



# **Handwriting Policy**

**Adopted: December 2022  
Review: Summer 2024**



## Our Intent is for our pupils to:

1. Know the importance of clear and neat presentation, in order to communicate meaning effectively.
2. Write legibly in both joined and printed styles with increasing fluency and speed by;
  - Having a correct pencil grip
  - Knowing that all letters start from the top, except d and e which start in the middle
  - Forming all letters correctly
  - Knowing the size and orientation of letters
3. Raise their self- esteem through the establishment of best handwriting practice.

## Implementation

### **Teaching Time**

**Foundation Stage:** Frequent opportunities are made for children to practice and develop their fine motor skills throughout the week. Through the Essential Letters and Sounds phonic programme (ELS), letter formation and word spacing is taught as soon as it is appropriate.

**KS1:** In Year 1, letter formation and word spacing is taught daily through the ELS programme. In Year 2 there are three sessions each week, either through ELS in the Autumn term or through handwriting lessons.

**LKS2:** Two 15/20 minute session each week.

**UKS2:** One 15/20 minute session each week until no longer needed as handwriting has reached Year 6 standard.

Good handwriting skills and neat presentation are continually reinforced in all work across the curriculum by all staff.

### Style

Our phonics SSP, Essential Letters and Sounds, teaches print as this is what is read in books. The letter 'k' is therefore not looped. We use a looped k in our handwriting lessons from Year 2 onwards as it helps children when joining letters. Once the children have finished the ELS we use the Nelson style of letter formation:

### **Lower case:**

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

### **Capitals:**

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

### **Numbers:**

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

### Letter families:

Letters can be grouped by the direction they are written:

1. **Long ladder** down and off in another direction – l, i, j, t, u, y
2. **One-armed robot** down and retrace upwards – b, h, k, m, n, p, r
3. **Curly caterpillar** or **one o'clock club** anti-clockwise round – c, a, d, e, g, o, q, f, s
4. **Zig zag letters** – v, w, x, z

## **Patterns: to help develop fluency and flow**



## **The four joins:**

- diagonal joins to letters without ascenders, e.g. ai, ar, un;
- diagonal joins to letters with ascenders, e.g. ab, ul, it;
- horizontal joins to letters without ascenders, e.g. ou, vi, wi;
- horizontal joins to letters with ascenders, e.g. ol, wh, ot;

## **The 'break' letters:**

b g j p q x y z (joins are not made to or from the letter z)

With modelling from teachers, at KS2 children will develop joins from some of these letters.

## **Tools**

Children should use a good quality HB handwriting pencil unless they have difficulties with applying pressure onto paper, in which case a 2B pencil should be used. Teachers and children should ensure pencils are always sharp and not too short. Pens may be introduced at UKS2 (See further guidance on p4).

## **Grip and Posture**

Children should be taught and continually encouraged to hold their pencil using the tripod grip.



Tripod grip  
for a  
right-handed  
writer



Tripod grip  
for a left-  
handed writer

Pencils should be held lightly between the thumb and forefinger about 3cm from the point. The middle finger provides additional support. Children should be sitting with chairs tucked in and with both feet on the floor.

## **Paper**

**Foundation Stage:** Children should write on plain paper and, when or where appropriate, should have wide lines to write on. As their understanding of writing develops, pupils should be encouraged, when they are ready, to write on the lines, rather than have letters 'dancing' above them. This is reinforced through the ELS phonic s programme.

**Year 1:** Children use the ELS booklets and are given wide lined exercise books to write in.

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**Year 2:** By the end of Year 2 children will all be practising handwriting in red wide-lined books with handwriting guidelines unless they have a specific motor skills difficulty. Other writing will be done in wide lined exercise books.

**KS2:** Children will make the transition to purple handwriting books with narrower guidelines and narrow lined exercise books when their fine motor control has developed further.

All children are also given opportunities to write on plain paper occasionally for aesthetic and presentation reasons.

### **Terminology**

When discussing handwriting it is important for children to understand the following terms: **ascender, descender, joined, lower case, capital letter.**

### **Teaching and Learning at Meadgate Primary - Guidelines for good practice**

Handwriting is a skill which needs to be taught explicitly. Since handwriting is essentially a movement skill, correct modelling by the teacher is vital. A mixture of whole class, small group and individual teaching is planned to enable the teacher to provide direct teaching and accurate modelling of the Nelson style; to provide resources and an environment which promotes good handwriting.

The basic structure of a handwriting session is as follows:

1. Teacher modelling, talking through the process – the success criteria
2. Children forming letters in the air and practising alongside the teacher model.  
Encouraging the children to join in and verbalise the process.
3. Children practising, using the success criteria, from memory.

During handwriting lessons, teachers emphasise quality over quantity remind children frequently about good posture: feet flat on the floor and chair pushed in.

At KS1 sessions are kept short, frequent, fun, varied and multi-sensory. Letters are written in the air, on backs or on hands as well as on whiteboards and paper; letter shapes or joins are described orally and children join in. The children's attention is drawn to handwriting in all subjects.

At KS2 sessions involve modelling of a particular join or skill by the teacher and then practising writing a spelling pattern or a range of words with this spelling pattern; letter shapes or joins are described orally and children join in. When handwriting joins are secure, then short passages of fiction, poetry or non-fiction can be practised in handwriting books. The children's attention is drawn to handwriting in all subjects.

### **Computing links**

Interactive whiteboard resources, such as [Handwriting Repeater \(edu-tools.github.io\)](https://edu-tools.github.io) are used across the school, where appropriate to model letter formation and joins. A range of programs such as *Word*, *PowerPoint* and *Publisher* are used to present and publish work to a high standard. Typing programs such as BBC Dancemat <http://www.bbc.co.uk/guides/z3c6tfr> are used to help children learn and practice keyboard skills.

## Continuity and Progression throughout Meadgate Primary School

Not all children develop the motor skills necessary to hold a pencil, form letters or join up their writing at the same time. It is very important that children are introduced to the next stage of handwriting when they are ready and that if they have difficulties the correct support is put in place. What follows is a guide to teachers as to the usual progression in handwriting, alongside end-of-year expectations from the National Curriculum and our school's expectations for on-screen presentation.

### Foundation Stage

In YR, children practise the skills required for handwriting in a variety of contexts, including activities for developing gross and fine motor movements. These include:

- using a finger to trace over tactile letters;
- tracing with a pencil;
- writing over highlighter pen writing or dotted letters;
- drawing around templates;
- writing in sand, foam or toothpaste with a finger or stick;
- writing with chalk on a chalkboard;
- using a finger to trace the outline of letters on the back of the person in front of you;
- writing on outside walls with water and paintbrushes;



























Through ELS mnemonics and rhymes, children are taught letter formation.

The emphasis at this stage is with movement rather than neatness. Staff ensure that the emphasis for letter formation is with starting at the right entry point and then moving in the right direction. If this is learned at this early stage, then correct letter formation becomes automatic and has a profound influence on later fluency and legibility.

To aid movement, pupils are given support with triangular pencils or special pencil grips - if needed- correct posture, the positioning of the paper and the organisation of the writing space.

ELS - Handwriting Rhymes

**ELS** Essential Letters and Sounds

	Swerve around the snake		Around the ostrich's body		Down the long ladder
	Around the head, down the body		Curl around the camel's back		Swoop down the tentacles and dot the head
	Down her body and cross her shoulders		Down the body, up the arm, down the leg		Down the tongue, up the tongue
	Down his body, around his face		Around the head and down the trunk		Hop to the top, land and hop, land and hop
	Down her body, spot her idea		Under the umbrella and down to the tip		Criss-cross the kiss
	Down the bird and over the nest		Down her body, up over the arm		Under the hull and down to the anchor
	Meerkat, mound, mound		From his head to his feet, up and over his back		Zig and zag
	Over his back and around the tail, up his neck and down to his feet		Down the person and around the wheel		Around the feather and down the pen
	Start at his ear, around the face and down the beard		Over the ear, down to the tail and across the jaw		

## **Key Stage 1**

During Key Stage 1 children need continued support with triangular pencils, special pencil grips (if needed), correct posture, the positioning of the paper and the organisation of the writing space.

### **Year 1**

Children revisit all letters to reinforce and practise correct orientation, formation and proportion.

- Sit correctly at a table, holding a pencil comfortably and correctly
- Form 'long ladder' lower case letters correctly (i, j, l, t, u)
- Form the equivalent upper case letters correctly (I, J, L, T, U)
- Form 'one-armed robot' lower case letters correctly (b, h, k, m, n, p, r)
- Form the equivalent upper case letters correctly (B, H, K, M, N, P, R)
- Form the digits 2, 3 and 5 correctly
- Form 'curly caterpillar' lower case letters correctly (c, a, d, e, g, o, q, f, s)
- Form the equivalent upper case letters correctly (C, A, D, E, G, O, Q, F, S)
- Form the digits 0, 6, 8 and 9 correctly
- Form 'zigzag' lower case letters correctly (v, w, x, y, z)
- Form the equivalent upper case letters correctly (V, W, X, Y, Z)
- Form the digits 1, 4, and 7 correctly

It is vital that children have correct letter formation before they learn to join their handwriting.

### **Year 2**

Children develop a comfortable and efficient pencil grip and practice forming lower case letters correctly in a script that will be easy to join later. Where possible, handwriting is practised in conjunction with teaching or revision of phonics and reinforcing the spelling of of common exception words.

When letter formation is correct and secure, children begin to work on basic joins. Children are taught to join the letters that are blends and digraphs. This reinforces an understanding of the sound as well as preparing the children for joined handwriting.

Pupils begin with diagonal joins, first to the letters without ascenders then those with. As appropriate the children are introduced to horizontal joins (top joins), first to letters without ascenders and then those with.

As the children become confident with these skills, and correctly form their letters with the correct joins, they are encouraged to apply these skills to their independent writing. It can be helpful for children to have their handwriting books open on their table while they write in another book. This way they can self-assess – Is my handwriting the same in both books?



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By the end of Key Stage 1, most children can do the following:

- Form lower case letters of the correct size relative to one another
- Write capital letters and digits of the correct size
- Know which letters not to join
- Use diagonal and horizontal strokes to join letters together
- Ensure spacing between words is appropriately sized
- **Type accurately**

## **LKS2**

During Years 3 and 4 children gradually build up handwriting speed, fluency and legibility through practice.

### **Year 3**

Children practise and consolidate the four basic joins introduced in Year 2. They are encouraged to use a joined script in their independent writing to enable them to build a fluent and clear style.

Once their handwriting joins are correct and have some fluency to their writing, in addition to using and practising the known joins, there is a focus on more complicated anti-clockwise joins in handwriting sessions: ac, ca, da, ha, ad, ag, ea, ed, va, wa, oa, oo, od, fa, fo.

Where possible, handwriting is practised in conjunction with teaching or revision of long vowel phonemes, spelling rules and words from the Year 3 and 4 vocabulary list.

- Write with joined handwriting consistently
- **Build keyboard skills to type, edit and redraft**
- **Develop fluency in typing**

### **Year 4**

Year 4 pupils continue to practise spelling patterns, rules and 'tricky words'. They use joined handwriting for all writing, except where other forms are required, and gradually build up fluency and speed. They start to learn a range of presentation skills, for example, print script for captions, sub-headings and labels and use capital letters for posters, title pages, headings.

- Improve the quality of handwriting by tackling any issues consistently
- Write consistently with neat, legible and joined handwriting
- **Develop fluency in typing**
- **Present on-screen texts which will appeal to the reader**

## **UKS2**

Pupils in Years 5 and 6 use joined script consistently in their writing. In handwriting sessions, children practice, reinforce and refine previous work from years 3 and 4, especially considering consistent spacing and size of letters and words, distinguishing ascenders and

descenders. There is a greater analysis of writing style and presentation. Handwriting lessons are used to reinforce spelling rules, e.g. prefixes and suffixes.

Pens may be introduced at UKS2, first in handwriting books and then, when each writer is proficient and has gained their pen licence, in English and topic books and for top copied work.

- Make the move from pencil to pen in their handwriting
- Write with joined handwriting in pen consistently
- Apply typing skills to all ICT-linked work

### **Individuality**

As children become confident many of them will develop individual writing styles. These variations will give their writing character and should be encouraged as long as they are neat, joined and legible.

### **Year 5**

- Begin to adapt handwriting to specific purposes e.g. printing, use of italics
- Increase the speed of handwriting without losing legibility
- Use features of layout, presentation and organisation effectively in written and on-screen media
- Combine written text, illustration, moving image and sound appropriately to enhance the words and their meaning

### **Year 6**

- Develop a neat, personal, handwriting style
- Consistently use a neat, personal handwriting style
- Choose the writing implement that is appropriate to the task
- Use an appropriate and cohesive style in work produced using on-screen media
- Present work produced using on-screen media stylishly and cohesively

### **Handwriting and Spelling**

Linking handwriting with spelling is one of the most powerful ways of developing the visual and kinaesthetic memory together. If teachers and then pupils also talk through the process, these skills will be combined with auditory memory. Handwriting should be practised using letters, blends, strings or digraphs so that patterns are internalised.

### **Left-handed writers**

- All staff know who their left-handed pupils are.
- Staff make sure that if left-handed and right-handed children next to each other, their elbows do not bump.
- Left-handed children are encouraged to tilt their page or book clockwise slightly so they can see what they are writing without 'hooking' their hand.
- Young left-handers sometimes need to learn how to put a dot instead of a finger space to help them organise their writing. Staff model this to the relevant pupils.



## **Inclusion and Equal Opportunities**

The ability to form legible handwriting is fundamental to children's development as independent learners. We believe that all children are entitled to high quality teaching and learning and we embrace the philosophy of inclusion. Provision is made for children with Special Educational Needs. This includes individual or small group sessions at the appropriate level, the use of specialist equipment or exercises and opportunities to practise using a range of media (bead threading, cutting out, colouring, tracing, jigsaw puzzles) and use of the motor skills box. If the difficulty is with general co-ordination, then the SENCo may suggest that Gym Trail might be needed to help develop gross and fine motor skills.

## **Impact**

This systematic approach ensures development in the skill of handwriting throughout each year group. Children take pride in their written work and achieve proficiency in their own use of the Nelson script. Outcomes in children's wider curriculum work, as well as in their English books and school displays, evidence the progress that children make in this area, as well as the consistency of the approach across the school.

## **Assessment**

Year group statements are used as a guide for on-going teaching and assessment. Individual difficulties are noted down. Children are encouraged to peer and self-assess by going back with the teacher to the model and checking against very clear success criteria. For example:

- Which letters are started from the top?
- Which words have clear ascenders?
- Which words have vowels which are all consistent size?
- Is the writing legible?
- Are the letters correctly shaped and proportioned?
- Are the joins made correctly?
- Are the spaces between the letters, words and lines appropriate?
- Is the size of the writing appropriate?

In YR achievements and areas of concern are recorded on pupil tracking sheets (see Appendix). Y1 to Y6 pupils are assessed using termly English assessment sheets and these are annotated regularly. Pupils in Y2 and Y6 currently have annotated copies of the interim assessment framework document inside their writing books.

## **Monitoring and Review**

The English subject leader, in consultation with the SLT, monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of the teaching and learning of handwriting. In discussion with the governors, areas for development and resource needs are identified. Handwriting throughout the school and how it reflects this policy will be reviewed in the following ways:

- SLT/staff book scrutinies;
- EYFS/KS1/KS2 external moderation;
- Year group internal moderation across the MAT;
- learning walks and observations.

This policy is due to be reviewed Spring 2023.