



ST MARY'S

CATHOLIC INFANT AND JUNIOR ACADEMIES

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me"
Philippians 4:13

Respect

Compassion

Resilience

Handwriting Policy

Designation	Name	Date Approved	Date of Renewal
Executive headteacher	Mrs Samantha Birchall	March 2026	March 2027
Chair of Governors	Mrs Gill Tuck	March 2026	March 2027

The Writing Framework 2025 states:

'Handwriting instruction should start at the beginning of reception, alongside phonics, and continue throughout the reception year and beyond.'

Handwriting is a core phonics skill and an essential part of learning phonics.

Letter recognition develops faster when children write real letters, enabling them to learn how to read sooner.

At St Mary's Catholic Infant and Junior Academies, we aim for all pupils to develop a sense of pride as they work towards achieving a fluent cursive handwriting style. We use the Letter-join programme as the foundation of our handwriting policy, ensuring full coverage of the National Curriculum requirements. Handwriting is a fundamental skill that influences the quality of pupils' work across the curriculum. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils should be able to produce fluent, legible and increasingly speedy joined handwriting, and recognise the different forms of handwriting used for different purposes.

School Aims

Our aim is for pupils to develop a neat, legible and efficient handwriting style using continuous cursive letters. This should enable them to form letters and words automatically during independent writing. By the end of Year 6, pupils will understand the importance of neat presentation and will know when to use different letterforms—cursive, printed or capital letters—to communicate clearly and effectively.

Method

To ensure a consistent and progressive approach to handwriting, all teachers and staff at St Mary's model handwriting appropriate to the developmental stage of their class.

EYFS: staff use neat, printed handwriting.

Year 1: Staff model letters with leads in and leads off, but without joining (*Letter-join Air Plus 40*)

Year 2 onwards: Staff use fully joined cursive handwriting with leads in and leads off for all writing tasks, providing a constant and accurate model for pupils (*Letter-join Plus 40*).

Consistency

Pupils should experience coherence and continuity in the teaching and learning of handwriting throughout all year groups. They should be consistently encouraged to take pride in the presentation of their work. Our aim is to ensure pupils enjoy learning and developing their handwriting, and that they do so with a sense of achievement and pride.

Handwriting Frequency

Handwriting is considered during all lessons, as presentation forms an essential part of pupils' written work. In addition, the formal teaching of handwriting takes place weekly and is delivered systematically to ensure that Key Stage expectations and progression targets are met.

When do I Teach Handwriting?

- Letter formation is taught within handwriting lessons and embedded within English teaching.
- Following the guidance of the Reading Framework, pupils should be seated comfortably at a table for handwriting sessions. These lessons focus on correct pencil grip (tripod grip), accurate letter formation and orientation, and appropriate posture. (*See appendix 1.*)

Early Years

For our youngest pupils, using sponge cake lines, we aim to provide a wide range of daily opportunities that support the development of early handwriting skills:

- **Gross motor development:** Activities such as air-writing, pattern making, dancing, climbing, sweeping and digging to strengthen the upper body and develop control.
- **Fine motor development:** Activities that develop hand and finger strength, including mark-making on paper, whiteboards, blackboards, sand trays and tablets, as well as using tweezers, pegs, scissors and play dough.
- **Letter formation through phonics:** Letter rhymes are shared during phonics sessions. Letter formation is modelled, and children are encouraged to practise forming letters in the air or on different surfaces (e.g., their hand or leg) using their finger (*see appendix 2*).
- **Handwriting within English lessons:** Handwriting forms part of group writing sessions to reinforce correct formation and early writing habits.
- **Progression towards lined paper:** Children use plain paper in Nursery and Reception until they are ready to write on 12 mm lines.

Year 1

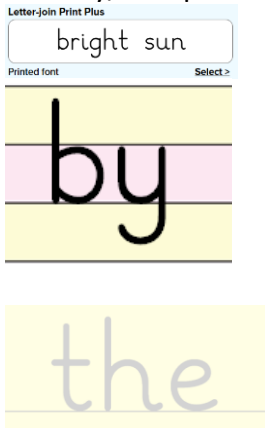
In Year 1, children build on their early handwriting foundations through structured daily opportunities using Oxford Lines that support the development of pre-cursive writing skills:

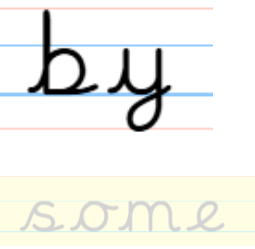
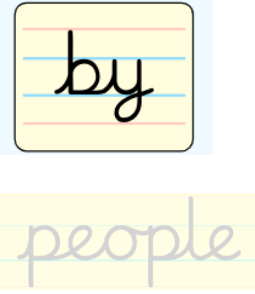
- **Developing control and consistency:** Children refine their letter formation, focusing on correct sizing, spacing and orientation to prepare for pre-joining.
- **Pre-cursive formation:** Staff model letters with lead-ins and lead-offs (not joined) using the *Letter-join Air Plus 40* font.
- **Handwriting within lessons:** Letter formation continues to be embedded within English lessons.
- **Dedicated handwriting sessions:** Daily 10-minute handwriting session provides explicit instruction and practice (unless children are receiving intervention support).
- **Progression towards lined paper:** Children write on **12 mm lines** once ready, enabling consistent letter height and placement.

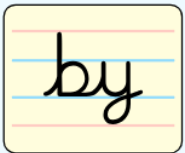
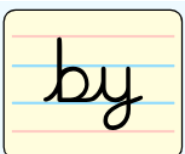
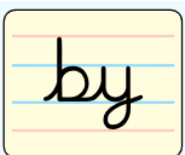
Year 2 Onwards

From Year 2 onwards, using Oxford Lines, children develop fluency and confidence in continuous cursive handwriting through regular, structured practice:

- **Continuous cursive writing:** Children are taught to join letters using lead-ins and lead-offs in line with the *Letter-join Plus 40* style.
- **Developing fluency and speed:** Children practise forming words and sentences increasingly automatically to support fluent writing across the curriculum.
- **Embedding in the curriculum:** Continuous cursive handwriting is modelled and reinforced during English lessons.
- **Dedicated handwriting sessions:** Daily 10-minute handwriting session provides explicit instruction and practice (unless children are receiving intervention support).
- **Progression to narrower lines:** Children write on **8 mm lines** to ensure accurate sizing, spacing and control as handwriting becomes smaller and more consistent.

Nursery/Reception 	Module 1 This module contains 70 lessons designed to teach handwriting using the printed method. At the beginning of the module, children are introduced to a range of gross and fine motor warm-up exercises that prepare them for writing. Pupils learn key handwriting vocabulary and explore letter shapes through air-writing and other large-scale movements, helping them understand the patterns and strokes needed for accurate formation. They are shown how to sit comfortably, how to position the paper, and how to hold a pencil using the tripod grip. Children are encouraged to make marks using pencils, crayons and other classroom resources as they develop confidence in early handwriting. As the module progresses, pupils work through Letter-join's engaging pre-writing shapes and activities, which familiarise them with the movements required for printed letter formation. A wide range of supporting resources is provided, including animations, lower-case letters and words, phonics links, games, activities and KS1 worksheets. The module is organised into three structured sections: 1. Pre-writing Patterns – 20 lessons Children practise large and small movements to establish the patterns and control needed for successful handwriting. 2. Easy Letters and Words – 25 lessons Pupils learn to form simpler printed letters and apply their skills in word-level practice, supported by animations and phonics activities. 3. Harder Letters and Words – 25 lessons Learners move on to more complex letter shapes and words, developing accuracy, consistency and confidence in printed handwriting.
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Year 1  	Module 2 At the start of this module, children are introduced to warm-up exercises that develop the fine and gross motor skills needed for handwriting, alongside guidance on correct posture and the tripod pencil grip. Pupils begin by familiarising themselves with the lower-case alphabet and learning the different Letter Families, supported through air-writing and large-scale pattern work to help them understand the movements required for successful letter formation. They then learn how to write capital letters and explore when printed letters are used, such as for labelling, before practising numbers and symbols. As pupils become secure with these foundations, they progress from printed handwriting to pre-writing patterns and finally to cursive letter formation. This structured programme consists of 80 lessons and uses Letter-join's online and printed resources. It is organised into three sections: Warm-ups, Letter Families and Capital Letters (40 lessons); Printed Letters (25 lessons); and Numbers and Symbols (15 lessons), ensuring children gain all the skills needed to transition confidently from print to continuous cursive handwriting.
Year 2  	Module 3 This module provides a structured sequence of 90 lessons designed to strengthen pupils' letter formation, orientation and overall control through regular, focused practice. Building on their print and pre-cursive foundations, children in Year 2 are taught how to join letters, developing continuous cursive handwriting that supports fluency across all curriculum areas. Throughout the module, pupils refine their handwriting while applying it meaningfully within spelling, grammar and punctuation tasks. The module is organised into three progressive sections: 1. Letter Families, High-Frequency Words and Joining Practice – 36 lessons Children revisit the main letter families and practise secure joins, applying these skills through sequencing sentences and structured dictation exercises. 2. Dictation, High-Frequency Words, Times Tables and SPaG – 36 lessons Pupils engage in further dictation work, learn additional high-frequency words and practise handwriting within 2, 5 and 10 times table facts, alongside targeted SPaG activities. 3. Dictation and Number Formation – 18 lessons The final section consolidates fluency through continued dictation practice and accurate number writing, ensuring pupils maintain consistent letter and number formation.
Year 3 	Module 4 In lower Key Stage 2, pupils should be writing in joined handwriting consistently throughout their independent work. Handwriting

 	continues to be taught explicitly, with the aim of increasing pupils' fluency and enabling them to record their ideas efficiently. Module 4 consists of 60 lessons, and is targeted at Year 3 pupils. The module is designed to improve the legibility, consistency and overall quality of handwriting through a wide range of engaging resources that link handwriting to other areas of the curriculum. Through these activities, children explore advanced vocabulary and develop greater independence in their writing and spelling. The worksheets in this module cover an extensive variety of curriculum topics, including dictation, double letters, number vocabulary, palindromes, tongue twisters, MFL (French and Spanish), onomatopoeia, similes, WOW words and spellings.
Year 4   	Module 5 Module 5 consists of 60 lessons and focuses on using handwriting practice to support learning across the wider curriculum while continuing to develop pupils' fluency, consistency and control. The module promotes meaningful links with a range of subjects, including English, maths, science, geography and modern foreign languages such as French and Spanish. Making these cross-curricular links enables pupils to apply the handwriting skills they have learned in real and purposeful contexts, adding depth to the curriculum and strengthening overall accuracy. Through regular, structured practice, learners continue to refine fluent, legible and consistent handwriting. By the end of this module, pupils should be well prepared to meet the expectations of upper KS2, where greater handwriting quality, speed and stamina are required.
Year 5   	Module 6 Module 6 consists of 60 lessons, which continue to strengthen pupils' ability to combine fluent cursive handwriting with learning across a broad range of curriculum subjects. Throughout this module, learners have extensive opportunities to develop the stamina required to write at length, while maintaining accurate spelling and punctuation. Using Letter-join's wide range of resources, pupils work towards producing consistently neat, legible and well-presented handwriting in every subject area. By the end of Module 6, children should be able to produce cursive handwriting automatically, enabling them to focus fully on the content and quality of their ideas rather than the physical process of writing.
Year 6 	Module 7 Throughout this module, learners consolidate the stamina and skills required to write at length with accurate spelling and punctuation. As pupils write with increasing automaticity, they begin to develop a more personal handwriting style while maintaining legibility and consistency. They learn to vary their writing speed and level of

	neatness depending on the task, understanding when quick, efficient handwriting is appropriate and when a polished final piece is required. A key feature of Module 7 is the expectation that pupils select the most suitable handwriting style for different purposes. Learners are presented with a wide range of tasks that require them to make decisions about whether to use joined handwriting, an un-joined style, capital letters or a quicker note-taking form. All of these styles are taught and practised within the module. Promoting speedy, fluent writing remains central. Challenging dictation exercises help refine pupils' revising and checking skills while building handwriting speed, stamina and fluency. A variety of curriculum-based worksheets provide opportunities for extended writing, enabling pupils to apply their skills in meaningful contexts. By the end of Module 7, children should be able to adapt their handwriting confidently for a range of purposes and to create different written effects. They will understand clearly which handwriting style best suits the task at hand—whether quick notes, formal presentation, an un-joined script or the use of capital letters—and apply these choices independently.
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Both right and left handed children should be encouraged to use the tripod grip which allows the pen/pencil to be held securely whilst allowing controlled movements of the pen/pencil nib. (*See appendix 1*)

Left-Handed Children

Left-handed children may find it difficult to follow right-handed teachers as they demonstrate letter formation (and vice versa). Teachers should demonstrate to left-handers on an individual or group basis.

Inclusion

Children whose handwriting is limited by problems with fine motor skills, including left-handed children, and children with special educational needs, will be given support to help achieve their optimum handwriting level.

Pens and Pencils

Children start handwriting using a soft pencil. Children transition to pen when fine motor skills have been established and the class teacher has assessed the individual. This is usually from Year 2.

Core skills

Nursery/Reception

- Hold a pencil in a tripod grip for writing and be encouraged to correct any errors in grip or stature.
- Hold and position the paper correctly (*see appendix 1*)
- Maintain a comfortable sitting position when writing (*see appendix 1*)
- Improve fine and gross motor skills through daily physical and busy fingers activities.
- Children are given the opportunity to practise their mark making skills in a variety of ways.
- Understand where letter formations start e.g. start at the top/middle and words are written from left to right, top to bottom.
- Follow letter formation rhymes to understand how the pencil should move to form the letters.
- Begin to form some recognisable letters and numerals.
- Begin to understand that some letters sit on the base line and some letters swing underneath.
- Begin to understand the need for spaces between words.

Year 1

- Hold a pencil in a tripod grip for writing and be encouraged to correct any errors in grip or stature.
- Hold and position the paper correctly (*see appendix 1*)
- Maintain a comfortable sitting position when writing (*see appendix 1*)
- Write legibly using upper and lower case letters without joining .
- Ensure that letters sit on the base line.
- Ensure that ascending letters go up to the line and descending letters go below the line.
- Form capital letters and use where appropriate and understand that they do not join to lower case letters.
- Form numerals that are consistent in size and sit on the base line.
- Begin to form letters with lead ins and lead offs and understand when they are to be used.

Year 2

- Hold a pencil in a tripod grip for writing and be encouraged to correct any errors in grip or stature.
- Hold and position the paper correctly (*see appendix 1*)
- Maintain a comfortable sitting position when writing (*see appendix 1*)
- Ensure that letters are consistent in size with ascenders and descenders that are the correct length and formation.
- Write legibly using upper and lower case letters with confident letters formation.
- Improve the speed of writing and begin to write automatically so promoting creativity in independent writing.
 - Learn to join letters to aid speed and automaticity

Years 3 & 4

- Hold a pencil in a tripod grip for writing and be encouraged to correct any errors in grip or stature.
- Hold and position the paper correctly (*see appendix 1*)
- Maintain a comfortable sitting position when writing (*see appendix 1*)
- Quality: Ensure letters are consistently sized with equal word spacing and that ascenders and descenders are parallel and do not touch words on the lines above and below.
- Speed: Improve speed of handwriting to allow creative writing to take precedence over the task of handwriting and be able to take 'quick notes' at a faster pace.
- Improve quality, speed and stamina of handwriting.
- Stamina: Have the strength and mobility to be able to write for longer periods of time without fatigue.

Years 5&6

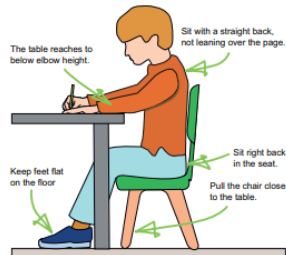
- Hold a pencil in a tripod grip for writing and be encouraged to correct any errors in grip or stature.
- Hold and position the paper correctly (*see appendix 1*)
- Maintain a comfortable sitting position when writing (*see appendix 1*)
- Have full knowledge and ability of the different forms of handwriting for different purposes:
 - Neat, joined, cursive letters for writing passages and large amounts of text, lists and letters.
 - Printed or capital letters for posters, notices, headings, labeling, and form filling.
 - Speedy handwriting for note-taking and dictation where neatness is not as important and shortcuts, such as + instead of 'and', can be used.

Appendix 1

Comfortable Sitting Position and Correct Paper Position

Right-handed children

How to sit correctly to be comfortable for handwriting.

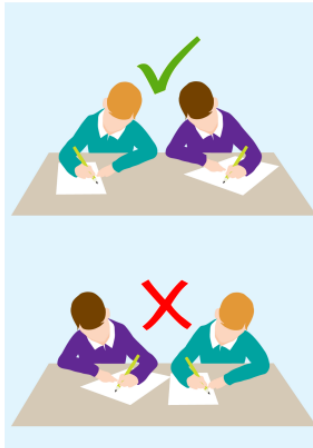


How to hold and position the paper



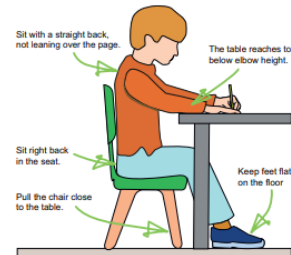
Sitting position

Sit left-handed children to the left of their partner so they have plenty of room to write.



Left-handed children

How to sit correctly to be comfortable for handwriting.



How to hold and position the paper



Left-handed Learners

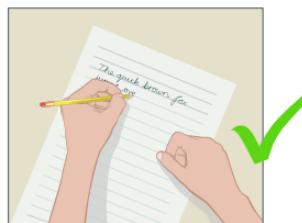
Recognising the needs of left-handed pupils

Teachers should be aware of the specific needs of left-handed writers and make appropriate provision. Some practical help right from the start can make a huge difference to the learning outcomes of left-handed children.

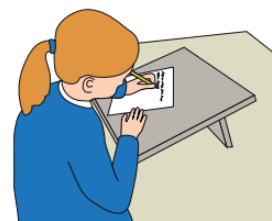
Here are a few pointers but please see Letter-join's Guide to Provision for Left-handed writers for a more detailed guide.



Model left-handed writing.



Ensure correct pencil grip and paper positioning.



Use accessories if necessary.



Sit left-handed children to the left of their partner.

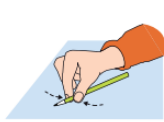
Tripod Pencil Grip

How to hold a pencil correctly for handwriting.

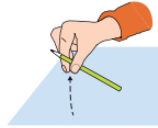
Right-handed grip



1. Point away the pencil,



2. Pinch it near the tip,



3. Lift it off the table,

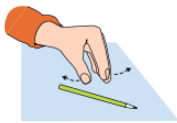


4. Spin it round...



5. ...and grip.

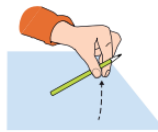
Left-handed grip



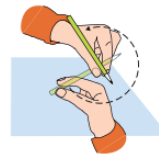
1. Point away the pencil,



2. Pinch it near the tip,



3. Lift it off the table,



4. Spin it round...



5. ...and grip.

Appendix 2

Letter formation through phonics

Nursery and Reception

To support handwriting the children use rhymes from Read Write Inc to help their letter formation.

a  Around the apple and down the leaf.	b  Down the laces to the heel and around the toe.	c  Curl around the caterpillar.	d  Around the dinosaurs bottom, up his tall neck & down to his toes.	e  Lift off the top and scoop out the egg.	f  Down the stem and draw the leaves.
g  Around the girls face, down her hair and give her a curl.	h  Down the head, to his hooves and over his back.	i  Down the body and dot for the head.	j  Down his body, curl, dot for his head.	k  Down the kangaroo's body tail and leg.	l  Down the long leg.
m  Down Maisie, mountain, mountain.	n  Down Nobby and over his net.	o  All around the orange.	p  Down the pirates plait and around his face.	qu  Round her head, up past her earring, down her hair, and flick.	r  Down the robots back and curl over his arm.
s  Slither down the snake.	t  Down the tower, across the tower.	u  Down and under, up to the top and draw the puddle.	v  Down a wing, up a wing.	w  Down, up, down, up.	x  Down the arm and leg, repeat the other side.
y  Down a horn, up a horn and under head.	z  Zig-zag-zig.				

