



Teaching Handwriting at Doubletrees School.

Context of school

Doubletrees school is a 2-19 provision. We have three learning pathways within school. The pre-formal learning pathway, known as Learning to Learn, where learners follow the Engagement Model. The Bridging to Learn cohort is a semi-formal learning pathway, where learners access the pre-requisites to learning and the early stages of the National Curriculum. The third pathway is our Ready to Learn pathway, where learners access the National curriculum through formal learning opportunities. We have an EYFS and Post 16 provision.

Our learners are complex and diverse and we take a personalised learning approach to our curriculum, making adaptations to ensure that learning is accessible to all.

Intent

The teaching of handwriting is a priority for our young people, where they have the physical capabilities to develop this. The ability to write to communicate is an essential skill and allows our young people to demonstrate understanding in what they have learnt, make requests and choices and communicate need. Research has shown that students who struggle with handwriting often have lower academic achievement scores, especially in subjects such as languages, arts and Maths and addressing this is essential to reduce frustration and promote resilience. Research has also shown that taking hand written notes also aids memory retention and recall. Handwriting is an essential form of communication and one of our aspirations for our learners is to ensure that our learners know both what to communicate and the most effective and personalise way of knowing how to communicate.

The teaching of handwriting is an essential aspect of education that aligns with our core values:

Achieve – developing good and fluid handwriting allows our students to demonstrate their understanding, promoting a higher academic achievement by supporting them to express their ideas more effectively.

Belong – we support our learners to be confident in their handwriting abilities, enabling them to participate in classroom and group activities which fosters a sense of belonging and encourages collaboration

Communicate – handwriting is essential to communicate ideas and learning and we aim to support our learners to express this more confidently and clearly.

Develop – our focus on the development of the fine motor skills that lead to clear handwriting are also closely linked to cognitive development and through this we also will develop patience, discipline and perseverance.

Enjoy – Writing is a form of self-expression and pride, which we aim to foster in our learners, further supporting their creativity. Being able to communicate through any means will ensure our learners enjoy and engage with all aspects of their learning.

The development of the production of text is an essential aspect of education that helps our learners achieve academic success and communicate, both now and in their later lives.

Implementation

In our EYFS, handwriting begins with increased special awareness and the refinement of gross and fine motor control. Through continuous play sessions, learners are encouraged to develop their mark making abilities, using a variety of creative mediums. This supports the development of the gross and fine motor skills that underpin handwriting. Our learners also explore and learn to recognize pattern and shape. They are supported to develop the language to talk about shape and movements and begin to develop the main handwriting shapes. These foundational skills are built upon as learners progress onto one of our 3 learning pathways. This is all underpinned by a strong foundation in communication so our learners know both how to communicate and what to communicate.

The Learning to Learn (pre-formal learning pathway) is pre subject specific learning, however the cohort follow the same termly theme as the rest of their phase peers. Learning is focused through the four Areas of Need within their EHCPs, with the area of Communication and Interaction. They develop knowledge that text is a form of communication and can be used to express needs and wants, alongside the Sensory/Physical targets for the development of the gross and fine motor skills that support this. By making choices using a variety of AAC, sign and gesture, and being supported to understand schedules, routines and transitions, these learners develop the early pre-requisites to writing.

Our Ready and Bridging to Learn pathways in key stages 1-3 experience handwriting development, through discrete daily sessions. We use the Nelson handwriting scheme to support this, and it sits alongside the wider English phonics and reading schemes, allowing our learners to experience consistency in the approach and make connections between the strands of English. Some of our Bridging to Learn staff have been trained in Write Dance, to support the more targeted development of gross and fine motor skills for learners who are on this semi-formal pathway. Where adaptations for physical needs are made, we use a range of writing tools and implements, alongside IT, including, for example, ipads, laptops and eye gaze. Where there are communication adaptations needed our learners may use AAC, sign or symbol, enabling all our learners to access the ability to produce text/mark making to communicate meaning.

As our learners move to our post 14 phase, there is an increasing focus on real life writing – being able to fill in forms, write letters/emails, make lists so that the skills learnt previously are firmly embedded in a context and therefore will be sustained. The focus remains on developing and refining fine motor skills so that there is increased fluency and precision in writing, or use of AAC/sign and symbol to support use with a wider audience, beyond school.

We also encourage opportunities to demonstrate a 'love of writing', through opportunities that allow self-expression or creativity, such as writing cards or letters to friends, role play activities and broader enrichment events.

Impact - Assessment of outcomes (So what difference did it make – Include evidence)

As our learners leave school, they are able to communicate meaning through text, where physically possible through handwriting. They are able to form letters fluently allowing a clear form of communication.

In order to measure the impact of our writing provision, we complete regular monitoring and assessment cycles which include: Termly Pupil Progress meetings, data tracking, monitoring of the effectiveness of the handwriting program across all areas of the English curriculum. We aim that through our handwriting provision we use a range of writing strategies throughout the school to develop our learners' writing skills which support their individual needs. We use scheduled and responsive interventions to support all of our children needs.

