



ST ANNE'S RC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Whole School Handwriting Policy & Progression Ladder



Handwriting Policy

Rationale

At our school, we believe that handwriting is a fundamental life skill that supports children's ability to communicate, think, and learn effectively. A fluent, legible handwriting style enables pupils to focus on composition rather than transcription.

This policy ensures a consistent, progressive approach to handwriting from EYFS to Key Stage 2, rooted in:

- Systematic phonics teaching through *Little Wandle*
- Developmentally appropriate physical preparation (Griffin OT)
- National expectations for writing (DfE)
- High-quality implementation and outcomes (Ofsted framework)

Aims

We aim to:

- Develop automatic, fluent handwriting for all pupils
- Ensure correct letter formation from the earliest stages
- Build strong physical foundations for writing
- Support all learners, including those with additional needs
- Promote pride and presentation in all written work

Principles of Effective Practice

Foundations Before Formal Writing

Handwriting begins before pencil meets paper.

Following **Griffin Occupational Therapy**, we prioritise:

- Core strength and posture
- Shoulder stability and gross motor control
- Fine motor development (e.g., threading, squeezing, manipulating)
- Hand strength and pencil grip
- Bilateral coordination

These are embedded through:

- Continuous provision (EYFS)
- Planned fine motor interventions
- Movement-rich learning environments

Consistency of Letter Formation

We follow **Little Wandle** letter formation rhymes and patterns to ensure:

- Correct starting points

- Directionality (top-to-bottom, left-to-right)
- Consistent terminology across school

Adults model handwriting explicitly and consistently following this guidance:

SUPPORTING CHILDREN TO
DEVELOP FLUENT HANDWRITING



Pace and progression

We recommend that the letter patterns (Unit 1) are taught over four weeks and the lower-case letters in letter families (Units 2 to 5) over the rest of the first term. After practising with patterns, we suggest that schools teach three letters a week in four lessons to support the development of accurate letter formation.

For lessons 1 to 3, use the **Lesson templates** and **Unit guidance** alongside the **Workbooks** to teach one letter per day. Watch the videos 'Letter formation: Revisit and review', 'Letter formation: Teach and practise' and 'Letter formation: Practise and apply' for further guidance. Use Assessment for Learning to identify where children need further support and practice.

In the fourth lesson, use the workbook blank practice pages, a lined book or the **Letter formation practice sheets** from the Little Wandle website to review and consolidate the week's learning. Focus particularly on correcting any issues with letter starting points and formation of letters identified through Assessment for Learning during the week's lessons. If appropriate, you can also practise writing the letters in words. Each lesson also begins with a review of the previous day's learning and a chance to practise forming the letter.

Unit 6 provides further practice of lower-case letters alongside the introduction of the corresponding capital letter, and in Unit 7, children consolidate their lower-case letter formation in digraphs, trigraphs and words.

A recommended weekly plan is shown in brackets in the **Reception progression** table on page 3.

Our expectations of progression are aspirational yet achievable if schools maintain pace, practice and participation by all children. However, the programme has been designed to be flexible so that it can be used to meet the pace of learning appropriate to your class – do not teach new content until previous learning is secure.

Lesson timings and teaching sequence

Handwriting lessons should last approximately 15 minutes and be scheduled at least four times per week. Each lesson should start with practice of the previous day's pattern/letter using the 'Pattern check-up' or 'Letter check-up' box. Consistent daily practice is essential for progress, and it is strongly recommended to use a small, lined exercise book for additional practice. It is crucial that an adult is present during this extra practice to provide guidance and support and to address any misconceptions promptly. The teaching sequence for introducing a new pattern/letter should be:

1. Introduce the letter and formation phrase.
2. Form the letter in the air.
3. Form the letter on the palm of the hand.
4. Trace the mnemonic with a finger.
5. Write the letter.

For steps 2 to 5, the teacher provides strong modelling and then the children join in.

Effective modelling

When modelling letter formation, face the same direction as the children, looking over your shoulder to check that children are engaged. This ensures that children can clearly observe the correct direction and movement of the letter. As part of your modelling, demonstrate how to check and improve. Look at your formed letter carefully to see how and if it can be improved, then make the required improvement in the next attempt. Ask the children to do the same.

Adaptations

Some children may be ready to move to independent letter formation more quickly than others. If so, direct them to the parts in the Workbook where there is no tracing or copying. Exercise books or additional practice paper can be used for independent practice. If you are using exercise books or additional practice paper, we recommend that you model the letter or add a starting point dot for children who need this support.

Reception progression

Autumn term	Preparation and practice (suggested time 4 weeks)	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teach the 'Ready to write' checklist Engage in motor development activities Practise with patterns 	
	Unit 1: Practising patterns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Horizontal lines, Vertical lines, Wavy lines, Circles (Week 1) Up curves, Down curves, Mixed-height curves, Letter C (Week 2) Spirals, Crosses, Turrets, Diagonals (Week 3) Zig-zags, Sideways V, Letter X, Triangles (Week 4)
	Teach lower-case letter formation (suggested time 9 weeks)	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teach the lower-case letters in families Use Assessment for Learning to reteach and review 	
	Unit 2: Curly letter family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> c, a, d (Week 5) g, o, q (Week 6) e, s, f (Week 7)
	Unit 3: Long letter family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> l, i, t (Week 8) j, u, y (Week 9)
	Unit 4: Bouncy letter family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> m, n, r (Week 10) b, p, h (Week 11)
	Unit 5: Zig-zag letter family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> v, w, x (Week 12) z, k (Week 13)
End or start of term	Assess and review week	Review lower-case letters as needed (Week 14)
Spring term	Teach capital letter formation (suggested time 11 weeks)	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teach capital letters Review lower-case letters alongside capitals Use Assessment for Learning to reteach and review 	
	Unit 6: Capital letters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cc, Aa, Dd (Week 15) Gg, Oo, Qq (Week 16) Ee, Ss, Ff (Week 17) Ll, Ii, Tt (Week 18) Jj, Uu, Yy (Week 19) <p>Assess and review week (Week 20 – before or after half-term)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mm, Nn, Rr (Week 21) Bb, Pp, Hh (Week 22) Vv, Ww, Xx (Week 23) Zz, Kk (Week 24)

End or start of term	Assess and review week	Review capital letters as needed (Week 25)
Summer term	Practise in digraphs, trigraphs and words (suggested time 9+ weeks) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess and review lower-case and capital letters as needed Practise letter formation in digraphs and trigraphs Practise letter formation in words Use Assessment for Learning to reteach and review 	
	Unit 7: Digraphs and trigraphs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ff, ll, ss (Week 26) zz, ck, qu (Week 27) ch, sh, th (Week 28) ng, nk, ai (Week 29) ee, igh, oa (Week 30) Assess and review week (Week 31 – before or after half-term) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> oo, ar, or (Week 32) ur, ow, oi (Week 33) ear, air, er plus Assess and review (Week 34) 	
End of term	Assess and review week	Week 35 (onwards): Assess and review all letters as needed

High Expectations for All

In line with DfE writing expectations and Ofsted's focus on curriculum implementation, we ensure:

- Handwriting is taught explicitly and regularly using digital handwriting repeater and sentence strips
- Expectations are consistent across subjects
- Presentation is valued in all work

Progression of Handwriting

EYFS

Focus: Readiness for writing and correct print formation

Children will:

- Develop gross and fine motor control
- Use a range of tools (paint, chalk, sand, pencils)
- Begin forming letters using Little Wandle formation rhymes
- Write using printed (non-joined) letters

Key approaches:

- Multi-sensory letter formation
- Daily fine motor opportunities
- Emphasis on posture and grip

Year 1

Focus: Secure correct print formation

Children will:

- Form all lower-case and capital letters correctly
- Begin consistent sizing and orientation
- Develop spacing between words
- Build stamina for writing

Teaching includes:

- Daily handwriting practice
- Reinforcement through phonics and writing sessions
- Continued fine motor support where needed

Year 2

Focus: Transition to precursive handwriting

Children will:

- Learn precursive letter formation (entry/exit strokes)
- Begin to join some letters where appropriate
- Maintain legibility and consistency

Key principles:

- Joins introduced only when formation is secure
- Clear modelling of joins
- Continued support for those not yet ready

Key Stage 2

Focus: Fluent cursive handwriting

Children will:

- Use a fully cursive, joined style
- Write with increasing speed and fluency
- Maintain legibility across all subjects

Expectations:

- Consistent joins
- Appropriate letter sizing and spacing
- Adapt handwriting for purpose (e.g., notes vs presentation)

Teaching and Learning

Teaching Approach

- Explicit modelling by adults
- Use of consistent language (Little Wandle)
- Short, frequent practice sessions
- Immediate feedback and correction

Practice

- Discrete handwriting sessions
- EYFS & Year One use scaffolded support sheets from Little Wandle
- Year Two & Key Stage Two have Handwriting books
- Integrated practice across the curriculum
- Targeted intervention for pupils who need additional support

Inclusion and Support

We recognise that some pupils may require additional support.

We provide:

- Adapted resources (e.g., pencil grips, writing slopes)
- Small group or 1:1 interventions
- Collaboration with SENDCo and specialists
- Occupational therapy-informed strategies

Assessment and Monitoring

Handwriting is assessed through:

- Ongoing teacher assessment
- Work scrutiny across subjects
- Observation of posture, grip, and fluency

Leaders monitor:

- Consistency of teaching
- Progression across year groups
- Impact on writing outcomes

Presentation Expectations

Across the school:

- Work is dated and titled appropriately
- Handwriting is neat and legible
- Pupils take pride in their work

Alignment with National Expectations

This policy reflects:

- DfE emphasis on transcription skills as part of writing
- Ofsted's Education Inspection Framework, particularly:
 - Curriculum coherence and progression
 - Quality of implementation
 - Impact on pupil outcomes

Review

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure it reflects:

- Current research
- National guidance
- School priorities

Handwriting Progression Map EYFS → KS2

EYFS – Print Formation Following Little Wandle

No joins introduced

Focus:

- Gross and fine motor readiness (Griffin OT)
- Correct letter formation using Little Wandle
- Starting points and directionality

Teach:

- All lower-case letters (printed)
- Capital letters (printed)
- Numerals 0–9

Key Expectations:

- Correct formation (not reversed)
- Developing tripod grip
- Writing on lines begins (where appropriate)

Year 1 – Secure Print (No Joins Yet)

No joins introduced

Focus:

- Automatic, correct formation
- Orientation and size consistency

Teach:

- Reinforcement of all letter formations
- Relative sizing (tall, small, descenders)
- Finger spaces between words

Ready to progress when pupils can:

- Form letters correctly and consistently
- Maintain orientation and spacing

Year 2 – Precursive Introduction (Entry Strokes & Early Joins)

Focus:

- Adding **entry and exit strokes**
- Introducing simple, natural joins

Step 1: Precursive Letter Formation (Autumn Term)

Teach:

- All letters with entry strokes (lead-in lines)
- Exit strokes where appropriate

 No formal joining until formation is secure

Step 2: Diagonal Joins to “Tall Letters” (Spring Term)

These are the easiest and most natural joins.

Teach joins:

- a → t (at)
- i → t (it)

- $n \rightarrow t$ (nt)
- $m \rightarrow t$ (mt)
- $a \rightarrow l$ (al)
- $i \rightarrow l$ (il)
- $u \rightarrow l$ (ul)

Step 3: Horizontal Joins (Summer Term)

Teach joins:

- $a \rightarrow c$ (ac)
- $o \rightarrow n$ (on)
- $o \rightarrow m$ (om)
- $e \rightarrow r$ (er)

Step 4: Diagonal Joins to Descenders (Summer Term)

Teach joins:

- $a \rightarrow g$ (ag)
- $i \rightarrow g$ (ig)
- $e \rightarrow y$ (ey)

End of Year 2 Expectation:

- Most letters formed with entry strokes
- Some joins used correctly
- Writing remains legible and controlled

Lower Key Stage 2 (Years 3–4) – Developing Cursive

Focus:

- Secure and consistent joining
- Increasing fluency

Consolidate All Join Types

1. Diagonal Joins (no ascender next letter)

- a → i (ai)
- e → n (en)
- s → u (su)

2. Diagonal Joins to Tall Letters

- a → t (at)
- o → l (ol)

3. Horizontal Joins

- o → w (ow)
- v → e (ve)
- w → a (wa)

Teach “Break Letters” (Non-joining letters)

Children are explicitly taught where **NOT** to join:

Common non-join letters:

- b, p, g, j, y, x

Examples:

- **bag** (no join into g)
- **play** (break before y)

End of Year 4 Expectation:

- Legible, joined handwriting
- Consistent size and spacing
- Increasing writing speed

Upper Key Stage 2 (Years 5–6) – Fluent, Personal Style

Focus:

- Automatic, fluent cursive handwriting
- Adaptation for purpose

Refinement and Fluency

Pupils will:

- Use joins automatically
- Write at speed without loss of legibility
- Develop a **personal, consistent style**

Advanced Application

- Writing for different purposes (notes, drafting, publishing)
- Maintaining presentation under time constraints

Summary of Join Progression

Stage	Join Type	Examples
Year 2 (Spring)	Diagonal to tall letters	<i>at, il, nt</i>
Year 2 (Summer)	Horizontal joins	<i>ac, on, er</i>
Year 2 (Summer)	Diagonal to descenders	<i>ag, ey</i>
Year 3–4	All joins consolidated	<i>ai, ow, ve</i>
Year 3–4	Non-joins taught	<i>b, g, y</i>
Year 5–6	Fluent cursive	All joins automatic

Key Implementation Notes (Ofsted-Aligned)

- Sequence is carefully structured and cumulative
- Joins are introduced only when pupils are ready
- Teachers use consistent modelling and language
- Practice is frequent, short, and purposeful
- Adaptations are made based on Griffin OT developmental readiness

<u>Assessment Checkpoints</u>			
Year Group	Autumn Term	Spring Term	Summer term
Reception	<p>Children typically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show emerging gross motor control • Begin to use whole-arm movements • Experiment with mark-making <p>Checkpoint:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can the child control large movements (e.g. sweeping, circular)? • Can they manipulate tools (brushes, chunky crayons)? 	<p>Children should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use preferred hand consistently • Begin controlled mark-making • Show developing fine motor strength <p>Checkpoint:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can the child form simple shapes (circles, lines, crosses)? • Are they beginning to use a tripod or near-tripod grip? • Can they sit with appropriate posture? 	<p>Expected Standard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correct formation of most letters (Little Wandle style) • Writing recognisable letters and simple words <p>Checkpoint:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are letters formed from correct starting points? • Are most letters correctly oriented (not reversed)? • Is there evidence of spacing between words? • Is pencil grip effective and comfortable?
Year One	<p>Focus: Reinforcing correct formation</p> <p>Checkpoint:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are all letters formed correctly and consistently? 	<p>Focus: Consistency and control</p> <p>Checkpoint:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are letters consistent in size (tall, small, descenders)? 	<p>Expected Standard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure, automatic print handwriting <p>Checkpoint:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are starting points secure? • Are reversals reducing? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is spacing between words evident? • Is writing sitting on the line? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can the pupil write fluently without thinking about formation? • Is handwriting legible in all work? • Is spacing consistent? • Is grip and posture secure? <p>Ready for Year 2 precursive if ALL secure</p>
Year Two	<p>Focus: Entry/exit strokes</p> <p>Checkpoint:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are entry strokes added consistently? • Are letters still correctly formed (not distorted)? • Is legibility maintained? 	<p>Focus: Simple joins</p> <p>Checkpoint:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are taught joins (e.g. at, it, nt) accurate? • Does the child know when not to join? • Is spacing still clear? 	<p>Expected Standard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beginning to use joins appropriately <p>Checkpoint:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are joins consistent and correctly formed? • Is handwriting still legible when joining? • Can the child write a short piece fluently with some joins? <p>Ready for KS2 cursive if joins are controlled and legible</p>

<p>Lower Key Stage Two</p>	<p>Focus: Securing joins</p> <p>Checkpoint:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are all taught joins used correctly? • Are non-joining letters respected (e.g. b, g, y)? • Is writing consistent across subjects? 	<p>Focus: Fluency</p> <p>Checkpoint:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is writing becoming more fluid and less laboured? • Are joins automatic rather than forced? • Is spacing consistent? 	<p>Expected Standard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legible, joined handwriting at speed <p>Checkpoint:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can the pupil sustain joined writing across a full page? • Is handwriting consistent in all curriculum areas? • Is presentation maintained without prompting?
<p>Upper Key Stage Two</p>	<p>Focus: Refinement</p> <p>Checkpoint:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is handwriting fluent and automatic? • Are joins consistent and natural? 	<p>Focus: Speed and stamina</p> <p>Checkpoint:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can the pupil write at speed without loss of legibility? • Is handwriting sustained across longer tasks? 	<p>Expected Standard (DfE aligned):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fluent, legible, joined handwriting <p>Checkpoint:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is handwriting adapted for purpose (notes vs presentation)? • Is personal style consistent and readable?

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does handwriting support, not hinder, composition?
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Letter formations we use:

a b c d e f

g h i j k l

m n o p q

r s t u v w

x y z

Examples

Diagonal joins to letters without ascenders	ai, ar, us, <u>au</u> , aw, er, ew, ir, ur, ss, as, ea, ae, ee, ie, se, ue
Horizontal joins to letters without ascenders	ou, vi, wi, xe, ere, oe, re, ure, ve, we, oi, on, <u>oo</u> , or, ov, ow, oa
Diagonal joins to letters with ascenders	ab, ul, it, ch, kn, <u>ll</u> , sh, th, ed, be, de, br
Horizontal joins to letters with ascenders	ol, wh, <u>ot</u>
Diagonal joins to letters with descenders	ff, ph, qu, igh, ing, <u>ng</u> , squ, fe, ge, <u>pe</u>
Horizontal joins to letters with descenders	op, oy