



HANDWRITING POLICY

February 2026

This policy sets out the agreed expectations for handwriting and how handwriting will be taught.

WHY

Handwriting is a fundamental transcription skill. When letter formation and joining are automatic, cognitive load is reduced and pupils can focus on composition, vocabulary and sentence construction. Pupils are then better able to concentrate on new learning, write at greater speed (which is particularly important as they transition to secondary school), and learn spellings (muscle memory). Efficient handwriting also reduces fatigue and discomfort, supporting sustained writing. Teaching letters in families based on starting points, and teaching joins as either diagonal or horizontal, supports movement pattern, fluency and automaticity.

Strong Foundations: Posture, Positioning and Pencil Grip

Correct physical habits are taught from reception, and continually reinforced. Pupils are explicitly taught correct sitting position, paper position and tripod pencil grip.

Sitting Position Children are taught to:

- Sit upright, back against the chair
- Keep **both feet flat** on the floor
- Bring the chair close so the body faces the table
- Use the **non-writing hand** to steady the paper

Paper Position

- Right-handed pupils: paper slightly tilted left
- Left-handed pupils: paper slightly tilted right
- Paper positioned so the writing arm can move freely

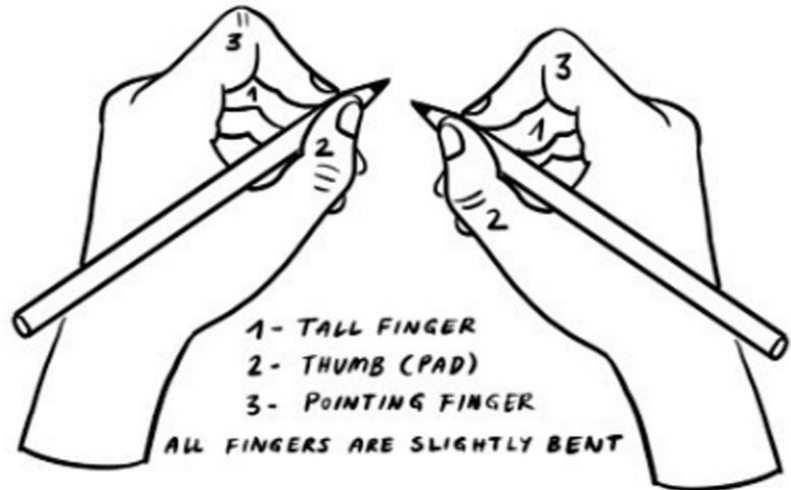
POSTURE GUIDELINES
• Feet flat on the floor or on a wide based raised surface
• Knees at a right angle with 2-fingers space behind the knee to avoid compression
• Sit on the chair so hips are positioned at approximately 90° with the back supported
• Sit approximately a fist-distance away from the table
AND
• Table height adjusted so that forearms rest on the top without leaning forward (too low) or raising the shoulders/arms (too high)
• Surface - clean, smooth and uncluttered



Pencil Grip

We teach the **tripod grip**:

- Pencil held between thumb and index finger
- Pencil resting on middle finger
- Grip relaxed, not tight
- Fingers positioned about 2–3 cm from the point



Adults model and correct gently and consistently. Alternative grips may be accepted where children write fluently and without discomfort.

HOW

In the earliest stages, a range of activities are used to ensure children develop the physical foundations needed for writing. These activities develop gross motor control, establish posture routines and support early letter formation. Examples include sand writing, paint writing, “magic pencil” air writing, ‘Squiggle while you wiggle’, and other large-movement tasks. Alongside this, pupils take part in activities that develop fine motor control, such as threading beads, colouring, sewing, using tweezers to pick up small objects and playdough strengthening activities.

Pupils are then taught phonics-linked letter formation. In the Early Years, triangular pencils are used for writing and drawing, as these support the development of the tripod pencil grip outlined above. Some pupils may continue to use triangular pencils for longer where this support remains beneficial.

Handwriting is taught:

- explicitly and systematically
- alongside phonics in the early years
- through structured revisiting and overlearning
- through modelling on paper for the whole class
- through modelling in pupils’ books in front of them for individuals where needed
- across the curriculum, not only in English lessons

All letter formation is taught with:

- clear starting points

- correct directionality
- consistent terminology
- large motor movement before small (e.g. air writing, whiteboards)

Letter formation is first taught as part of phonics and then revisited systematically through letter families to build automaticity.

-During handwriting lessons pupils will be encouraged to assess their own work in simple ways: circling their best 'g'/horizontal join/word after completing a line of handwriting, using a ruler to identify inconsistent letter size across the line etc. This encourages pupils to take ownership of their learning and undertake further practise in their 'problem areas'.

-Correct formation can be reinforced by apps such as 'Hairy Letters'.

-Teachers/TAs model printed/joined handwriting, in line with this policy, when writing on the board/creating displays etc.

-Pupils will be expected to use what they have been taught in handwriting lessons in their independent work/other subjects – independent use is the aim and key to success.

-Rubbers will not be used in handwriting lessons. Mistakes are important to learn from and inform the teacher of problem letters/joins which need further work. In addition, over use of rubbers reduces the time a child is practising handwriting.

-Pupils need to learn to orientate letters in relation to the line. They also need to learn to 'visualise' the tall/short letter horizontal lines to enable them to write with consistency. We use lined paper from early years onwards to support this.

-Pen licences will be awarded to children in KS2 when they consistently show clearly formed/joined handwriting when writing in many contexts. All pupils in Y6 write in pen in term 5/6 in preparation for secondary school.

Practice and overlearning

Handwriting is practised through:

- discrete sessions
- sentence practice (we use Twinkl font as the nearest to our handwriting policy, for any sentence or paragraph copying / translating into joined script exercises – see Appendix 3)
- spelling work
- dictation by the teacher
- cross-curricular writing

Children who have not achieved year group expectations receive additional short, frequent practice with support from an adult, as well as support during English lessons with a focus on handwriting.

WHEN

Handwriting is taught daily in Rec – Y3. More time will be given to explicit handwriting teaching in reception, year 1 and year 2. In these years handwriting may sometimes form the larger part of an English lesson, for example where significant new learning is taking place, or where a teacher is responding to a substantial need of the class as a whole. In Y4- Y6 handwriting is taught daily-near daily in response to the needs of pupils/class. The vocabulary of tall/short letters, ascenders/descenders, upper case/ lower case and capital letter is used in teaching.

INCLUSION

-Handwriting skills are progressive. Although there are expectations for year groups, work for pupils will be adapted so they reflect the next steps of learning in the handwriting progression no matter the age of pupil.

-Some pupils will be offered different materials to support handwriting such as triangle pencils/grips/sloped boards.

-Some pupils will receive focused intervention work to support handwriting.

-Left handed pupils (approximately 10% of the population) are supported by being encouraged to:

- Turn their paper to the right rather than the left
- Sit on the left-hand side of a right-handed child so they have enough space
- Keep the wrist straight and their hand below the writing line

LETTER FAMILIES

Printing formation of lowercase letters are taught in '**letter families**' with a 'chant' to support children. When modelling, the teacher and children say the chant to support the child knowing the correct formation when writing independently. The aim is to secure the understanding of the common features of letter formation as soon as possible (such as the letter families below and all letters start at the short line/tall line except e and f etc).

<u>Family</u>	<u>Letters</u>	<u>Movement Focus</u>
Curly Caterpillar	c, a, o, d, g, q, s*, e*, f*	Anti-clockwise curve
Ladder	l, i, t, j, u, y	Pull down
One-Armed Robot	r, n, m, h, b, p, k	Pull down then arch
Pull / Push	v, w, x*, z*	Pull down, push up

*These letters share similar movements to their families, but have specific differences, which are taught explicitly. Children will be taught to see the similarities, but notice how they have their own, unique pattern of movement.

PROGRESSION

Reception	Gross motor control and correct formation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daily fine and gross motor activities • Posture and pencil grip explicitly taught • Letter formation taught alongside phonics • Letters revisited in families once most sounds are introduced • Capital letters introduced (names, labels, start of sentences) • Emphasis on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ starting points ○ direction ○ size relative to others
Year 1	Consistency and automaticity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daily focused handwriting practice • Letter families systematically revisited • Capital letters retaught methodically <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ formation ○ size difference from lower case ○ when to use them • Begin ensuring: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ letters sit on the line ○ consistent size ○ correct spacing between words
Year 2	Introduction of joins	<p>Once children form letters correctly and consistently:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Horizontal joins to letters without ascenders (e.g. oo, ow) 2. Horizontal joins to letter with ascenders (e.g. ol, ot) 3. Diagonal joins to letters without ascenders (e.g. ai, ar, un) 4. Diagonal joins to letters with ascenders (e.g. ul, it) 5. 'Tricky' joins – see appendix <p>Children learn:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • when letters join • when they do not join • how joins should not distort letter shapes <p>Handwriting sessions continue alongside English lessons, as well as this being a focus embedded within English lessons themselves.</p>
Class 3 (Y3/4)	Securing joins and fluency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All join types revisited and practised • Emphasis on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ writing at speed ○ maintaining legibility ○ consistent size and spacing • Handwriting expectations apply across the curriculum • Daily practice of joins • Y3 consolidation of all joins / Y4: increasing speed and stamina • Focus on neat presentation in longer pieces
Class 4 (Y4/5)	Speed, stamina, consistency & targeted intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handwriting applied in extended writing • Fluency and consistency across subjects • Common difficulties as noted by teachers in formative assessment (e.g. s being too tall) • Targeted intervention for pupils not yet automatic: this will be a focus during everyday teaching, as well as additional support.
Class 5 (Y5/6)	Speed, stamina, fluency, personal style & targeted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mature, fluent, joined handwriting • Writing at length without loss of legibility • Personal style may develop once core formation is secure • Common difficulties as noted by teachers in formative assessment (e.g. capitals not being larger than lower-case letters)

	intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handwriting continues to be practised for a short time, near-daily for most, and is reinforced through high expectations at all times. • Targeted intervention for pupils not yet automatic: this will be a focus during everyday teaching, as well as additional support.
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EXPECTATIONS:

By the end of Rec: (printed script)

- Pupils sit correctly at a table with correct pencil grip.
- Pupils use correct letter formation for the 26 lower case letters.
- Begin to form some capital letters (e.g. in commonly-used names, places)
- Begin to understand letter families and practise these with adult support

By the end of Y1: (printed script)

- Pupils understand which letters belong to which family and practise these (letters that are formed in similar ways).
- Pupils use correct letter formation for the 26 lower case letters.
- Pupils use correct letter formation for the 26 upper case letters.
- Pupils leave word spaces.
- Pupils use correct formation for numbers 0-9.

By the end of Y2: (printed/joined script)

- Pupils position letters correctly in relation to the line (eg: p not P)
- Pupils show consistency in size in lower case letters in relation to each other (tall and short letters, length of descenders etc.).
- Pupils use horizontal and diagonal joins correctly after teaching/in independent work.
- Pupils join/not join letters (in line with this policy) after teaching/in independent work.
- Pupils use consistent word spaces.
- Pupils show consistency in size in writing capital letters.
- Pupils show consistency in size in writing numbers.

By the end of Y3: (joined script)

- Pupils use a legible, joined script in independent work.
- Pupils join/not join letters, in line with this policy, in independent work.

By the end of Y4: (joined script)

- Pupils write in a legible and consistent style, with increase speed and style.
- Pupils write letters with parallel down strokes.
- Pupils write with appropriate letter/word spacing over lines/paragraphs.

By the end of Y5: (joined script)

- Pupils write fluently and legibly with speed and a personal style.

PRINTING SCRIPT: LETTER FORMATION 'CHANTS'

Letter	Chant
Curly caterpillar letters	
c	Around like a c.
o	Around like a c, keep on going
a	Around like a c, up and down with a flick
q	Around like a c, up and down, with a kick
g	Around like a c, up and down, down, tail
d	Around like a c, all the way up, and down with a flick
s	Curl backwards, slide down, curl
e	Start in the middle, spiral around
f*	Curl, down down, with a tail, and cross
Ladder letters	
l	(start tall) Down with a flick
t*	(start tall) Down, with a flick and cross
j	Down, with a tail
i	Down with a flick and dot
u	Down, round, up and down with a flick
y	Down, round, up and down with a tail
One armed robot letters	
r	Down, up and around
n	Down, up and around
m	Down, up and around and around
p	Down, up and around (tummy on the line)
h	(start tall) Down, up and around
b	(start tall) Down up and around (The top of the bubble should be level with the short letter line.)
k	(start tall) Down, up and around (The top of the bubble on the k should be level with the short letter line.)
Pull / push letters	
v	Pull down, push up
w	Pull down, push up, down, up
x	Pull down, pull down
z	Push out, pull back, push out

* All crosses should be the same height as the short letter line.

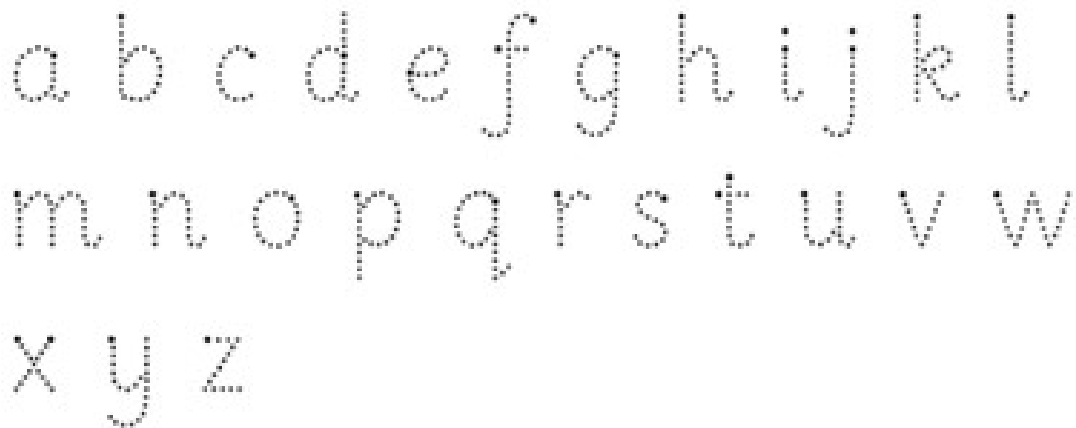
JOINING SCRIPT: BREAK LETTERS

Assume all letters are joined into and out of – exceptions are on the table below:

Letter	No join in/ No join out/ No join in or out
f	Join in. Join out using cross
x	No join in or out
z	No join in or out

APPENDIX 1: LETTER AND NUMBER FORMATION

Lower case formation:



Lower and upper case formation:

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff

Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm

Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt

Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz

Number formation:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

9 10 11 12 13 14

15 16 17 18 19 20

APPENDIX 2: JOINING LETTER FORMATION

THE TWO MAIN JOINS

Horizontal joins to short letters: EG. ou, oo, ow, wi, wa, vi, vu.

ou oo ow wi wa vi vu

Horizontal joins to tall letters: EG. ol, ot, ob, oh, ok, wh.

ol ot ob oh ok wh

Diagonal joins to short letters: EG. ai, ar, un, ur, ir, li.

ai ar un ur ir li

Diagonal joins to tall letters: EG. ab, al, ul, ut, ib, it, ll, lt, etc.

ab al ul it ib it ll lt

PROBLEM JOINS:

s as ask bass

f from for of off offer

g/i/y/q g go ping j jaw ajax y yell day q quiet

k k kick back

APPENDIX 2: JOINING LETTER FORMATION

THE TWO MAIN JOINS

Horizontal joins to short letters e.g.

ow, ou, oe, ve, or, oi, oy, on, op, ov
oo, oa, wa, wo, ot, og, od, va, vo

Horizontal joins to tall letters e.g.

ok, ot, ob, ol, wh, oh

Diagonal joins to short letters e.g.

ai, ay, ir, er, ie, ue, ee, le, ar, ur,
in, ui, ey, aw, an,
ea, ig, dg, ng, ed, cc, eg, ic, ad, ug,
dd, ag, as, es, os, ns, ds, is, ls, ts, ks

Diagonal joins to tall letters e.g.

ch, th, ck, al, el, at, il, ill,

TRICKY JOINS: f / g/j/y/ q

APPENDIX 3: USEFUL TYPE FONTS

For when preparing handwriting worksheets/flashcards/display etc.

'Twinkl' will produce the alphabet as below:

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9