At John Hellins we aim

- To develop legible handwriting.
- Where appropriate, we teach cursive handwriting to meet the individual needs of our children.
- To encourage children to develop a sense of pride in their work, enabling them to present work neatly for an audience.

Objectives

For every child…

✓ To be able to hold a pencil in a comfortable and correct manner.
✓ To be able to correctly form lower and upper case letters.
✓ To know the correct entry and exit points of letters.
✓ For each child to know how to position themselves correctly, whether they are right or left handed.
✓ To be able to write letters and words showing regularity of spacing.
✓ To develop an ability to join letters in words by building upon their knowledge of letter formation.
✓ To handwrite with speed, precision and legibility.

Curriculum Organisation

- The teaching of handwriting at John Hellins is based upon an approach, which stresses a ‘running hand,’ and separate flowing letters, as in links leading easily into cursive handwriting. We follow the Penpals scheme in each class. Foundation Stage children also use materials from Write Dance by Ragnhild A. Oussoren (published by SAGE).
- Handwriting is taught as a separate component within the English curriculum. Equal status is given to the development of motor skills, use of pattern strokes and letter formation throughout the school.
- Handwriting skills are developed cumulatively throughout the school dependent on a child’s needs.
The School’s Rationale on the Teaching and Learning of Handwriting

Learning best takes place where children can clearly see a correct demonstration of how letters and joins are formed. We recognise that effective assessment can only be made by observing pupils whilst they are writing, as the finished article does not always show incorrect letter formation. Teachers in Key Stage 1 are particularly vigilant, as they recognise that incorrect letter formation must be rectified as early as possible.

Teacher’s handwriting is written in the same style as the children’s, therefore enabling the teacher to be a good model and show correct letter formation on white boards, worksheets, and the majority of classroom labels, (Sassoon Primary Infant).

We recognise that before our children can be expected to undertake writing tasks for a range of purposes and audiences, they must possess sufficient motor skills.

Provision is made for the children to practise letter and number formation on a regular basis in our accepted style. Teaching takes place individually, in small groups or as a class, depending upon needs and maturity.

Developing Letter and Number Formation

When teaching letter and number formation, we provide a range of activities to enable our children to develop their skills by…

- Using whole body and limb movements to trace out patterns and letters.
- Using multi sensory methods and materials, (including tracing on different textures, children’s wipe boards and sand for example).
- Tracing them in the air with big sweeping movements.
- Writing patterns, tracing them and making their own.
- Writing letters and numbers with fingers, using paint mixed with paste in sand etc.
- Drawing around letter and number templates
- Tracing letters
- Writing words from a copy
- Writing individual letters and numbers from a copy. Children in Foundation Stage initially learn to form the letters in their own name and then progress to letter formation families such as c, o, a, d, g.

During year 1, children are introduced to capital letters through writing their names and days of the week. As a result of this, children are taught to correctly form capital letters in year 1.
In year 2 an alternative method is used, by using the phonic order of a, m, s, t, i, etc. to reinforce phonic teaching. Ensuring that our children understand that letters should be upright, of uniform size, evenly spaced and has sufficient space between the words.

Towards the end of year 1 and during year 2, children are provided with opportunities to use and select plain/ lined paper for writing tasks. Guidelines are also provided.

In order to encourage good handwriting we provide children with a variety of media at all levels, as this fosters good pencil grip (the child is able to hold the pencil in a relaxed manner with a natural grip). In recognition of this our children are given opportunities to use paint, thick crayons, fingers, chalk, sand and plasticine to develop their handwriting.

**Cursive Approach**

We have developed and use a cursive style of lettering from the Foundation Stage. Through this, we encourage and support children to adopt from an early age a “running hand,” which is legible, fast flowing and effortless to produce.

**Left Handers**

We recognise that left-handers have difficulty with handwriting, because the movements required have been developed by right-handers. The natural inclination is to write in an outward direction from the body, which results in left-handers writing mirror wise.

As a result of this, we help the left-handed children in our classes by paying attention to the following points:

**Position**

Left-handed children should be away from another child’s writing hand. Since the body is moving towards the body, the left hander needs to be distanced from the paper by sitting in the right hand half of his or hers writing space.

**Movements**

The left-hander pushes, as opposed to ‘drawing,’ the pencil across, therefore it is helpful for the child if the paper is positioned at an angle.

**Pencil**

We use triangular soft leaded pencils to help the writing flow for all children. Due to the nature of the writing movement hard, sharp pencils impede the flow and are particularly counter productive for left-handed children. Due to this, we endeavour to ensure that all left-handers use pencils without sharp points.
We teach the correct pencil grip, by ensuring the pencil is held between the thumb and index finger, with the pencil resting on the middle finger. With left-handed children we encourage a grip, which is higher up the shaft and with the pencil pointing back up in line.

**Self Image**

It is important that discretion is made in making ‘special arrangements,’ to avoid the child feeling they are different.

**Planning**

Learning objectives for the teaching of handwriting are identified in the Primary Strategy. Differentiation of work to achieve these objectives is planned and recorded by class teachers on their weekly planning sheets.

**Dimensions**

We seek to ensure that a positive image is presented whether a child shows left/ right hand dominance and that appropriate resources are available for left handed children, for example scissors.

**Special Educational Needs**

We ensure that every child is given the opportunity to receive his/ her entitlement through the provision of experiences, which are appropriate to teach child’s needs. For some children their learning is supported by IT.

**Teaching and Learning**

Children are constantly given opportunities to develop their handwriting skills. As a whole class they watch the teacher, who acts as a role model and are then encouraged to have a go with their peers, whilst good examples are highlighted.

As the children become more able, they are taught how to copy from a white board, moving from one letter at a time to chunks of letters.

Patterns are used to teach children how to reduce pencil grip tension.

Opportunities are provided for the children to experience working on lined and unlined paper. Initially in Foundation Stage, the children usually write on landscaped unlined paper. Later as their skills develop, they are introduced to wide lined paper. As the children progress further with their handwriting the depth of the lines on the paper narrow.
Guidelines are introduced and used to help children present pieces of work for display. Greater use of guidelines is expected from year two and the use of rulers to underline and draw borders is emphasised towards the end of Key Stage 1.

Handwriting books with red/ blue guidelines are introduced from Year one and two to teach the correct proportion and regularity of size of letters. Their use is dependent on a child’s ability to use lined paper.

Children are taught to sit with good posture by ensuring that they are sitting straight with their feet on the ground and on a chair that is suited to the height of the table.

Children are encouraged not to lean over their books when writing. Furthermore, left-handed children are encouraged to sit so that light comes from the right and vice versa for right-handed children.

We appreciate that for a right-hander, paper should be positioned to the right of the line of the centre of the body and for the left-hander to the left. We teach our children to do this and encourage our left-handed children to slant their paper.

Advice to Parents

Parents are advised about the style of lettering used in the school and are provided with a copy of the lower case letter formation sheet as part of the new intake school induction pack.

Assessment

Assessing written work provides teachers with knowledge of a child’s current achievements and future targets. This assessment occurs in formal or informal circumstances and is ongoing. Furthermore, it is recommended that a sample of children’s work is kept in individual portfolios, to allow teachers to develop a cumulative picture of each child’s development this can be added to other evidence for APP. Selected work is also used to level children in order to set individual targets for children’s independent development.

What we look for in assessment of a child’s writing

- Attitude
- Desire to communicate
- Willingness to experiment
- Letter formation
- Attention to presentation
- Aesthetic sense
- Constraints.