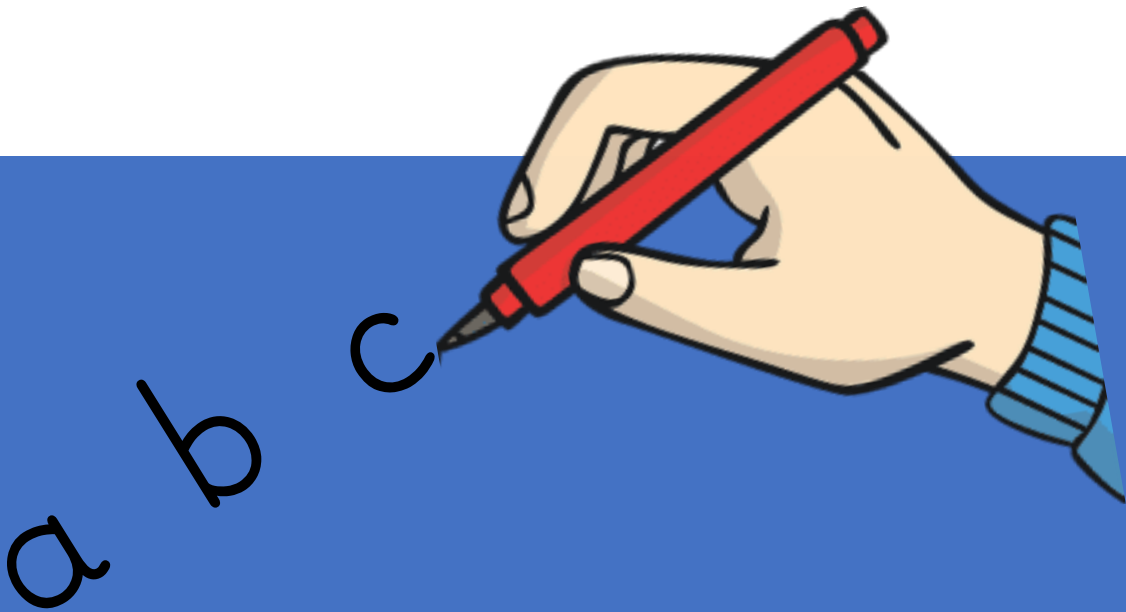




Heatherlands  
Primary School

# Handwriting Teacher Handbook



## Handwriting Rationale

### Intent

At Heatherlands Primary School, we recognise that fluent, legible handwriting is a foundational skill that enables pupils to communicate their ideas effectively. A consistent and well-structured approach to handwriting ensures that children develop automaticity, freeing up their working memory to focus on composition, spelling, and higher-order writing skills.

Handwriting also plays a vital role in preparing pupils for success beyond primary education. From completing examinations to note-taking and formal communication, the ability to write efficiently remains a crucial life skill. Our curriculum aligns with our school values of respect, resilience, aspiration, motivation and independence as well as our drivers: communication, consolidation and community.

By embedding our values and drivers, we aim for every child to develop handwriting that is legible, fluent, and automatic—allowing them to communicate with clarity and confidence, concentrating on what is being taught and not simply on how to record it.

### Key Definitions

- Handwriting – The skill of forming letters and words on paper, requiring fine motor control, spatial awareness, and muscle memory.
- Grip – The way a pupil holds a writing tool, which influences control, fluency, and stamina.
- Transcription – The physical process of handwriting or typing, including spelling, punctuation, and letter formation.
- Automaticity – The ability to write letters and words without conscious effort, allowing cognitive resources to focus on composition.
- Fluency – Writing that is smooth, consistent, and efficient, enabling effective communication.
- Fine Motor Skills – The small muscle movements in the hands and fingers essential for precise and controlled handwriting.

### Evidence-Based Approach

Our handwriting curriculum is grounded in educational research, including studies from the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) and Ofsted literacy research, which highlight the critical role of foundational skills in developing writing fluency:

- The EEF's Key Stage 1 Literacy Guidance (Recommendation 6) states that fluency in handwriting and spelling must be developed to the point of automaticity, as

pupils who focus on transcription struggle to concentrate on composition. It emphasises the need for explicit teaching, extensive practice, and effective feedback. (EEF KS1 Literacy Guidance)

- The EEF's Key Stage 2 Literacy Guidance (Recommendation 5) reinforces that handwriting fluency frees up cognitive resources, enabling children to focus on structure and meaning in their writing. It highlights the importance of monitoring handwriting and providing feedback to ensure efficient transcription skills. (EEF KS2 Literacy Guidance)
- Ofsted's research on early literacy supports the development of foundational skills in handwriting, noting that children who master letter formation early are better equipped to construct sentences and paragraphs with fluency. (Ofsted Research Review: English)
- Research in cognitive load theory (Sweller, 1988) highlights that reducing transcription effort allows pupils to allocate more cognitive capacity to higher-order writing processes such as planning, structuring, and refining their ideas. Additionally, studies on motor skill acquisition (e.g., Bara & Morin, 2013) suggest that repeated handwriting practice strengthens neural pathways, supporting fluency and legibility.

This research informs our approach, ensuring that handwriting instruction is structured, progressive, and embedded within wider literacy teaching.

## Teach Handwriting

At Heatherlands Primary School, we use Teach Handwriting to teach and develop handwriting in a systematic and progressive way.

- The scheme takes a holistic view of teaching handwriting, developing both a child's key strengths (gross & fine motor skills) and key abilities (knowledge) from Early Years through to Year 6.
- It's systematic, adaptable and progressive approach supports children of all ability levels and takes into account the child's developmental requirements at each Key Stage.
- It aligns with Ofsted's emphasis on foundational skills, ensuring children develop handwriting fluency early, enabling them to focus on composition.
- The scheme teaches the capital letters together with the lower-case font style (manuscript), then the single letter continuous cursive font style; finally joining the letters (route B)
- Termly timetables, broken into 6-week blocks, set out the key strength and key abilities lessons to be taught.

By following this structured approach, pupils develop the necessary transcription skills to write fluently, confidently, and with stamina, preparing them for future success.

## Whole School Expectations

At Heatherlands Primary School, we recognise that fluent, legible, and automatic handwriting is essential for pupils to communicate their ideas effectively and confidently.

To support this, handwriting is explicitly taught at least three times per week in every year group. High expectations for presentation and handwriting are reinforced across all written work, ensuring consistency and progression from Early Years to Year 6.

## Whole-School Approach

The school will adopt the use of the suite of Twinkl fonts for use in classroom labels, displays, resources, worksheets and smartboards.

In EYFS/KS1 – Twinkl

In Y2/LKS2 - *Twinkl precursive*

In UKS2 - *Twinkl cursive looped*

When modelling handwriting, the 'k' will be formed in EYFS/KS1 using the printed diagonals as in the diagonals letter family 'k'.

## Early Years & Year 1

In EYFS and Year 1, children will be taught to **print only in letter families**.

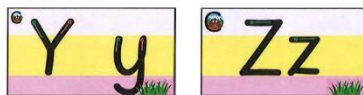
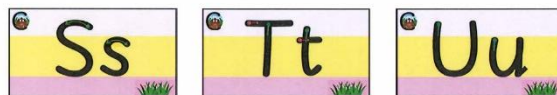
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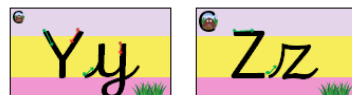
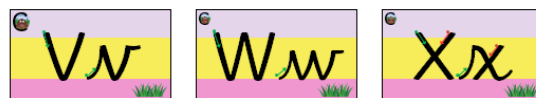
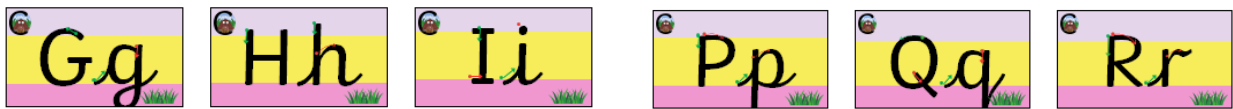
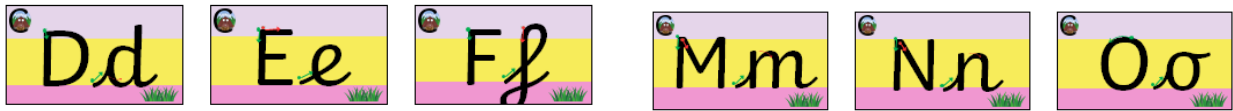
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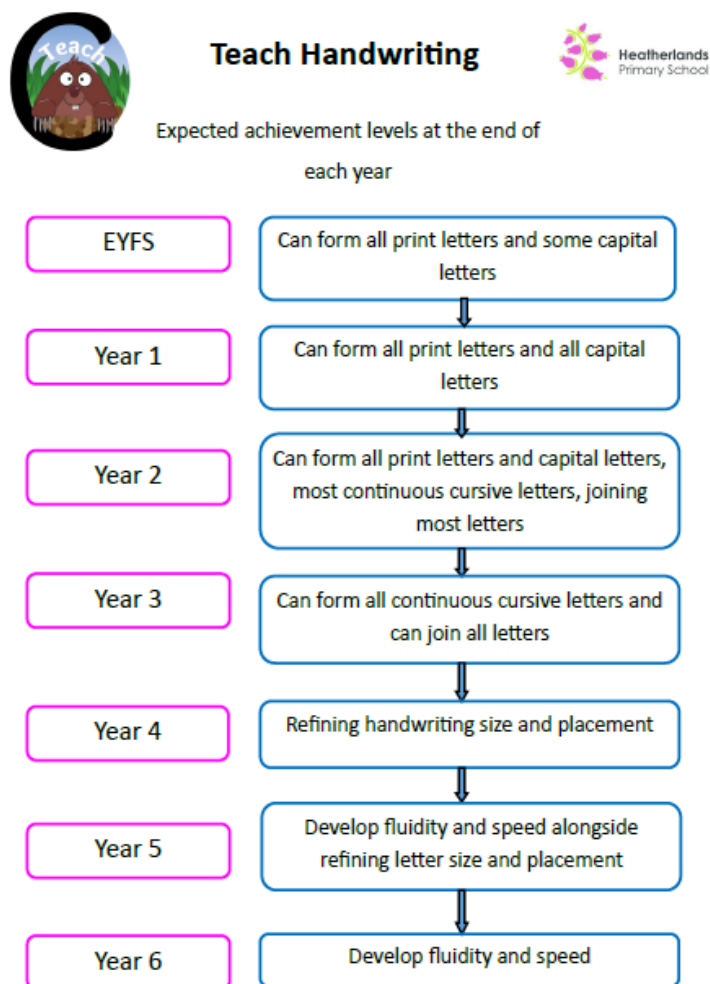
## Year 2 & Key Stage 2

In Year 2 and lower Key Stage 2, children will first **revise printing** before being taught to join letters using the continuous cursive font. **See letter formation posters in year group packs.**



## Handwriting Progression

We have created an adapted version of the Teach Handwriting achievement levels to show the expected outcomes at the end of each year group.



Handwriting lessons are delivered in the following stages:

- **Pre-writing patterns** (*EYFS*) – Developing fine motor skills and pencil control.
- **Printed letters** (*Reception, Year 1, Year 2*) – Teaching correct letter formation with a focus on spacing, size, and consistency.
- **Introduction to joining** (*Year 2, Year 3, Year 4*) – Gradual teaching of continuous cursive to develop fluency and confidence.
- **Fluency, consistency, and stamina** (*Year 4, Year 5, Year 6*) – Refining handwriting for speed, clarity, and automaticity.

Our approach follows a **cyclical progression**, with regular opportunities for **revision and assessment** to monitor formation and provide **targeted support** where needed.

As pupils move into **Years 3, 4, and 5**, they refine their joins and build stamina, ensuring handwriting becomes an effortless skill.

By **Years 5 and 6**, pupils consolidate their fluency and independence, preparing them for the increased writing demands of secondary school.

All termly timetables and 6week blocks can be found in year group packs.

## Grip

A correct pencil grip is essential for control, comfort, and stamina in writing. Pupils are taught to use the **tripod grip**, where the pencil is held between the thumb and index finger and rests on the middle finger. This grip allows for precise movements while preventing strain or fatigue.

Pupils should hold the pencil approximately **2-3 cm from the tip**, ensuring clear visibility of their writing. A relaxed grip is encouraged—gripping too tightly can cause discomfort and limit fluid movement, while an overly loose grip reduces control. Where necessary, pupils may be provided with pencil grips or additional support to develop a secure and effective hold.

We use the 'drawbridge flip' method to help children hold their pencil in the tripod pencil grip: <https://teachhandwriting.co.uk/whole-class-tripod-pencil-grip-teaching-ks1.html>

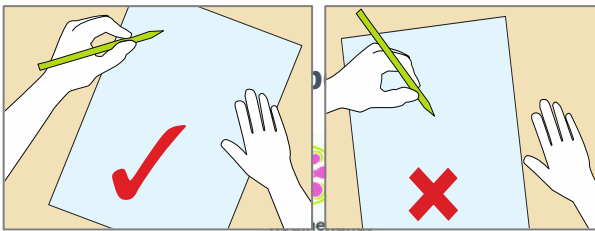
- Place the pencil on the table in front of the writing hand, so it forms a straight line up the table with the writing tip of the pencil pointing towards you.
- Then using your thumb and index finger pinch the pencil either side of the shaft about 2 cm up from the tip for a right-handed writer and about 3 cm up for a left-handed writer. Dots or sticker may be placed on the pencil to help thumb and finger placement.
- Pick the pencil up off the table and place the finger nail of the middle finger on to the pencil just above the tip.
- Keep the ring and little finger gently curled in.
- Push down with the middle finger so that the pencil moves up and over like a drawbridge, keep pushing until the pencil is supported in the cup (web of skin that joins the thumb, hand and index finger) and the pencil is resting on the inner edge of middle finger.
- When writing, the end of the pencil will be angled towards the shoulder for right-handed writers and the elbow for left-handed writers.

## Seating Position

Learning to sit correctly at a table for handwriting style activities is not just important for developing a physically comfortable and maintainable sitting position; it also allows the arms and hands to move freely and enables the paper to be tilted and positioned correctly, helping to improve the quality of the handwriting.

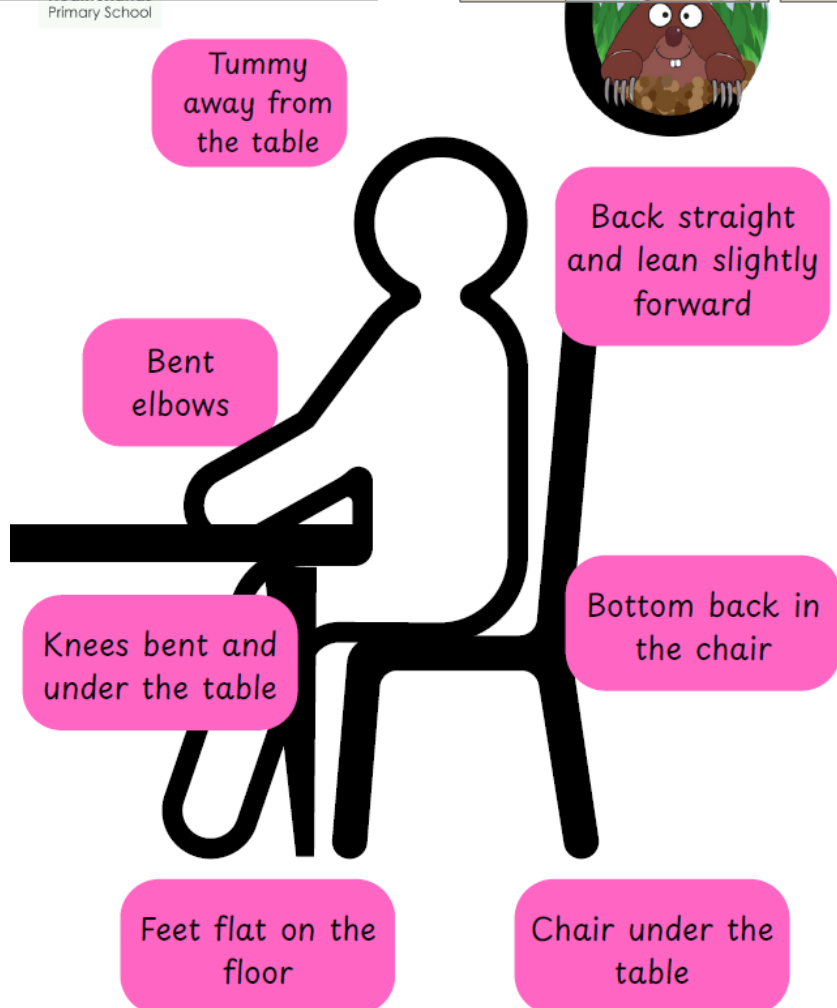
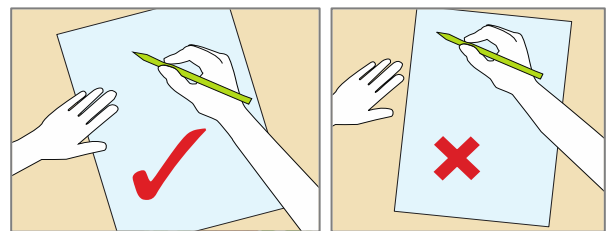
The non-dominant hand should be used to steady the page, and paper should be angled as follows:

Left



Primary School

Right



## The sitting song

The aim of the sitting song is to provide a prompt which children can use later as a checklist to make sure they are sitting correctly for handwriting tasks. This ability to self-check is a very powerful tool in helping a child to become an independent learner. It also gives them a tool to use, so when they are told to sit properly, they know what that means and how to achieve the correct sitting position.

### Sitting Song

Verse 1



Stand to attention, in front of the chair,



One last wriggle, and check to be sure,



Lean slightly forward, with a straight back,



Wriggle on down, 'til your bottom rests there.



That both feet are flat, on the floor.



Elbows are bent, and arms aren't slack.



Pull the chair in, towards the table,



Your bottom is back, against the seat.



Now you are comfy, and ready to write;



Jiggling hands between it and your navel.



And your tummy and table, do not meet!



Make sure you don't hold that pencil too tight!

Chorus



Sitting, correctly, there's no need to frown.



Sitting, correctly, there's no need to frown.



Sitting, correctly, there's no need to frown.



Follow this song, and wriggle on down!



Follow this song, and wriggle on down!



Follow this song, and wriggle on down!



With a wriggle and a jiggle, feet flat on the floor.



With a wriggle and a jiggle, feet flat on the floor.



With a wriggle and a jiggle, feet flat on the floor.

We're all getting ready, to write some more!

We're all getting ready, to write some more!

Now we're all ready, to write some more!

## Left-Handed Pupils

Left-handed pupils require specific guidance to ensure they develop clear, fluent handwriting without discomfort. Teachers will provide individual support as needed and ensure that:

- Left-handed pupils sit to the left of right-handed peers to avoid elbow clashes.
- Paper is tilted slightly to the right to improve letter formation and reduce smudging.
- Pupils hold the pencil slightly further from the tip to maintain visibility while writing.
- Teachers model letter formation from a left-handed perspective where necessary, as left-handed pupils may find it difficult to mirror right-handed demonstrations.
- Additional practice may be provided to help left-handed pupils develop confidence and fluency in writing.

## Formation

Accurate letter formation is fundamental to developing a fluent and legible handwriting style.

Pupils are expected to:

- Form all letters correctly, beginning at the correct starting point and following the correct direction.
- Maintain consistent **letter size**, ensuring clear distinction between ascenders (e.g., *l, h, t*) and descenders (e.g., *g, y, p*).
- Use appropriate spacing between letters and words to maintain readability.
- Transition to **joined handwriting** in Year 2/Key Stage 2 to develop fluency and stamina in writing.
- Teachers will provide regular feedback on letter formation and ensure consistency across all handwriting instruction.

## Handwriting Across the Curriculum

Handwriting is not confined to discrete handwriting sessions but is an expectation across all subjects. Pupils are encouraged to apply their handwriting skills consistently in all written tasks, ensuring high standards of presentation in every subject.

Teachers reinforce handwriting expectations in English, maths, science, and the foundation subjects, reminding pupils of correct posture, grip, and letter formation. Where necessary, additional handwriting interventions are provided to support pupils who need further practice.

By the end of Year 6, all pupils should be able to write fluently, consistently, and at speed, enabling them to focus on the content and quality of their writing without being hindered by transcription difficulties.

# EYFS and Key Stage 1 Lesson Structure and Expectations

In Early Years and Key Stage 1, the focus is to develop the foundational skills for handwriting, ensuring that children learn correct **pencil grip, posture, and letter formation**. This enables them to build a strong foundation for fluent and legible handwriting as they move through their schooling.

By Year 2, children begin learning **letter joins** to increase fluency. Handwriting is taught **at least three times per week** with the aim of making handwriting automatic and efficient.

Across the school a typical handwriting lesson lasts around **15 – 20 minutes**, ensuring focused, high-quality practice. However, in the Autumn term of Early Years, lessons may be longer as handwriting is taught in place of writing for the first few weeks. This allows children additional time to develop the fine and gross motor skills necessary for early writing, as well as to establish correct pencil grip, posture, and letter formation from the outset.

## Lesson Structure

Handwriting lessons follow a structured approach to support children in developing gross motor skills, fine motor skills, correct posture, and handwriting fluency. The structure is tailored to the developmental needs of the children. **See example overviews:**

Autumn term EYFS						
1st Half Term	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6
<b>Posture Base (PE warm ups) (section 3)</b>	Curly-ups Tightrope trail Cross crawling	Bridge games Marching	Tummy skittles Chair push-ups	Crab walk Step-ups Staves	Cross crawling Tightrope trail	Curly-ups
<b>Bilateral Coordination (section 3)</b>	Lazy 8	Simon says Keep it in the air	Bubble tag	Goalpost skittles	Cross pass ball Simon says	Messy games Goalpost skittles
<b>Sensory Perception (section 3)</b>	Feely bag	Messy play	Imprint	Buried treasure	What's the fabric?	Printing
<b>Hand &amp; Finger Strength (section 3)</b>	Clothes pegs	Finger football	Hole punch Posting frenzy	Rock pots	Finger escape	Egg box share Wheelbarrows
<b>Non-Pencil Lessons (section 4)</b>	Straight pattern family (long wallpaper strips, chalk, paint, crayons, water)	Diagonal pattern family (long wallpaper strips, chalk, paint, crayons, water)	Curves pattern family (long wallpaper strips, chalk, paint, crayons, water)	Tunnels pattern family (long wallpaper strips, chalk, paint, crayons, water)	Mixed pattern family (long wallpaper strips, chalk, paint, crayons, water)	Mixed pattern family (long wallpaper strips, chalk, paint, crayons, water)
<b>Paper &amp; Pencil Lessons</b>	Name writing					
<b>Letter Shape Lessons (beginner/phonics progression)</b>	S I A A T P P	I I N N M D D	G G O a C C K K	c k E u R r	H H B B F L L	# B G
<b>Sitting &amp; Posture Lesson</b>	Getting ready to handwrite - Posture & the Sitting Song (section 3)					
<b>Hand Dominance Lessons (section 6)</b>	Baseline assessment Stage 1 crossing the midline		Stage 2 Which is the dominant hand?			
<b>Pencil Grip Lessons</b>	Getting ready to handwrite- Pencil grip lessons Stage 2-3 (section 7)					

Spring term Year 3						
1st Half Term	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6
<b>Shoulder stability (section 3)</b>	Up we go	Chair push ups	Hand pushes	Bear hug	Up we go	Desk push ups
<b>Crossing the mid line (section 3)</b>	Butterflies	Scissor cuts	Windscreen wipers	Lazy 8	Paper chase	Scissor cuts
<b>Wrist strength &amp; mobility (section 3)</b>	Wrist lifts	Doorknob turns	Wrist circles	Wrist lifts	Doorknob turns	Wrist circles
<b>Whole hand (section 3)</b>	Rolling pencil	Walk & flip	Super hands	Rolling pencil	Super hands	Walk & flip
<b>Thumb &amp; finger (section 3)</b>	Tips only	Bow politely	Finger bend	Circles	Tips only	Bow politely
<b>Letter &amp; number formation</b>	Refine skills					
	Whole words Capital letters & mixed letter families & bottom exit letter joins	Whole words Capital letters & mixed letter families & top exit letter joins	Whole words Capital letters & mixed letter families & joins			
<b>Sitting &amp; Posture Lesson</b>	Getting ready to handwrite - Posture & the Sitting Song (section 4)					
<b>Pencil Grip Lessons</b>	Getting ready to handwrite- Pencil grip lessons Stage 2-3 (section 4B)					
<b>Paper Grip &amp; Position Lesson</b>	Learning to handwrite—paper position & tilt lesson (section 4B)					

## Gross & Fine Motor Skills

For each session, tasks are provided in the year group packs. The tasks are designed to support the development of posture, bilateral coordination, sensory perception, wrist, hand & finger strength and shoulder stability.

## Teacher Modelling

All teacher modelling should be done with a combination of the IWB, big movements (Air Writing), handwriting flip chart and a visualiser. The gradual release model is used for all modelling across the school.

### The Gradual Release Model

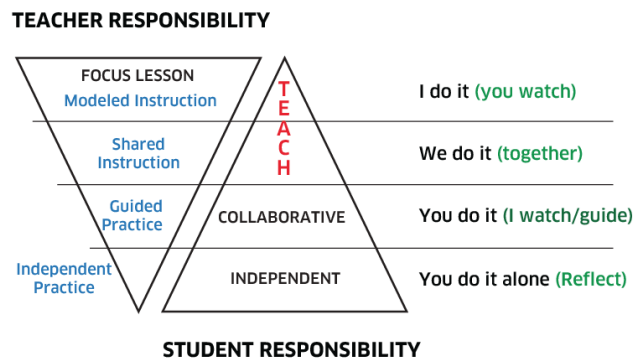


Figure 1: The Gradual Release Model

## Tummy Time

In EYFS, deliberate practise of formation can take place on the carpet, where children lay on their stomachs. This is designed to significantly improve core strength, which is essential for gross motor skills and, later, fine motor skills and good pencil control.

## Application of handwriting

Any application of handwriting should take place at tables. Specific handwriting books are provided for this. All staff will circulate the room to live mark and offer instant feedback, including correcting errors or misconceptions. Pupils who need additional practice may take part in interventions.

## Retrieval practice & consolidation

Each session begins with a brief reminder of the specific handwriting focus for that lesson. This may include letter joins, consistent letter sizing, maintaining a uniform slant, or improving fluency. Teachers set clear expectations, reinforcing prior learning to ensure progression.

To activate prior knowledge and warm up, pupils may air-write letters or trace words on mini whiteboards. This ensures they are thinking about letter shapes and movements before beginning their written work.

## Assessment

It is essential that teaching staff are assessing children's handwriting continuously throughout the year as, if incorrect formation is not picked up at the earliest opportunity, children will embed this and it will be much more difficult to unpick later. Assessment should take two forms; formative and summative.

### Formative Assessment

It is expected that, when practising handwriting, children are not left unsupervised to do so; practise does not always make perfect. Instead, teaching staff should be circulating and observing the formation of letters, delivering regular feedback and 1:1 intervention 'in the moment', offering more modelling followed by extended deliberate practise of the letter or join they are forming inaccurately. This should also be the case during writing lessons, where handwriting, alongside the lesson's key objective, should be at the forefront of our minds when offering feedback.

### Summative Assessment

In all year groups, Teach Handwriting assessments are completed throughout each 6week block. These provide a valuable insight into individual pupil progress in all areas of gross & fine motor as well as in letter formation, sitting position and pencil grip. They highlight any difficulties with letter formation, joining or handwriting fluency. Throughout the programme there are planned opportunities for consolidation, targeted re-teaching and reinforcement to address these needs before moving on.

Children who are not demonstrating 'security' and/or 'automaticity' at these checkpoints will receive appropriate support. This may include intervention linked to fine or gross motor skills, such as shoulder stability, crossing the midline, or tripod grip. Intervention plans are also provided in the pack.

In Key Stage 2, assessment is primarily formative and ongoing, with teachers monitoring handwriting regularly across subjects. If concerns arise—such as persistent issues with fluency, stamina, or legibility—more formal assessment and intervention may be used to identify and address the specific barrier to progress.

## Interventions

Interventions are targeted, timely, and based on clear diagnostic assessment.

## Identifying Needs

Children who are not meeting age-related expectations in handwriting are identified through regular teacher assessments, handwriting checklists, and ongoing classroom observation. Particular difficulties may include:

- Letter formation and size
- Pencil grip and pressure
- Posture and hand dominance
- Underlying fine or gross motor challenges (e.g. shoulder stability, midline crossing, bilateral integration)

All staff are expected to act promptly on handwriting concerns. Early intervention and consistency are key. Handwriting support is not seen as an optional extra but a fundamental part of literacy development.

If a difficulty is identified, the class teacher—in collaboration with the SENCO will plan a tailored intervention based on the pupil's specific barriers to progress. This may include:

- Daily fine motor skill development tasks
- Targeted handwriting practice using the Teach Handwriting interventions
- Occupational therapy-informed exercises (e.g. shoulder stability or bilateral integration activities)
- Adult modelling, air writing, and scaffolded visualiser demonstrations
- Pre-writing shapes and motor patterning for pupils not yet ready for full letter formation

Handwriting interventions will be organised depending on the needs of the child. They may include short daily sessions during early morning work, focused intervention slots led by a teacher or teaching assistant, additional handwriting-focused group work, or targeted support delivered through pre- or post-teaching connected to classroom writing activities.

## Developing Fine Motor Foundations

Handwriting difficulties often stem from wider physical development delays. Staff use structured programmes and resources to address areas such as:

- Fine motor skills (e.g. using tweezers, threading, manipulating dough)
- Core and shoulder strength (e.g. crawling, weight-bearing activities)
- Crossing the midline and bilateral coordination (e.g. body movement games, obstacle courses)

- Pencil grip development through play-based motor activities and adapted writing tools

## **Handwriting & Fine Motor Skills**

Handwriting and Fine motor skills involve the use of the smaller muscle of the hands, commonly in activities like using pencils, scissors, construction with bricks, doing up buttons and opening lunch boxes.

Fine motor skill efficiency significantly influences the quality of the task outcome as well as the speed of task performance. Efficient fine motor skills require a number of independent skills to work together to appropriately manipulate the object or perform the task. Before looking at the following skills and related intervention activities it may be a good idea to review the child's posture and seating.

### **How can you tell if a child has fine motor skill difficulties at a glance?**

- Avoidance and/or disinterest of fiddly finger skills
- Preferring physical activity (again to avoid sit down tasks)
- Interest in 'passive' activities such as IT
- No interest in pencil or scissors skills
- Being 'bossy' in play and asking others to "draw a cat for me"
- Not persisting in the face of a challenge
- Waiting for parents to dress them or clean their teeth rather than trying themselves

## **Crossing the Midline**

The midline is an imaginary line running down the middle of the body dividing the body into halves (left and right).

Crossing the midline is where the movement of a body part crosses over the midline from one side to the other side of the body to complete a task.

Crossing of the body midline begins as early as infancy, when a baby reaches out with both hands to grasp a large object. This could be for a ball that is positioned slightly to one side of their body, the baby will end up crossing the midline to reach and take hold of the ball.

The automatic crossing of the midline is required for mature and complex movements. The child who has difficulties with midline crossing will lean over to the right or left when writing on that side rather than rotate their upper body.

For support see teacher packs.

## **Bilateral Integration**

Children may tend to use the left hand on the left side of the body and the right hand on the right side of the body as they play. Initially this could be the hand closer to the object. However, over time they develop the skills to use both sides of their body simultaneously. This could mean when both sides are doing the same thing i.e. when using a rolling pin or when one side is doing one movement and the opposite side is doing another for example one hand could be using a pen or a pair of scissors whilst the hand holding/turning the paper.

Bilateral integration is also an important factor in helping a child develop the skill of crossing the midline.

For support see teacher packs.

## **Shoulder Stability**

Shoulder stability is the ability of the surrounding muscles to support the shoulder and allows for accurate hand functions. This develops from an early age as a baby lies on their tummy and takes weight through their arms and will continue to develop as they begin to crawl.

Shoulder stability is an important developmental milestone for children who are learning to colour and write. When toddlers start to scribble they start by using their whole arm. Then, as the child progresses developmentally, they begin to rest their forearm on the table. This helps them to start using their hand and fingers (instead of their shoulder and arm) to control the crayon.

Good shoulder stability can make it easier to control the smaller movements of the hands and fingers.

Babies who don't crawl or don't crawl for very long or can't tolerate "tummy time" can often be delayed in developing shoulder stability. This makes it harder for them to learn how to write and they may complain that they are too tired or that their arm hurts when writing. This is because they are using their entire arm to try to make a tiny letter, which is very hard work.

Children with delayed or poor shoulder stability, you may also find it hard to use scissors, have poor dressing skills and struggle to use items such as cutlery.

For support see teacher packs.

## Pincer Grip

An infant will initially hold objects within the palm of their hands after being raked into the palm by the fingers. They will then develop on to picking up and holding objects in a pincer grasp. The development of grasp is influenced by a child's growing interest in objects and desire to hold them.

The pincer grasp is defined as a grasp that uses the pads then tips of the index finger and thumb to pick up and grasp objects. You will start to see this grasp the most as a baby masters feeding itself and can pick up smaller pieces of food such as circle cereal with their fingers instead of the palm of their hand.

While it may seem like second nature to an adult, to a baby this is an important milestone in fine motor development. The pincer grasp represents the coordination of brain and muscles that's necessary to help them gain increasing independence.

A baby will typically develop this skill between the ages of 9 and 10 months, although this can vary. Children develop at different rates.

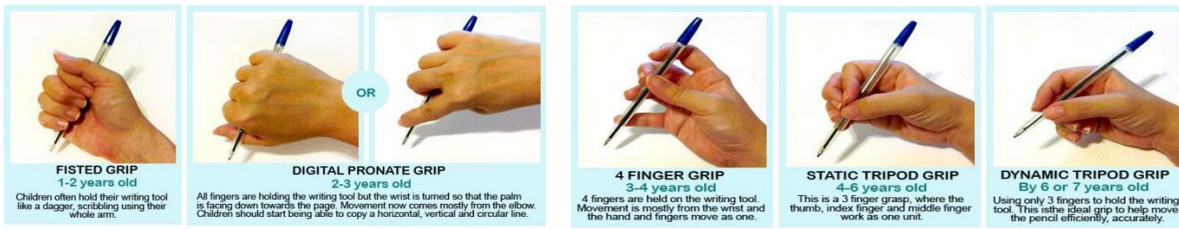
The pincer grasp is an essential grasp to develop as it allows for more refined control as over time the child will be using a pincer grasp for important tasks such as holding a pen/pencil, using cutlery, buttons, zips.

## Pencil Grip

A good pencil grasp/grip is one which allows the child to keep the wrist steady and make small movements of the fingers to move the pen tip in different direction to create short straight and curved lines. An immature or poor pencil grip tends to block the finger movements, and the movements to form letters will come from the wrist and/or the arm instead. This can lead to pain and fatigue. It is important that children displaying inefficient grasp patterns are corrected and encouraged to adopt a functional, developmentally appropriate grasp pattern.

There are different pencil grasps, shown below, but one that is deemed most effective is the tripod grasp, where the thumb, index and middle fingers are holding the pencil. There are some variations this grasp which have been found to be almost equally efficient. If a grasp enables the writing to be legible and efficient, it is considered functional.

As a child grows, they will naturally hold their crayons and pencils in different ways. The way in which a child holds their crayon/pencil depends on how 'ready' their shoulder and arm muscles are. It is important for children to go through stages of pencil grasp. Most children will develop an efficient pencil grasp by using and mastering the following grasps:



These grasps are common in pencil grasp and fine motor development. Putting pencils into little hands before they are ready may lead to immature and inefficient pencil grasps. Instead, engage children in age-appropriate activities to help develop the upper body, shoulder, arm and wrist muscles. Activities such as jumping, crawling, scribbling on vertical blackboards, shovelling sand with a spade, playing with play-dough and doing arts and crafts are all great motor activities to lay the foundations for a good pencil grasp.

## Pre-writing Skills

Pre-writing skills are the underlying skills children need to develop before they are able to write. Many children develop these skills naturally through play.

Early development such as tummy time, rolling, crawling, standing all naturally help a child gain good core strength which will progress to help them sit upright, have strong neck to hold the head upright, strong shoulders to facilitate arm and wrist movements and strong hand/finger strength to grasp objects. These skills also contribute to the child's ability to hold and use a pencil, and the ability to draw, write, copy, and colour later on.

Pre-writing skills are the lines and strokes (pre-writing shapes) a child needs to master before learning how to write the alphabet. These are the pencil strokes that most letters, numbers and early drawings are made up of. They are typically mastered in sequential order, and to an age specific level. These strokes include the following strokes: |, —, O, +, /, square, \, X, and Δ.

Pre-writing skills are essential for the child to be able to develop the ability to hold and move a pencil fluently and effectively and therefore produce legible writing.