going under the line like a number one, make a bubble and flick up.
l	You go up the slide, tumble backwards, hit the floor in a straight line and flick.
t	You go up the slide, reach up, straight back down, hit the floor and flick up. Lift your pencil up and a small straight line across.
u	You go up the slide, hit the floor, curve under, bounce up, back down the same line and a flick.
v	You go up the slide, down the slide, back up and flick.
w	You go up the slide, one ice-cream scoop, down the same line and a second ice-cream scoop then flick.
y	You go up the slide, hit the floor under the line, curve under, bounce up and flick.

Cursive Script Upper Case Letters

- The capital letters are slightly different. They need plenty of practice.
- Some capital letters have a join loop while others don't.

Number Formation Guide

- 1 - Start at the top and go straight down
- 2 - Start at the top, around, down diagonally to a point and straight across.
- 3 - Start at the top and go around anti- clockwise to half way then go around again to the finish.
- 4 - Start at the top, go straight down and straight out. Lift your pencil and cross it.
- 5 - Start at the top, go down and out and around to make a 'belly', then lift your pencil to put a hat on it.
- 6 - Start at the top, go down in a curve and back up and around.
- 7 - Start at the top, go straight across and then down diagonally.
- 8 - Start at the top like an "S" and then go back up and around.
- 9 - Start at the top, go out and around, back up and straight down right to the bottom.
- 0 - Start at the top and go around anti- clockwise.

Number Formation Rhymes

The following number formation rhymes are used in Junior and Senior Infants to help teach the children number formation.

1	Number 1 is like a stick, a straight line down, that's very quick!
2	Number 2 go right around, then make a line across the ground!
3	Number 3 go right around, what will it be? Go round again to make a 3!
4	Down and over and down some more, that's the way to make a 4!
5	Go down and around and then you stop, finish the 5 with a line on top!
6	Make a curve and then a loop, you've made a 6, so join the troop!
7	Across the sky and down from heaven, that's the way to make a 7!
8	Make an "S" and then don't wait, climb up again to make an 8!
9	Make a loop and then a line, that's the way to make a 9!
10	Make a 1 and then a 0, 10 are all your fingers you know!

