



SHOBNALL PRIMARY & NURSERY SCHOOL

APPROACH TO THE TEACHING OF HANDWRITING



"Writing is just painting with words."

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INTRODUCTION

This document outlines the teaching, organisation and management of handwriting taught and learnt at Shobnall Primary & Nursery School. The aim of this handwriting policy is to ensure a consistent and progressive approach to the teaching and development of handwriting across all classes and key stages. We aim for all children to develop handwriting that is legible, fluent, accurate and efficient, enabling them to record their ideas confidently and independently. The policy promotes high standards of written presentation across the curriculum and ensures that children are taught clear expectations for letter formation, joining, spacing, sizing and overall presentation. Through regular practice, appropriate modelling and consistent expectations, we aim to develop children's confidence, pride and enjoyment in their handwriting.

The main purposes of this document are:

- To establish an entitlement for all pupils.
- To establish expectations for teachers of this subject.
- To promote continuity and coherence across the school.

RATIONALE

Handwriting is a fundamental component of writing and a key part of the transcription process. At Shobnall Primary and Nursery School, we recognise that fluent, legible and automatic handwriting is essential in enabling pupils to communicate their ideas effectively and confidently.

The Department for Education's Writing Framework (2025) identifies handwriting and spelling as foundational skills that should become automatic, stating that this will "free up their working memory for composition." The framework also highlights that, in Key Stage 2, the aim is to develop "the fluency and speed with which they are able to write down what they want to say."

This is supported by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), which states that "if children have to concentrate to ensure their handwriting and spelling is accurate, they will be less able to think about the content of their writing." Developing handwriting fluency therefore reduces the cognitive demands of transcription, allowing pupils to focus on higher-level aspects of writing, including generating, organising and refining their ideas.

Our intention is for handwriting to become an automatic process that does not interfere with creative and mental thinking. This requires handwriting to be explicitly taught, modelled and practised regularly, with appropriate feedback to develop accuracy, fluency and consistency.

Handwriting is therefore viewed not simply as a matter of presentation, but as an essential foundation for successful writing. By prioritising the development of fluent handwriting, we aim to ensure that all pupils are able to record their ideas with increasing confidence, speed and independence.

HANDWRITING PROGRESSION AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES

At Shobnall Primary and Nursery School we primarily use the Little Wandle Handwriting programme. The handwriting lessons are designed to be short and focused, involve recall from the previous day, with direct, explicit teaching through strong modelling.

EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE:

In the Early Years, we recognise that successful handwriting begins with the development of strong gross and fine motor skills. In Nursery, children are provided with a wide range of purposeful, play-based opportunities to develop strength, coordination, balance, spatial awareness, hand–eye coordination and dexterity. Activities such as climbing, balancing, mark-making, manipulating playdough, threading, cutting and using tweezers help to build the physical foundations needed for handwriting.

In Reception, children build on these foundations through the explicit teaching of pre-writing movements and patterns alongside formal handwriting instruction. Children are introduced to handwriting through the Little Wandle Handwriting programme, which complements *Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised* and uses familiar language and phrases to support links between phonics and handwriting. Multisensory activities and purposeful practice help children develop pencil control, letter formation and fluency. By the end of Reception, children are expected to write recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed, and to write simple phrases and sentences that can be read by others. They should also be able to hold a pencil effectively in preparation for fluent writing, using a tripod grip in almost all cases.

Little Wandle Handwriting lessons in Reception focus on:

- correct pencil grip
- correct starting point for each letter
- letter formation and orientation
- families of letters
- capital letters
- reinforcing the link between letters and sounds.

The correct formation of lower-case letters is the key priority in Reception handwriting. Lower-case letter formation is taught in letter families in Units 2 to 5. It is then practised in Unit 6, when capital letters are introduced, and further embedded in Unit 7 by practising with digraphs and trigraphs.

By the end of Reception, children should be able to hold their pencil with correct pencil grip, form lower-case letters beginning at the correct starting point and follow the correct direction. They should be beginning to form capital letters correctly. Daily handwriting lessons are timetabled in Reception for a duration of 15 minutes at appropriately sized tables.

Option 1

Handwriting is taught in a small group of approximately six children of similar ability at a table, with a teacher or teaching assistant who has been fully trained, enabling close monitoring and intervention to ensure the children develop the correct habits right from the start. Suggested time: 15 minutes at tables.

Option 2

The 'Revisit and review' and 'Teach and practise' parts of the lesson are taught to half the class, with the children sitting at tables. The teacher circulates to support the children during the 'Practise and apply' part of the lesson. Suggested time: 15 minutes at tables.

Option 3

The 'Revisit and review' and 'Teach and practise' parts of the lesson are taught to the whole class. The teacher then works with one group at a time, seated at the table, revisiting the modelling and guiding the children in the 'Practise and apply' part of the lesson, while closely observing and providing support as needed. Suggested time: 10 minutes on the carpet; 5 minutes for each group at tables.

Option 4 A whole-class lesson with children seated at tables, supported where possible by a teaching assistant or additional adult to help correct pencil grip and letter formation as needed. Suggested time: 15 minutes at tables.

There are four pupil workbooks to support the Handwriting lessons in Reception.

- Workbook 1: Patterns
- Workbook 2: Lower-case letters
- Workbook 3: Capital letters
- Workbook 4: Digraphs and trigraphs

For children needing extra support, scaffolding is provided through tracing letters before progressing to independent writing. Children with more advanced pencil control and letter formation skills can bypass tracing and practise forming letters independently after teacher modelling.

Once the children have completed the Unit 1 lessons, learned how to hold their pencil correctly and can demonstrate control with tracing over and copying a pattern, they can begin Unit 2. In Units 2 to 5, letters are taught in families based on similar movement patterns, starting with curly letters, followed by long letters, bouncy letters and ending with zig-zag letters

KEY STAGE ONE

In Year 1, handwriting builds on the foundations laid in Reception and progresses to focus on:

- consolidation of letter formation
- sizing and spacing of letters
- formation of punctuation marks and digits 0–9
- practice linked to phonics

In Year 1, pupils are taught to develop correct pencil grip and posture, form capital letters and digits 0–9 accurately, and form lower-case letters in the correct direction, starting and finishing in the right place. They are also taught to recognise and practise letters belonging to the same handwriting families.

In Year 2, handwriting builds upon the skills introduced in Year 1, moving on to focus on:

- sizing of letters
- spacing of letters
- joining letters using the two main joins (diagonal and horizontal)
- practice linked to spelling patterns.

In Year 1 and Year 2 the suggested format for lessons is a class lesson for 10 to 15 minutes, four days a week. Practice in Year 1 lessons will relate to phonics; in Year 2 lessons, practice

will relate to joins and spelling patterns.

KEY STAGE TWO

In Key Stage 2, handwriting continues to be taught and practised to develop pupils' legibility, consistency and fluency. Once pupils can join letters to form words, regular practice supports the development of automaticity, enabling them to write with increasing speed and accuracy and focus more readily on the content of their writing.

Pupils develop their handwriting through a weekly 15-minute session incorporated into spelling practice. Weekly spellings and dictation extracts provide opportunities for pupils to practise and apply their transcription skills.

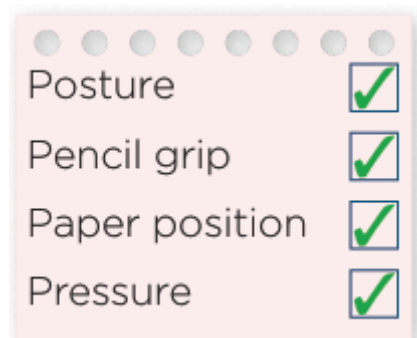
Most pupils are expected to develop and use a fully cursive handwriting style, with a focus on consistency, fluency and legibility. Where specific handwriting difficulties are identified, Letter Join resources may be used to provide targeted teaching and intervention matched to individual needs.

All teaching staff model the agreed handwriting style consistently across the school, including on whiteboards, displays and in pupils' books. Staff should use the Little Wandle formation phrases outlined in the appendices when modelling letter formation.

POSTURE, PAPER POSITION AND PENCIL GRIP

The same routines for finding the correct and comfortable pencil grip and sitting position should be used throughout the school and practised until they are automatic, so that only shorthand reminders to pupils are necessary. These can be referred to as 'ready to write' routines.

The Little Wandle 'Ready to write' checklist ensures children are well prepared to start handwriting with confidence and control. The children are taught and reminded of four elements prior to starting their handwriting lesson.



Posture	☒
Pencil grip	☒
Paper position	☒
Pressure	☒

Posture

By modelling, monitoring and reinforcing good posture from the beginning, poor habits can be prevented from developing and children can be supported in building the stamina and speed needed for fluent writing.

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- **Feet** are flat on the floor or supported on a wide, stable raised surface.
- **Knees** form a 90 degrees angle, with about two fingers' space behind the knees to prevent pressure on the lower thighs.
- **Hips** are positioned at approximately 90 degrees, with the back fully supported by the chair.
- **Seat position** with the back against the chair maintaining a small gap (about the width of a fist) between the stomach and the table, so there is sufficient space to breathe comfortably.
- **Table and chair height** should allow the forearms to rest comfortably on the surface - without leaning forward (too low) or raising the shoulders (too high).
- **Work surface** must be clean, smooth and clear of clutter to promote proper hand and arm placement and allow arms to move freely to write.

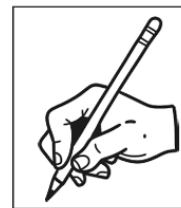


Pencil grip

Pencil grip affects the flow, speed and overall quality of handwriting. Young children need to develop the muscles in their hands to build the strength required for a proper pencil grip. For some, this will take longer and require additional practice. Children initially start to hold the pencil within their fist (age 1–1.5 years), progress to holding the pencil shaft with all their fingers (2–3 years) and then move on to a static, then dynamic tripod grasp. Children typically progress through a series of grasp patterns before developing a tripod grip.

Tripod grip

The tripod grip is typically the easiest for children to learn. It can be modelled by showing how to pinch the pencil between the ball of the thumb and index finger – about a finger's width from the pencil tip – while resting the middle finger underneath for support, and the other fingers tucked into the hand. Using a small sticker to mark the correct grip position can be a helpful visual aid. The ideal location of the fingers is about 3cm from the pencil tip. For children who find pencil grip challenging, timely intervention and additional practice are essential to prevent the development of incorrect habits.



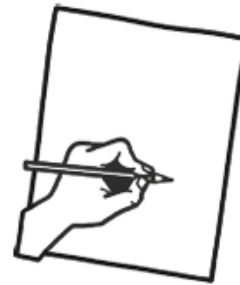
Paper position

Paper angle helps support natural hand movement and improves handwriting posture. It is important to teach children the optimal paper position for writing. The paper placement should not be directly in front of the child, but slightly offset as follows:

For right-handers: Position the paper slightly to the right. Tilt the paper so that the top left corner angles downward to the left.



For left-handers: Position the paper slightly to the left. Tilt the paper so that the top right corner angles downward to the right.



Using the non-writing hand to hold and steady the paper.

Pressure

As children learn to write, the pressure they apply with a pencil often varies based on their developmental stage and the nature of the task. With practice and experience, most children naturally figure out the appropriate amount of pressure to use. Excessive pencil pressure can cause hand fatigue and slow writing, while too little pressure can make handwriting faint and hard to read.



Ready to write

Let's sit up straight, feet nice and flat,
Tilt your paper – just like that!
Pinch your pencil, give it a flip,
Check your hold and then your grip.
Now we can begin to write,
But not too hard and not too light.



Little Wandle Handwriting, 2025

INCLUSION, ADAPTATIONS AND INTERVENTION

All pupils should be supported to develop comfortable, fluent and legible handwriting. Provision should be adapted to meet individual needs, particularly for pupils with SEND or difficulties with fine motor control, coordination, posture or writing stamina.

Left-handed pupils: Left-handed pupils should be given appropriate space and positioning, with left-handed pupils seated to the left of right-handed pupils where possible. Paper should be positioned at a suitable angle and pupils should be encouraged to use a comfortable grip that allows them to see their writing clearly.

Adaptations for additional needs: Teaching should be adapted according to individual need. This may include breaking skills into smaller steps, providing additional modelling and practice, reducing writing demands where appropriate, and allowing additional time to develop fluency and stamina.

Assistive writing tools: Appropriate equipment should be provided where it supports a pupil's individual needs. This may include pencil grips, triangular or larger pencils, writing slopes and slanted boards to support pencil control, posture and wrist positioning.

Targeted intervention: Pupils experiencing persistent or specific handwriting difficulties should receive targeted support based on identified needs. This may focus on areas such as pencil control, letter formation, spacing, sizing, joining, fluency or writing stamina, using appropriate resources from Little Wandle/ Letter join where required. Intervention should be reviewed regularly to ensure it is supporting progress.

ASSESSMENT, MONITORING AND FEEDBACK

Handwriting is assessed as an integral part of the writing process, with teachers monitoring pupils' progress in letter formation, joining, fluency, consistency and overall presentation. Assessment is used to identify individual needs, inform future teaching and ensure that pupils develop the skills required to write accurately, fluently and legibly.

Handwriting is monitored through ongoing teacher assessment, scrutiny of pupils' books and written work, and review of progress over time. Teachers consider whether pupils are transferring the skills taught in handwriting sessions into their independent writing across the curriculum.

Feedback should be timely, specific and focused on the agreed handwriting expectations. Teachers provide verbal feedback during handwriting sessions and may provide written or in-the-moment feedback where this will help pupils to improve a specific aspect of their handwriting. Feedback should prioritise the most important area for improvement rather than correcting every error.

HANDWRITING AT HOME

Handwriting can be effectively reinforced at home, but it is essential that parents are guided to support and reinforce the letter formation taught in school. Parents have access to the formation phrases for lower- case letter, capital letters and digits 0-9. Any additional Little Wandle letter formation practice sheets can also be sent home to further support correct letter formation.

MONITORING AND REVIEW

It is the responsibility of the writing subject leader:

- to support colleagues in their teaching, by keeping informed about current developments in handwriting and by providing a strategic lead and direction for this subject;
- to monitor handwriting throughout the school;

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- to encourage staff to provide effective learning opportunities for all pupils;
- to develop valid activities, appropriate for children at different stages of development, which enable pupils to progress in the subject.

This policy will be reviewed at least every three years.

APPENDICES

Capital letter formation phrases

Letter mnemonic	Formation phrase
A	From the top, diagonally down to the left, up to the top, diagonally down to the right. Lift up and across.
B	From the top, down, back to the top. Round to the middle, round to the bottom.
C	From the top, curl around to the left to sit on the line.
D	From the top, down, back to the top. Curve right, down to the bottom.
E	From the top, down, back to the top. Across, back. Lift up and across the middle. Lift up and across the bottom line.
F	From the top, down, back to the top. Across, back. Lift up and across the middle.

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Letter mnemonic	Formation phrase
	From the top, curl around to the line, carry on up, then straight down. Lift up and across.
	From the top and down. Space. From the top and down. Lift up and join the lines across the middle.
	From the top to the bottom and stop.
	From the top, all the way down, then short curl to the left.
	From the top, down, up to the middle. Diagonally up, back and diagonally down to the line.
	From the top, down and across the line.
	From the top, down, back to the top. Diagonally down, diagonally up. Straight down to the line.
	From the top, down, back to the top. Diagonally down, then straight up to the top.
	From the top - all around the o.
	From the top, down then back up. Curve right to halfway down.

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Letter mnemonic	Formation phrase
Q	From the top – all around the o. Lift off. Short line diagonally down.
R	From the top, down, then back up. Curve right to halfway down. Diagonally down to the line.
S	From the top, curl around to the left. Then curl around to the right to make a snake shape.
T	From the top, down and stop. Lift up and from the left, make a line across the top.
U	From the top, down and curve right, then straight up to the top.
V	From the top diagonally right to the bottom, then diagonally up to the top.
W	From the top diagonally right to the bottom, diagonally up to the top, diagonally down to the line, then diagonally up again.
X	From the top, diagonally right to the bottom. Space. Start at the top, then diagonally left to the bottom.
Y	From the top diagonally right to the middle. Space. From the top diagonally left to the middle. Straight down to the bottom.
Z	From the top go across, diagonally down to the left and across the bottom.

Lower-case letter formation phrases

Unit 2: Curly letter family

Letter mnemonic	Formation phrase	Letter mnemonic	Formation phrase
	Curl around the cat.		Around the queen's face, down her robe and a flick at the end.
	Around the astronaut's helmet and down into space.		Around the elephant's eye and curl down its trunk.
	Around the duck's body, up to its head and down to its feet.		Down the snake from head to tail.
	Around the goat's face and curl under its chin.		Down the flamingo to its foot and across its wings.
	All around the octopus.		

Unit 3: Long letter family

Letter mnemonic	Formation phrase	Letter mnemonic	Formation phrase
	Down the lollipop stick.		Down the jellyfish and dot its head.
	Down the iguana and dot the leaf.		Down and around the umbrella and back to the ground.
	Down the tiger and across its neck.		Down, around the yo-yo and curl around the string.

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Unit 4: Bouncy letter family

Letter mnemonic	Formation phrase	Letter mnemonic	Formation phrase
	Down, up and over the mouse's ears.		Down the bear's back, up and around its tummy.
	Down, up and over the net.		Down the penguin's back, up and around its head.
	From the cloud to the ground and over the rainbow.		Down, up and over the helicopter.

Unit 5: Zig-zag letter family

Letter mnemonic	Formation phrase	Letter mnemonic	Formation phrase
	Down to the bottom of the volcano and back up to the top.		Across the top of the zebra's head, zig-zag down its neck and along.
	Down and up and down and up the waves.		Down the kite, up to the top corner and down to the bottom corner.
	From the top, across the box to the bottom. From the top again, across the box to the bottom.		

Digit formation phrases

Number	Mnemonic	Formation phrase
		Start at the top and go all around the tortoise's shell.
		From the meerkat's neck, straight down to its feet.
		From the swan's eye, all around its neck and along its wing.
		From the butterfly's head, around its top wing and around its bottom wing.
		From the crocodile's nose to its cheek and along its jaw. Lift off and go down the stick.
		From the seahorse's snout to the back of its head, down its neck and around its tummy.

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Number	Mnemonic	Formation phrase
		Down the stalk and around the apple.
		From the giraffe's nose to its ear and down its neck.
		From the flag, draw an S, then loop back around the racetrack.
		From the dinosaur's eye, around its head and down its neck.