



Handwriting Policy

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At Whittlefield Primary School, we believe handwriting is a fundamental life skill which supports communication, confidence and achievement across the curriculum. We aim for all pupils to develop a fluent, legible and consistent handwriting style through a clear whole-school approach from EYFS to Year 6.

We recognise that effective handwriting teaching enables pupils to communicate ideas more efficiently by reducing the cognitive demands of transcription. As handwriting becomes automatic, pupils are able to focus more fully on composition, spelling and the communication of meaning.

Handwriting is taught explicitly through the Twinkl Handwriting Scheme, adapted to meet the needs of our pupils and to ensure continuity and progression across school. Our approach is informed by guidance from the National Handwriting Association and promotes consistency in teaching, modelling and expectations.

Through our handwriting curriculum, pupils will:

- develop secure letter formation and orientation
- establish correct posture, pencil grip and paper positioning
- write fluently and confidently using a joined style
- take pride in presentation across all curriculum areas
- develop stamina and automaticity in writing
- understand the importance of handwriting as a tool for communication.

Implementation

Whole-School Approach

Handwriting is taught progressively throughout the school using the Twinkl Handwriting Scheme. Teachers follow a consistent approach to modelling letter formation, joins and presentation expectations so that pupils experience continuity as they move through school.

The scheme has been adapted to ensure letters are taught with lead-ins to support the development of joined handwriting. Lessons are carefully sequenced to build pupils' confidence and fluency over time.

Handwriting is not taught in isolation. Expectations for neat, legible presentation are reinforced across all curriculum areas so that pupils apply their handwriting skills consistently in all written work.

Teaching Principles

Our teaching is underpinned by recognised good practice from the National Handwriting Association. Before pupils begin writing, teachers reinforce the importance of correct posture,

pencil grip, paper position and pressure control. These elements are essential in supporting comfort, stamina and fluency.

Pupils are taught to sit correctly with both feet flat on the floor and their backs supported. Paper should be positioned appropriately for left- and right-handed pupils and writing tools held using an effective grip, ideally a dynamic tripod grip where possible.

TIPS FOR TEACHING

National Handwriting Association
Promoting good practice

'P' Checks

Preparing to write



The 'P checks' are used to support the process of handwriting and cover Posture, Pencil grasp, Paper position and Pressure and fluency.

Posture

Poor posture can be a root cause of common handwriting difficulties such as pain or fatigue and will present as a reluctance to write, poor presentation or legibility, slow writing speed and reduced output.

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

Tip

Establishing good habits of posture and position early is really helpful. Correcting bad habits later is much more difficult.

ALTERNATIVE FURNITURE

Adaptive equipment is available for those that struggle with underlying stability, gross and fine motor skills.

If standing desks are used they should also be an appropriate height.

A writing slope can help with wrist position and posture. The chair height needs to be higher.

TABLE AND CHAIR HEIGHT

If the table is at the correct height the forearm is supported, making it easier to control the movement.

Too High: children may raise their shoulders inducing greater fatigue.

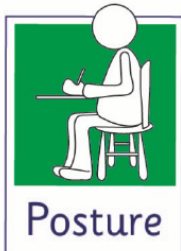
Too Low: children may slump forwards and increase strain on the trunk, neck, arm, wrist and fingers making it more difficult to make controlled precise movements.

Too Far: children will slump forwards if their chair is set too far back from the table, regardless of chair and table height.

Tips

Exchanging furniture with another class can accommodate children who are taller or shorter than their classmates.

At times swap a chair for a ball to sit on or try an air-filled or a wedge cushion. Check the height is correct.



Pencil

Children and adults can be seen to use a wide range of different pencil grasps, often because they have not learnt differently or as compensation for postural instability elsewhere. An inefficient pen/cil grasp can cause discomfort, impacting motivation, fluency and legibility and create difficulty in sustaining speed.

1 Before children are asked to write, it is important that they are developmentally ready to do so. The teacher will be able to assess when a child has developed the essential skills. In Early Years, most children will manage pre-writing tasks only, which are designed to introduce the basic movements and 'feel' required for writing. Asking a child to hold a pen or pencil and write before they are developmentally ready can create difficulties.

PENCIL GRASP GUIDELINES:

- Check the child is developmentally ready before asking them to write.
- A dynamic tripod pencil grasp is the most efficient and is expected by end of Year 1.
- Address an inappropriate grasp in the early learning stages and later if it is causing discomfort or impacting speed.
- Consider corrective action using adaptive grips or specialist writing tools, but always trial several options to find the most appropriate.
- Encourage a 2 cm gap between finger tip and pencil point - and slightly greater for left-handers.



3

Changing a writing grasp can be challenging for an older child and should only be attempted if there is discomfort or other difficulty.

(See *Tips for Teaching - Writing Grip* from www.nha-handwriting.org.uk for more detail)

4

There is a wide range of specialist pencils, pens and adaptive grips available to purchase. However, focusing on the writing tool alone will not solve handwriting difficulty - take care when recommending specialist pens and pencils and trial several options as what helps one writer may cause greater discomfort for another.

See NHA booklet 'NHA TOOLS' (available soon from www.nha-handwriting.org.uk) for more details

5 When developing handwriting skills, the child needs to see the pencil nib to monitor their writing. This is more difficult for left-handers.

Holding the pencil too close or too far from the tip or holding too tightly can cause tension and thereby difficulties with handwriting.



Correct paper position is vitally important during the early years of handwriting development as bad practice can lead to compensatory strategies, such as a hooked-wrist in left-handers, that are difficult to remedy in later years.

TILT

When writing, the wrist and hand will naturally step along a path across the paper, but at an angle to the body. The writing paper should ideally be positioned so that the hand follows this natural path.

For a right hander the top left corner of the paper is angled down to the left.

For a left-hander, the opposite is best, having the top right corner angled down to the right.



OFFSET

The paper should not be directly in front of the child but slightly offset, to the right for a right hander and to the left for a left hander.

NON-WRITING HAND

Encourage the use of the non-writing hand to stabilise the paper. (This enables the writing hand to move freely and also balances the body). Encourage writers to move the paper and adjust the position of the holding hand as writing progresses down the page.

PAPER GUIDELINES:

- Tilt and offset the paper according to the writing hand.
- Move the paper up or down to facilitate a comfortable reach and keep it in place with the non-writing hand.
- Consider glare from paper and overhead lighting.
- Consider a specialist vision assessment if visual stress continues.

VISUAL STRESS

Ocular motor (eye movement) difficulties tend to be fatiguing, especially when having to be focussed on an extended writing task. If a child rubs their eyes frequently or complains of headaches when writing, it can be a sign of visual acuity or ocular motor difficulties. An eye test will detect visual acuity, difficulties, but other factors can make the eyes work harder than they need to, causing fatigue.

The teacher will be able to identify the best measures for each child, but ocular motor difficulties should not be ignored, as left unaddressed will tend to demotivate children to writing regardless of lighting levels.

LIGHT ON THE PAPER

TOO LITTLE

Make sure that the children's work is well lit - sometimes there is a dark corner of a classroom where lighting levels are low

TOO MUCH

Direct sunlight tends to reflect brightly off white writing paper

Eyes have to work hard to compensate for fluctuating light levels. It is better to try to keep light levels as constant as possible. Artificial light or window blinds can be effective as can writing on coloured, rather than white paper.



The act of writing should leave a clear trace on the paper, neither too faint nor too dark, and flow along the line rhythmically.



Tip The shape of the writing tool and the way it is held impact the amount of pressure exerted onto the paper. Trialling a range of pens, pencils and grips can be a good place to start.

EARLY WRITERS

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.

LIGHT PRESSURE INDICATORS

- Faint, shaky script
- The fingers are often more extended at the joints and higher up the pencil

HEAVY PRESSURE INDICATORS

- Marks that go through to the next page
- Raised ridges on the back of the paper that can be felt with the fingertips
- Red marks on the skin because of contact with the pen
- White knuckles

SUGGESTIONS TO HELP

- Use carbon paper underneath layers of writing paper and challenge the student to aim for: p2 - copy, p3 - shadow, p4 - invisible.
- Use a 2H pencil for increased sensory feedback so there is less need for hard pressure.
- Use a mechanical pencil (0.5mm) that will break under heavy pressure.
- Use a B/2B pencil or a pen to improve the visibility of writing for those who have light pressure.
- Use light up pens: the light is activated to correct light pressure and deactivated to correct heavy pressure.
- Use a lead pencil to shade in a picture using light, medium and dark grey. Discuss how different amounts of pressure alter the shade.
- Write on a single sheet of paper when at a desk or table. A firm surface can limit the amount of pressure the child can use.

PRESSURE GUIDELINES:

- The just-right pressure eases writing across the page, which is important for fluency and reducing the risk of pain during handwriting.
- Use teaching tools such as carbon paper, mechanical pencils, 'light-up' and 'squiggle' pens to demonstrate appropriate pressure.
- Try some gross and fine motor warm ups before and during the handwriting task. Actions which include squeezing and deep pressure, resistance and/or vibration will increase body awareness.
- Check that posture/issues with postural control are not the causative factor here.

FLUENCY

- Write to rhythms / beats of music
- Pattern repeated letters and encourage flowing movements
- Think of skating / gliding on the paper
- Use gel crayons or pastels to increase ease of flow when patterning at a larger scale and on bigger blank paper

See also - NHA posters: 'P' Checks and 'S' Factors and Tips for Teaching: The 'S' Rules

Adapted from an article 'P' Checks explained' by Catherine Elsey, Joanna Moore and Michelle van Rooyen in *Handwriting Today* 2016, the journal of the National Handwriting Association. Edited by Gwen Dornan

Teaching and assessment are also supported through the use of the 'S Factors for Success', which focus on the key features of effective handwriting:

- Shape
- Space
- Size
- Sitting
- Stringing
- Slant
- Style
- Speed

These features support teachers in modelling handwriting explicitly and enable pupils to understand how handwriting can be improved.

TIPS FOR TEACHING

National Handwriting Association 
Promoting good practice

'S' Factors for success



Shape, Space, Size, Sitting, Stringing, Slant, Speed, Style Useful as:

- 1 A GUIDE TO TEACHING handwriting and a CURRICULUM RESOURCE showing development of handwriting skills in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and the National Curriculum (NC) KS1 & 2.
- 2 An ASSESSMENT TOOL: a checklist for quick evaluation of handwriting by a student or teacher (see p 3)

Part 1 'S' Factors as a GUIDE TO TEACHING handwriting

1 Shape

EYFS: Reception
NC: KS1

Once a child is ready to write, the first important task is to learn how to form the letters correctly – best taught as a motor skill. (This will save many problems at later stages.)

Children learn best by:

- 1 Watching the letters being made and hearing a simple patter.
- 2 Making the letters themselves in developmentally appropriate ways using just fingers – sand, paint, sandpaper, air-writing etc. – before pencils.

Letters can be put into groups or teams according to the movement needed to make them. When children learn to write a new letter, the 'lead' letter of its team will help them to start.

The 'l' team l i u t y j
The 'c' team c a d g q o e s f
The 'r' team r n m h b k p
The 'zig-zag' team z x v w y k

N.B.
These letters have exit flicks to support joining but no entry strokes which complicate the basic letter shapes and use diagonal lines that many young children find difficult at this stage.

A basic lower case alphabet in letter formation families

2 Space

NC: KS1

Children need to understand that spaces need to be left between words so they can be easily read.

Gradually, they need to learn to leave an appropriately-sized space – about the size of 1 or 2 letter 'o's. Lolly sticks make good spacers for beginner writers, followed by coffee stirrers if necessary later. These work much better than the traditional finger-spacing. (Fingers grow bigger while writing becomes smaller so are ineffective when the child is older. Finger spacing is also difficult for left-handers to use).

3 Sitting on the line

Once children are secure in forming letters correctly they need to know where to position them in relation to the base line.

The plan is to write
the map is a big
I hid the map.
1

Writing on a single base-line

- 4 **Size**
NC: KS1
- ... and also to their relative sizes:
Small/halfway letters/x-height letters e.g. a, e, o, s
Tall letters/letters with ascenders e.g. h, l, b, k (plus all capitals)
Tailed letters/letters with descenders e.g. p, g, y, j
- A visual image helps children understand the 3 levels. Suggestions are:
- sky/grass or forest/underground
 - head/body/legs
- While children are learning about size it is helpful to use paper marked with a base-line and a second line above for the tops of a, e, s, o etc. The tall letters and tails are written at about twice that size.
- (This is preferable to traditional 'tram-line' paper with 4 lines that encourages over-long ascenders and descenders).
- Beginner writers, especially, need widely spaced lines to avoid cramping letters and all children need some flexibility in line spacing rather than 'one size fits all'.
- 5 **Stringing together**
NC: KS1 & KS2
- Joined or cursive writing is the next step towards fluency.
- The NC states that children 'should be taught a joined style as soon as they can form letters securely with the correct orientation' and 'understand which letters, when adjacent to each other, are best left unjoined.'
- Basic joins.
- These can be taught in a series of lessons with plenty of practice:
- Diagonal (up the hill join) to 'l' team letters, both tall and short e.g.
 - Horizontal (washing line join) to both tall and short letters from o, v, w e.g.
 - Joins to 'c' team letters e.g.
- Practice is more fun making patterns from digraphs using felt tipped pens. (See *Tips for Teaching: Patterns* for ideas)
- The NC expectation for Years 3 & 4 is that pupils will be 'using joined handwriting throughout their independent writing'. This will encourage joined writing to become automatic. Note: cursive/joined writing can have some breaks - usually after j,y,g,x,z. (See *Style* below)
- 6 **Slant**
NC: KS 2
- A consistent slant helps the appearance of handwriting.
- A slightly forward slant is a natural movement for right-handers and helps to improve fluency and speed. (See 'Slant' in Part 2)
- 7 **Speed**
NC: Y5+
- Students in KS2 & 3 need to be able to write legibly and quickly.
- Students need help in understanding that increasing speed changes writing: it can improve rhythm and fluency but can cause illegibility if allowed out of control. It will help students if they are encouraged to gradually build up the speed of legible writing by repeating words, then phrases, sentences & paragraphs in short regular periods of practice. (See *Tips for Teaching: Speeding up*)
- 8 **Style**
NC: Y5+
- Students should be encouraged to develop a style of writing that works for them.
- Students can consider changes to their writing style that could increase speed and/or fluency, e.g.
- Adding loops to g,y,j and possibly f to increase speed and flow.
 - Consider if there are any joins that do not flow well and would be better left unjoined.
 - Be aware that different qualities and speeds of writing are required for different tasks: personal notes, exams, course work, job applications - and adapt accordingly.
- N.B. They should also be aware of occasions when an unjoined style is appropriate: for labelling diagrams/data, e-mail addresses etc. and be able to use capital letters for form-filling.
- The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. When she had reached the
- These children are developing personal styles

Early Writing Development in EYFS

In EYFS, handwriting development begins through opportunities to develop gross and fine motor control, core strength and hand-eye coordination. Children engage in a range of activities which promote movement, control and pre-writing patterns before formal handwriting begins.

Letter formation is taught alongside phonics and pupils are encouraged to develop confidence and control through structured practice and practical activities. Correct posture, pencil grip and starting points are modelled consistently from the beginning of early writing.

Progression Through School

Handwriting is taught progressively from EYFS to Year 6.

In EYFS, the focus is on developing motor control, mark-making and correct letter formation. In Key Stage 1, pupils secure accurate formation, orientation and spacing while beginning to develop joins once letter formation is secure.

During Lower Key Stage 2, pupils are expected to develop fluent joined handwriting with increasing consistency in size, spacing and presentation. In Upper Key Stage 2, pupils continue to refine fluency, speed and stamina while adapting handwriting for different purposes and audiences.

By the end of Year 6, pupils should be able to write fluently, legibly and efficiently in a joined style.

Frequency of Teaching

In EYFS and Key Stage 1, handwriting is taught daily and closely linked to phonics and English teaching. In Lower Key Stage 2, regular discrete sessions continue to develop joining and fluency. In Upper Key Stage 2, handwriting lessons focus increasingly on fluency, speed and presentation.

Although discrete lessons are important, handwriting expectations are reinforced consistently throughout the curriculum.

Letter Formation and Joining

Letters are taught in families to support motor memory and consistency. Teachers model correct starting and finishing points and reinforce accurate formation throughout school.

Lead-ins are used to support the transition into joined handwriting and joins are introduced only once pupils demonstrate secure letter formation. Pupils are expected to write in a joined style by the end of Year 3.

Letter families

For teaching letter formation

Letter family 1

Down and off in another direction

l i t j u y

Letter family 2

Down and retrace upwards

m n r b p h k

Letter family 3

Anticlockwise round

c a d o q g e f s

Letter family 4

Zig-zag letters

v w x z

The two most popular handwriting styles in current use can be described as:

1. Simple modern
2. Cursive/continuous cursive

Simple modern

Individual letters are taught with exit flicks where appropriate:

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

Then, when letter formation and positioning are both secure, joining is taught. Some break letters are left unjoined:

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

Pre-cursive/cursive/continuous cursive

This system is not advocated by NHA.

Individual letters are taught with an entry stroke:

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

All letters, except capitals, are joined from the outset:

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

Pencil Grip and Posture

Teachers explicitly model and reinforce correct posture and pencil grip throughout school. Pupils are encouraged to hold writing tools comfortably and efficiently while maintaining appropriate writing pressure.

Where necessary, adaptive resources such as pencil grips, writing slopes or alternative materials may be used to support pupils' physical development and handwriting control.

Staff Modelling

All staff are expected to model the agreed cursive handwriting style consistently across the curriculum. Staff use agreed terminology when teaching handwriting and provide live modelling, verbal feedback and regular reinforcement of presentation expectations.

Handwriting is valued across the school and improvement, effort and pride in presentation are celebrated

Presentation Expectations

Pupils are expected to present work neatly and take pride in their books. Teachers reinforce expectations for spacing, layout, dating and overall presentation in all subjects.

Presentation expectations are age appropriate and support pupils in developing independence and responsibility for the quality of their work.

Expectations by Year Group

Year Group	Expectation
End of EYFS	Correct pencil grip and emerging letter formation
End of Year 2	Secure formation, spacing and beginning joins
End of Year 4	Neat, legible, joined handwriting with increasing fluency
End of Year 6	Fluent, consistent and efficient joined handwriting

	Statutory requirements	Non-statutory notes and guidance
Year 1 Age 5–6	<p>Pupils should be taught to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	<p>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.</p> <p>Whatever is being used should allow the pupil to hold it easily and correctly so that bad habits are avoided.</p> <p>Left-handed pupils should receive specific teaching to meet their needs.</p>
Year 2 Age 6–7	<p>Pupils should be taught to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	<p>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.</p>
Years 3 and 4 Age 7–9	<p>Pupils should be taught to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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, consistency and quality of their handwriting, for example, 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. 	<p>Pupils should be using joined handwriting throughout their independent writing.</p> <p>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.</p>
Years 5 & 6 Age 10–11	<p>Pupils should be taught to write legibly, fluently and with increasing speed by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	<p>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.</p> <p>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).</p>

Handwriting requirements from the English programmes of study: Key Stages 1 and 2 National Curriculum in England

Left-Handed Pupils

Left-handed pupils are supported through appropriate seating arrangements, correct paper positioning and guidance to avoid uncomfortable wrist positions. Staff ensure pupils can write comfortably and effectively without smudging or strain.

Intervention and Support

Where pupils experience difficulties with handwriting, early support and intervention are provided to help pupils develop confidence, control and fluency. Teachers identify barriers to handwriting development through ongoing assessment and provide targeted support within lessons wherever possible.

Interventions may focus on fine motor development, pencil control, letter formation, joining, spacing or writing stamina. Support may include additional modelling, guided practice, adapted resources, modified paper, pencil grips or writing slopes.

Pupils who require further support may access small-group or individual intervention programmes using Twinkl handwriting resources and practical motor skill activities.

SEND Provision

We recognise that some pupils with SEND may experience additional barriers to handwriting development. Staff work closely with the SENDCo to ensure appropriate adaptations and support are in place so that all pupils can achieve success.

Adjustments may include:

- specialist equipment or adaptive resources
- additional adult support
- differentiated handwriting expectations where appropriate
- opportunities for overlearning and repetition
- alternative methods of recording where necessary.

High expectations are maintained for all pupils, while recognising individual needs and ensuring children can access the curriculum successfully.

Assessment

Handwriting assessment is ongoing and informs teaching and intervention. Teachers assess handwriting through observations, pupils' written work across the curriculum and regular review of fluency, legibility and presentation.

The S Factors are used to support feedback and self-assessment, helping pupils to recognise strengths and areas for improvement.

Impact

The impact of this policy is that pupils develop fluent, legible and confident handwriting which supports learning across the curriculum. Pupils demonstrate pride in presentation, increased writing stamina and the ability to communicate ideas effectively through writing.

As pupils progress through school, handwriting becomes increasingly automatic, enabling them to focus more successfully on composition, vocabulary and the quality of their written outcomes.

Appendix 1: Progression

Based on the Twinkl Handwriting Scheme and adapted to include lead-ins and structured progression from EYFS to Year 6.

Appendix 2: Teaching Structure

Handwriting is taught through a progressive sequence which includes:

1. Gross and fine motor development
2. Pre-writing patterns and motor memory
3. Letter formation with lead-ins
4. Joining letters
5. Developing fluency and stamina
6. Applying handwriting across the curriculum