

Cliftonville Primary and Pre- School



Independence Safe and Settled Resilience Respect Aspiration Learning Community

OUR MISSION

As an outstanding school we will inspire children to achieve more than they ever believed possible

OUR VISION

That every member of our school community is challenged and supported to be the very best they can be

That through our high-quality learning experiences & curriculum we will improve the life-chances of our children

That we educate the whole child so they can thrive in a changing world

Handwriting Policy

“Handwriting is a very important academic skill – part of our heritage. The loss of this skill is like the loss of a language.”

We believe all children should be given the opportunity to write effectively and confidently to be able to express their thoughts and ideas and to share their learning. We want them to leave us ready for the next stage of their learning being able to write legibly and accurately. Handwriting is an interrelated skill and is developed continuously throughout all areas of the curriculum.

Aims

- To encourage children to produce a clear, fluent handwriting form.
- To develop the necessary manual skills as a vehicle for communication.
- To encourage children to take pride in the appearance of their work.

Curriculum Delivery

Writing is a life-skill and an essential part of enabling children to express themselves, both as learners and as individuals. Handwriting itself is an incredibly complex skill which requires a strong level of

gross motor control, fine motor control, motor memory skills, visual memory skills, spatial awareness skills and eye tracking skills. It needs to be taught explicitly in discrete sessions with correct modelling by the teacher and practised regularly over time to improve and master. A consistent teaching approach is key.

At Cliftonville Primary and Pre-School we have adopted the Nelson style of handwriting in a clearly structured programme with full coverage of the technical aspects of writing (including letter formation, basic joins, printing and speedwriting). This is a cursive style and children are introduced to it from the beginning of their schooling. This decision was made as this style is considered to be the most natural development of children's earliest attempts at writing and ensures no changeover of writing style or re-learning has to occur as children move the different stages of our school. It is also in line with research into brain development as by making each letter in one movement, children's hands develop a "physical memory" of it making it easier to produce the correct shape. Cursive writing also means that letters and words flow from left to right, children are less likely to reverse letters and there is a clear distinction between capital letters and lower case letters.

Progression

Foundation Stage:

We aim for children to leave this stage of their learning being able to hold a pencil effectively in the tripod grip, correctly form recognisable letters with their starting point on the line and produce writing which can be read by others. Children are provided with a host of engaging and motivating opportunities to write in a range of ways for a variety of purposes.

The emphasis at this stage is with movement rather than neatness ensuring that letters are formed in the correct direction without excessive concern about their size. Children first begin their handwriting journey through the development of their physical skills – both large-muscle co-ordination and fine motor skills. This involves a variety of different indoor and outdoor activities including messy play and using equipment such as scissors and tweezers. Time in the pre-school and the first term of Reception is focused on building hand strength and training the shoulder muscles for handwriting movements such as through Write Dance and Dough Disco™ alongside practising specific handwriting patterns daily which help them learn and internalise the movements that create letters. Children in pre-school are also given opportunities to and support to write their names.

Letter formation learned at this early stage becomes automatic and has a profound influence on later fluency and legibility therefore our children are introduced to cursive handwriting from the very start. Staff model correct letter formation with consistent memorable phrases so children learn the language of the direction of movement. During the second term, letters are taught in families of similarly formed letters in specific handwriting lessons ("curly caterpillars": c, a, d, g, q, e, s, f, o, "ladder letters": l, t, j, i, y, u, "one-armed robots": r, b, n, h, m, k, p and "zigzag monsters": v, w, x, z) with each letter starting on the line and having a lead in and out. The children are introduced to the letters in these families gradually and corresponding to the order of initial sounds that they are

taught in phonics. The families are then revisited with additional letters added. This not only allows children to be able to write simple CVC words but also incorporates spaced retrieval to help them remember the correct letter formation. Children's process and progress is continuously checked on with extra guidance given where needed.

Close attention is paid to pencil grip, correct posture at a table and the positioning of the paper and the organisation of writing space. Pupils are also given the opportunity to experiment with a range of writing materials and implements.

Once children have been introduced to all the letters and taught how to form them correctly, they begin to use them in their phonics and literacy lessons alongside practising them in discrete handwriting sessions.

Key Stage 1:

During Year 1, children practise and consolidate their letter formation focusing on ensuring consistent size and proportion including of ascenders and descenders. They form capital letters, lower-case letters and the digits 0 to 9. Teaching of handwriting is direct with regular opportunities for children to practise their style and develop fluency. Children also refine their pencil grip and posture.

In Year 2, children are taught how to join letters in words to produce a fully cursive style. Teachers explicitly teach the diagonal and horizontal strokes needed to join letters and introduce children to these in a logical order.

Key Stage 2:

In Year 3, pupils consolidate their use of the four basic joins ensuring consistency in size, proportion and spacing of letters through regular lessons. Their handwriting speed, fluency and legibility are built up through practice and children are expected to use a joined cursive style in their writing across the curriculum. During this year, children progress onto writing in a blue handwriting pen in all subjects as they earn their "pen licence" when their writing has reached an adequate standard.

In years 4, 5 and 6 children continue to practise their handwriting with a focus on increasing the speed of it whilst ensuring legibility. Lessons or interventions are used for those pupils who have not yet achieved a fluent and legible joined script.

Posture and Position

To develop and produce fluent, legible handwriting, children need to be comfortable and should write sitting at a table for the majority of occasions. They are encouraged to sit with their feet flat on the ground, their bottom square in the chair and at the back of the seat with their knees bent at a 90° angle. Their forearm should rest comfortably on table and the paper needs to be tilted at an

angle of up to 25° (for right handed children this is towards the left and for left handed children this is towards the right).

Children are taught to use the dynamic tripod grasp where the pencil is held between the tips of the thumb, index and middle fingers in a relaxed way without too much pressure being applied and the pencil resting on the hand between the thumb and index finger.

In the early stages of children's mark making and writing journey, they are encouraged to experiment with a variety of mediums to form patterns and letters including pencils, crayons, felt tip pens, chalks, paintbrushes and to do this on a variety of surfaces such as paving stones, whiteboards, easels, etc. When children are explicitly taught to form letters, this is with a pencil and paper and seated at a table. Writing on whiteboards is used as a tool on occasions in a variety of lessons throughout the school but is never used as the primary method for writing. Children generally use lined paper for handwriting exercises and the size of the lines depends on the ability of the child.

Additional Educational Needs

As with all areas of learning, not all children develop at the same rate so adaptations are made to the teaching of handwriting for individual children as appropriate. In Reception, children who are able to form letters during Term 2 begin to also write during phonics lesson whilst the majority of the cohort begin this in Term 3.

Children with poor postural control, spatial awareness and hand strength are supported through interventions including the Fizzy and Clever Hands programmes. Equipment adaptations are made to support children develop their writing posture and grip including: wobble board foot rests, move and sit cushions, weighted lap buddies, writing slopes and shaped pens.

Left-handed children often experience more difficulty with handwriting than right-handed children. The pen or pencil tends to be pushed across the page towards the body. Care needs to be taken to ensure that there is room for the child to sit at a comfortable angle and that there is no clash of arms with a right-handed person as well as modelling a left-handed grip and ensuring correct equipment is available e.g. scissors.

Some children, particularly those with dyslexia, may need to begin to learn a cursive style at an earlier age than their peer group, as this can be a useful tool in learning spelling and developing co-ordination. Some children may not be ready to commence cursive handwriting until much later due to insufficient fine motor control.

It should be remembered that handwriting ability and intelligence are not necessarily related.

A word processor may be used as an alternative way of presenting work for children who have pronounced handwriting difficulties. In these cases, children use the Nessy Fingers programme to learn to touch type.

Presentation

Presentation is an important aspect of children's learning. We encourage children to take pride in their work and set them clear guidelines for each piece of work so they know what is expected of them. We ensure they have the appropriate materials necessary for producing the best quality work. We provide them with a variety of audiences so that they are encouraged to present good work e.g. displays, other classes, parents, the community. Children should write their names on the left of the paper and the date on the right-hand side with the title in the middle. A pencil and ruler should be used to underline all names, dates, titles and headings.

Equality

Where appropriate reasonable adjustments will be made to ensure that all pupils have equality of opportunity to access handwriting activities regardless of age, disability, gender, race or belief.