



BANDONBRIDGE N.S.

HANDWRITING POLICY

Whole-School Approach to Handwriting and Presentation

Date ratified by Board of Management	June 2021
Date of review	

Introductory statement

This policy was formulated by the staff of Bandonbridge N.S. to address concerns about the varying quality of handwriting among the pupils. This has become an area which is difficult to monitor and reinforce due to the number of pupils in the classrooms, pupils arriving in Junior Infants with a fixed but incorrect pencil grip, insufficient support in the early years' classes to ensure correct letter formation.

We would like the children within the school to produce work with a good standard of presentation. We hope to achieve this goal through a whole school plan for handwriting, by increasing the support to the junior classes where good writing habits are formed and providing incentives to the pupils to take pride in their presentation and penmanship. Junior and Senior Infants introduced the Mrs. Murphy Pre-cursive Handwriting Programme in 2019 and it has been decided to roll out this programme across the school over the next few years.

Rationale

So much of our school work and the world around us relies on print media and keyboard skills. While it is important that children acquire competency in word processing/keyboard skills, there is still a necessity for good penmanship and cursive handwriting.

Cursive handwriting activates a different part of the brain than print so it develops fine motor skills when children use their hand muscles in a new way. The fluidity of cursive requires less lifting and placing of the pencil/pen than print. Research has shown that learning to write in cursive improved spelling and composing skills (Berninger, 2015). Learning cursive handwriting is linked to improved memory for spelling as muscle memory is reinforced. Pupils with dyslexia who struggle with letters like b and d are supported as cursive b and d look very different.

Aims

- To encourage pride in one's penmanship through the standard teaching of the pre-cursive handwriting scheme in the infant classes, introducing and consolidating cursive handwriting from 1st class onwards, throughout the school
- To develop accurate letter formation and fast, fluent handwriting
- To focus on the improvement of spelling and word structure through the use of cursive handwriting
- To reflect otherwise high standards present across other curricular areas
- To promote good long-term handwriting skills i.e. provide them with the writing skills which will be needed later on in secondary school

In order to develop fast, fluent handwriting, children need:

- Refined kinaesthesia
- Efficient motor planning
- Accurate hand-eye coordination
- Intact visuo-motor integration
- In-hand manipulation
- To appreciate the rhythmic qualities of writing, knowing when and where to join according to letter form
- To know where to position and lift the wrist
- To comprehend word construction
- To apply appropriate pressure through the writing instrument – too much will slow down the movement, too little will reduce fine-motor control
- To organise the page spatially, knowing where to start, how to track across horizontally, and where to finish
- To be able to write without viewing every letter and word in order to copy from books, black or white boards, and to take dictation

(Addy, L. Speed up! LDA U.K. 2008)

Overview of the Plan

Infants: Children in Infant classes will use Tripod pencils with grip. The use of tripod colouring pencils will be encouraged. Children will practise colouring in a circular formation, which will aid the development of muscles and will also allow the children to practise an action involved in forming some of the basic letters. Infant classes will focus on pre-cursive writing skills. The tripod grip is the preferred way to hold the pencil but, for some children, the quadropod grip may be more appropriate. The class teacher, in consultation with the SET, will decide which grip is best for each individual pupil. The SET and EAL teacher will support the class teacher to ensure the correct pencil grip is maintained.

1st/2nd: The children will use thinner tripod pencils - these will be introduced as children are ready to progress. Every effort will be made to encourage the child to hold the pencil/writing implement correctly, to maintain good posture and, where helpful, particularly for left-handed writers, to position his/her book at a 45-degree angle. Sloped boards may be used, as necessary or where recommended by an Occupational Therapist or other educational professional. Parents should ensure pupils are using the same letter and numeral formation, the correct pencil grip and the same type of pencil when working at home. Sample sheets of these will be provided to parents of children in the infant and junior classrooms at the beginning of each school year.

Cursive writing will be introduced in 1st class using a handwriting workbook but will only be in general use from 2nd class, as appropriate the ability and needs of the individual pupils. The SET and EAL teacher will support the class teacher with the teaching and reinforcing of the cursive writing.

3rd/6th: Pupils will progress from pencil to pen/biro. It was decided to trial Uni-ball pens which write like ink pens; this will encourage pupils to take their time and focus on accurate letter formation. Cursive writing will be in use in all classrooms for all activities. The class teacher, in consultation with the SET, may allow some pupils to continue at the pre-cursive stage, where persisting with cursive handwriting is deemed to be too challenging.

Programmes in use

Edco Handwriting Programme with Mrs. Murphy

Teachers will model letter formation and shapes on the board for children to copy.

Occasionally, handwriting competitions may be held.

Success criteria

It will take a number of years for the current handwriting programme and additional support with handwriting in the junior classrooms, to see the improvements outlined.

Roles and responsibility

The class teacher's role is to teach the correct formation of the letters and the letter patterns and to encourage good penmanship and neat presentation of work. The Support teachers will continue the work done by the class teacher and should the need arise, the 'Speed up!' and 'Handwriting Without Tears' programmes will be developed further to assist children who may continue to experience difficulty with handwriting. Parents need to check written homework to ensure it is of a good standard.

Timeframe for implementation

All classrooms and support teaching classes will fully implement the revised handwriting policy from September 2021.

Timeframe and Responsibility for review

This policy will be reviewed annually for the next few years as the pre-cursive and cursive programme is phased in fully to assess the programme's effectiveness and to establish where pupils can best be supported with their handwriting proficiency.

The class teacher and support teachers are responsible for monitoring the programme and bringing their feedback to the review meetings.

Appendix A: Outline of the Handwriting Programme

Approach

Pre-cursive writing in Junior and Senior Infants. Cursive writing in First Class – Sixth Class.

Shape

Children frequently struggle with letter heights. These copies offer support by using red and blue lines throughout until the children become confident writers.

Phonics

Designed with a phonetic approach - Children at all class levels can read what they are writing.

Progression

The writing in this programme is developed in a structured way.

Free Writing

Free writing from Junior Infants to Sixth Class.

Junior Infants

Patterns to develop fine motor skills and fluency and make letter formation easier.

All 26 letters included.

Progression to writing words and sentences using HFW and CVC rhyming words.

Senior Infants

Revision of 26 lower case letters.

Development of 26 capital letters.

Sentence writing using HFW with a phonetic approach.

First Class

Develops cursive letter formation in practice books only.

All 26 lower case/capital letters included.

Sentence writing with a phonetic approach.

Second Class

Introduction of cursive writing in copybooks as well as practice books

Sentence writing with a phonetic approach.

Introduction of the imaginary line.

Third - Sixth Class

Full adoption of cursive writing in all written activities

Sentence writing with a phonetic approach.

All six genres of writing included.

Wide range of activities.

Individualised

These copies allow for differentiation as children progress through the writing stages at their own pace under teacher guidance and supervision.

Revision

Revision/Assessment pages incorporated throughout.

Appendix B: Pencil Grip

Understanding The Hand

There are two sides to the hand. The first is considered the “mobile” side. It includes the thumb, index, and middle finger. These fingers move when you write. The other side is considered the “stable” side. It includes the ring and pinky finger. These two fingers generally are closed and resting on the table during writing. The web space is the open area between the thumb and the index finger. It is where the pencil should rest during writing.

Different Types of Grips

What is the correct grip? Here’s a picture. Notice that there is a choice. Some children like to pinch with the thumb and pointer. That’s the tripod (3—pinch with thumb and pointer, pencil rests on tall man). Others like the quadropod (4—pinch with thumb and pointer/tall man together, pencil rests on ring finger).

Tripod grip

The Tripod Grip is a writing grip that holds the pen or pencil with the thumb + index finger. The pen or pencil rests on the middle finger when using the tripod grip.



Quadropod grip

The Quadropod Grip is a writing grip that holds the pen or pencil with the thumb + index and middle fingers. The pen or pencil rests on the ring finger when using the quadropod grip.

