



Literacy is the key to all students' success in the academic domain and is the foundation on which they create their future.

Literacy is the responsibility of **all** departments and **all** teachers at Christ Church. The teaching staff is committed to developing literacy skills in all students and firmly believes that improving literacy skills will enhance the learning of our students and raise standards across the curriculum.

In particular the following specific goals will be a priority:

## Extended writing

- Provide opportunities across many subjects to write extended pieces of work in a variety of styles, for example, to persuade, to inform, and to explain.
- Actively encourage students to structure their written work to reflect standard conventions such as use of sentences, headings, and paragraphing.
- Actively encourage students to plan, organise, draft, edit and reflect on their writing.

## Reading

- Encourage students to write specific glossaries that contain key words and their meanings. These should be kept in the students' files and actively referred to in lessons. However, it may be more appropriate for some subject areas to build a glossary list as the term, semester and year progresses.
- Make reading a part of all lessons whenever possible. Students should be encouraged to read written information in class.
- As far as possible, ensure that department resources are accessible for students of all reading abilities.
- Provide opportunities for students to read for understanding and to read for fun as well.

## Speaking and listening

- Insist upon the use of Standard English, where appropriate, in order to support the development of communication skills.
- Develop specific opportunities for individual, paired or small group speaking and listening.
- Continue to provide opportunities for students to speak and debate publicly, both in and out of classes.

## Note-making

- Allocate lesson time to develop note-making skills, for example identifying key sentences or words/terms in written text.
- Continue to provide students the opportunity to learn study skills which include effective note-taking, note-making and note-summarising.

## Spelling

- Students should be expected to correct spelling mistakes and make use of dictionaries, including those specific to individual subjects; they should use 'Australian English'.
- Common subject terms should be displayed in classrooms with the correct spelling and meaning.

## Research

- Incorporate one structured piece of research for all students in Years 7 to 10 into relevant subjects, making use of the Senior Library and/or the ICT Centre.
- Continue to have high expectations of students' ability to reference research findings and provide accurate referencing using contemporary and widely accepted frameworks.

## Marking

- The expectation of technical accuracy should be reinforced by all teaching staff across all subjects. To this end, marking of work should include correction of punctuation, grammar and spelling. It may be appropriate to correct all spelling errors in written work for some students and only certain words or aspects of the work for other students.
- Neatness, careful presentation and clear handwriting should be insisted upon by all staff. It is expected that all work written by teachers for students should also conform to these standards.

## Handwriting

- If teachers cannot decipher a student's handwriting, the student needs to be made aware of this. Should the problem be entrenched and evident in assignments, assessments and/or homework, an SRS should be sent by the teacher. The Head of House will be able to suggest strategies, particularly where the problem is evident across a number of subjects. The article below, "Putting Pen to Paper – improving handwriting" by Peter William at the School Curriculum and Standards Authority (July 2016), will assist. <http://www.scsa.wa.edu.au/publications/blog>
- In extreme cases, the HOH may liaise with the parent and school psychologists to organise evaluation with an occupational therapist and/or explore the provision of a laptop for assessments.



When you're writing under pressure, like in a test or an exam, it's easy to think the most important thing is to get the information down. There's some truth in that. Answering the question is why you're sitting at that desk.

Remember, though, the quality of your handwriting matters. The person marking your paper needs to be carried along with your writing – seeing all of your ideas so you have every chance to get high marks. Right? *None of this can happen if your writing is illegible.*

Legible writing comes down to letter formation. Perhaps you remember learning to write and practising your letters on those pale blue lines. Upstrokes, downstrokes, looping the tail of a 'g' –arms and dots. Perhaps you liked to invent your own letter shapes. Or perhaps you don't do that much hand writing now – unless you have to, because a keyboard or smart phone is easier.

Do you even think about your letters as you write? If, in your heart of hearts, you know your handwriting could do with some improvement, read on!

### **Analysing your writing can help**

Poor hand writing can mean we get less marks than we should. Letters or words that are not written clearly can look like mistakes. Try analysing your writing and see what you can improve. Copy three or four sentences from this blog and answer these questions about what you wrote:

- Do you write with curves and loops? Or do you write straight?
- Do your letters run together? Are they recognisable? Do you dot the 'i's and cross the 't's?
- Does your writing slant, significantly, to one side? Or do you write perpendicular to the lines? Does the angle of words change as you write?
- Does your writing overlap the lines?

- Is your writing cramped? (Can you write a single 'o' in the space between each word?) Cramped words can be hard to read.
- Do you use all (or very little) of the space in the lines to write?
- Are the lines in your letters even and balanced or uneven and bumpy?

Do you ever find it hard to read your own writing? If so, consider changing one or more of these seven areas to improve your writing's legibility. Still not convinced? Did you know that some of our chief examiners have reported that poor handwriting interferes with student performance?

### **You are your first reader!**

Whether you're revising your notes or proofing an exam essay, you are your first reader. This means you *must* read your own work to ensure it's as easy to read as possible. When you're checking for clarity of meaning and accuracy you don't need the distraction of trying to decipher your own scrawl.

Your next reader is the person marking your work. Do you think of them as you write? Chances are, if you're not thinking about who you're writing for, they won't engage with them as well as you could. Your handwriting is your written voice – your message to your audience. Ignore being clear at your peril!

### **Writing (itself) is an art**

For some people, the 'way of writing', also known as calligraphy, is an art to be developed. Calligraphy requires practice, care, a dexterous hand and an eye for the visual balance of words or characters and ink on paper. We're not suggesting you aim for the detail and flourishes of calligraphy but please consider investing some time in writing practice.

As a busy student you might think you don't have time for the 'luxury' of practising writing. But if you've ever tried to ride a skateboard, play a guitar or swing a golf club, you know the importance of technique. In the same way, your pen control has a big impact on your writing. Here are some suggestions to improve your pen handling skills:

- Write some of your study notes by hand. Use this as an opportunity to work on letter formation and legibility. The aim is to write neatly, but freely. This takes practice.
- Mark your own 'neatness' in your practice essays. Don't just time yourself getting ideas on the page. Time yourself getting ideas on the page legibly.
- Look at your handwriting analysis (using the seven steps above) and target one or more areas that need attention. Why not work some exercises (to improve your spacing, alignment, balance or letter shapes) into your routine as a signal to yourself that you're starting (or finishing) a study session?
- Find some 'no pressure' writing opportunities – a birthday card, a party invitation, a note to a friend, or a postcard.

How many skills that involve hand and eye coordination would you expect to master, if you rarely practise them? Make time to improve your writing. It will be a sound investment.

### **Other strategies**

**Choose your tools wisely.** A pen that sits well in your hand and writes smoothly as you move it across the page is important. If you have to use a pencil, make sure it's sharp. Try your pen (or pencil) before you buy it, to find one that works well for you.

**Your sitting posture matters too.** Yes, it's true! If you sit with your back supported, your body angled forward, and your feet on the ground, it will help your writing; especially if you're going to be putting pen to paper for an extended period of time. Some people write most neatly when they can move their shoulders and forearms freely. Posture is important!

**Is your head supported?**Your head should be supported by your neck, not by your spare hand. If your spine is not aligned properly and you're leaning to rest your head on your hand, your head is not properly supported. In fact, your 'spare hand' is not really spare at all. It should be holding the page steady and moving it as you work your way along it.

**Get a grip!**In the mix with good posture is good grip (or grasp). The way you hold your pen affects your posture. If your grip is too tight, you become tense. Remember to keep your wrist and arm loose. Ideally, the movement of the pen across the page should be fluid and relaxed. Be aware of how you hold your pen.

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