

Handwriting Policy

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Handwriting Policy September 2016

1.1 Importance and nature of handwriting

Handwriting is a means of recording language on paper, using a generally understood system of symbols. It is an important life skill as a functional tool for expressing language and as part of self-image and expression of personality. Despite the increased use of computers for writing, the skill of handwriting remains important in education, employment and in everyday life.

As a school, we recognise that children’s ability to write well for the rest of their lives, depends on firm foundations of taught skills in their primary years.

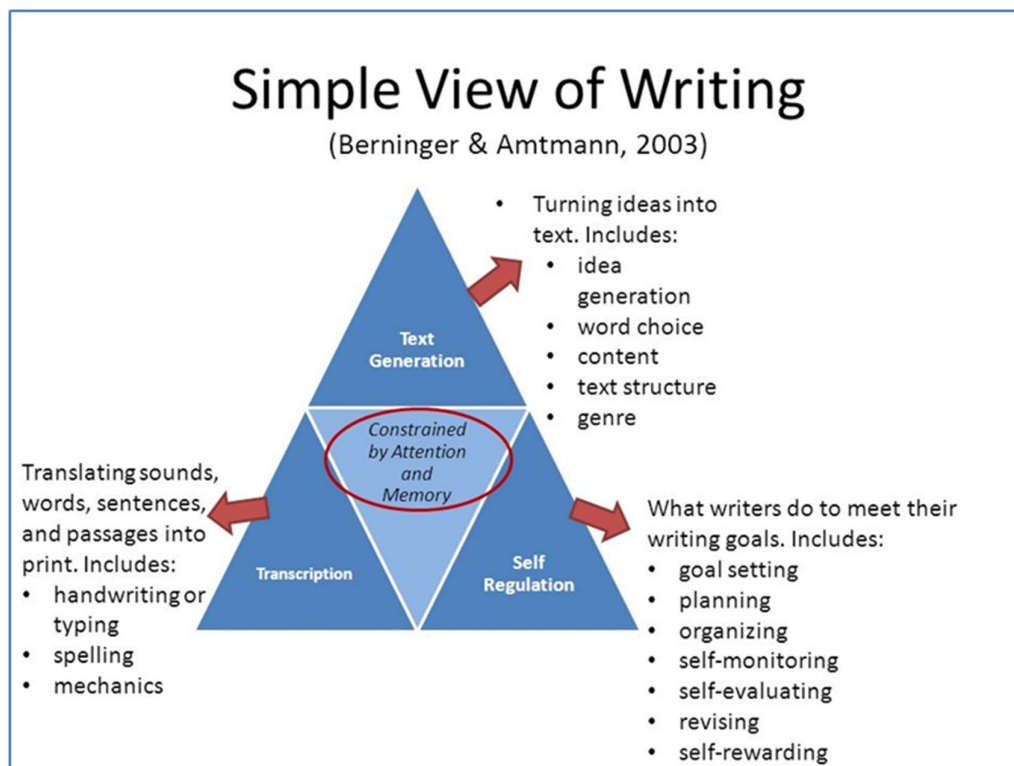
1.2 The place of Handwriting in the Writing Process

The National Curriculum for English (2014) defines the **two dimensions** of the writing process as:

- **transcription** (spelling and handwriting)
- **composition** (articulating ideas and structuring them in speech and writing)

It requires that teaching develops pupils’ competence in both dimensions.

‘Writing also depends on fluent, legible and, eventually, speedy handwriting.’



This model reflects the implications of current research that:

- both dimensions of writing draw upon limited resources of working memory and attention

- any increase in the amount demanded by one component, such as handwriting, will mean fewer cognitive resources are available for the others, so children need to develop 'automaticity' in handwriting
- there is a strong link between developing fluency in handwriting and the ability to produce high quality written texts.

1.3 Aims

Our aims in teaching handwriting are:

- For all children to learn and practise appropriate and effective handwriting skills at each stage of development, continually working towards mature handwriting which is:
 - Legible
 - Presentable
 - Comfortable
 - Fluent
 - Flexible
 - Fast
 - Automatic
 - Sustainable
- To raise attainment by all by involving children in the development of their own handwriting and to understand the factors which help this process.
- For children to have opportunities to write in different styles and for different purposes across the curriculum.
- For all staff to use and model the agreed handwriting conventions outlined in this document, thus providing consistency and continuity throughout the school community.
- To make provision for left handed children and for children who experience difficulties.
- To encourage personal satisfaction and pride in well- presented writing.

1.4 Development of Handwriting skills: Rationale

Handwriting is complex perceptual-motor skill that is dependent upon the maturation and integration of a number of cognitive, perceptual, and motor skills including:

- Gross motor skills
- Fine motor skills
- Visual-motor control
- Eye hand co-ordination
- Cognitive and perceptual skills
- Tactile and kinaesthetic sensitivities
- Behaviour, concentration and motivation

Awareness of this complexity informs the curriculum and teaching progression across the school.

It also underpins any intervention programme when children experience difficulties.

From Early Years onwards, staff and children understand that handwriting is a 'whole body' activity.

2.1 Curriculum

We understand that handwriting is a taught developmental process with its own distinctive stages of progression.

The school handwriting curriculum is guided by the requirements of the

1. **Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework (2012)** and the
2. **National Curriculum for English KS1 & KS2 (2014).**

2.2 Early Years Foundation Stage (0 -5 years)

All areas of learning in the EYFS are integrated , but *specific references* to handwriting skills are found in

- **Physical Development** (movement and growing)
- **Literacy** (writing)
- Other areas which support handwriting development include
- **Communication and language development**
- **Personal, social and emotional development**
- **Expressive arts and design**

Secure learning in this early stage lays the crucial groundwork for effective, lifelong handwriting habits. This begins with informed practice whereby:

- From the very beginning (home visit), staff support parents and carers as partners in their children's learning by sharing and explaining the handwriting curriculum
- We acknowledge the fundamental importance of developing the 'big muscles of the body' (gross motor) as these support the 'little muscles of the hand' (fine motor)
- Baseline assessment is used to establish a clear starting point and identification of the next steps in developing the subskills of handwriting
- Progress in all areas of development is monitored to ensure that extra support is given where needed. Where there are wider concerns, specialist support services are consulted to provide early intervention programmes
- The curriculum takes into account the different ways children learn and provides for this.
- Activities to develop handwriting skills are implemented through planned, purposeful play and through a balance of adult-led and child-initiated activity
- Children are not expected to undertake *formal* handwriting instruction (ie sitting writing at a table) until they are developmentally ready.
- The movement patterns needed for letter formation are modelled and practised using a wide variety of playful activities, tools, media and positions
- **Warm-up activities are used before any writing activity begins**
- Teaching correct letter formation in letter families is given high priority, especially the letters in the child's own name. This is explicitly taught and practised in developmentally appropriate ways from the beginning of the EYFS.
- The use of capital letters at the beginning of names is modelled and used at all times

- Staff and children both use **spoken language** as they form letter shapes and patterns to reinforce cognitive learning. The ‘patterns’ used when learning letters are agreed and consistent
- All staff understand how to intervene sensitively and at an appropriate time, when children are forming letters ‘differently’ to the school model. Parents are involved to ‘get it right from the beginning’ and avoid children having to relearn movements at a later stage.

2.3 Progression and Assessment in EYFS

Each child’s continuing progress is observed using ‘Early Outcomes’

http://www.foundationyears.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Early_Years_Outcomes.pdf

and recorded in their Learning Journey.

End of EYFS Assessment

The EYFS profile summarises and describes pupils’ attainment at the end of the EYFS.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/488745/EYFS_handbook_2016_-_FINAL.pdf

Handwriting forms part of Early Learning Goals 4 and 10.

2.4 National Curriculum for English KS1 & KS2 (2014)

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/335186/PRIMARY_national_curriculum_-_English_220714.pdf

The National Curriculum sets out statutory and non-statutory requirements for each year group.

The requirements for handwriting reflect the ‘P Checks and S Factors’ (below)

Posters explaining these are displayed in all KS1 and KS2 classrooms.

2.5 P Checks and S factors



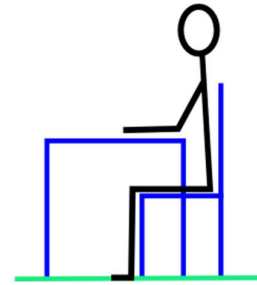
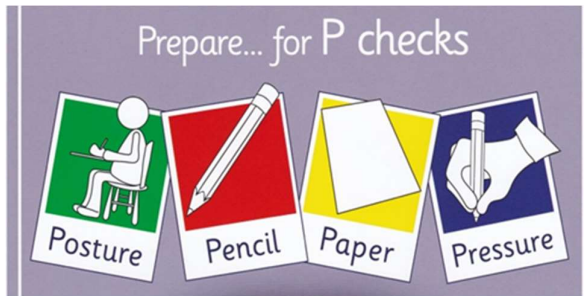
The P Checks

These are a visual reminder of how to prepare for the ‘process’ of handwriting: They are taught to all children as soon as they are ready to begin sitting to write (usually in Reception) This ensures that good handwriting habits are established early and practised constantly.

Posture Pencil Paper Pressure

The S Factors,

These are the elements of the ‘product’ - successful handwriting and provide the sequence of teaching steps: **Shape, Space, Size, Sitting on the line, Stringing (joining), Slant, Speed, Style.** Children working at greater depth in Y6 could add **Stamina.**



Posture

Children require a stable and comfortable posture in order to have effective control of their hands for handwriting. To support this, all staff ensure that

- Chairs and tables are sized correctly for each age group and adapted where these do not match individual children's needs.
- Every child's feet can rest on the floor. Footrests are provided where necessary

Children are shown how to sit well:

- Back is supported by the chair,
- Body leaning slightly forward
- Hips, knees and ankles at 90°, feet flat on the floor.
- Arms resting comfortably on the table
- Sitting a 'fist distance' from the table.
- Non dominant hand used to stabilise paper

A dynamic tripod grasp, with the pencil held between thumb, index and middle finger is modelled and encouraged as soon as children are developmentally ready to begin writing. This grip must be supported by a stable wrist resting on the writing surface and positioned below the writing line.

Poor or inefficient grips are often compensation for postural instability elsewhere.

Where a child's grip is causing pain, fatigue or affecting fluency, staff will seek advice from the **SEND coordinator**. See also Tips sheet: Handwriting Grip (appendix)

Staff are aware of potential handwriting difficulties when children have hypermobile joints.



Dynamic tripod grip



Alternative tripod grip: An alternative dynamic grip

- Ergonomic pencils and those with triangular shaped barrels are used to support an effective grip in the beginning stages and later if needed.
- Pencils should be held about 2cm from the tip or slightly higher for left handed writers.
- Pencils are kept sharpened and well maintained at all times
- Pens are introduced in ... for presentation work

NB 'Pen Licences' are not regarded as supporting inclusion

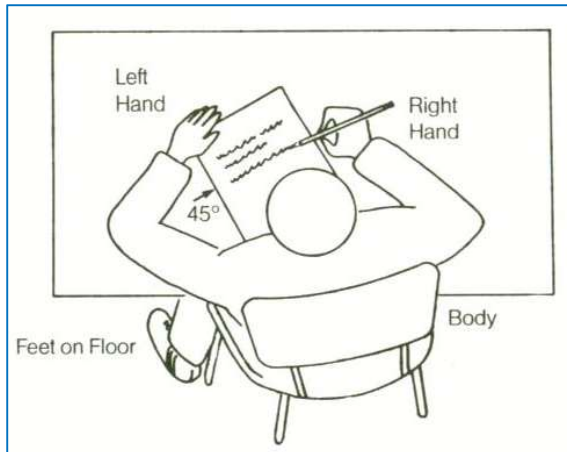
Paper

Children are taught how to position their writing paper correctly and to stabilise it with the non-writing hand.

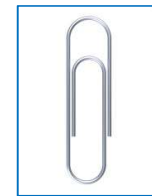
The paper should be positioned at the child's midline (or just beyond) with the bottom angle placed about 2-3cm from the lower edge of the desk.

Left-handed writers: the paper should be slanted to the right at about a 30-45-degree angle.

Right handed writers: the paper should be slanted at about a 20-35-degree angle to the left.



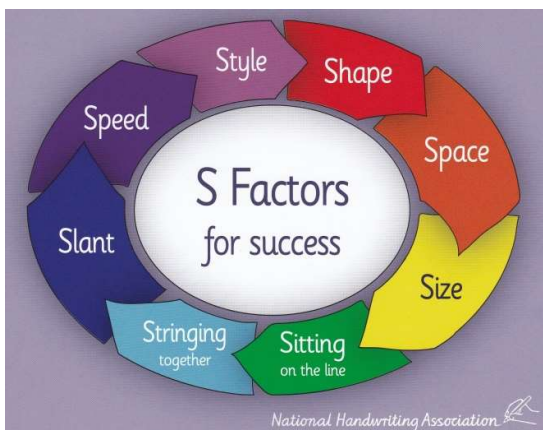
When children are writing on a loose sheet of paper, this should be clipped to card or a clipboard to provide stability.



Pressure

Before beginning a writing activity, children do warm up exercises, then relax their whole body. They are helped to become aware of how much pressure to exert on their pencils, especially when this is excessive.

2.6 National Curriculum and S factors



Year 1 : Consolidating Shape +
 Year 2: Space, Size, Sitting, Begin to join +
 Year 3: + Consolidate joining +
 Years 3&4: Slant,
 Years 5&6: Speed, style

Notes on the S Factors

Shape

- Letters are taught in stroke related families (PenpalsFont) See Appendix 1
- All letters (except e and d) begin at the top. **Penpals font does not use entry strokes**
- The C team letters start at 1 o'clock
- Letters that end on the base line have a rounded exit stroke
- Capital letters sit on the baseline

Space

- There should be an even space between words (about the size of one or two letter 'o's),
- There should be an even space between letters

Size

- The relative height of letters should be consistent: (ascenders, x height letters and descenders)
- Capital Letters are all the same height, sit on the baseline and do not join to the small letters
- The overall size of writing should be appropriate for age and stage. Line spacing matches this.

Sitting on the line

- All letters relate to the base line

Stringing (joining)

- Letters joins are Diagonal (up the slope) or horizontal (washing line)
- some letters are better left unjoined

Slant

- All 'down lines' should be uniformly parallel and not 'a mix of slants.'

Speed

- Speed is developed in KS2 and reflects the level of automation

Style

- As handwriting develops legibly, fluently, with increasing speed, Year 5&6 children will create their own personal style. They are taught that this must be easily read by others and that they should keep it comfortable, quick, fluent and most importantly, automatic. Children are taught to adapt their writing according to its purpose, eg, unjoined style for labelling a diagram or data, writing an email address, or for algebra and 'block' capital letters (e.g. for filling in a form).

**2.7 National Curriculum for English - Handwriting
Year 1 Statutory Requirements**

Pupils should be taught to:

- sit correctly at a table, holding a pencil comfortably and correctly
- begin to form lower-case letters in the correct direction, starting and finishing in the right place
- form capital letters
- form digits 0-9
- understand which letters belong to which handwriting 'families' (i.e. letters that are formed in similar ways) and to practise these.

Notes and guidance (non-statutory)



Handwriting requires frequent and discrete, direct teaching. Pupils should be able to form letters correctly and confidently. The size of the writing implement (pencil, pen) should not be too large for a young pupil's hand. Whatever is being used should allow the pupil to hold it easily and correctly so that bad habits are avoided. Left-handed pupils should receive specific teaching to meet their needs.

*NB The Year 1 curriculum focuses on **teaching** letter formation. As we teach this earlier in EYFS, by Y1, correct formation should be an automatic habit. **Shape, Space, Size, Sitting on the line** are also taught in Y1, so that good habits are established. **Stringing (joining)** is not taught until all the previous S Factors are secure, but may be introduced in the last term if children are ready.*

Year 2 Programme of Study : Statutory Requirements

Pupils should be taught to:

- form lower-case letters of the correct size relative to one another
- start using some of the diagonal and horizontal strokes needed to join letters and understand which letters, when adjacent to one another, are best left unjoined
- write capital letters and digits of the correct size, orientation and relationship to one another and to lower case letters
- use spacing between words that reflects the size of the letters.

Notes and guidance (non-statutory)

Pupils should revise and practise correct letter formation frequently. They should be taught to write with a joined style as soon as they can form letters securely with the correct orientation.

Years 3 & 4 Programme of Study : Statutory Requirements

Joined handwriting should be the norm; pupils should be able to use it fast enough to keep pace with what they want to say.

Pupils should be taught to:

- use the diagonal and horizontal strokes that are needed to join letters and understand which letters, when adjacent to one another, are best left unjoined.
- increase the legibility and quality of their handwriting, e.g. by ensuring that the downstrokes of letters are parallel and equidistant; that lines of writing are spaced sufficiently so that the ascenders and descenders of letters do not touch.

Notes and guidance (non-statutory)

Pupils should be using joined handwriting throughout their independent writing. Handwriting should continue to be taught, with the aim of increasing the fluency with which pupils are able to write down what they want to say. This, in turn, will support their composition and spelling.

Years 5 & 6 Programme of Study

Statutory requirements: Handwriting and presentation

Pupils should be taught to:

- write legibly, fluently and with increasing **speed** by:
- choosing which shape of a letter to use when given choices and deciding

- whether or not to join specific letters
- choosing the writing implement that is best suited for a task.

Notes and guidance (non-statutory)

Pupils should continue to practise handwriting and be encouraged to increase the speed of it, so that problems with forming letters do not get in the way of their writing down what they want to say. They should be clear about what standard of handwriting is appropriate for a particular task, for example, quick notes or a final handwritten version. They should also be taught to use an unjoined style, for example, for labelling a diagram or data, writing an email address, or for algebra and capital letters, for example, for filling in a form.

3.1 Teaching Resources

Scheme: We use **Cambridge Penpals Handwriting** materials, including CD Rom and computer font.

There is a Handwriting folder on the school system where resources are stored.

Handwriting Tools:

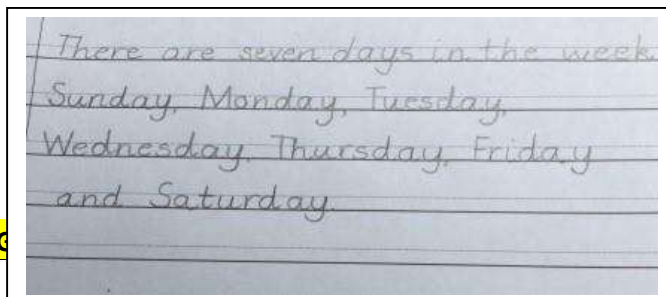
Throughout their time in school, children use a range of tools for different purposes and styles of handwriting including:

- A wide range of tools and media for mark-making in the EYFS.
- A selection of pencils which support effective grip in KS1 &2
- Whiteboard pens throughout the school.
- Art supplies including coloured pens and pencils for posters, displays and artwork.
- Handwriting pens

3.2 Books and Paper

We acknowledge that children need appropriate line spacing in books and on paper to match their developmental needs, to ensure that their letters are not cramped and to allow sufficient space for letter alignment. Plain paper with line guides is also used.

As most children’s fine motor skills improve and their letter formation or joining becomes increasingly accurate, the width between the lines they write on gradually decreases. There can be flexibility at all stages. Plain paper with line guides is also used. Once children are confident in the correct movement of separate letters and the concept of spacing, they will use ‘zoned’ paper to learn alignment of letters.



cape plain paper books or **A5 sized plain.**

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| | When children ready to write more, A5 books with minimum 15 mm or 20mm spacing. |
| Year 1 | Minimum 15 mm lines. |
| Year 2 | 15 mm To reinforce the teaching of alignment without any space issues. |

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| | Alignment paper (15mm/5 or 4mm) to help teach the relative size of ascenders and descenders. |
| Year 3 | Begin with 12mm. 10mm is acceptable for some by mid- year. Alignment paper (4mm and 3mm) used to reinforce relative size of ascenders and descenders. |
| Year 4 | Minimum 10 mm Some children will need 12mm Alignment paper (3mm) used to reinforce relative size of ascenders and descenders. |
| Years 5 & 6 | Minimum 8mm . Many children prefer 10mm . It is worth letting them experiment to see which works best. This is especially important for any children with handwriting difficulties. |

3.3 Other resources

Each classroom has a supply of footrests to support any child whose feet do not touch the floor.

Writing slopes and wedge cushions are available for any children who need these

Additional resources may be provided where a child has handwriting difficulties

4.1 Agreed language

Staff use consistent language to describe handwriting, including:

Letter families, lower case, upper case, capital letters, ascenders, descenders, exit flicks, joining stroke.

We use technical language to support children with difficulties rather than the derogatory 'messy', 'untidy'.

4.2 Provision for left-handed children

All staff are aware of the specific needs of left-handed pupils and make appropriate provision

See Appendix 'Tips for Teachers'

- Left handed scissors are provided and left hand pencils if needed
- Where pens are used, left handers need one which is smooth and non-smudging
- Children are shown how to position paper (See P Checks)
- Pencils should not be held too close to the point as this can interrupt pupils' line of vision
- Left-handed pupils should sit to the left of a right-handed child so that elbows do not bump
- Children should be encouraged to have the correct sitting posture for good handwriting
- (See P Checks)

4.3 Equality of opportunity

All of our children have equal access to handwriting lessons and to the resources available.

We recognise that some children take longer to develop the necessary skills and we cater for those children by providing additional opportunities for skills development.

We aim to identify any handwriting problems as early as possible and seek support from LEA Occupational Therapists.



Children who join the school with an effective handwriting style that differs from the school model, may continue to use it. They will follow the same curriculum steps to ensure progression in handwriting skills.

4.4 Progression, Assessment and Monitoring

Progress in handwriting development is monitored, assessed and shared throughout the school

EYFS: Baseline assessment establishes a clear starting point and identifies next steps. Progress is then recorded in each child’s journal. Intervention advice is sought where there are difficulties.

End of Reception: Early Learning Goals.

KS1 & 2

Handwriting development is assessed **each term** using the Assessment Grid (Appendix) At all stages, children learn the skills to self-assess their own handwriting and develop understanding and responsibility for improving it.

End of Key Stage SATs

At all stages, children learn to self-assess their own writing and develop understanding and responsibility for improving it.

There is a school portfolio of annotated examples to support consistency and continuity across the school.

4.5 Timetabling of Handwriting

Handwriting skills are taught both as a discrete subject and as part of everyday written language activities. **As a guideline, children should receive at least 2 sessions of 20 -30 mins teaching per week.** Skills can be reinforced in many ways including ‘skywriting’ and patterns to music.

4.6 Parental Involvement

The EYFS handwriting curriculum is explained to parents and carers when children begin Nursery and Reception. They are shown how to write the letter formation families and especially their child’s name. There are workshops every year for each age group to inform parents of the curriculum requirements. Where children are experiencing difficulties, parents will be guided towards appropriate intervention strategies. (See Appendix : Tips for teaching: Handwriting Difficulties)

Status of this policy

This policy was agreed by.....

It will be reviewed annually on



Ratified by Governors on

2016

Chair of Teaching and Learning Committee _____

Key Documents:

