



Pickhurst Junior School

POLICY FOR HANDWRITING

Date: February 2022

Date Reviewed: February 2026



We aim for our children to leave in Year 6 with the ability to write using their own style of fast, fluent, legible and sustainable handwriting, as well as other styles of writing for specific purposes. In addition to teaching handwriting during our regular handwriting lessons, we have high expectations that what is taught and practised in handwriting lessons will be used in all writing activities. We believe that handwriting is integral to a child's personal development and know that children's engagement and self-esteem can be improved by their satisfaction and pride in good quality presentation. Our Handwriting Curriculum is in line with National Curriculum Expectations and is resourced through Penpals Handwriting.

Aims

Our aims in teaching handwriting are:

1. For all children to learn and practice 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
2. To raise attainment by all by involving children in the development of their own handwriting and to understand the factors which help this process.
3. For children to have opportunities to write in different styles and for different purposes across the curriculum.
4. For all staff to use and model the agreed handwriting conventions outlined in this document, thus providing consistency and continuity throughout the school community.
5. To make provision for left handed children and for children who experience difficulties.
6. To encourage personal satisfaction and pride in well- presented writing.

Development of Handwriting skills: Rationale

Handwriting is a 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 kinesthetic 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.

Curriculum

We understand that handwriting is a taught developmental process with its own distinctive stages of progression. The children at Pickhurst Juniors build on their understanding of Handwriting that is taught in the Infant school. The curriculum details for KS1 / EYFS children allow teachers to identify any gaps in pupil understanding to practice in lesson time. 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 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 Reception year
- 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

2.3 Progression and Assessment in EYFS

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 development 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)

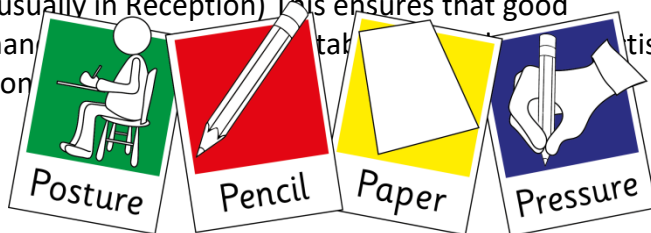
Posters explaining these are displayed in all KS1 and KS2 classrooms.

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 is established from the start.



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



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.

Children are taught 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

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 Inclusion team.

Staff are aware of potential handwriting difficulties when children have hypermobile joints. (see Resources List 5.1)



Dynamic tripod 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



NB 'Pen Licences' are not regarded as supporting inclusion

Alternative tripod grip: An alternative dynamic grip

Paper

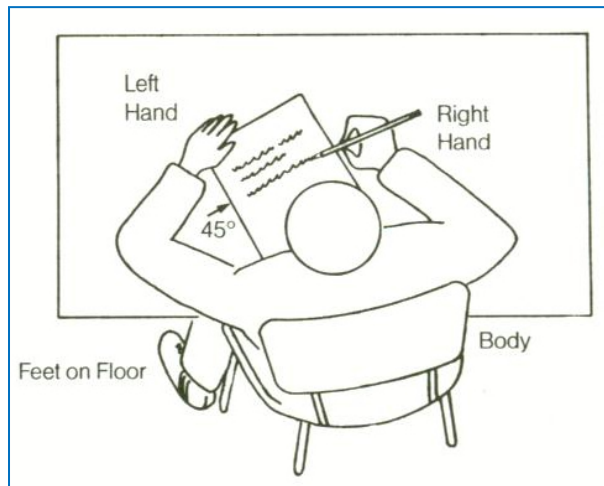
Children are taught how to position their writing paper correctly and to stabilise it with the non-writing hand.



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 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.



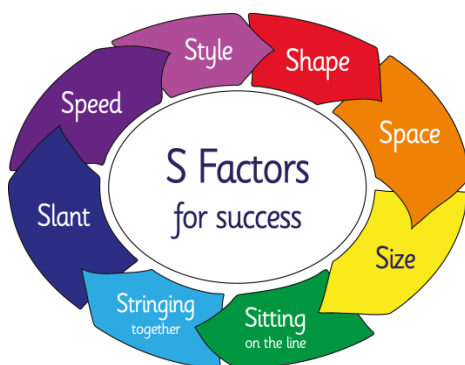
When children are writing on a loose sheet of paper, this should be clipped to card or a clipboard to provide stability.

Pressure

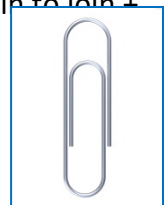
Before beginning a writing activity, children do warm up exercises, then relax their whole body.

(see Appendix 6: Tips: Hand Up for Handwriting'). 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



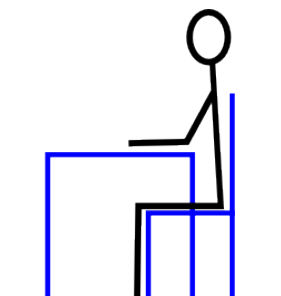
Year 1 : Consolidating Shape +
 Year 2: Space, Size, Sitting, Begin to join +
 Year 3: + Consolidate joining +
 Years 3&4: Slant,
 Years 5&6: Speed, style



Notes on the S Factors (see Appendix 6- Tips for Teaching 4 - S Rules)

Shape

- Letters are taught in stroke related families (Nelson Font) (see Appendix 1)
- All letters (except e and d) begin at the top. **Nelson 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 a 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 **PenPals Handwriting** materials to support pupil's handwriting. Examples of good handwriting practices are modelled by teachers during lessons, and shared on working walls and displays.

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

3.3 Other resources

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 agreed consistent language to describe handwriting, including:

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

4.2 Provision for left-handed children

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

- 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



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 the Inclusion team.

Children who join the school later may have an effective joined handwriting style that differs from the school model. They may continue to use it and 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. 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 Grids (Appendix 4)

At all stages, children learn the skills to assess their own handwriting and develop understanding and responsibility for improving it. Handwriting practices are moderated termly in Year Group moderations.

End of Key Stage SATs

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

4.5 Timetabling of Handwriting

At KS2, discrete handwriting sessions are taught on a weekly basis through Pen Pals Handwriting. As well as this, during lessons which involve writing, handwriting practices are discussed in lesson, and expectations are shared with children. Shared writing also reinforces these expectations.

Presentation

Children will record in their handwriting books, using the long date (which should be underlined) as a guide to signify the start of that session.

Cursive handwriting is developed throughout Key Stage 2. Much of the work undertaken by the children from Year 3 to Year 4 will be written in pencil. However, children are encouraged to progress to writing in pen, and a pen licence is introduced in KS2 for children



whose handwriting is sufficiently neat. All children in Year 5 and 6 will write in blue pen as appropriate.

Through the use of PenPals resources, children will be exposed to the same handwriting style throughout the school, and staff will model in accordance. This style focuses on correct letter formation, and teaching children how to lead in and out of a word. It is not expected for children to use lead-ins at the beginning of a word.

Assessment

Teachers use formative assessment and verbal feedback within sessions, discussing children's progress/needs and modeling for children to assist their development. Pupils also take part in an end of term check for their handwriting throughout the year.

Progression of skills

Penpals enables us to teach and secure the development of handwriting throughout the school:

- First, children experience the foundation of handwriting through multi-sensory activities (EYFS F1 and F2).
- Correct letter formation is taught, practised, applied and consolidated (EYFS F1/Y1).
- Joining is introduced only after correct letter formation is used automatically (Y1/Y2/Y3).
- Joins are introduced systematically and cumulatively (Y2–Y6).
- As children practice joining, they pay attention to the size, proportion and spacing of their letters and words (Y3–Y6).
- Once the joins are secure, a slope is introduced in order to support increased speed and fluency (Y5).
- Children are introduced to different ways of joining in order that they can develop their own preferred personal style (Y6).

In using *Penpals*, we ensure that our children follow the requirements and recommendations of the National Curriculum. We share the aspirations that children's handwriting should be 'sufficiently fluent and effortless for them to manage the general demands of the curriculum' and that 'problems with forming letters do not get in the way of their writing down what they want to say'.

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. Children who need specific fine motor or handwriting interventions are identified early and the impact of interventions is carefully monitored. Children with a physical disability are catered for, and progress is monitored, according to their individual action plans.



Letter formation: Year 3 and 4

Penpals: Example Letter formation before joining

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

Cursive Script: Year 5 and 6

*All joins can be
either top, baseline
or mixed, to simulate
what happens
when handwriting* :



Lower- and Upper-case letters:

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

Capital letters are formed as follows:

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

Letter families

Long-legged giraffe

l i t u j y ll L I T U J Y

One-armed robot

r b n h m k p R B N H M K P

Curly caterpillar

c a d o s g q e f ff ss C A D O S G Q E F

Zig-zag monster

z v w x zz Z V W X

Letter combinations

ck qu ai igh oo ee oa ow ch wh



Joins:

Diagonal join to ascender

ch

Diagonal join, no ascender

ai

Horizontal join to ascender

wh

Horizontal join, no ascender

ow

Join	Letters in this box	To letters in this box	Joins taught
Diagonal join to ascender	<i>a c e i l t</i>	<i>h k l t</i>	<i>ch, th, ck, al, el, at, il, ill, ok, ot, ob, ol</i>
Diagonal join, no ascender	<i>a c d e i k l n t u</i>	<i>e i n r y</i>	<i>ai, ay, ir, er, ie, ue, ee, le, ar, ur, in, ui, ey, aw, an, ip</i>
		<i>a c d g s</i> (anticlockwise letters)	<i>ea, ig, dg, ng, ed, cc, eg, ic, ad, ug, dd, ag, as, es, os, ns, ds, is, ls, ts, ks</i>
Horizontal join, no ascender	<i>o v w</i>	<i>e i n p r u v w y</i>	<i>ow, ou, oe, ve, or, oi, oy, on, op, ov</i>
		<i>a c d g o s</i> (anticlockwise letters)	<i>oo, oa, wa, wo, oc, og, od, va, vo</i>
Horizontal join, to ascender	<i>o w</i>	<i>h</i>	<i>wh, oh</i>



Year 5 and 6 Letter formation:

The focus in UKS2 is working on a more sloped style to enable speedier writing. All of the letters and joins taught previously will be revisited to enable your child to practise the slope in familiar contexts. We will also focus on issues of proportion, size, legibility and different styles for different purposes.

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

Capital letters are written as follows:

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

**Diagonal join to ascender (e.g. at)**

This join is used to join letters in this box . . .

a b c d e h i k l m n p s t u

to letters in this box.

b f h k l t

Diagonal join, no ascender (e.g. da)

This join is used to join letters in this box . . .

a b c d e h i k l m n p q s t u

to letters in this box.

e i j m n p r u v w y

** a c d g o q s*

Horizontal join, no ascender (e.g. wo)

This join is used to join letters in this box . . .

f o r u w

to letters in this box.

e i j m n p r u v w y

** a c d g o q s*

Horizontal join to ascender (e.g. oh)

This join is used to join letters in this box . . .

f o r u w

to letters in this box.

b f h k l t

Personal style

It is possible to experiment with new letter formations and joins to develop a personal style.

Break letters

Joins are not usually made from these letters, but you may wish to try.

g j y

g j y

Joins are not usually made to or from these letters, but you may wish to try these style variations:

x z

x z

Alternative letter shapes and joins

bt ff m th va wa

* anticlockwise letters