



Bill Quay Primary School

Rights, Respect and Resilience

Handwriting Policy

1. Aims & Rationale

1.1 Aims

This policy aims to outline Bill Quay Primary school's approach to the teaching of handwriting.

Handwriting remains an important life skill as a tool for learning, self-expression, and communicating language. We recognise that children's ability to handwrite effectively for the rest of their lives depends on the firm foundations established in this primary school.

Our aims are that by the end of their primary education, pupils will:

1. Produce legible, fluent and appropriately joined handwriting, with consistent size, spacing and alignment
2. Develop speed and ease so handwriting does not inhibit writing expression
3. Demonstrate correct posture, grip, and pencil control
4. Maintain high standards of handwriting across all curriculum subjects
5. Receive targeted support if they struggle, with scaffolding, intervention, or assistive tools
6. Understand that writing by hand is still a valuable skill even in a digital age

1.2 Rationale

- Handwriting (as part of transcription) is a foundational skill: fluent, legible handwriting frees up cognitive load for composition
- The DfE Writing Framework emphasises that from Reception onwards, children should learn **consistent letter formation**, which over time becomes fluent and automatic, enabling higher-level writing skills
- The National Handwriting Association (NHA) guidance reminds us that a school-wide, consistent handwriting approach ensures clarity, equity, and continuity for students and staff
- Good handwriting supports presentation, pride, and confidence
- Some children may require differentiated support (SEND, motor difficulties); a strong policy helps to plan inclusive provision
- This policy document draws upon the advice found within the **DFE Writing Framework (July 2025)** and the **National Handwriting Association: Developing a handwriting policy – A practical guide for schools (September 2025)**.

2. The importance of Handwriting

Handwriting is writing done with the hand using a pencil, pen, digital stylus or other marking instrument. It is used as a mode of expressing and communicating language. Handwriting involves using a recognised system of symbols. It is sometimes referred to as ‘Language by hand’.

Handwriting is a taught skill and involves:

- learning to use a recognised system of symbols
- carefully structured and consistent instruction
- regular opportunities for practice

Handwriting is an integral component of the English programmes of study for Key Stages 1 and 2. The programmes describe two dimensions of writing:

1. Transcription (spelling and handwriting)
2. Composition (articulating ideas and structuring them in speech and writing)

The curriculum demands that teaching should develop competence in both dimensions, as writing down ideas fluently depends on effective transcription. This relationship defines the role of handwriting as a functional tool in the writing process.

3. Principles & Key Features

These principles draw on both the DfE Writing Framework and NHA guidance:

- **Early, systematic teaching:** staff should introduce handwriting as part of transcription from Reception. The Writing Framework underlines that handwriting begins early and must be developed with intention
- **Oral rehearsal before writing:** pupils should speak their sentences aloud, which supports planning before putting pen to paper (a DfE recommendation)
- **A unified, simple style:** the school should adopt a single, developmentally appropriate handwriting style (with clear letter formation, exit strokes, and “break letters” as necessary) so that all staff and pupils have consistency. NHA emphasises the need for a consistent school-wide style

- **Progressive sequence:** over time, pupils should move from un-joined print (or emergent forms) to joined handwriting, as readiness permits
- **Deliberate practice with feedback:** pupils need regular short practice sessions, modelled exemplars, scaffolding, and teacher feedback
- **Integration across curriculum:** handwriting should not be confined to “handwriting lessons” — expectations for neat, legible writing apply in all subjects
- **Differentiation and support:** for pupils with slower fine motor development, motor difficulties or other barriers, staff should adapt expectations, offer scaffolds (e.g. pencil grips, lined paper, overlays), and consider additional interventions. NHA guidance foregrounds inclusion
- **Modelled exemplar and staff training:** teachers and teaching assistants should model high-quality handwriting; CPD should ensure all staff understand progression, modelling, posture, and scaffolding techniques
- **Assessment and monitoring:** this should track pupils’ progress, diagnose difficulties, and use data to inform teaching, grouping, or interventions.

4. Scope & Where It Sits

This policy applies across the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) through Key Stage 2. It forms part of the English / Literacy policy, but expectations for handwriting quality apply in all written work across subjects. It links to other policies (e.g., SEND / Inclusion; Presentation; Marking; Assessment). It underpins classroom practice, curriculum planning, staff training, and intervention.

5. Handwriting Plan

5.1 Font style

As the National Handwriting Association states, learners benefit from being taught a simple letter formation with an exit flick where appropriate. Learners will also benefit from learning each letterform within a letter family which will reinforce correct letter formations and may avoid potential confusions with letters such as b and d. When learners produce an exit flick for letters that end on the right, it gives the potential to join when they are ready to do so. As the national curriculum states, pupils should know which letters are best left un-joined. A simple way to think of this is to use letters which end on the left as break letters, i.e. those which do not need to be joined.

The agreed style of font is therefore shown below:

Print letter formation

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

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

Joined letters

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

The break letters are **b, g, j, p, s** and **y** for they have no exit flick by which to join.

5.2 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

6. Handwriting in the Curriculum Years 1 - 6

The National Curriculum (NC) programmes of study outline the statutory handwriting outcomes for each year of the curriculum and provide additional non-statutory guidance.

	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 • learn unjoined handwriting before they start 	<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. Whatever is being used should allow the pupil to hold it easily and correctly so that bad habits are avoided.</p>

	<p>using some of the diagonal and horizontal strokes that are needed to join letters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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>Writing is likely to develop at a slower pace than reading at this stage. This is because pupils need to encode the sounds they hear in words (spelling skills), develop the physical skill needed for handwriting, and learn how to organise their ideas in writing.</p> <p>Left-handed pupils should receive specific teaching to meet their needs.</p>
<p>Year 2, Age 6–7</p>	<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 un-joined • 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>
<p>Years 3–4, Age 7–9</p>	<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 un-joined • 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. 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>
<p>Years 5–6, Age 10–11</p>	<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. They should also be taught to use an un-joined 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>

7. Agreed Language

Using an agreed vocabulary for the teaching of handwriting helps to avoid confusion when staff communicate with one another and with pupils.

The same words should be used throughout school with some slight adjustments for the very youngest children if teaching the meaning of the words is required.

7.1 Positional Language

An essential part of teaching patterning and letter formation is ensuring that young children really understand positional language. The youngest children may need to be taught the meaning of the following terms through teacher talk and modelling.

Terms include:

Up, down, above, below, under, top, bottom, across, around and between.

Base line (the continuous line upon which the main bodies of the letters rest)

7.2 Letter formation language

Agreed terms:

Capital letters

Lower-case letters

Ascenders (to describe tall letters)

Descenders (to describe tail letters)

Short letters (those without an ascender or descender)

Letter bodies/body (the rounded or arched part of the letter which is not the ascender or descender)

Exit flick (the final flick on a letter in the forward direction)

7.3 Joining letters

The National Curriculum refers to diagonal and horizontal strokes needed to join letters and adjacent letters which are best left un-joined.

Diagonal stokes – join from letters which finish on the baseline

Horizontal strokes – join from letters which finish at the top

Break letters – those which, when adjacent to each other, are best left un-joined

The break letters are **b, g, j, p, s** and **y** for they have no exit flick by which to join.

8. Rationale for development of skills

Handwriting is a complex skill which requires many component skills to be successful.

Below is a summary of the component skills required.

8.1 Handwriting as a movement or motor skill

Children need to be physically and developmentally ready before they begin to write. This includes both gross and fine motor areas:

- Gross motor factors: core strength, control and postural stability
- Motor planning skills
- Development of a consistent hand preference
- Fine motor factors: good wrist and hand function, finger dexterity
- Development of a pincer grip
- A functional grip on the pencil

8.2 Handwriting as a perceptual skill

Every action we perform involves the senses and perception and interpretation of the information they supply. Handwriting requires very fine perceptual judgements to be made and linked together. Visual perception and visual memory are two key areas that impact handwriting.

8.3 Handwriting as a visual motor skill

Visual motor integration consists of coordinating visual perceptual skills together with gross and fine motor movement. This enables a child to visually observe a letter or shape and then make the required movements to reproduce that letter or shape with a pencil on paper. Before children are developmentally ready to learn letter formation, they need to be able to copy and draw simple geometric shapes including the oblique cross X.

8.4 Handwriting as a cognitive skill

Unlike other movement skills, handwriting is language based and involves learning the conventions of a written script. Other cognitive components include:

- An interest in talk and communication through mark making
- Sufficient cognitive ability to pay attention and follow instructions
- Letter recognition and remembering shapes and patterns for letters
- An understanding of prepositional language such as up, down, in front, behind, top, bottom so that the child can follow verbal handwriting instructions.

8.5 Self-esteem and motivation

Handwriting can be a difficult skill for some children to master. Motivation and engagement are essential to maintain self-esteem for all, but especially for those who struggle. The way handwriting is introduced at the very beginning will have a lasting effect on the child's confidence.

8.6 Integration of skills

Handwriting requires the simultaneous integration of all the above components, rather like the instruments in an orchestra all playing together. The stage at which this becomes possible will vary for each child and be affected by factors such as early experiences/ opportunities, interest levels, motor, sensory and cognitive development and differing rates of maturity.

9. Development of skills in the EYFS

Before children begin to learn letter shapes, they need to develop the necessary skills, stamina and motivation. This preparation for writing starts in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which begins at birth and ends at 5 years (usually the end of Reception).

The Early Learning Goals which relate to handwriting are Physical Development and Literacy.

Physical Development ELG: Fine Motor Skills

Children at the expected level of development will

- Hold a pencil effectively in preparation for fluent writing – using the tripod grip in almost all cases
- Begin to show accuracy and care when drawing

Literacy ELG: Writing

Children at the expected level of development will

- Write recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed
- Spell words by identifying sounds in them and representing the sound with a letter or letters
- Write simple phrases and sentences that can be read by others

9.1 Supporting documentation

Birth to 5 Matters is the non-statutory document for the EYFS from the Early Years Coalition which Gateshead Local Authority advocates. Within this document, the word ‘writing’ is mentioned several times and encourages practitioners to ensure children have access to mark-making tools and opportunities to mark -make and write.

Development Matters is a non-statutory document aimed at providing early years practitioners with guidance on how to implement an effective curriculum.

On page 67, Development Matters details additional guidance when observing children using a comfortable grip when holding pens and pencils. On page 70, it goes on to say that practitioners should continuously check how children are holding pencils for writing. Under the Literacy area of Development Matters (page 80), there are suggestions for how to motivate children to write, such as making homemade books or having clipboards and paper in the outdoor area so children can take notes or write lists. The guidance goes on to say that practitioners should help children learn to form letters accurately in addition to understanding the language of direction in order to form letters.

9.2 Overarching principles

These principles link the distinctive ethos of the EYFS with a developmental approach to handwriting recommending the following:

- There is a shared understanding of good practice in developing handwriting
- Parents are informed partners in the development of skills
- This understanding informs the programmes of learning
- The ways of learning are in accord with the EYFS ethos
- Skilled observation is used to plan learning for the needs of the unique child

- Provision includes both adult-focused and child-initiated opportunities.

9.3 Key points of practice: preparation for writing

Movement

To develop good handwriting, a child needs strength and stability in their body. This gross motor control can be developed in the playground and in PE sessions, for example, crawling, jumping, running, hopping, arm circling and ball skills.

On joining reception, some children may need teaching and practice in using and manoeuvring their thumb, wrist and shoulder muscles in the way they need for handwriting.

Children should therefore

- Build the physical skills through exercises to develop muscle strength within the wrists, fingers, thumb and shoulders whilst learning the movement required for letter formation.
- Use playdough, threading and finger exercises to develop fine motor skills and finger strength.
- Learn movements needed to form letters, practising these movements through whole body movements, developing their muscles in their arms, hands and shoulders through dance and physical exercise.

Making patterns

Making patterns and exploring patterns is a useful introduction to letter formation. In patterning, children are making and repeating the movements they need to make the letters. With their repetitive nature, patterns also emphasise the rhythmic movement of writing.

The patterns can be made in a multitude of materials that provide variety, reinforce movements already experienced, and can be a part of group projects and artwork.

1. Pattern making should be developed in young children through whole body movements which practice the essential patterns, including: up and down, round and round, over and under, making curves, zigzags, spirals, figures of eight, backwards, forwards and sideways. Music, dance and outdoor play offer many opportunities to practise these.

2. The next stage is to practice patterns through mark-making and modelling. They might be made with fingers in sand, lentils, foam, paste and paint or in the air; on biscuits with tubes of icing; rolled from plastercine or dough; made with wool or thread.
3. Make patterns on paper using paint, with brushes, crayons, chalk or felt tips. Paper should have no lines at this stage.



9.4 When to teach letter formation

Letter formation teaching will be guided by observation of individual children. Only those children who are observed to be forming pre-writing patterns accurately and demonstrating a secure tripod grip, will be ready to begin learning the letter formation families.

9.5 Learning to write names

The letters in a child's own name are the ones they will use on a regular basis, so teaching these will be a priority when learning to form letters for handwriting.

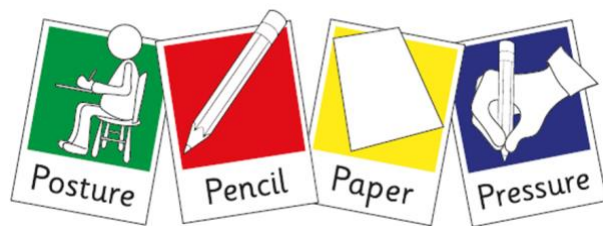
9.6 Handwriting and phonics.

We teach children to read and write Set 1 sounds from the start of Reception as part of their Read Write Inc. (RWI) Phonics lessons. Children first learn to form letters while they learn to read Set 1 letter-sounds in Reception. As soon as they can read Set 1 sounds, we teach a separate daily 10-minute handwriting lesson. These handwriting lessons are at a different time from the Read Write Inc. lesson. As part of a phonics session, the phoneme grapheme correspondence will be taught but this is separate and in addition to a handwriting session.

We start teaching separate handwriting lessons as soon as children can read Set 1 sounds from the phonics programme. At this point, they will be taught letters in handwriting families. Each

family has a common formation. Any handwriting which does take place within the phonics session (whilst children write or spell the sounds they can hear) should be carefully monitored by the teacher to ensure that the formation being used is accurate. The correct letter formation will always be modelled by the teacher within the phonics session, using the agreed terminology from the RWI scheme.

10. The process of handwriting – P Checks



Effective handwriting practice has two dimensions: Preparation (Process) and Teaching steps (Product). Preparation involves setting up the optimum conditions for successful learning. This can be summarised as the P checks – posture, pencil, paper and pressure.

The P Checks need to be gradually explained to children as soon as they are ready to sit at a table to write. This ensures that good handwriting habits are established from the start and become automatic.

10.1 Posture

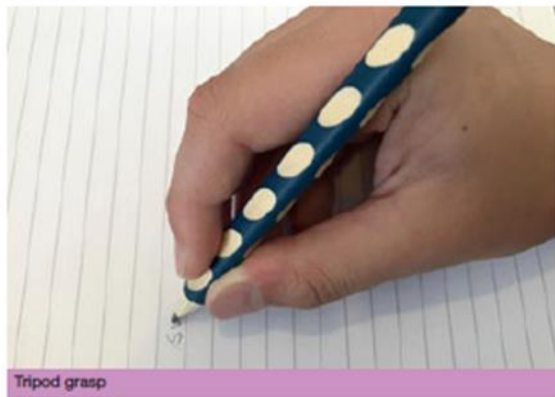
- Back supported by the chair
- Slight tilt forwards
- Hips, knees and ankles at right angles
- Feet flat on the floor
- Arms resting comfortably on the table
- Tummy – a fist's distance from the table
- Other hand used to stabilise paper
- Eyes – ruler's length away from the desk



10.2 Pencil (grip/grasp)

A functional grip combines a balance of control, freedom and comfort in order to produce a legible script for the required duration.

The tripod grasp is the optimal grip. It must be supported by a stable wrist resting on the writing surface and positioned below the writing line.

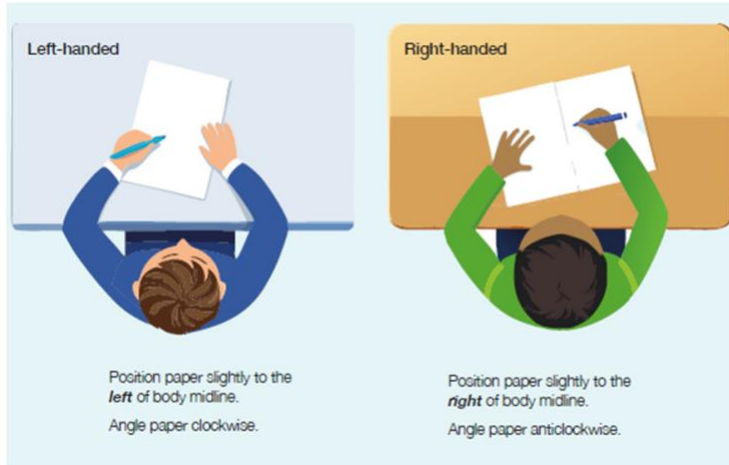


Points to note when teaching pencil grip:

- Children need to be developmentally ready before being expected to use a pencil
- Fine motor strength and coordination need to have been developed
- There needs to be a choice of pencils and pens at each stage of development
- Pencils are to be held 2cm from the tip
- Grip should be supported by a stable wrist, resting on the desk.

10.3 Paper

Good positioning of the paper needs to be taught and reinforced with children. The position of the paper in relation to the body is shown in the diagram below.



- The paper should be slanted parallel to the writing arm at a comfortable distance from the edge of the table.
- The other hand should be a “helper hand,” holding the paper still.
- Children need to be shown how to move the paper upwards as the writing moves down the page.
- A single sheet of paper should be paperclipped to card to provide more stability.

10.4 Pressure

Pressure refers to the force applied through the pencil to mark the paper. Ideally, this should leave a clear trace on the paper, which is neither too faint or too dark, and flow along the line rhythmically.

When learning to write, pencil pressure can vary depending on the child, their development and the tools being used.

Points to note when teaching:

- Begin writing sessions with warm up and hand relaxation exercises to develop the muscles
- Observe the whole-body positioning and grip on the pencil and correct where necessary
- Experiment with pressure – children to try and make light marks and dark marks
- Provide a range of pencils, pens and adaptive equipment as necessary

11. Key Resources

11.1 Pencils

Children with well-developed fine motor skills will generally manage with standard pencils, but for children with difficulties, a well-chosen design can offer support.

The choice should consider:

- Pencil shapes – triangular and hexagonal
- Tactile qualities – smooth and textured bodies
- Sizes – variety of widths, lengths and weights
- Lead grading – hard and soft leads
- Designs – ergonomically designed mechanical pencils for both left and right handers

A selection of pencils will be available for pupils to try and choose from if they are experiencing difficulties with their writing.

11.2 Pens

At all stages of learning, children should have access to a wide range of mark makers for different purposes. Towards the end of primary school, children need to practise writing in pen as preparation for the next stage in their handwriting journey.

In Years 5 and 6, the National Curriculum states that children should be able to choose a writing implement best-suited to a task. Therefore, by years 5 and 6, children (who are ready to do so) should begin to use pen within handwriting sessions and, when ready, writing tasks as required.

A ballpoint pen will be the type of pen used by most children, however, quick-drying gel pens are to be used by left-handed writers to prevent smudging.

11.3 Exercise books – line spacing

Line spacing within exercise books needs to suit the natural size of the child's writing and their stage of writing development.

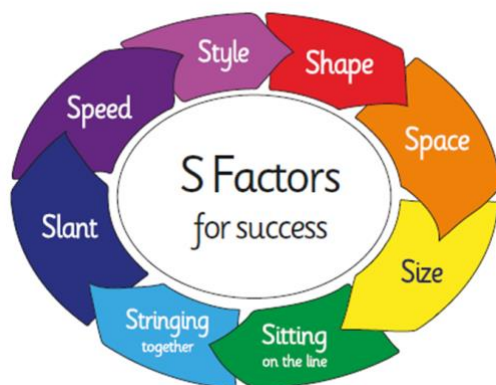
The progression in the provision of lines is based on what is required to support the teaching steps (S Factors):

1. Beginner writers: blank paper to focus on formation of the letters
2. Secure formation: a single baseline for letters to sit upon
3. Writing more: faint lines with sufficient space for ascenders and capital letters (20mm, 15mm or 12mm)
4. Understanding alignment: double lines for a short period to support understanding
5. Developing fluency: back to normal lines with adequate spacing (20mm, 15mm, 12mm, 10mm, or 8mm depending on the pupil).

In EYFS and Key Stage 1, developing writers should have widely spaced lines so that the writing is never cramped. There should be lines no smaller than 12mm being used by the end of Key Stage 1.

If writers are ready to move to smaller line spacing, this should be gradual, and pupils should move from 12mm to 10mm within years 3 and 4 if they are ready to do so. In years 5 and 6, the majority of pupils will be using either 10mm or 8mm line spacing if this appropriate.

12. The Teaching Steps - S Factors



Each S Factor represents a step in the developmental sequence, beginning with learning letter formation (Shape)

Children must be taught how to form the letters of the alphabet accurately from the very beginning. This means knowing the right starting point for each letter and following the correct movement pathways.

Letter formation families

Teaching the letters in movement groups reduces the learning load and provides reinforcement of basic movement patterns.

As letter formation is taught in **Reception**, the letter families will be introduced here too. The movements of letters should be practised in playful ways including painting, modelling, lasers, wands, air writing, salt and sand trays, dance and music.







While learning letter formation, children will use blank paper if they are writing in a book until their letter formation is secure.



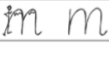

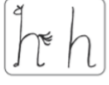


Year 1 handwriting requirements also include the correct formation of numbers which can also be incorporated into the letter formation families (see below).







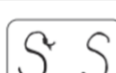
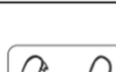
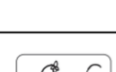
l t i u y j	1 4
r n m p h b k	2 3 5
c o a d g q s e f	6 8 9 0
z v w x	7





Letter formation families with numbers

The “patter” which accompanies each letter formation can be found below. This is a revised version of the RWI handwriting formation phrases.

	Down the long leg and flick
	Down the tower and flick, across the tower
	Down the body and flick, dot the head
	Down and under, up to the top then down and flick
	Down a horn, up a horn and under its head
	Down its body and curl, dot the head

	Down its back, back up and curl over the arm
	Down Nobby, back up, over his net and flick
	Down Maisie, back up and over the mountain, over the mountain and flick
	Down the plait, back up and over the pirate's face
	Down the head to the hooves, back up and over its back then flick
	Down the laces to the heel, up and round the toe
	Down the kangaroo's body, up to curl round the tail, down the leg then flick

	Curl round the caterpillar
	All around the orange
	Round the apple, down the leaf and flick
	Round the dinosaur's bottom, up its tall neck and back down to its feet then flick
	Round her face, down her hair and give her a curl
	Round her head, up past her earrings, back down her hair and flick
	Curl up from the snake's head and then curl the other way
	Go up and round to lift off the top and then under to scoop out the egg.
	Over and down the stem and flick, cross for the leaves

	Across, diagonally down and across
	Down a wing and up a wing
	Down, up, down, up
	Down the arm and leg then down the other arm and leg

The capital letter for the child's name should be the first capital letter taught. This should take place in Reception class.

In Year 1 children should begin to form capital letters correctly, and these will be taught within handwriting sessions once children know their lower-case formation. The letter names for the capital letters will be used instead of the letter sound.



S for Space: between letters and words

There needs to be a small space between letters in a word. Exit flicks and joining strokes can provide this. There needs to be appropriate spaces between words for the sake of legibility. The spaces should be even, match the size of the writing and be about the same size as one letter o or two – oo.

Children need to gradually visualise a suitable space between words, but before this is established, a lolly stick or coffee stirrer can help. Using the traditional 'Finger space' isn't helpful in the long run as fingers grow bigger and writing gets smaller.



S for sitting on the line

Once children are secure with their letter formation, they need to learn where to position them. Sitting the letters on the writing line (base line) helps with legibility.



S for Size: the relative positioning of letters

After sitting, the children need to understand the relative sizing of letters.

Step 1: sorting plastic letters into groups - short, descenders and ascenders

Step 2: positioning the plastic letters correctly so the body of the letter sits on the base line



Step 3: 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. (see diagram below)

i u c a o e s r n m v w x z

l t d f b h k

y j g f q p A B C D

Step 4: Practising the spacing on double-lined paper follows next



To enable all letters to be appropriately aligned, the lines in all exercise books need to be sufficiently spaced to accommodate the child's natural writing size.

If the spacing is too narrow, writing becomes cramped and incorrectly aligned. A short period using simple double-lined paper will help scaffold learning of size and position. As the size of children's writing will vary, it is advisable to print this format in differing widths and use that which is most suitable for each child.

In Years 1–2, this will need to include 6mm, 5mm and 4mm spacings between the two lines. Children will need to use their eyes to judge the sizing of 'ascenders' and 'descenders'. Once this awareness of sizing becomes embedded, the child can return to using normal lines.



S for Stringing together - joining

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.’

There are three basic rules for joining:

- Diagonal - Letters which finish on the baseline join diagonally
- Horizontal - Letters which finish at the top join horizontally
- Unjoined or break letters - Some letters are best left unjoined.



Progression of joining:

Step 1: diagonal joins to letters without ascenders

ai, an, am, ar, au, aw, ac, ag, as,

ca, cu, co, ce, ci

da, du, di, do, de, dg

hu, hi, ho

in, ir

kip, kn, ke

ta, ti,

un, ui, up

Step 2: diagonal joins to letters with ascenders

ab, ul, it, th, ib, if, ub, ut

ck, ch, cl

it, if, il

mb,

th,

ub, ut, ul

Step 3: diagonal join from letter e

ea, en, em, eo, ep, ed, eg

Step 4: horizontal joins without ascenders

ou, on, oi, oo, or, oe, oa

ve, vi, vo, vv, va, vu

wo, wi, wa, we, wu

Step 5: horizontal joins with ascenders

ol, oh, ok, ob, ot

wh, wl

Step 6: joins and break letters

gap, bang, jump, yoga, pay, bag, base, sag, gas, yes, say

Once the basic join has been taught and practiced, the join can be used within words. These can be linked with spelling lists in order to give additional practice of both spelling and writing. Modelling and observing writing must still always take place.



In years 3 and 4, the national curriculum expects children to begin to be introduced to this step. A consistent slant helps the appearance of handwriting. A slightly forward slant is a natural movement for right-handers and helps improve fluency and speed.

Slant can be practiced through writing small words using letters l, h, b, t, u and y: hill, little, bible, belly etc. with a focus on parallel down strokes.

Speed

Speed and Style are the aspects of handwriting to be secured in Years 5 and 6.

Speed will not develop until the other S Factors have been embedded. Children need help in understanding that increasing speed can change the writing. More speed can improve rhythm and fluency, but too much can cause illegibility.

Children need to be taught that competent writers have two kinds of handwriting:

- Good quality, neat and used for more formal purposes e.g. letter writing, display work etc
- Fast/rough notetaking which is used when speed is required

Building speed takes short, regular practice of appropriate tasks: repeating words, phrases, then sentences and paragraphs.

Style

As handwriting develops, children should be encouraged to develop their own writing style that works for them individually but is also accessible to a reader.

Teaching will focus on how different styles can be used for different writing demands:

- Labels
- Decorative fonts
- Headings
- Block capitals
- Posters

13. Organisation of teaching

Handwriting skills need to be taught both as a timetabled discrete subject and through ongoing reinforcement of skills in everyday written language activities.

Lessons should be focussed, short and at regular intervals.

13.1 Structure of a session

In EYFS, KS1 and Lower KS2 a handwriting lesson should be taught daily and include the following:

- Sessions of 3 to 10 minutes depending on the pupils
- Warm-up / motor control exercise
- Review prior shapes / joins
- Teacher model (live or via visualiser)
- Guided pupil practice with scaffolding and feedback
- Independent practice
- Plenary / reflection (pupil self-check, peer-check, teacher check).

In Upper KS2, the above structure should be used, but lessons may be three times per week for between 15 and 20 minutes per session. This will be dependent on the needs of the children within the year group.

13.2 Integration with Phonics, Spelling & Composition

- Handwriting should be taught in addition to phonics/spelling lessons
- When pupils write sentences within phonics or spelling sessions, the teacher should prompt them to check their handwriting (spacing, consistency) before finishing
- Teachers must encourage pupils to read their writing back and check legibility.

13.3 Differentiation & Scaffolding

- For pupils who struggle with motor control, provide support such as: grips, raised-line paper, larger spacing, overlays, or sloped surfaces
- Use multisensory techniques (air writing, sky writing, tracing, finger movements).
- Work in small groups or one-to-one where needed
- Monitor fatigue—short, more frequent sessions may help
- For pupils with severe difficulties, consider use of technology (keyboard, speech-to-text) while still encouraging optimal handwriting where possible.

13.4 Modelling & Teacher Expectations

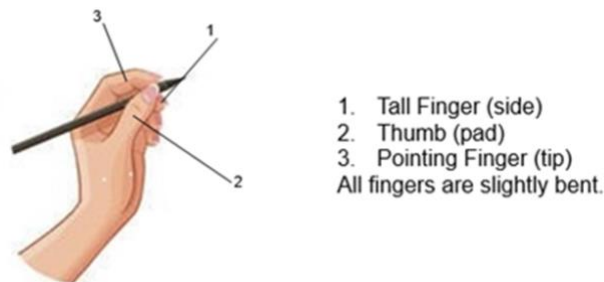
- All staff should model the school's agreed handwriting style in displays, marking and worksheets
- During live teaching, within lessons outside of handwriting, teachers should use the agreed handwriting style to model writing on boards, flipcharts or visualisers
- Teachers should plan for handwriting progression within writing units
- During marking or conferencing, staff should prompt pupils to improve their handwriting and if they notice incorrect formation, take immediate steps to address this, modelling the correct formation with the child and getting them to practise with the teacher observing.

14. Provision for left-handed writers

14.1 Writing Tool and Grip

In order to see as they write, and to prevent smudging, the lefthander should hold the pencil/pen at least 3 centimetres from the point. This can be indicated by a small elastic band around the desired area for grip which can be removed once the child is familiar with the position.

Aim for tripod grip: i.e.



This grip, taught in early stages along with sitting and paper position, should eliminate the need for 'hooked' hand. If this hasn't developed it can be remedied in the following ways:

- Vertical blackboard writing using handwriting patterns. This encourages full arm movement with greater freedom and a less cramped position.
- Frequent practice of large writing on paper should be provided.
- Sloping desktop board.
- Attention to correct sitting and paper position.

- Use of thick barrel pen, crayons, felt tip for writing patterns.



14.2 Seating

- Check that a left-hander is not sitting too close to the right of a right-hander. This will prevent their arms from colliding
- Some, but not all, left handers will find writing easier if they can sit on a higher chair BUT their feet are still firmly on the floor
- When copying a word, numbers, letters, writing patterns etc. a left-hander is helped if these are placed down the right-hand side of page.



14.3 Strategies

Writing Implement

- It can be harder for a left handed writer to write with a very fine nib. Offer pens and pencils with broader and more flexible nibs
- When using pens, avoid ink which appears very “wet” as this can be easily smudged. Do use ink which flows freely, to help reduce writing pressure which can lead to pain over longer pieces of written work

- Use softer leaded pencils e.g. 2B rather than HB to reduce writing pressure.
- Try pens and pencils with a differentiated barrel.



Grasp

- Ideally left-handers should hold the pen or pencil 2-3cm from the point to enable them to see round their fingers and avoid “hooking” with the writing hand or adopting an awkward neck posture when writing
- Try marking the distance with stickers, a line of nail varnish (clear works well if children are self-conscious) or a small elastic band wrapped round several times
- “The finger rule” – If the child places his index and middle fingers at the end of the sharpened part of the pencil, and then grasps the pencil ready to write above this, his fingers should be an appropriate distance from the point.

Paper Position

- Allow the child to tilt the paper slightly to the right. Around 45° is usually appropriate but allow the child to experiment until comfortable
- Left-handed writers may require more space at a shared desk or prefer to sit on the left of a shared desk so they do not bump arms with their peer when writing
- Provide left-handed pupils with a “Left Write Guide” mat (shown below) to use each day, to support positioning of the paper in relation to the body and arm.



15. Provision for SEND pupils

To support pupils with SEND regarding handwriting, there should be a focus on a multi-sensory approach. Key strategies include finding the right grip and paper, ensuring good posture, using multi-sensory methods like writing in sand, and using tools like speech-to-text or keyboards for work that doesn't need to be handwritten.

Adjust tools and physical setup

- *Provide a variety of writing tools:* Explore different pencil grips, pen/pencil weights, and barrel sizes to find the most comfortable option
- *Experiment with paper and surfaces:* Some pupils may prefer different types of paper, or a writing slope to improve posture and visibility
- *Ensure good posture:* Encourage a stable, upright sitting position with feet flat on the floor and the back supported. Poor posture can lead to fatigue and discomfort.

Break down tasks and set goals

- *Focus on small, achievable goals:* Instead of a large, overwhelming task, set small, incremental goals like reaching a specific mark on the page
- *Work letter by letter:* Break down the process of forming letters into smaller steps, which can build confidence and lead to a snowball effect of improvement
- *Make it a consistent habit:* Encourage short, frequent practice sessions rather than long, infrequent ones. This helps build muscle memory and stamina.

Make practice engaging

- *Use multi-sensory techniques:* Engage different senses by having pupils write in sand, shaving foam, or on a chalkboard to practice letter shapes and movements
- *Connect to real-world tasks:* Use handwriting practice with the week's spelling words or create fun activities like writing down the best part of the day on a slip of paper for everyone to read
- *Focus on progress and effort:* Praise the effort put into handwriting instead of focusing only on the final result. Acknowledge small improvements as they happen to build motivation
- *Consider alternatives to handwriting:* For tasks that require extensive writing, consider using tools like keyboards or speech-to-text software. This allows pupils to focus on the content without the physical strain of handwriting.

Provide scaffolding

- *Use visual guides:* Incorporate strategies like "sky, grass, mud" lines to help pupils with correct letter sizing and positioning

- *Provide models:* Create a "gold standard" example of the child's own "best" work for them to reference
- *Offer verbal support:* Before starting, generate ideas through talking and discussion to help the pupil organize their thoughts before they begin writing.

16. Supporting children with handwriting difficulties

The Problems: EYFS

Many problems cited during the EYFS can be a simple mismatch between the child's developmental readiness and the tasks being demanded. At risk are the children who are chronologically younger and others whose development is slightly delayed.

Where there are wider concerns, these need to be referred to the inclusion team. In all cases, the programmes of learning should be adjusted to suit the child's needs.

The problems: Key Stages 1 and 2

Reported difficulties usually focus on those which are visible in the finished product. These often relate to appearance and legibility, including letter formation, spacing, use of lines, relative sizing, joining and speed. Other reported difficulties include the process of handwriting and include those related to posture, pencil control and pressure. In reality, process and product are interrelated, and both dimensions need to be considered when addressing handwriting difficulty.

Common problems in handwriting might appear to be similar, but the underlying causes may be very different. Informed observation of the child engaged in writing is the first, most important step in addressing any problems. Remember that most children with handwriting difficulties may produce letters that 'look' correct but the ways in which they form them are inaccurate. Observation is essential in order to capture this.

16.1 Difficulties with the process of handwriting

The *process* of handwriting relies on the integration of component factors – motor, perceptual, cognitive and linguistic processing. Consequently, children with a known disability in any of these areas will most likely need support to develop effective handwriting. The severity of the conditions will obviously have an impact, as will any co-occurrence with other conditions.

Related disabilities include: cerebral palsy, arthritis, muscular dystrophy, hypermobility syndrome, autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), ADHD, developmental coordination disorder (or dyspraxia), developmental language disorder and dyslexia.

16.2 Handwriting difficulties: product

Each step of the S Factors (Section 12) needs to be taught and practised thoroughly to ensure legibility and fluency. For many reasons, this foundation is not always achieved. As a result, incorrect habits can become embedded and often prove difficult to remediate. Ensuring a sound start to teaching handwriting is key to limiting the number of children who fall into this category. This should be backed up by early intervention to relearn any faulty movement patterns as soon as possible. Many handwriting problems are linked to spelling difficulties. Effective intervention combines both in a structured programme of learning.

16.3 Addressing intervention

A tiered model of handwriting support provides a coherent structure for addressing handwriting difficulties.

Tier 1: Core provision – all pupils

Best practice in handwriting is provided to benefit all in school. Flexible strategies are applied to remove barriers and support individual needs. Relationship building and knowledge sharing are both fundamental.

Tier 2: Focused intervention – some pupils

Staff consider those pupils whose difficulties persist. Advice is sought from the SEND Coordinator. To investigate the source of problems, the process of the child writing and the finished product are observed. If possible, referrals to other professionals are initiated. The child and family are involved in setting goals. An intervention programme to include differentiated instruction is planned, timetabled and implemented. Adjustments are made to curriculum expectations while this is happening.

Tier 3: Specialist – a few pupils

At this tier, specialist intervention is provided for those pupils who have complex needs. Some will have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), and others may be in the process of application. This tier will require the intervention of a therapist to work collaboratively with family and school to provide appropriate provision. For some pupils, this may include learning to use technology as a main mode of transcription.

16.4 Intervention strategies

The detail of any intervention strategy is dependent on the nature and severity of the difficulty.

Some cases are straightforward, others not. Just as handwriting is a complex process, so are the solutions to many of its problems. For this reason, blanket approaches are unlikely to get to the core of the difficulty. This may include 1:1 handwriting tuition on a daily basis, led by a teaching assistant or the use of a specific handwriting intervention programme such as Teodorescu. It may be suitable for some children to receive an intervention as part of a small group.

17. Assessment and progression of handwriting

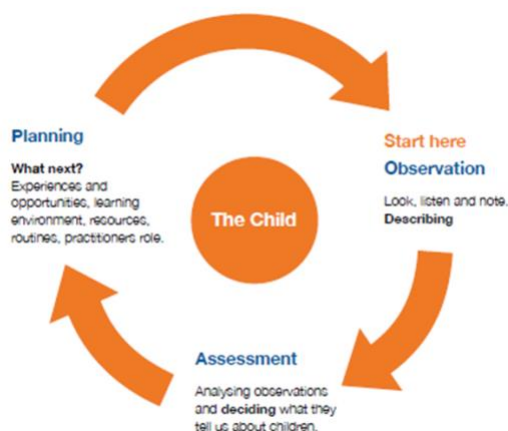
The procedures for the assessment of handwriting will be both formative and summative.

Formative assessment involves observing children in both dimensions of handwriting – process and product – and relating this information to progression of skills.

Summative assessments relate to the statutory assessments at the end of EYFS and key stage 2.

17.1 Formative assessment in the EYFS

Ongoing formative assessment is at the core of effective early years learning (see diagram)



Practitioners need to understand the skills and dispositions which support handwriting and how these develop in all relevant areas of learning. Assessments then guide what the child needs to learn next.

The progress of each child in their handwriting will be recorded on the EYFS assessment rubric. This will be based on what the teacher observes within the classroom setting.

17.2 Summative assessment:

EYFS Profile

At the end of the Reception year, the EYFS Profile provides a summary of a child's development against the Early Learning Goals (ELGs).

The word 'handwriting' itself is not used in the profile, but there are references to the writing process in both ELG Physical Development and Fine Motor, and ELG Literacy-Writing.

17.3 Key stage 1: transition from EYFS

Assessment information from EYFS is vital to ensuring a confident start to handwriting in Year 1. This is particularly important for younger children and those with additional needs. Children who did not meet expected levels in the Physical Development and Fine Motor elements of the EYFS will need to be monitored and supported.

17.4 Ongoing Assessment

At the start of Year 1, staff need to observe each child writing to assess which letters are being formed correctly and which are not. Early identification and correction of errors will prevent many later problems with handwriting. Assessment needs to be an integral part of the teaching sequence of every new step.

A class assessment sheet is to be used to monitor progress with handwriting proficiency. The handwriting assessment sheets should be shared during transition meetings, so teachers are aware of the handwriting needs within their classes.

19. Community involvement

In order to ensure consistent practice and support for the skills taught in the classroom, parental engagement and involvement are key. At Bill Quay we aim to involve parents and the wider community in the following ways:

- **Information Sessions and Workshops:** 'Stay-and-Play' workshops or information sessions for parents in EYFS, allowing parents to understand the specific handwriting style and methods used in the school
- **EYFS Welcome Pack:** The handwriting formation and “patter” for the letter formation are shared with parents in the Welcome pack and are discussed in the home-visit meetings
- **Clear Communication:** Teachers should report any handwriting difficulties to parents in a timely manner and guide them toward appropriate intervention strategies
- **Shared Goals:** This policy aims to create a shared understanding that good handwriting is a valued skill for life. Parents and teachers should encourage a sense of pride and confidence in the children's presentation of work, both at school and at home
- **Involving Governors:** The school governing body is responsible for adopting and reviewing this policy
- **Feedback from staff, pupils and parents,** along with assessment data will inform the review of this policy, which will take place every 3 years (or sooner if curriculum changes occur).

By involving the community, particularly parents, the school ensures a consistent and collaborative approach to developing fluent, legible, and speedy handwriting, which is a fundamental skill for educational achievement.

20. Supporting Documents

- A staff handbook of letter formation, joins, “break letters”
- Handwriting assessment checklist / rubric
- Intervention session plans
- Display / poster templates (S Factors and P Checks)
- Guidance for parents (how they can help, posture, simple exercises)

