



FOREST OF DEAN COMMUNITY SCHOOLS FEDERATION

PARKEND PRIMARY & YORKLEY PRIMARY

HANDWRITING POLICY

2026 - 2028

Policy Status

Recommended

Rationale

At our school, handwriting is recognised as a fundamental skill that underpins effective communication, learning and academic success. Fluent, legible handwriting enables children to record their ideas efficiently, reduces cognitive load, and allows pupils to focus on the content of their writing rather than the mechanics. High standards of handwriting also contribute to pride in work and high-quality presentation across the curriculum. This policy reflects national expectations and research which emphasise the importance of explicit teaching and regular practice in developing handwriting proficiency.

Policy Aims

This policy aims to ensure that:

- Handwriting is taught consistently across all classes and key stages.
- All children develop legible, fluent and efficient handwriting.
- Pupils use handwriting confidently to support composition and learning in all subjects.
- High standards of written presentation are evident across the curriculum.

Teaching Progression and Expected Outcomes

Handwriting development is taught progressively, building on children's physical development and fine motor control.

The stages of progression include:

- Developing gross motor control and core strength.
- Refining fine motor control and hand-eye coordination.
- Establishing a correct pencil grip and comfortable posture.
- Secure formation of lower-case and capital letters.
- Accurate sizing, spacing and alignment of letters.
- Introduction and consolidation of joins leading to cursive handwriting.
- Increasing fluency, speed and the development of an individual, legible style.

Year Group Expectations

Year Group	Expectations
Reception	Develop a secure pencil grip, correct posture and form recognisable letters using correct starting points, direction and orientation. See APPENDIX A
Y1	Form letters correctly; leave spaces between words. See APPENDIX B Pupils should be taught to: <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• 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.
Y2	Begin joining; maintain consistent size and spacing. See APPENDIX C Pupils should be taught to: <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 unjoined• 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.
Y3/ Y4	Use joined handwriting fluently and legibly. Pupils should be taught to: <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 unjoined• 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].
Y4	Maintain legibility and speed; develop personal style.
Y5	Write neatly at pace; adapt handwriting for purpose. Pupils should be taught to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• write legibly, fluently and with increasing speed by: 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.
Y6	Write fluently, legibly, and efficiently across all tasks. We aim for them to develop a clear, fluent style and by the end of Year 6 be able to adapt their handwriting for different purposes, such as: a neat, legible hand for finished, presented work, a faster script for note making and the ability to print for labelling diagrams etc. Also see above.

The Joining Style See Appendix C

"Joins between letters are only worthwhile if they increase the speed, rhythm and ease of writing without reducing legibility"

Which letters join?

Joins are made both to and from the following 17 letters:

a c d e f h i k l m n o r t u v w

Joins are made to but not from the following 8 letters:

b g j p q s x y

Joins are never made to or from the letter z

The 4 basic joins:

1. Diagonal joins to letters without ascenders e.g. in, on, at
2. Diagonal joins to letters with ascenders e.g. at
3. Horizontal joins to letters without ascenders e.g. on
4. Horizontal joins to letters with ascenders e.g. the 'eb' in z-eb-ra

Once a child has developed a clear and consistently accurate style and takes pride in producing neat presentation, a pen licence will be awarded. It is the expectation that by the end of Year 3, all children will have received their pen licence.

Teaching Handwriting

- Handwriting is taught explicitly and regularly through short, focused sessions. In Key stage 2 this will be at the beginning of the English lessons at least 4 times per week.
- Handwriting books are used for handwriting lessons.
- Teaching follows a direct approach: teacher modelling, guided practice and independent application.
- Lessons include warm-up activities to prepare hands and fingers for writing.
- Teachers and support staff consistently model high-quality handwriting in lessons, on displays and in feedback.

Posture, Paper Position and Pencil Grip

Children are taught and reminded to:

- Sit correctly with feet flat on the floor, knees bent at approximately 90 degrees and backs supported by the chair.
- Position paper appropriately, with a slight tilt depending on whether they are right- or left-handed.
- Use their non-writing hand to hold and steady the paper.
- Use a comfortable and efficient grip; the tripod grip is recommended and encouraged.

Inclusion, Adaptations and Intervention

The school is committed to ensuring that all children can make progress in handwriting.

Provision includes:

- Specific guidance and support for left-handed children. **APPENDIX D**
- Reasonable adaptations for children with additional needs, including difficulties with motor control, dyspraxia or dysgraphia.
- Use of appropriate equipment such as pencil grips, sloped writing boards or alternative writing tools.
- Targeted interventions to address identified handwriting difficulties.
- Close liaison with external professionals where appropriate.
- Children joining the school who have previously been taught a different handwriting style will be supported through a gentle transition to our agreed school handwriting approach. However, if their current handwriting style is already neat, legible and comfortably established, they will not be required to change it.

Assessment, Monitoring and Feedback

- Handwriting is monitored regularly through work scrutiny, lesson observation and pupil discussions.
- Assessment considers letter formation, size and spacing, consistency, joins and fluency.
- Feedback is provided verbally and/or in written form, focusing on clear next steps for improvement. Incorrect letter formation will be highlighted in pink and the child will practice the letter underneath their work three times.
- Progress in handwriting informs teaching and intervention planning.

Standards for Written Presentation

- Clear expectations for written presentation are set out for each year group.
- These include layout, margins, dates, headings, titles and approaches to corrections.
- Expectations apply across all curriculum subjects to ensure consistency.

Resources

The school uses:

- A chosen handwriting scheme that supports progressive development.
- Appropriate writing equipment including pencils, pens and pencil grips.
- Lined paper and exercise books with line spacing suitable for each year group.

Engaging Parents and Carers

- Parents and carers are informed about handwriting expectations and the style taught in school.
- Guidance and resources are shared to help support handwriting practice at home.

- Consistent messages are promoted between home and school.

Policy Monitoring and Review

- The implementation of this policy is monitored by the subject leader and senior leadership team.
- The policy is reviewed regularly to ensure it reflects best practice and meets the needs of pupils.
- Updates are provided to staff as required following review.

Links with other policies

Monitoring and Evaluation policy
Marking and Feedback Policy
Special Educational Needs and Disability Policy

Policy review

Written by: SLT

Agreed by Governors: March 2026

Review date: March 2028

APPENDIX A

Teaching Little Wandle Handwriting in Reception

SUPPORTING CHILDREN TO DEVELOP FLUENT HANDWRITING

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.

Lesson organisation in Reception

Handwriting lessons need to be timetabled and prioritised in Reception. We recommend four short lessons of 15 minutes each. There are different options for the way lessons can be organised.

Option 3 is used across the Federation

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.

Teaching routines for handwriting

Consistent routines and expectations for behaviour need to be established and reinforced right from the beginning of Reception. This includes listening carefully, returning to the table promptly, lining up quietly, following instructions, and handling resources responsibly.

You may wish to practise the four Ps in the 'Ready to write' checklist before you begin handwriting lessons - see the information in the Handwriting document 'Little Wandle Handwriting' and watch the videos 'Posture' and 'Pencil grip'.

It is especially important that children develop the correct pencil grip from the start so that bad habits are not allowed to form. Establishing correct habits early helps prevent the formation of poor writing habits and promotes consistency and confidence from the outset.

Use the Little Wandle Handwriting programme 'Ready to write' rhyme as part of your preparation for teaching and in handwriting lessons:

'Ready to write' rhyme

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.

Using the pupil workbooks

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

Children enter school with varying motor skill proficiency and develop handwriting skills at different rates. The workbooks are thoughtfully designed to be flexible, to accommodate children's needs. 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. Additionally, the blank lined pages at the back of the workbook and the Letter formation practice sheets from the Little Wandle website can be used to provide further guidance and modelled examples.

The workbooks contain line guides to support children and to demonstrate appropriate letter size and correct positioning. The darker baselines will support children with positioning the letters on the line. There are fainter lines to further guide children who are at the stage of being able to control the size of their letters. However, in Reception, the main emphasis should be on ensuring children start their letters in the right place and follow the correct direction to form each letter accurately. There will be a greater focus on sizing and spacing of letters in Year 1.

Practising patterns

Unit 1 of the programme prepares Reception children for letter formation through carefully planned motor development activities and practice of patterns. This will give the children the chance to develop the correct pencil grip, develop pressure on the page and the flow of writing. Children will practise the different types of strokes and curves they will need to use in letter formation, including horizontal and vertical lines, up and down curves, crosses and zig-zags. See the Handwriting document 'Unit guidance: Practising patterns' for further information about the aims of each pattern type.

Teaching letter families

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. More detail is given in the progression table in the Handwriting document 'Pace and progression'.

Links to phonics lessons

The Little Wandle Handwriting programme uses the familiar formation phrases from Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised to help the children to remember the direction of the letter (see the Handwriting documents 'Lower case letter formation phrases' and 'Capital letter formation phrases'). Letters in the workbooks are set in the familiar Sassoon Infant font from the Little Wandle phonics programme, with dots to show the starting point and arrows to show a directional stroke. There are flicks at the end of some letters to prepare the children for joining in Year 2.

It is preferable for children to have learned letters and their corresponding phonemes in phonics lessons before they are taught them in handwriting lessons. Children on track with the Little Wandle core programme progression and starting the Handwriting programme in Reception Autumn 1 will have been taught all of the graphemes before they encounter them in handwriting, with the exception of 'q'. For the letter 'q', we suggest that you introduce the sound briefly (kw) and explain that the grapheme will be covered in an upcoming phonics lesson.

Resources for teaching

To maximise time efficiency, all resources should be prepared in advance of the lesson and

easily accessible. To teach the handwriting lessons, you will need:

- a lined tripod whiteboard and marker
- sharpened pencils
- pencil grips if needed
- pupil workbooks
- the large Phase 2 grapheme card for the letters being taught and reviewed (Units 2 to 5)
- the large grapheme card for the letters being taught or reviewed (for Units 2 to 5)
- the lesson template for the lesson type being taught
- lower-case letter formation phrases (Unit 2 onwards)
- capital letter formation phrases (for Unit 6)
- unit guidance (Unit 2 onwards).

We also recommend the **Little Wandle Wall Frieze for Reception: Phase 2** (available from Collins) which shows the lower-case and capital letters.

Engaging parents

Home learning

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. Some children will come to school able to write their names but may have poor pencil grip and poor letter formation. It is important that these are corrected straight away. (See also the paragraph 'Writing names' on page 3 of the Handwriting document 'Introduction to teaching handwriting'.)

Consider organising parent workshops to introduce the handwriting approach used and to demonstrate correct letter formation. You could include a section on handwriting in phonics workshops for parents. However, it is important to tell parents that handwriting is taught in letter families and the reason for this. (It is easier for children to learn correct letter formation when letters with similar shapes and strokes are taught in groups.) The Little Wandle **Letter formation practice sheets** can also be sent home to further support correct letter formation.

APPENDIX B

Teaching handwriting in Key Stage 1

SUPPORTING CHILDREN TO DEVELOP FLUENT HANDWRITING

Year 1

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.

National Curriculum statutory requirements for handwriting: Year 1

Pupils should be taught to:

- Sit correctly at a table, holding a pencil comfortably and correctly
- Form lower-case letters in the correct direction, starting and finishing in the right place
- Form capital letters
- Form digits 0-9
- Understand which letters belong to which handwriting 'families' and to practise these.

Year 2

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
- practice linked to spelling patterns.

National Curriculum statutory requirements for handwriting: Year 2

Pupils should be taught to:

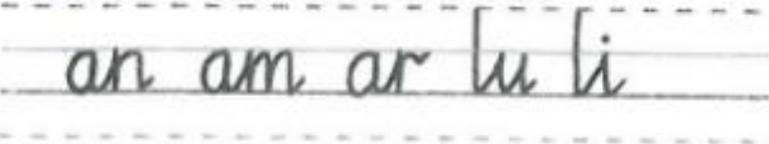
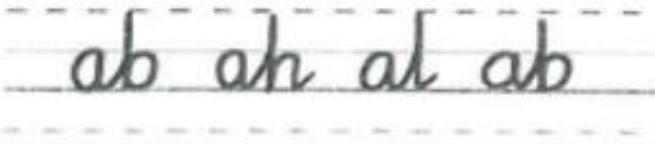
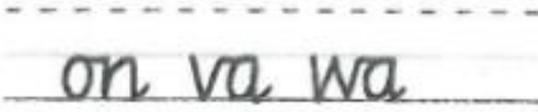
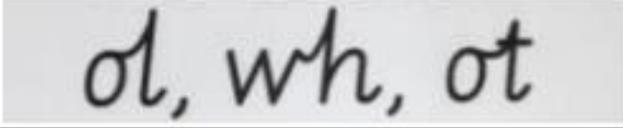
- Form lower-case letters of the correct size relative to one another
- Start using some of the diagonal and horizontal strokes needed to join letters and understand which letters, when adjacent to one another, are best left unjoined
- Write capital letters and digits of the correct size, orientation and relationship to one another and to lower-case letters
- Use spacing between words that reflects the size of the letters.

Lesson organisation in Years 1 and 2

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. If possible, in this lesson, the tables should be organised in rows or in a position where they can clearly see the board. The weakest writers should be seated in the front row or at a table where you can more closely monitor the children.

Nelson Handwriting Joins Checklist

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

Join 1	<p>Diagonal upwards join from letters than finish with upstrokes to letters without ascenders e.g. a to n / l to i</p> 
Join 2	<p>Diagonal upwards join from letters than finish with upstrokes to letters with ascenders (to b, f, h, k, l, t)</p> 
Join 3	<p>Horizontal join across the top of letters to letters without ascenders (o v and w).</p> 
Join 4	<p>Horizontal join to letters with ascenders (to l, h, t etc.)</p> 
Break Letters	<p>Joins are not make from these letters. Appropriate joins are made to these letters: b g j p q x y</p>
Mean Letter	<p>The only mean letter is z. Children should not join to or from this letter.</p>

APPENDIX D

Supporting left-handed children

Common Left-Handed Writing Problems

Writing with a hooked or arched hand - Left-handed children need a slightly different grip on their pen or pencil than right-handed children. This is because their hand needs to be in a different position so they can see what they're writing.

Smudging words - As a left-handed child writes, their hand can very easily drag over the words they've just written, causing them to smudge the words.

Letter formation - Left-handed children are "pushing" their pen across the page to write from left to right. This means they might use certain tricks to make things a little easier for themselves. This might mean they write their letters backwards. Some left-handed children will form the same letter but by doing it in the opposite direction, this is very common.

Not being able to use certain pens - Writing for left-handers is different than it is for right-handers, and that means different pens. Left-handed people have different grip and also write across their body rather than away from it. Using pens with quick-drying ink can help with smudging and there are certain pens that are designed to help left-handed children with grip.

Restriction of movement - Left-handed people are drawing their hand and arm towards their body, which can restrict their movement.

Not being able to see what they're writing - Due to the positioning of the hand, left-handed children might not be able to see what they're writing very clearly when their paper is straight.

Ways to support Left-Handed Children

1. Get the right tools. In the beginning, when a child is writing with a pencil, you can get a pencil grip that helps your child to hold their pencil in the correct place - about 3cm above the nib.
2. Help them master grip. When children write with their left hand, they tend to have a different grip to right-handed children. This is usually in an attempt to be able to see what they're writing but can result in a hooked or arched hand. We want to avoid this because these grips can cause strain on the wrist, and we don't want to add any extra tension to learning how to write.
3. Tilt the paper to the right. Left-handed child, need to tilt their paper clockwise. Tilting the paper between 30-45 degrees will keep the child's hand underneath the writing line, which gives them a clear view of what they're writing.
4. Give them space. Make sure children have enough space to move. Left-handed writer's movement is already a little more restrictive, so it's important we give them space. This might mean you place them further away from right-handed children or on the left side to avoid bashing elbows.