

Handwriting Policy

“But a sluggish pen delays our thoughts, while an unformed and illiterate hand cannot be deciphered” (*Institutio Oratoria*, by Quintilian: Closing the Writing Gap, Alex Quigley).

At Four Oaks, we recognise how important handwriting can be to motivation, achievement and success in writing. Research shows that pupils who learn cursive writing benefit greatly, especially with an enhanced spelling ability, as they develop muscle memory and get a ‘feel’ for the words. Furthermore, we know how important it is for pupils to develop a fluent and legible handwriting style which reduces pupils’ cognitive load. A reduction in cognitive load enables pupils to focus on the content of their writing; their stamina and their presentation, thus producing higher standards of written work across the curriculum, of which they can be proud.

Intent

Handwriting is a key transcriptional element of pupils’ writing that we teach explicitly and monitor frequently. We have worked hard to create a well-structured, deliberately organised, rigorous handwriting curriculum- rooted in research- that empowers pupils to write fluently, legibly and confidently; to be proud of their work, their presentation, and their efforts.

The writing rope (Sedita, 2019) highlights the key transcriptional elements of writing that is necessary for pupils to become proficient in, in order to be creative with their writing. The image below shows how handwriting and spelling are inextricably linked and helps to form an important part of the writing process. Experts believe this is a direct result of forming letters by hand while learning sounds, which in turn activates reading circuits in the brain that promote literacy (Spear-Swelling, 2006).

Without a secure, fluent handwriting style, pupils’ progress in writing can be hindered.

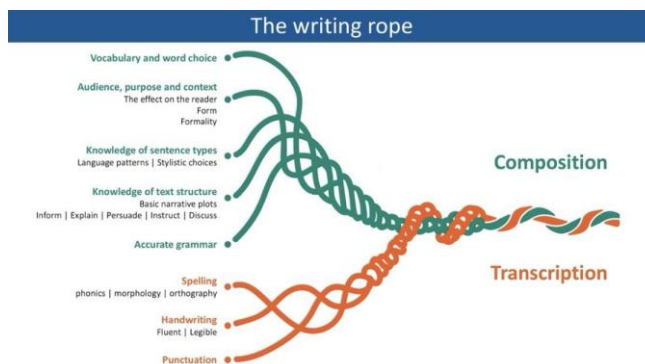


Figure 1: The Writing Rope (Sedita, 2019)

We want:

- Pupils to be able to have consistently neat and well-formed letters/words;
- To create handwriting automaticity to alleviate the cognitive load for writers;
- To raise standards of handwriting and presentation;
- To raise attainment in spelling and writing.
- All of our pupils to be proud of their written work.

Implementation

We have a consistent approach to the implementation of handwriting across the school in terms of expectation, support and explicit modelling. We recognise that some handwriting sessions may look different at different stages of pupils' development and that handwriting produced in Year 6 will look very different than in EYFS, for example. However, the rigour and importance placed on handwriting, letter-formation and presentation is consistent across our school and our handwriting curriculum is progressive for all pupils to achieve high standards. This document goes some way to outlining our approach to handwriting in EYFS, KS1 and KS2.

- Handwriting is explicitly taught four-times per week during the pupils' early stages of handwriting development, which can be reduced appropriately once a consistent size, spacing and formation is achieved.
- When marking books, teachers model handwriting formation appropriate to their Key Stage consistently in-line with their current stage of handwriting development. If pupils write in print, teachers mark their books in print. If pupils write in a cursive style, teachers mark in cursive.
- Teachers model writing for pupils in-line with the handwriting policy and MSL scheme, including written work on IWB and on working walls.
- Teacher 'patter' is consistent and used to establish that there are two main joins in our handwriting approach: a "diagonal join" and a "washing line join" (Debbie Hepplewhite Handwriting).
- Teachers closely monitor pupils' progress in handwriting and are proactive in providing the best support for individuals or struggling groups.
- Handwriting interventions may be delivered to groups/individuals who require further modelling and support to form/join letters.
- Intervention groups are ongoing across pupils' journeys through our school- if necessary.
- Handwriting interventions should help pupils' to become better writers by reducing the cognitive load in relation to the transcriptional elements of learning to write.
- Teachers can use the handwriting legibility scale to make decisions about individuals handwriting. (See *Supporting Tools*)

Handwriting in EYFS

"Early handwriting instruction shapes a life-long skill. Handwriting is an important skill that supports effective learning." (Research Schools Network, March 2022)

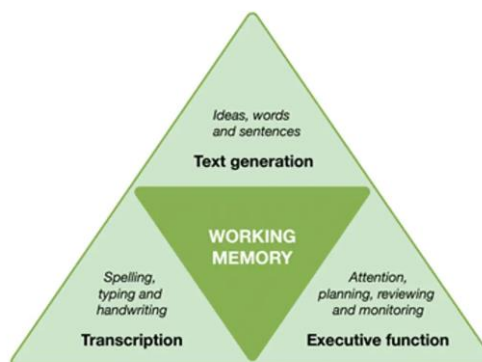


Figure 2. Improving literacy at Key Stage 1, based on the 'Simple View of Writing' developed by Berninger et al

- Learning phonics is integrated with practising writing letters
- Accurate letter formation is an essential early skill that forms the basis of a fluent handwriting style. In turn, this supports writing composition: if handwriting is slow or effortful then children are less able to think about the content of their writing. Therefore, it is important to develop the foundations of a fast, accurate, and efficient handwriting style. As part of this, it is important to look at both the **product** and **process** of children's writing. (EEF, Preparing for Literacy, 2018)

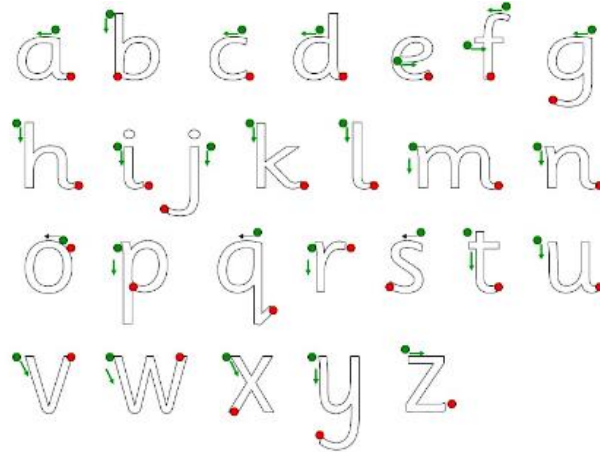


Figure 3: correct letter formation in-line with RWInc

- Product is what they produce - letters may look well-formed but actually the process of forming them is slow and inefficient (adding in lead-in strokes after they've formed the letter) leading to further difficulties with writing in the future, including with motivation.
- The EEF's report "Preparing for Literacy" recommends 'Developing children's motivation and capability to write'. It suggests that we focus on three connected elements of handwriting instruction:
 1. Practise
 2. Motivation
 3. Product and process
- Modelling correct grip (tripod grip)
- Support provided through school by SendCo, including correct apparatus to assist pupil success and remove barriers
- Considerations given to pupil posture; seating; table heights; chair heights; classroom setup
- Letter formation begins in-line with our RWInc phonics programme and letter formation is matched to RWInc handwriting style so to make it consistent and easy to recognise, understand, replicate and apply.
- Pupils are taught sounds progressively in-line with RWInc. They are taught to recognise phoneme-grapheme correspondences through practice of letter formation and over learning of sounds. This informs handwriting practice sessions in EYFS.

Handwriting in Key Stage 1 (KS1)

- KS1 maintains the fundamental aspects of EYFS handwriting instruction including accurate letter formations, correct seating and posture and tripod pencil grip.
- In KS1, pupils continue to be explicitly taught careful letter formation in-line with their current Read Write Inc (RWInc) phonemes/graphemes (see figure 3).
- Alongside RWInc, discrete handwriting lessons are taught at least four times per week.

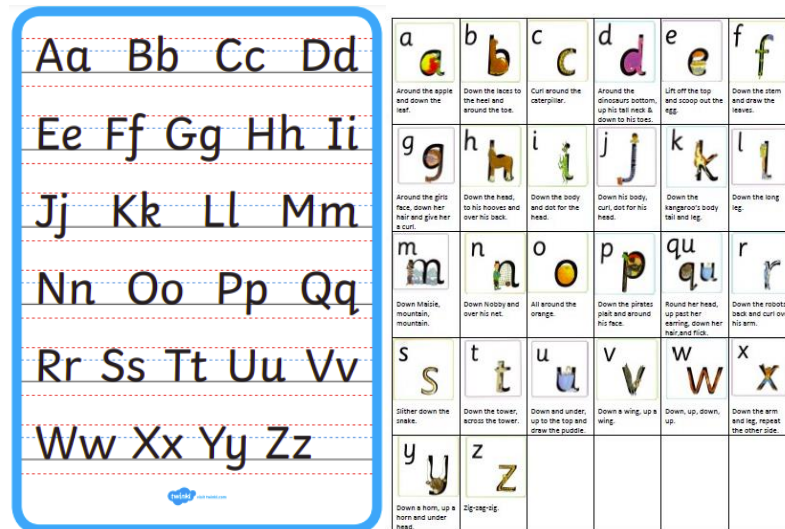


Figure 4: upper and lowercase letter formation taught in-line with RWInc, with RWInc patter.

- In Year 2, good handwriting habits are established from the beginning
- Teachers carefully monitor children's progress with handwriting and as soon as they are consistently producing correctly formed, accurately sized letters, they are taught precursive.
- At the precursive stage, each letter begins on the line with a **diagonal join** and finishes with either the beginning of another **diagonal join**, or a **washing line join** (Debbie Hepplewhite, 2012). This patter has been chosen deliberately as it supports the implementation of handwriting between Y2-6 in-line with the MSL handwriting scheme used in KS2.

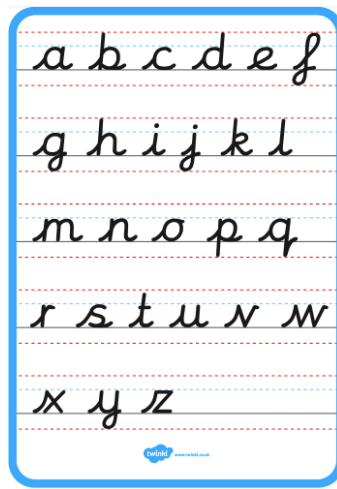


Figure 5: pre-cursive letter formation taught explicitly as soon as pupils are ready in Year 2.

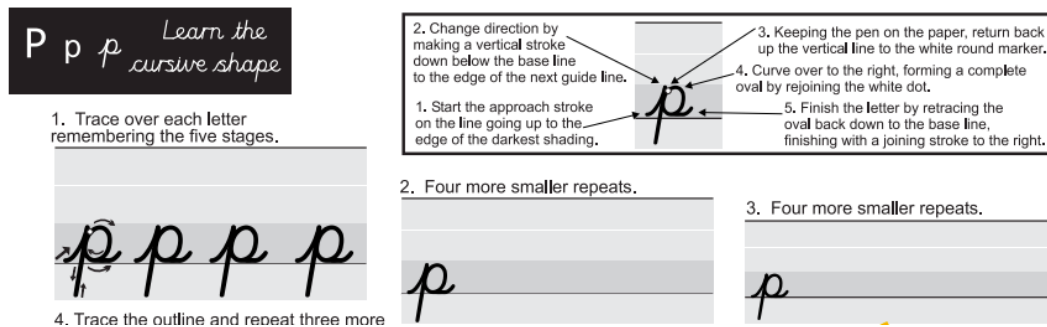


Figure 5.1: MSL cursive letter formation taught in KS2 (Y3-6).

Handwriting in Lower Key Stage 2 (LKS2)

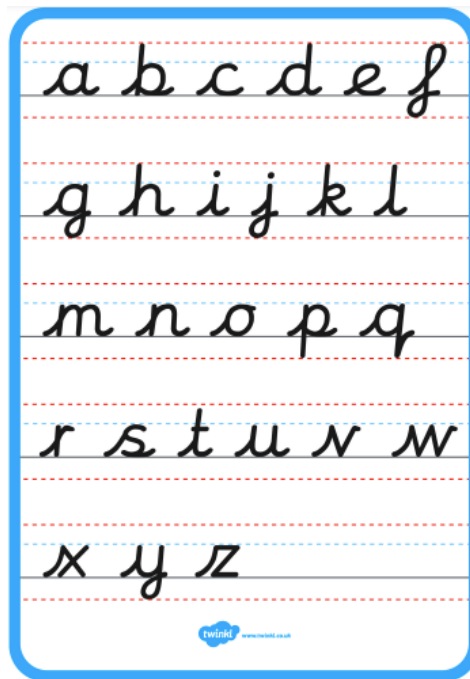
In LKS2, ***“joined handwriting should be the norm; pupils should be able to use it fast enough to keep pace with what they want to say”*** (National Curriculum, 2014).

- MSL handwriting scheme is used in KS2 to support handwriting implementation and to build upon the solid foundations of handwriting set in in EYFS and KS1, with a consistent approach to cursive writing.
- Handwriting remains a priority in LKS2 and is taught four times weekly and may include practice of spelling rules and patterns taught or being revised.
- Teachers explicitly model the cursive style of handwriting we expect our pupils to use, in lessons, when modelling writing, for writing on display- including working walls- and in marking of books.
- Year 3 begin the year by writing in pencil. When pupils are consistently producing neat and well-presented handwriting, teachers (in consultation with the English Subject Lead and the legibility scale) may give those pupils a pen.
- In Year 4, all children are given a pen to write with and handwriting standards are to be regularly checked; to be maintained and to be fostered.
- Some pupils may require bespoke handwriting interventions to suit their stage of handwriting development.

Handwriting in Upper Key Stage 2 (UKS2)

In UKS2, ***“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.”*** (National Curriculum, 2014)

- In Years 5 & 6, handwriting is taught four times weekly with explicit handwriting instruction.
- Teachers may combine spelling rules with handwriting practice (this must not explicit teaching of spelling rules and patterns).
- Handwriting lessons may need to be reduced for pupils as soon as they are writing consistently neatly, but not at the detriment of their presentation.
- Staff monitor standards of handwriting and presentation frequently and insist upon high standards of all pupils across the curriculum.



Impact

- Evidence/ photographic evidence of work in books - expectation of consistent handwriting.
- Standard of handwriting and presentation of books across the curriculum.
- Staff modelling correctly handwriting and pattern across the school (in marking, written work on display in classrooms including working walls).
- Consistency of approach across the school (EYFS-UKS2).
- Fidelity to the school's handwriting policy.
- Writing outcomes.
- Spelling outcomes.

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Supporting tools:

1) Handwriting Legibility Scale:

<https://www.brookes.ac.uk/getmedia/fcff2186-6204-483c-9648-a1b97019846f/handwriting-legibility-scale.pdf>

2) MSL Scheme (found on Staff Share)

3) Handwriting Repeater Online Tool: [Handwriting Repeater](http://www.edu-tools.github.io/) (www.edu-tools.github.io/)

Responsibility: Mr R Price (DHT, English Co-ordinator)

Date: Spring 2026

Next Review: Spring 2027