



# Policy Document: Handwriting

## Policy Statement on Handwriting

*Learning Together, Learning for Life*



**Agreed and Signed on behalf of the Full Governing Body.....** 

**Date:** 19-5-23 .....

Last Updated: May 2023  
Next Review: May 2025



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## Aims

We want all children to learn and practise appropriate and effective handwriting skills at each stage of development. We aim that by the time children leave us at the end of Key Stage One they have handwriting which is:

- Legible
- Presentable
- Comfortable
- Fluent
- Flexible
- Fast
- Automatic
- Sustainable

## We aim for children:

- To develop gross and fine motor skills so they are ready to write (EYFS)
- To form letters using a non-cursive script (EYFS), moving towards pre-cursive script, developing into a neat joined, cursive script towards the end of Year 2
- To see good handwriting as an important skill for communication
- To involve children in the development of their own handwriting, understanding the processes of how to improve (P Checks detailed later in the policy)
- To have opportunities to write in different styles and for different purposes across the curriculum throughout their time with us
- To see all staff using and modelling the agreed handwriting conventions outlined in this document, providing consistency and continuity throughout the school community.
- To have additional provision if they are left handed or if they experience any difficulties
- To take pride in well-presented writing and always use a sharp pencil

## Rationale

Joined, neat legible handwriting is an essential skill which must be taught to all children. A consistently high standard of writing is expected across school in order to foster a sense of pride and respect in recorded learning. Handwriting must be embedded across the curriculum; it should become an automatic process allowing children to record their thinking fluently and legibly.

The National Curriculum (2014) English makes a clear reference to handwriting and forms part of the expected standard at the end of KS1. This can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-english-programmes-of-study/national-curriculum-in-england-english-programmes-of-study#key-stage-1---year-1>.

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## Overview

In the Early Years, children work to the Statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Handwriting falls into the Prime Area of Physical Development, both fine and gross motor skills are important into children's letter formation development. It is an important part of the Early Learning Goal for Writing and links can be made to Expressive Arts and Design, particularly when children are creating with a range of materials and equipment.

Handwriting begins in the EYFS with mark-making, pattern tracing and emergent writing. All pupils are given access to a wide range of writing tools and mediums to practise the early fine motor skills. The needs of left handed children, or those with physical difficulties are also taken into consideration and where necessary accommodated with resources or specific intervention (such as pencil grips, writing slopes). Our children are taught correct letter formation as soon as we begin Phase 2 Phonics in EYFS in Term 1 using the Unlocking Letters and Sounds specific letter formation rules which are recapped when needed in Year 1 and 2.

In all year groups handwriting is taught through discrete sessions as well as through every day activities where children's formation and pencil grip can be readily overseen. Correct posture and positioning of the child's body, alongside paper or books as well as correct pencil grip are also emphasised during these sessions. Letter formation and handwriting is taught and modelled using a range of resources.

## Progression through school:

In EYFS, following Development Matters:

- Children develop hand eye coordination, gross and fine motor skills needed to support handwriting
- Children use a range of tools to develop drawing lines and circles using gross motor skills. e.g. swirling ribbons, painting and peg work
- Children use a range of materials to develop fine motor skills. e.g. shaving foam, sponges, felt tips etc.
- Children practice manipulative skills through play e.g. through use of playdough and other malleable materials
- Children use a variety of tools and paper, both indoors and outdoors for the purpose of writing through role play and labelling their creations
- Children are introduced to letter formation through our Phonics programme Unlocking Letters and Sounds at the time they are introduced to each new phoneme, they learn and practice the corresponding grapheme
- Whenever adults model or share write with children, correct letter formation is modelled and expected from the children, children are supported as needed
- Children are taught to form letters using a variety of strategies and materials, using a supportive 'patter'/rhyme to help them to remember correct formation (these are taken from Unlocking Letters and Sounds)
- Children are taught how to hold a pencil correctly in a tripod grip – we use the mnemonic Nip, flip and grip to support this (detailed later)

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In Key Stage One, we follow the National Curriculum.

Children in Year 1 are 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

Children in Year 2 are 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

In addition to this, children who are forming their letters correctly will progress to joining. Some children may be ready for this in Year 1, some on entry to Year Two, others may need further practice at the non-cursive stage. Teachers will plan for this accordingly.

For those that are ready to join letters, this will be taught explicitly in handwriting sessions and followed up with frequent teacher/teaching assistant modelling during other lessons. It will continue to be linked to Phonics sessions, in order to support our children with their 'muscle memory' – linking sounds they hear to the letters they write.

Our aim is for the majority of children leaving us at the end of Year Two to have begun to join their letters and have a good understanding of the strokes needed for joining letters as well as those letters that are best left unjoined.

Our progression for joining letters can be found later in this policy.

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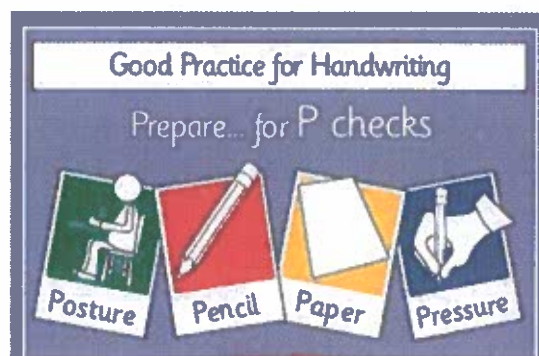
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## P Checks and S Factors

Following the National Handwriting Association guidance online (which can be found here <https://nha-handwriting.org.uk/>) we have adopted the following 'P Checks' as a reminder of good practise when completing any writing activity. 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 EYFS) This ensures that good handwriting habits are established early and practised constantly.

**P Checks are Posture, pencil, paper, pressure.**

**These are further explained below (this information is taken from the National Handwriting Association's Good practise for handwriting - teacher toolkit)**



### **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:

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- 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

Children are shown how to sit well:

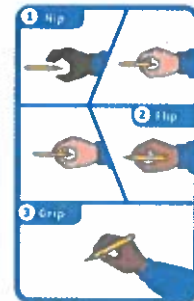
- Back is supported by the chair,
- Body leaning slightly forward
- Hips, knees and ankles at 90°, feet flat on the floor.
- Arms resting comfortably on the table
- Sitting a 'fist distance' from the table.
- Non dominant hand used to stabilise paper

## Pencil (Grip)

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. Ergonomic pencils and those with triangular shaped barrels or rubber pencil grips 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.

Teachers may wish to keep track of children's pencil grip, especially in EYFS and monitor these, sharing with other staff working with the child.

To support children holding a pencil correctly mnemonics can be used. At our school we use **Nip** → **Flip** → **Grip** to remind children to use the correct pencil grip.



## 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 towards the right at about a 30-45-degree angle.

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

## Pressure

When learning to write, pencil pressure is likely to vary depending on the demands of the task and stage of development. Most children will learn through experience how much pressure they should exert through the pencil onto paper. Children will be taught to self-check how much pressure they are using when writing and given tips to support them verbally by adults working with them when needed.

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## **Agreed language**

Staff use consistent language to describe handwriting, including:

In EYFS: lower case, capital letters (upper case)

In addition to this in KS1 we use: ascender, descender, curly letter, down letter, zig zag letter, letter family, join, diagonal join, horizontal join.

When supporting children all adults will use the formation 'patter' to remind children of correct formation. This is printed and displayed in all classrooms to ensure consistency.

## **Letter families and letter formation**

We teach the children to form letters as they learn them in Phonics (following Unlocking Letters and Sounds) and they will also learn about letter families (Year 1 onwards)

All children will be taught non cursive writing, following the font style "HfW precursive" as on all computers in school. This is shown below. Letter formation rhymes are also used to support the children with remembering how to form each letter.

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz  
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

In Year 1 children will continue in this way, progressing to joining as they are ready in either Year 1 or Year 2. In Year 1 the children are also introduced to letter families. In line with our phonics scheme – Curly letter family, down letter family, zig zag letter family.

## **Joining**

Children will learn to join their letters once all letters are consistently formed correctly (as judged by their class teacher following both formal and informal assessment). Children will mainly learn to join their letters in Year 2 as they become ready and then they will be first taught about diagonal joins, then about horizontal joins. Teachers will focus on letters that the children in their class are ready to join and will provide plenty of practice of a join before progressing to another.

## **Number formation**

To ensure consistency of number formation across school we also have rhymes to support the children to form their numbers. This is displayed in all classrooms and the same language used by all adults supporting with number formation to ensure consistency across school. Although not a requirement of the EYFS curriculum, our children begin to learn how to form each number and practice this from Term 5 in EYFS.

## **Assessment**

Assessment is a continual process and teachers are consistently assessing and recording children's progress. We see assessment as an integral part of the teaching and learning process and endeavour to make our assessment purposeful, allowing us to match the correct level of work to the needs of the pupils, thus ensuring progress and meeting individual needs. The most

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effective feedback for handwriting/letter formation is that which is given immediately and 'in the moment', and then providing the child with another chance to have a go. This happens across the school and will often be indicated by a 'VF' on the child's work. The adult would then remodel the letter/join and the child has another go. In EYFS, staff use 'Evidence Me', an app to record children's learning, including them taking part in letter formation activities/mark making in a variety of ways. Next steps would usually be verbal to the child and this may sometimes be indicated on the observation if this is relevant.

In KS1 once a whole letter family has been taught over a few weeks or a term, teachers will use an assessment sheet to check in more formally with their formation. This enables teachers to identify which letters children form correctly and which they still need further practice on. Teachers will use this assessment within their own classrooms to support teaching of handwriting.

## **Handwriting across the curriculum**

Handwriting is taught as both discrete lessons across the week and daily as part of Phonics. In EYFS, as our children are taught each phoneme, they are also taught how to form the corresponding grapheme. These are then revisited both informally through play and mark making invitations in classrooms and more formally when children are ready and able to form letters as 'handwriting' lessons. This continues in a formal way into Year 1 and Year 2.

Correct letter formation is both expected and modelled continuously in all subjects when writing is a part of the lesson. Neat handwriting, joining when ready, is also encouraged in all subjects to build children's confidence and ability as clear written communicators by the time they leave us to attend Junior school. All adults working with children on handwriting have high expectations and model handwriting neatly.

## **Intervention**

Across school during any letter formation activity or handwriting lesson children are formally and informally assessed and supported to improve their letter formation. In EYFS, children who are identified as needing more support and practise in this area by their class teacher or adults working with them then follow a specific intervention linked to their need. We follow the programme 'Hand skills' throughout EYFS.

## **Classroom Resources**

For consistency and continuity all classrooms will have on display or readily accessible for all staff and when appropriate, children, these things:

- **Letter formation rhymes poster (in letter families)**
- **Number formation rhymes poster**
- **Nip flip grip poster reminders**
- **P Checks Poster**
- **'Sitting to Write' poster prompt**

Children will begin in EYFS using a standard hexagonal pencil when they are writing. If a teacher

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identifies a child needing further support as they are having some difficulties with this pencil size/shape, then we will try using a rubber pencil grip to support correct pencil grip to see if this helps them. We will also try using a triangular pencil instead whilst they practise their letter formation skills. We aim for all children to leave our school using the standard hexagonal pencil with confidence.

Supporting documents for all school staff to use:

- Letter family assessment sheet
- Handwriting progression overview – termly/weekly expectations for teaching and assessment
- Joining letters progression (diagonal and horizontal strokes)
- Number formation rhymes powerpoint
- Glossary of key terminology
- Pencil grip information posters
- Handskills intervention document

K Tanner  
May 2023

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Last Updated: May 2023

Next Review: May 2025