Coastal Together

Bacton Primary School | Horning Primary School | Cantley Primary School | Freethorpe Primary School | Mundesley Infant School | Mundesley Junior School | The Beacon SEMH Base

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'together aspire, together achieve, together we are stronger...'

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Dear Parents/Carers,

Introducing Handwriting Home Learning

Research demonstrates that handwriting is an important part of our children's writing. As children move through each year group, they are expected to know more and write at a higher level. Evidence suggests that children need to become fluent in their handwriting so that their memory is not overloaded. If children are focusing on handwriting at a later stage, they will find it more difficult to compose sentences and express their ideas and often find themselves falling behind. If you would like to read what ofsted say about handwriting, please refer to the information at the end of this letter.

Our children need time to be taught how to form and join letters. In school, we teach children how to write at a young age. In Reception and Year 1, children focus on letter formation and are not required to join. Delaying joining, allows young children to focus on forming letters correctly and writing on the line. From Year 2, children will begin to learn how to join. They will focus on diagonal and horizontal strokes that are needed to join letters.

As well as learning to improve their handwriting in lessons, children need repeated practice so that they can become fluent. ***This is where we need your help***. Children will be given a handwriting home learning book and each week they will be set one piece of home learning to complete. This home learning will start with fine and gross motor activities in Reception and will develop with each year group, this will be accompanied by activities that match the expectations in each year. Within the home learning book will be guidance about handwriting in each year group so that you are able to support your child at home.

In School we follow the Letter-Join programme for teaching handwriting. As part of this programme, Letter-Join provide further online resources and guidance to be used at home. This can be used either alongside the handwriting home learning activities or as an optional extra. There are videos on how to form each letter, tracing activities and games children can play. Details of how and where you can access Letter-Join online, are included here and will be sent out alongside this letter.

Abi Carter
Head of Schools MIJS

What do Ofsted say about handwriting?

The national curriculum specifies that children should be taught to correctly form letters of the correct size and orientation.

There is evidence that repeated practice in handwriting is necessary to go beyond accuracy to fluency in letter formation.

Fluent transcription skills are the foundations of writing. If pupils master these, they can then focus their attention on developing, organising and communicating their ideas. If spelling and handwriting are not fluent, pupils' working memory is overloaded and it becomes difficult to focus on composition.

An effective writing curriculum should give time for pupils to be taught and to practise the component skills of transcription, at least in the early stages of primary. Kellogg has argued that, if pupils do not develop sufficient fluency in handwriting (or typing) in primary school, this significantly affects the development of the higher-order processes, such as planning and generating ideas, and writing and reviewing texts.

Children at the end of the EYFS should be able to 'hold a pencil effectively in preparation for fluent writing – using the tripod grip in almost all cases'.

The national curriculum requires children to learn unjoined handwriting before they 'start using some of the diagonal and horizontal strokes that are needed to join letters'. Delaying teaching joined handwriting gives teachers and children time to focus on other aspects of the writing process, such as composition, spelling and forming letters correctly.

Research supports the idea that writing letters may be important for supporting children's early reading development, because it stimulates the areas of the brain known to underpin successful reading. A small study with 4- to 5-year-olds showed that practice in writing letters 'stroke by stroke' may be the 'gateway' through which beginning readers learn to recognise the features of each letter, as well as learning which features are not important.

There is also evidence that repeated practice in handwriting, going beyond accuracy to fluency, leads to success in higher-level writing tasks. Skilful handwriting has an impact on composition. According to 2 meta-analyses of research on handwriting instruction, teaching handwriting is closely associated with the quality, length and fluency of writing. As these meta-analyses showed, teaching handwriting can improve writing because the pupil can spend more time planning, thinking about content and constructing the sentences.