Shipston-on-Stour
Primary School

Handwriting Policy



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DEFINITION OF HANDWRITING:

Handwriting is writing done with the hand using a pencil, pen, digital stylus or other marking instrument. Handwriting involves using a recognised system of symbols to express and communicate language.

1. AIM

Our aim is for all children to learn and practise appropriate handwriting skills at each stage of development, working towards comfortable handwriting which is legible, fluent and fast.

This policy has been written using the latest research and guidance into best practice. Early handwriting instruction shapes a life-long skill. Handwriting is an important skill that supports effective learning and evidence points to underpinning principles for a coherent curriculum. The early years are a time to cultivate motivation and joy in writing. Handwriting instruction should prevent the development of long-term misconceptions.

How?

INTENT:

- By providing a carefully designed handwriting curriculum which is coherently planned and based on evidence-based practice to cumulatively develop children's knowledge and skills.

IMPLEMENTATION:

- Handwriting teaching is delivered by a confident and skilled teaching staff who have a good knowledge of the development of handwriting skills.
- The school creates an environment that optimises learning within handwriting and quickly identifies those children who need further support and delivers support in a timely fashion.
- Children will be taught to form letters correctly using the simple modern cursive style from Reception and then learn to join when they display control over formation. They will join all appropriate letters apart from capital letters.

IMPACT:

- Learners develop handwriting skills across the curriculum and, as a result, achieve well, meeting the statutory requirements expected at the end of KS1 and KS2.
- They produce legible, fluent and fast handwriting which enables them to express their thoughts and ideas and communicate with others effectively.

2. TEACHING AND LEARNING

Handwriting is a skill which needs to be taught explicitly. Successful practice in handwriting is based on **consistency** and **continuity** across the whole school community. Since handwriting is essentially a movement skill, correct modelling of the agreed style by all school adults is vital. Consistency in the attitudes displayed, the methods employed and the models provided is the key to effective learning.

A mixture of whole class, small group and individual teaching is planned throughout the school. Handwriting will be taught separately to phonics as an additional part of the timetable in line with the 2025 Writing Framework . Children will start handwriting sessions from the first term of reception. As well as these handwriting sessions, activities to support fine and gross motor skills

will be planned. We use the Read Write Inc. handwriting phrases for teaching letter formation, which links to our phonics teaching. We use the Read Write Inc. Handwriting scheme and use the vocabulary linked with this scheme across the school. Teaching the correct formation of the letters should be given the highest priority and this should be achieved by pupils before any attempt is made at joining.

It is important to bear in mind that 'handwriting' lessons include developing motor skills and that 'practice' should be adapted to the developmental needs of individual children.

The children will:

- Learn to form upper and lower-case letters and numbers correctly from their Reception year.
- Learn and practise handwriting during dedicated handwriting lessons, with links made to the phonics and spelling programme.
- Sit correctly at a table, holding their pencil comfortably and correctly.
- Be encouraged to use neat, appropriately joined handwriting for all subjects as appropriate to the task and according to the ability of each individual.
- Understand which letters belong to which handwriting 'families' and will practise these.
- Choose appropriate writing tools.

The teachers and teaching assistants will:

- Provide direct teaching and accurate modelling of handwriting.
- Have high expectations of the presentation of children's writing.
- Ensure that children adopt good writing posture and position.
- Observe individual children's handwriting to ensure correct formation is adhered to, monitor progress and determine targets for development.
- Quickly identify children who have difficulty mastering handwriting and build in appropriate support.

3. TEACHING TIME

It should be frequent, discrete and direct teaching. There should be a minimum of 5 x 10 minute 'handwriting' lessons each week in Reception and Key Stage 1. Opportunities for fine and gross motor development are included within continuous provision. In Key Stage 2, 2 x 15 minute or 3 x 10 minute handwriting lessons each week are taught. More opportunities will need to be provided for children across the school who still have difficulties to improve their skills and confidence in letter formation.

Adults should act as models when writing in front of children.

4. STRUCTURE OF A LESSON

Begin your lesson with a fine or gross motor activity to get the children warmed up for a handwriting lesson.

Ensure children have correct posture and grip.

Identify the type of letter shape and join.

Model the letter or join using the Read Write Inc. videos and using the visualiser writing on the same lines as your children. Ensure the visualiser is angled appropriately so that children can see the end of the pen. Use talk to describe the actions.

Provide opportunities for deliberate practice.

Give time for self and peer assessment.

5. ASSESSMENT AND MONITORING

Children in Reception and Key Stage 1 need to have their progress towards legible, joined handwriting monitored very carefully. Studies have shown that incorrect letter formation early on is a significant contributor to handwriting difficulties later on.

Core Leaders should monitor children's writing and presentation in books at least termly, or more often if required.

Children should be observed as they write during handwriting lessons – the teacher must circulate, monitor and intervene immediately. The following should be considered:

- Is the posture correct?
- Does the child hold the pencil correctly?
- Does the child use the correct movement when forming and or joining letters?
- Are any letters / numbers reversed or inverted?
- Does the child write fluently and rhythmically?
- Is the writing easily legible?

Key Development Milestones

- Children will be taught to correctly form capitals by the end of Year 1
- As soon as children are ready, they will be taught to join letters.
- All children are expected to be able to join legibly by the end of Year 3.
- All children can write with fluent, joined, legible handwriting by the end of Year 6.

6. IDENTIFYING CHILDREN WHO NEED FURTHER SUPPORT:

Handwriting is a complex skill to master, one that involves linguistic, cognitive, perceptual and motor components, all of which have to be coordinated into an integrated fashion. As a result, some children may have difficulty mastering it. These children need to be identified quickly and have additional support put in place.

To provide the most appropriate support, a teacher must first identify which area of handwriting is the main area of concern:

- Legibility: can the words be read out of context?

- Neatness: is the handwriting messy or poorly controlled?
- Comfort: does the child experience pain, strain or discomfort when writing?
- Pressure: is the child pressing too hard or not hard enough, or is the pressure within one piece of writing variable?
- Speed: is the child writing very slowly, producing too little writing, or too fast, becoming inaccurate?
- Motivation / enjoyment: is the child reluctant to write or gives up too easily?

7. RESOURCES TO SUPPORT HANDWRITING DEVELOPMENT:

Equipment:

- Soft pencil grips to help reduce fatigue caused by writing pressure.
- Slope boards to reduce the stresses and strains caused by working on flat surfaces.
- Softer lead pencils to improve legibility for children with light pressure (e.g. 2B).
- Wide-lined exercise books and maths books with larger squares for children developing control of size.

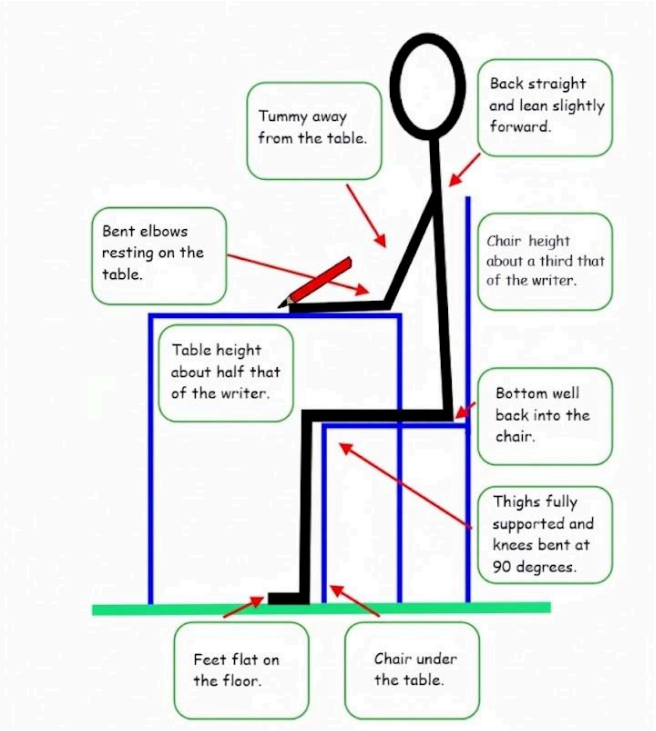
Small Group and Individual Interventions:

These will be organised by individual class teachers under guidance from the SENDCO.

- Read Write Inc Handwriting.

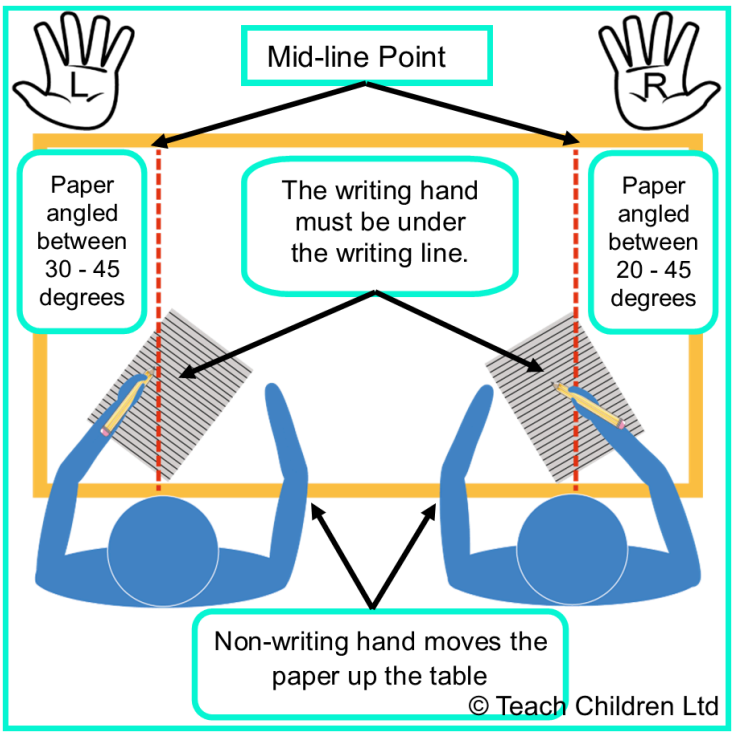
8. POSTURE

- Feet - flat on the floor.
- Arms - resting on the forearms without the shoulders being forced upwards. Forearms should ideally be positioned 45 degrees to the table edge away from the body in order to support the shoulder girdle.
- Back - should be almost straight (but slightly leaning forwards).
- Head - upright without the neck poking forwards.
- Weight - evenly distributed between feet and forearms.
- Non-writing hand - should support the work at the top corner furthest away from the writing hand. This allows the forearm to support the body enabling the writing arm to move lightly across the page.
- The book should be tilted slightly towards the non-writing hand.
- Left-handers should have the same posture as right-handers but may wish to use a sloping board to raise their work slightly or use a seat wedge to raise their bodies to allow them to see over their hand.
- Children should be seated so that a left-handed child sits on the left-hand side of a table if next to a right-handed child.



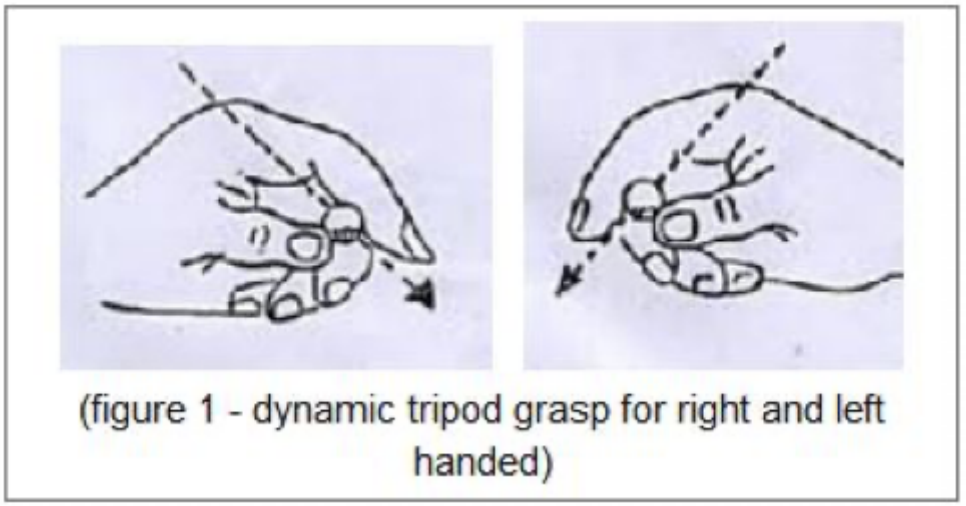
9. PAPER POSITION

Right-handers should position the paper towards their right side and left-handers should position the paper towards their left side, within their body range, not too far and not too close. As they move down the page, right-handers should move the paper up in the same line using their left hand and left-handers should move the paper up in the same line using their right hand, to maintain the correct body posture.



10. PENCIL GRIP

Children need to hold a pen or pencil with an appropriate grip; these need to be explained and modelled. The dynamic tripod grip offers the greatest control and allows the precise movements needed to form letters:



(figure 1 - dynamic tripod grasp for right and left handed)

However, this grip does not suit all children. Comfort and ease of movement are more important. As a child grows older, if the grip is not causing pain, discomfort or fatigue, and it is not seriously affecting legibility, it should be left alone.

11. CORRECT FORMATION BEFORE JOINING

Teaching the correct formation of the letters should be given the highest priority and this should be achieved by pupils before any attempt is made at joining.

12. CHILDREN NEW TO THE SCHOOL

Children who join the school with established fluent joined handwriting should be allowed to continue with their current style of handwriting.

13. HEALTH AND SAFETY

Children are shown how to sit correctly and how to hold writing tools comfortably. They are also shown how to position paper correctly. Adaptations will be made for right and left handed children, and resources which need to be copied will be in a position to ensure comfort of view.

14. TYPE OF WRITING TOOLS TO BE USED

- School will provide a range of pencils and pens.
- From Reception, children will practise using a sharp pencil.

- When Key Stage 1 teachers decide that children are ready, children are to practise using a pen.
- From Year 3, all children will practise using a pen.
- All children should be writing using a pen in Year 4.
- Children may choose to bring their own pen to write with if that is the more comfortable pen for them to write successfully with.
- All children's pens must use blue ink.
- Left handed children may choose a blue gel pen if that reduces smudging.

15. REWARDING PROGRESS

Superstar Writer - in Reception and Key Stage 1 children can be awarded a Superstar Writer pencil to reward them for the effort they are making with their mark-making or handwriting. There is no limit as to the amount of times a child can be awarded this.

In line with the school's Positive Behaviour, Relationships and Wellbeing Policy, all children should receive praise for effort and high personal achievement.

We do not award pen licences. We aim to develop a sense of pride in producing high quality writing where children understand that neat, legible handwriting is a skill which helps us to achieve that, not the end result of writing.

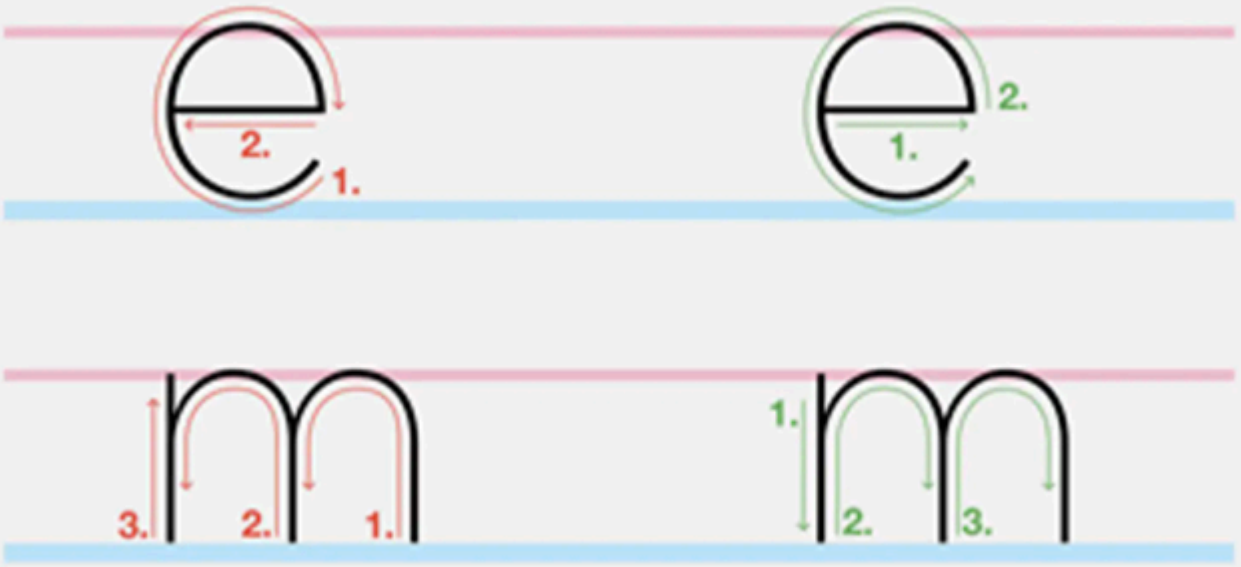
There are a range of rewards available across the school which can be used to reward the effort children put into developing their handwriting. (See Positive Behaviour, Relationships and Wellbeing Policy).

APPENDIX 1: AN OVERVIEW OF TEACHING HANDWRITING FROM RECEPTION

In Reception, our baseline for writing is children writing their name and drawing a picture of themselves.

Product and Process
The finished product (a letter) can look correct but be formed using a flawed process. A flawed process hinders fast, fluent transcription (see the diagram below). Embedded handwriting problems often come from process misconceptions. We address this from the start with a focus on the correct start point and movement pattern of each letter. The National Handwriting Association (NHA) suggests that print letters are easier to learn. Fewer strokes place less pressure on working memory.

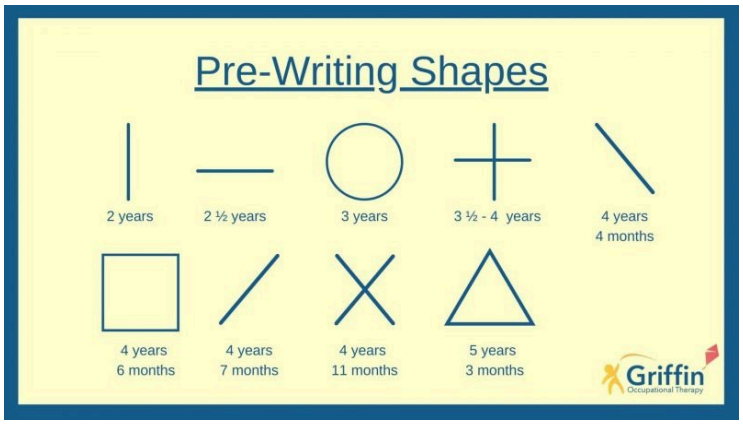
Box 7: The product and the process of handwriting

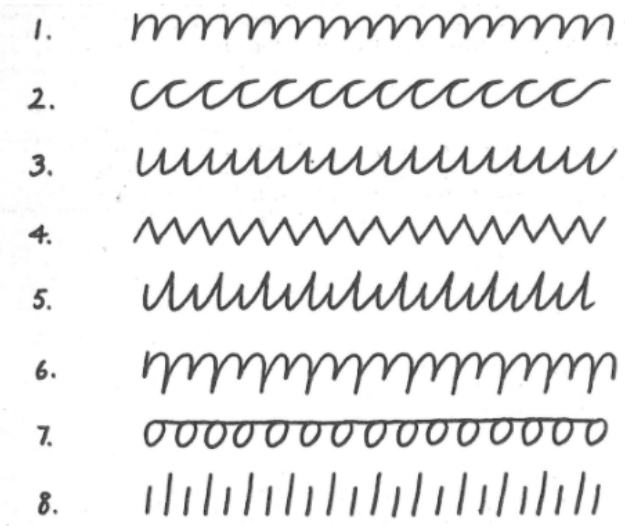


It is important to monitor both the product and process of children's handwriting. For the letters above, the product is good in both cases, but the inefficient process of forming the letters on the left will hinder the development of a fluent handwriting style.

Pencil grip
For children ready for a tripod grip, we use the crocodile snap. A video on the crocodile snap tripod grip can be found below.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1j0rPflY8-k

Pre-writing patterns and shapes
We teach these patterns and shapes in early handwriting to aid the development of fine-motor control and the later formation of certain letter shapes. The children will move onto letter formation when ready.





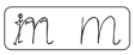
Letter families

Letter formation is taught in formation groups rather than in phonic sound groups, as teaching children letters in letter families helps them reinforce correct formation patterns through muscle memory and motor learning, much more successfully than when letters are taught in phonics groups or alphabetically (Griffin 2021).

Guidance for handwriting in the Read Write Inc. Phonics lessons

Children follow the same handwriting routine every day for each letter they learn to read. This routine is embedded in every Speed Sounds lesson.
For example:
The teacher air-writes a, saying: Round the apple, down the leaf.
The children copy.
The teacher writes ‘a’ on the board, saying: Round the apple, down the leaf.
The children say the phrase as they write ‘a’ on wide lined paper, at their tables.
These are the letter-formation phrases to use while you are teaching children to read the Speed Sound cards.

Individual letter formation plans

Speed Sound Card	Letter	Picture name	Phrase
		mountain	Maisie, mountain, mountain
		apple	Round the apple, down the leaf
		snake	Slither down the snake
		dinosaur	Round the dinosaur's bottom, up its tall neck, down to the feet
		tower	Down the tower, across the tower
		insect	Down the body, dot the head
		net	Down Nobby, over his net
		pirate	Down the plait and over the pirate's face
		girl	Round her face, down her hair and give her a curl

Speed Sound Card	Letter	Picture name	Phrase
		orange	All around the orange
		caterpillar	Curl round the caterpillar
		kangaroo	Down the kangaroo's body, tail and leg
		umbrella	Down and under, up to the top and draw the puddle
		boot	Down the laces to the heel, round the toe
		flower	Down the stem and draw the leaves
		egg	Lift off the top and scoop out the egg
		leg	Down the long leg
		horse	Down the head to the hooves and over its back

Speed Sound Card	Letter	Picture name	Phrase
		robot	Down its back, then curl over its arm
		jack-in-a-box	Down its body, curl and dot
		vulture	Down a wing, up a wing
		yak	Down a horn, up a horn and under its head
		worm	Down, up, down, up
		zip	Zig-zag-zig
		x ray	Down the arm and leg and repeat the other side
		queen	Round her head, up past her earrings and down her hair

Handwriting Stage 1 - To be taught in Reception

We start teaching separate handwriting lessons as soon as children can read Set 1 sounds.

This lesson is at a different time to phonic lessons.
We now teach letters in handwriting families. Each family has a common formation.
They continue to write on wide lined paper.
a d g o c q
u y
b p
h n m r
e s f i
l t k j
v w x z

Stage 1 Blueprint lesson plan

Practise writing one letter a day. Repeat a letter the following day if your class need more practice. Once children have practised writing all the letters, continue to use the same lesson plan to practise the letters that children find the most difficult.

Use the following routine for every lesson.
1. Hold up the A4 card on the picture side. Think out loud (TOL) the points on the checklist as you trace the letter shape on the picture. For example:
✓ start at the stalk
✓ go round the apple
✓ go back up to the stalk, then down
✓ curl the leaf at the bottom.
2. Write the letter on the board as you say the points on the checklist again.
3. Encourage children to say each point with you as you write the letter two more times.

Children practise writing the letter
1. Check that the children are still sitting in the perfect handwriting position – see page 7 above.
2. Remove the picture and any letters from the board – the children must visualise the letter, not copy.
3. Ask the children to write the letter on their paper. Go round the room supporting children who need help. Don't sit with one child.

Review the letter
1. Write the letter on the board. Make one error, choosing a common error children have made.
2. Ask the children to TTYP to find your 'two best bits'. Give examples from the checklist: 'Did I remember to
start at the stalk? Did I go back up to the stalk?'
3. Choose two partners to tell you the 'two best bits'.
4. Ask children to TTYP to find 'one to fix'. Give examples from the checklist: 'Did I make the leaf too curly?'
5. Choose two partners to tell you their 'one to fix'.
6. Rewrite the letter perfectly.
7. Ask children to practise writing the letter again.
8. Ask children to underline their best letter.

Individual letter formation plans

a d g o c q

Letter	Handwriting Phrase	Checklist
	Round the apple, down the leaf	✓ start at the stalk ✓ go round the apple ✓ go back up to the stalk, then down ✓ curl the leaf at the bottom
	Round the dinosaur's bottom, up its tall neck, down to the feet	✓ go round his bottom ✓ up the tall neck ✓ down the straight line to the feet ✓ make a curl for the feet
	Round her face, down her hair and give her a curl	✓ start at her bobble ✓ go round her face ✓ go back to her bobble ✓ go down her straight hair ✓ draw a curl
	All around the orange	✓ start at the stalk ✓ go around the orange back to the stalk
	Curl round the caterpillar	✓ start at the caterpillar's head ✓ curl round the body
	Round her head, up past her earrings and down her hair	✓ start at the back of her crown ✓ go round her face ✓ go back up to her crown ✓ go down her hair ✓ give it a sharp flick

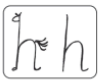
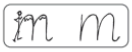
u y

Letter	Handwriting Phrase	Checklist
	Down and under, up to the top and draw the puddle	✓ start at the handle ✓ go down the straight handle ✓ go underneath the umbrella and back up the other side ✓ go down the umbrella ✓ add a little curl for the puddle
	Down a horn, up a horn and under its head	✓ start at the top of the first horn ✓ go down the straight line for the first horn ✓ go underneath the horns ✓ draw a straight line up for the second horn ✓ go down and curl under its head

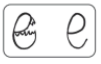
b p

Letter	Handwriting Phrase	Checklist
	Down the laces to the heel, round the toe	✓ start at the top of the boot ✓ go straight down the boot ✓ go up over the toe ✓ back to the heel
	Down the plait and over the pirate's face	✓ start at the top of the plait ✓ go down the plait ✓ go over the face ✓ finish under the chin

h n m r

Letter	Handwriting Phrase	Checklist
	Down the head to the hooves and over its back	✓ start at the horse's head ✓ go down its straight neck ✓ go down to its feet ✓ go round its back ✓ draw a back leg ✓ add a little curl of dust as the horse runs away
	Down Nobby, over his net	✓ start at the top of Nobby's head ✓ go straight down Nobby ✓ go over the net ✓ add a curve for the grass
	Maisie, mountain, mountain	✓ start at Maisie's head ✓ go straight down Maisie ✓ go over the mountains ✓ check the mountains are the same height as Maisie ✓ add a small curl for the grass
	Down its back, then curl over its arm	✓ start at the robot's head ✓ go straight down its body ✓ go over the robot's arm

e s f i

Letter	Handwriting Phrase	Checklist
	Lift off the top and scoop out the egg	✓ go up around the shell that needs to be cut off the egg ✓ draw underneath the egg
	Slither down the snake	✓ start at the snake's head ✓ curl one way ✓ curl the other
	Down the stem and draw the leaves	✓ start at the top of the flower ✓ go round and down the flower stem – then lift the pencil off the page ✓ draw a straight line across the leaves
	Down the body, dot the head	✓ start at the top of the insect's neck ✓ go down the body ✓ draw a tail ✓ add a dot for the head

t k l j

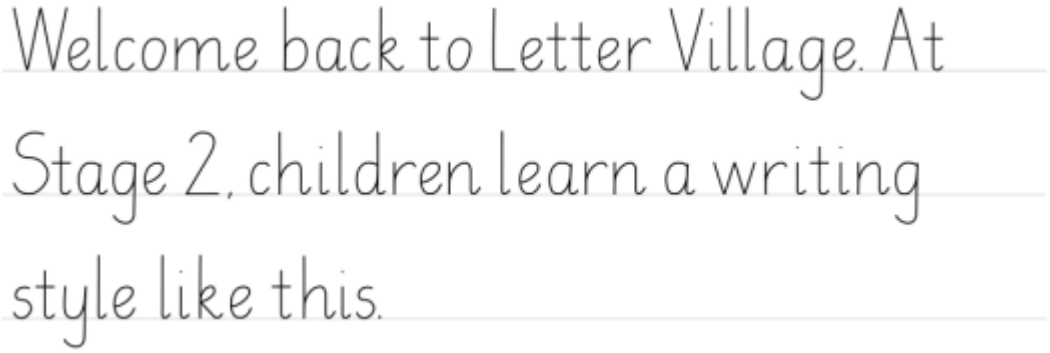
Letter	Handwriting Phrase	Checklist
	Down the tower, across the tower	✓ start at the top of the tower ✓ go straight down the tower ✓ add a curve ✓ make a straight line across the tower
	Down the kangaroo's body, tail and leg	✓ start at the kangaroo's head ✓ go down its body ✓ draw a tail to the body ✓ draw a straight back leg
	Down the long leg	✓ start at the top of his leg ✓ go down his long leg ✓ add a curl for the shoe
	Down its body, curl and dot	✓ start at the top of the jack-in-a-box's neck ✓ go down the long straight body ✓ draw a smooth curl for the legs ✓ add a dot for the head

v w x z

Letter	Handwriting Phrase	Checklist
	Down a wing, up a wing	✓ draw two straight lines for the wings – down, up
	Down, up, down, up	✓ draw four lines, all the same length – down, up, down, up
	Down the arm and leg and repeat the other side	✓ start at the top left ✓ go to the feet ✓ start at the bottom left ✓ go up to the arms
	Zig-zag-zig	✓ draw three straight lines – across, down, across

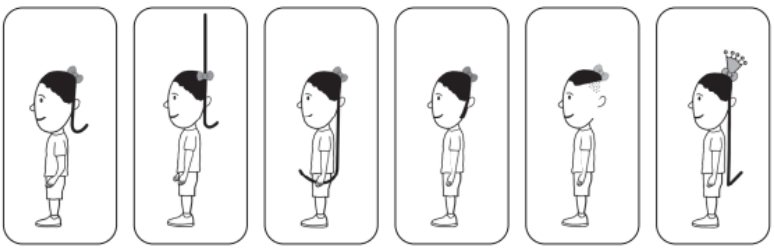
Handwriting Stage 2 (Year 1 or when ready to move on)

Children learn the relative size of letters and to form letters that will flow easily into a joined style. They will learn a style that looks like this:



At Stage 2, we group letters that have a similar formation:
a d g o c q
u y
b p
h n m r
e s f i
l t k j
v w x z

These new handwriting 'picture hooks' focus on each group's shared similarities. For example, here's the first group of letters – a d g o c q.

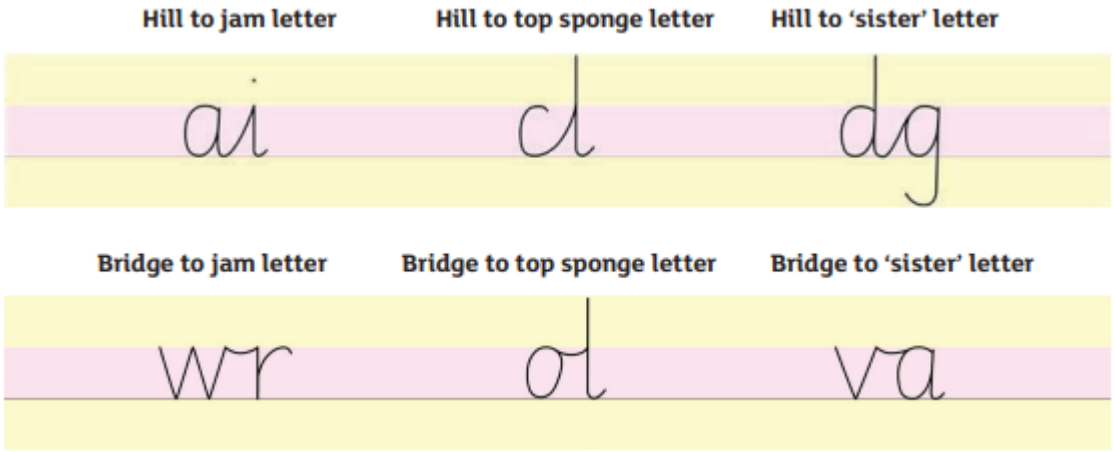


Stage 2 Blueprint lesson plan.

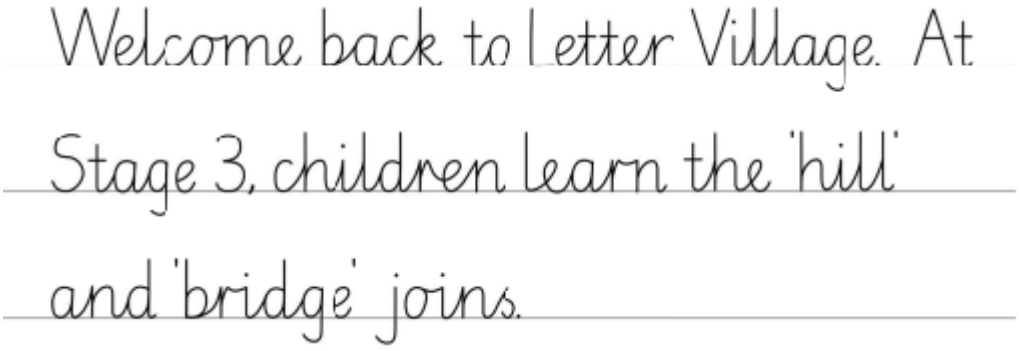
Each 10-minute film follows the same structure:
1. Introduce the story with a letter and a rap.
2. Show children how to write the letter.
3. Children practise writing the letter.
4. Children check their letters with their partner.
5. Repeat steps 2, 3 and 4.
6. Review the new letter and previous letters by asking children to practise writing words containing them.

Handwriting Stage 3 (Year 2 or when ready to move on)

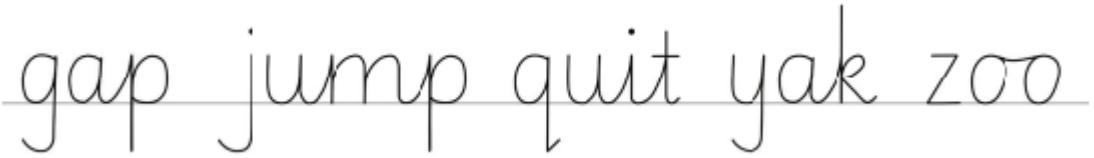
Children learn how to join letters using two basic joins: the 'hill' join and the 'bridge' joins.
Each has three variations:



Children practise each join with specific letter combinations. Then they write words with the joins they have practised.
They will learn a style that looks like this.



Do all letters join?
We teach children that all letters are joined with the 'hill' or 'bridge' join with the exception of g, j, q, y and z:



We have separate lessons that show how we modify some letters to allow them to join. For example, r, e and s.



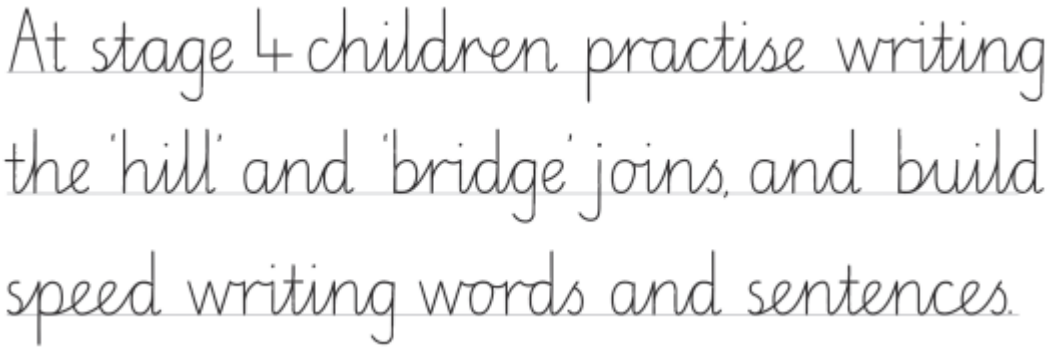
Stage 3 Blueprint lesson plan

Each 10-minute film follows the same structure:
1. Introduce the join with a story and a rap.
2. Show children how to join two letters.
3. Children practise writing two letters with the join.
4. Children check their letter joins with their partner.

We then repeat steps 2, 3 and 4.
Every fourth film is a 'celebration' lesson: children practise writing words that contain all the joins they have learnt following the same structure as films 1 to 3.

Handwriting Stage 4 (Year 3 and beyond)

At Stage 4, we help children to develop a mature and speedy style.
Children continue to practise using the two basic joins - the 'hill' join and the 'bridge' join and the two variations of each.
In each ten-minute lesson, children practise joining two letters, a word containing the join and a sentence containing the word.
The 60 lessons maximise practice time so children develop the automaticity needed to write with speed.
The Stage 4 writing style is the same as Stage 3. They will learn a style that looks like this:



Stage 4 Blueprint lesson plan

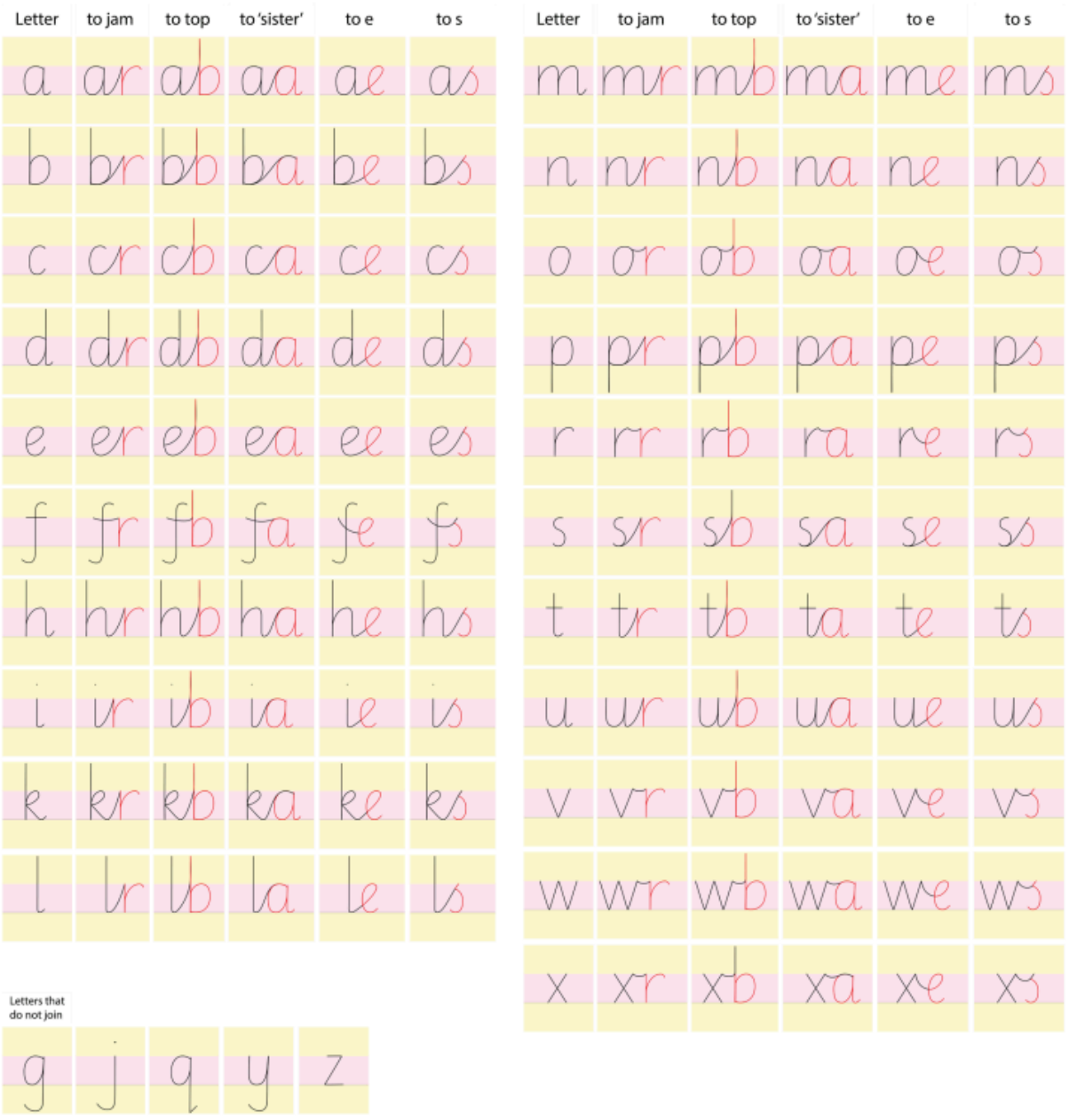
Each Stage 4 film follows the same 10-minute structure. Children:
1. practise joining two letters
2. check the join with their partner
3. practise writing a word containing the letter join
4. build speed writing the same word
5. practise writing a sentence containing the word
6. check the handwriting in their sentence
7. build speed writing the same sentence
8. check their handwriting with their partner.

Handwriting beyond year 3

In Year 4, teachers should reteach Stage 4 with a focus on accurate joins and fluency.

In Year 5 and 6, after assessment of handwriting teachers should reteach the elements of Stage 4 that are appropriate to their cohort and practice speed and fluency.

Example letter joins



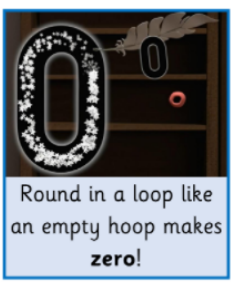
Capital Letters

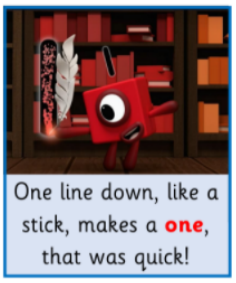
Are as tall as b, d, l and used for names and modelled when the date is written on the board.

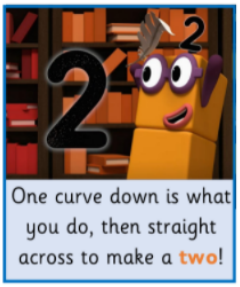
Capital letters are not joined.

Number Formation

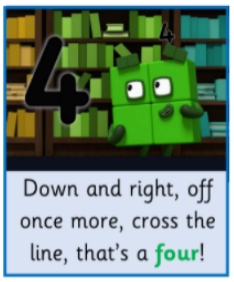
Children are taught using the Numberblocks rhymes. All numbers start from the top and should be the same height as capital letters:





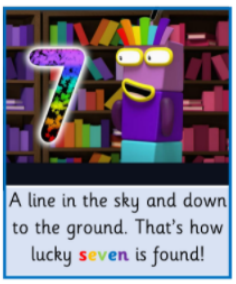


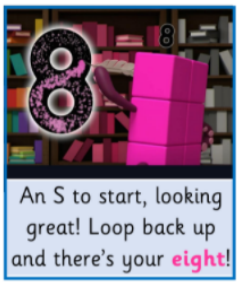


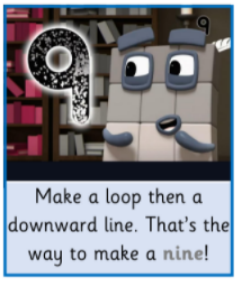




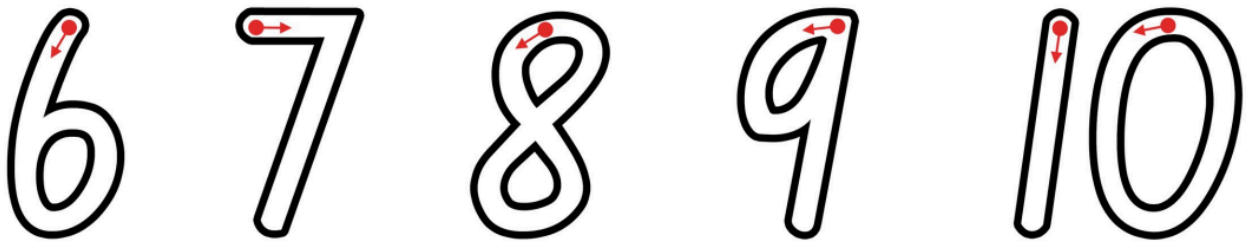




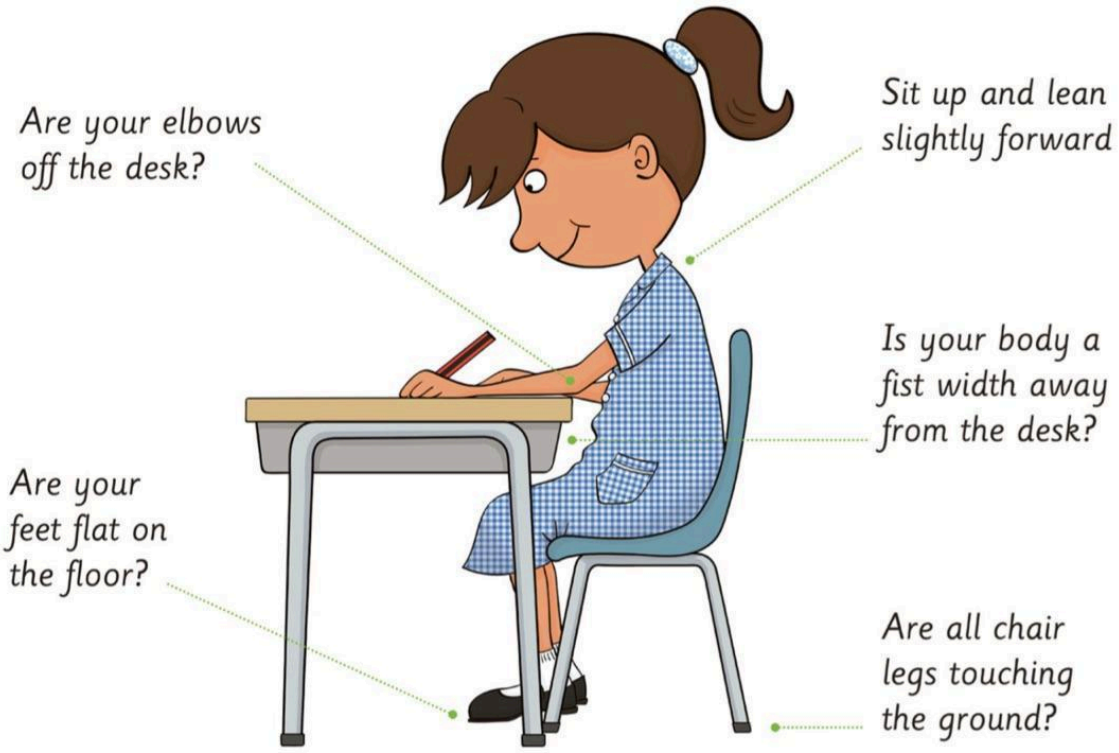








Are you ready for handwriting? Relax!



Left Handers



Is there a circle gap between your thumb and finger?

Is your paper tilted at a slight angle?

Right Handers



Simple Modern Cursive

Firstly, individual letters are taught without entry strokes. e.g.

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

Then, when letter formation and positioning are both secure, joining is taught. Some break letters are left un-joined. The choice of these is suggested by the scheme used, e.g.

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

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