

Selsdon Primary School and Nursery

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SELSDON PRIMARY SCHOOL

HANDWRITING POLICY & GUIDANCE

Updated September 2025

INTRODUCTION

Good handwriting is an essential skill; this handwriting policy is intended to enable all children in the school to develop a fluent, presentable script using cursive script.

HOW WE TEACH HANDWRITING

Handwriting should be taught and then practised regularly.

When writing for the children, all staff should use the style of handwriting that is appropriate to their year group. This is different for EYFS and Year 1 compared to Year 2 onwards.

From the very start of Reception, children are taught to use the tripod grip. They are also taught to form letters in line with our Little Wandle Letter Formation Phrases until the end of Year 1. From Year 2 onwards, all teachers should teach cursive handwriting in line with our handwriting patter, alongside modelling this with their own handwriting.

PENCIL/PEN HOLD AND POSTURE

The adult should emphasise the need for **good sitting posture**. The 'writing hand' should rest lightly on the paper below the words being written so that the words are not obscured. The paper should be tilted slightly to the right (for right-handers) or to the left (for left-handers), so that it is nearly in line with the direction of the forearm.

Left-handed children should be seated with other left-handed children or at the left-hand side of the writing table. A note should be kept of all left-handed children so that this is facilitated.

Children should be taught the traditional tripod pencil hold from the beginning of Reception. To make this skill child-friendly for younger pupils, say, "Put your froggy legs [thumb and forefinger] on the bottom of the painted part of the pencil [not on the cone-shaped end part] with the pencil across the frog's back [back of the hand], then put the log under the frog" [middle finger supporting the pencil to complete the tripod grip].

The teacher should ensure that extra support and/or allowances are made for children whose physical disabilities affect their handwriting. This will take the form of additional handwriting interventions, transcription or using Chromebooks to type.

Children should be encouraged to develop an awareness of space and layout from the earliest stages, thinking about the placing of headings, margins and the look of the text on the page. This is explicitly taught during handwriting lessons, dictation lessons and during our routine lessons at the start of the academic year.

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Use of Handwriting Pens:

We use pencil in nearly all of our lessons, including handwriting lessons. For final pieces of work, including those to go on display around the school, children can use a pen to publish their learning.

HANDWRITING STYLE

In Reception and Year 1, we teach a printed handwriting style. This is in line with our phonics programme. Children are taught how to print their letters using our Letter Formation Phrases (see appendix 1)

We are promoting an all-joined style with two types of join from Year 2 onwards to ensure fidelity with our SSP (see appendix 2). These two joins are a diagonal join which starts with the pencil point on the writing line and a washing line join. The letters f, g, j and y have descenders which, "...go straight down through the writing line with thin loops..." and continue to form the diagonal join to the following letter. The diagonal join and washing line join (or smile join) need to be adjusted for writing the letter e.

Demonstrate the two joins by drawing two separate squares sitting on a writing line to half height. In one square, draw a straight line from the bottom left corner to the top right corner to form the diagonal line join. In the other square, draw a curved line from the top left corner to the top right corner to form the washing line join. The diagonal join is taught as a straight line at first to ensure good spacing between the letters, but over time and with increasing fluency, the diagonal join naturally becomes slightly curved.

The joins are very important for spacing letters evenly and learners need to understand that there must be a clear join between all the letter shapes. Learners are taught which part of each letter is the actual letter shape and which part of the letter is the join.

At first, all lowercase letters are taught as discrete (separate) shapes starting with the pencil point 'on the line' to form the diagonal lead-in stroke or 'leader' [see the examples below]. A lead-in stroke at the beginning of every word in lower case is considered to be very dyslexia friendly. This style is not taught by writing any long letter strings of the same letter.

Not only are learners taught to form each letter shape to fluency, they are also taught to think carefully about the letters they write and the join each letter needs in whole words. This engagement with the mechanics of the writing style instead of just mindlessly copying strings of letter shapes results in learners proceeding rapidly to joining any words they wish to write independently.

All upper case, or capital, letters are simple print letter shapes which do not join other letters. Teach that capital letters start 'from the top' - that is, from just below the upper writing line. When writing a whole word which requires a capital letter at the beginning, a small space is left after the capital letter and the second [lower case] letter starts 'on the line' and all subsequent letters in the word are joined.

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THE ORDER OF TEACHING THE LOWER-CASE LETTER SHAPES FOR CURSIVE HANDWRITING (YEAR 2 ONWARDS)

Establish from the outset that there are two main joins:

- 1) A diagonal join to half height (approximately the mid-point of the gap between reasonably spaced writing lines in an ordinary exercise book);
- 2) A washing line join. With letter e, the diagonal join has to sweep round to form the e (egg) and the washing line join has to dip down to form the e (are).

It is most important to teach the letters which start like the letter c to fluency before the other letters (c, a, d, s, g, o, q, f)

Teach, 'Start on the line, diagonal join, then hook over, back and round' for the letter 'c'. For the subsequent letters which start like 'c', describe and model how to, "...catch the hook...".

When a letter that ends with a washing line join (o, r, v, w, x) is followed by a letter in the c group (c, a, d, s, g, o, q) a hook over is added to the washing line join to reach the starting point of the next letter (oak, rag, van, want, exam).

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Appendix 1 - EYFS & YEAR 1 PRINTED LETTER FORMATION

How to write letters

Use this document to ensure correct letter formation.

Letter	Letter formation phrase
a	Around the astronaut's helmet and down into space.
b	Down the bear's back, up and around its tummy.
c	Curl around the cat.
d	Around the duck's body, up to its head and down to its feet.
e	Around the elephant's eye and curl down its trunk.
f	Down the flamingo to its foot and across its wings.
g	Around the goat's face and curl under its chin.
h	Down, up and over the helicopter.
i	Down the iguana and dot the leaf.
j	Down the jellyfish and dot its head.
k	Down the kite, up to the top corner and down to the bottom corner.
l	Down the lollipop stick.
m	Down, up and over the mouse's ears.
n	Down, up and over the net.
o	All around the octopus.
p	Down the penguin's back, up and around its head.
q	Around the queen's face, down her robe and a flick at the end.
r	From the cloud to the ground and over the rainbow.
s	Down the snake from head to tail.
t	Down the tiger and across its neck.
u	Down and around the umbrella and back to the ground.
v	Down to the bottom of the volcano and back up to the top.
w	Down and up and down and up the waves.
x	From the top, across the box to the bottom. From the top again, across the box to the bottom.
y	Down, around the yo-yo and curl around the string.
z	Across the top of the zebra's head, zig-zag down its neck and along.

ck	c Curl around the heel of the sock. k Down the sock, up and back down to the toe.
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

















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Appendix 2 - YEAR 2-6 CURSIVE HANDWRITING PATTERN

Letters	Patter
	Start on the line, diagonal join to half height, hook over, back and round
	Start on the line, diagonal join to half height, hook over, back and round, catch the hook, (straighten up), straight down, flick...
	Start on the line, diagonal join to half height, hook over, back and round, catch the hook, straight up, straight down, flick...
	Start on the line, diagonal join to half height, hook over, back and curl around (like a snake), flick...
	Start on the line, diagonal join to half height, hook over, back and round, catch the hook, (straighten up), straight down through the line, thin loop ready to join the next letter...
	Start on the line, diagonal join to half height, hook over, back and round, catch the hook, washing line join...
	Start on the line, diagonal join to half height, hook over, back and round, catch the hook, (straighten up), straight down through the line, loop at the bottom, up with a parallel line, stop at the writing line, diagonal join to half height, down to form the bowl for the 'u', down and flick...
	Start on the line, diagonal join to half height, straight up then hook over, back and straight down through the line, thin loop ready to join the next letter...
	Start on the line, diagonal join to half height, straight up, straight down, flick...
	Start on the line, diagonal join to half height, straight up, straight down, flick... then cross the 't' from left to right above the join (after the whole word is written)
	Start on the line, diagonal join to half height, straight up, straight down, up to form a full bridge, flick...
	Start on the line, diagonal join to half height, straight up, straight down, up to form half a bridge and curve to complete the 'b', flick...
	Start on the line, diagonal join to half height, straight up, straight down, up to form a bow-shape, flick...
	Start on the line, diagonal join to half height, down, back up to form half a bridge, washing line join...
	Start on the line, diagonal join to half height, down, back up to form a full bridge, flick...
	Start on the line, diagonal join to half height, down, back up to form a full bridge, then another full bridge, flick...
	Start on the line, diagonal join to half height, straight down through the line, back up to complete the curve of the 'p', flick...

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	Start on the line, diagonal join to half height, straight down to the line, flick... then dot the 'i' (after the whole word is written)
	Start on the line, diagonal join to half height, straight down through the line, thin loop ready to join the next letter... then dot the 'j' (after the whole word is written)
	Start on the line, diagonal join to half height, down to form the bowl for the 'u', down and flick...
	Start on the line, diagonal join to half height, down to form the bowl, straight down through the line, thin loop ready to join the next letter, flick...

	Start on the line, diagonal join to half height, down diagonally to form a single zigzag, washing line join...
	Start on the line, diagonal join to half height, down diagonally to form a double zigzag, washing line join...
	Start on the line, diagonal join to half height, down diagonally to form the first line of 'x', pencil-point off and start back down on the writing line again to form another diagonal line up to half height for the second line of 'x', washing line join...
	Start on the line, diagonal join to half height, straight line across from left to right, diagonal line back down to the line, form a curved line across from left to right with a flick... (which provides flair)
	Start on the line and the diagonal line sweeps round to form the 'e'...

PLANNING FOR HANDWRITING – SKILL PROGRESSION

NURSERY

- To begin to write some letters in-line with our Little Wandle letter formation phrases.
- To experiment with different handwriting grips, including being introduced to the tripod grip.

RECEPTION

- To sit at a table to write.
- To form lower-case letters in line with our Little Wandle letter formation phrases.
- To use a tripod grip to form letters.

YEAR 1

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- To sit correctly at a table, with feet on the floor and book at an angle in the direction of the arm.
- To hold a pencil with a tripod grip.

- To form all lower-case letters in the correct direction, in line with our Little Wandle letter formation phrases.
- To form capital letters.
- To leave finger spaces between words.
- To form digits 0-9.

YEAR 2

- To begin to form lower-case letters in line with our handwriting patter.
- To ensure letters are the correct size relative to one another.
- To 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 un-joined.
- To write capital letters and digits of the correct size, orientation, and relationship to one another and to lower-case letters.
- To use spacing between words that reflects the size of the letters.

YEAR 3

- To form all letters in line with our handwriting patter.
- To use the diagonal and horizontal strokes that are needed to join letters.
- To understand which letters, when adjacent to one another, are best left un-joined.
- To increase the legibility and consistency of their handwriting.

YEAR 4

- To begin to write with increasing speed.
- To quickly and accurately use diagonal and horizontal strokes to join letters.
- To understand which letters, when adjacent to one another, are best left un-joined.
- To increase the legibility, consistency, and quality of their handwriting.
- To write at a clearly visible size.

YEAR 5

- ~ To write legibly and with increasing speed
- ~ To choose which shape of a letter to use when given choices
- ~ To decide whether to join specific letters.
- ~ To choose the writing implement that is best suited for a task.

YEAR 6

- ~ To write legibly and with increasing speed.
- ~ To identify the different standard of handwriting for notes compared to final drafts.
- ~ To choose the writing implement that is best suited for a task and explain why.

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To maintain legibility in joined handwriting at speed.

Appendix 4 - FINE MOTOR AND HANDWRITING SKILLS ACTIVITIES

DISCRIMINATION OF LEFT AND RIGHT

Massage each hand – Accompany it with the song “This is the way we massage the RIGHT hand” to the tune of Here We Go Round The Mulberry Bush, or make up a story about Mr. Right and Mrs. Left hand and make each of the fingers a different child as you massage (e.g. This is Mr. Left, he is good at holding apples, this is Billy Left, he likes to play football. This is Charlotte Right she likes to ride a bike etc.)

Use puppets – Ask the right hand to choose a puppet and play with that on the right hand, then ask the left hand to choose a puppet and play with that. Encourage the students to interact with each other. You could finish by having both puppets – can the students say which one goes on which hand correctly?

Shake hands – Use a red ribbon for RIGHT and a yellow ribbon for LEFT – tied around the wrist or a finger, or a felt tip mark on the back of the hand as a visual prompt and say, “I want to shake your right hand” as you hold up a piece of red ribbon. Can they extend the correct hand? Sing a song such as “If you’re happy and you know it, shake your left hand”, while you shake it

Treasure hunts – Use a tray, placed on either the left or the right of the student. Show them a raisin, Smartie or crisp being placed on the tray, and say “I want you to find this with your right hand” – touch that hand as a prompt as you say it. Then blindfold them, and encourage them to feel around on the tray for the treat and pick it up

EYE-HAND CO-ORDINATION

Target activities – Throw a range of equipment at targets – such as balls in a bucket, beanbags in a hoop, quoits on a stick, balloons in a basketball hoop, bowling at skittles. Encourage the appropriate grasp / release of each object (see below)

Magnetic fish – Encourage students to pick a fish and target it. Use a visual cue, like putting a ring around, or a mark on, the fish they are trying to catch

Lacing and threading – Use different shape and sized beads – square, cylinder, oval, and flat ones. Set the activity in context – can you make a necklace for Teddy? Use lacing cards and encourage a left to right orientation, as well as visual focus. Try a simple sewing activity – again set it in context

Tracing activities – Non-paper based, such as tracing a car left to right along a road, using the touch screen to trace a route, tracing in damp or dry sand, dipping one finger in paint (or a mixture of paint and sand) and tracing on paper, tracing a path on velvet or hessian. Make it tactile and multisensory.

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CROSSING THE MIDLINE

Balls and balloons – Encourage students to cross the midline when playing with balls and balloons, or using a hockey stick

Treasure Hunt 2 – Play the game outlined above (Discrimination of right and left, 4), but place the tray on the opposite side to the hand you want them to use

Figures of eight – With physical prompting initially, draw a large, sideways figure of eight in the air, or holding a pencil on a large vertical piece of paper. Make sure the centre of the body is the midpoint of the eight. Can the student sustain this action when the physical prompt is withdrawn?

IN-HAND STRENGTH

Water transfer – Challenge the students to transfer water from one receptacle to another using a sponge. Demonstrate how to soak up the water from the first receptacle, and then squeeze it into the second receptacle. Ask them to practice making a closed fist without the sponge first, then with it.

Playdough – Encourage students to manipulate playdough, clay (harder) or plasticine (harder still). Get them to squeeze it, so it oozes between their fingers, squash balls flat, roll sausages on the table or between their hands (if you start it off, it will be easier) or roll small and big balls of it. Try to put the activities in some sort of context, such as “Poor dolly is hungry. Shall we make her some sausages and potatoes for lunch?”

Banging – Use a wooden hammer to bang in pegs, or a beater to hit a drum or triangle.

Encourage eye-to-hand coordination and accuracy as well as strength of hit.

Cutting – Use loop or normal scissors to encourage cutting. Cut along lines or find things in catalogues to cut and stick. Alternatively just do free cutting.

Tongs – Use tongs to pick up objects and move them from one container to another. Make it into a game by making it a race between teacher and student (give lots of commentary), or between the two students.

Whistling tubes – Encourage students to hold the tube firmly and spin it around fast. Set challenges such as “Who can make the loudest sound?” or “Who can make the longest sound?”

FINGER / IN-HAND MANIPULATIONS

Scrunchy paper – Crumple or screw up little bits of paper using the fingertips. Use a range of papers – e.g. tissue, crepe, foil, coloured, thin card. Set in a context, such as a collage activity or making a dinner for a puppet.

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Finger Rhymes – Encourage signing along to favourite songs and counting rhymes, such as “Twinkle-Twinkle Little Star” or “Here’s the Church” etc.

Construction Toys – Use a range of construction equipment that requires different manipulations, such as Duplo, Interstar, Stickle Bricks, Popoids or Snappit. Set challenges, such as “Who can make the tallest tower?” or “Who can make a dog?”

Opening things – Encourage students to open a range of packets, jars and bottles, preferably in a real context, such as taking the lids off the squash bottles or opening the milk to help to prepare drinks, or opening packets of crisps or biscuits for snack time (and practice using the “pull apart pinch”). Also set challenges such as “Which lid goes on which bottle?” with a selection of three of various sizes. Can the students match the lids to the correct bottles and screw or push them on?

Mr Potato Head – Ask the students to make faces with potatoes (if these are too difficult then use softer fruit or vegetables, such as courgette or pear). Encourage them to think about the positioning of the features, and concentrate on hand-eye coordination.

Wind up toys – Ensure there is a variety of different wind up mechanisms – big and small, cylindrical and wing nut. Make sure the toys are motivating!

Fastenings – Use a zipper board and ask students to open or close all of the zips.

Alternatively, use the fastening cubes from the ball pool and concentrate on the range of manipulations needed to open or close them. Also, encourage students to attempt fastenings on their clothing, in context (such as zippers on coats, Velcro on shoes, etc.)

Inset puzzles – Use a range, both with and without holding pegs

Pegs – Have a selection of multi-coloured plastic pegs, and sheets of card or boxes of the same colour as the pegs. Ask the students to sort the pegs by colour, by pegging them on the appropriate card or box.

FINGER ISOLATION SKILLS

Bubbles – Pop bubbles with the index finger (or other named fingers) as they are blown, or while they are in the air.

Finger painting – Focus on two fingers, one on each hand, and assign each a different colour.

Can students put the right finger in the right colour?

Piano play – Or other keyboard instruments, or thumb piano. Encourage free play, but also demonstrate, such as using one finger to go up the keyboard, and then back down again.

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Checkout Till - Put the activity in context - play shops and ask one student to be the shopper, the other the shopkeeper. The items to buy should be small things that require a pincer grip, such as

Smarties, raisins or Hula Hoops, so that the shopper has to use fine- motor skills too. The shopkeeper must ring up the purchase on their till before taking the money. Swap roles.

Telephone - The students can take in turns to ring each other, dialling the number on a push button telephone. Encourage them to use one finger to press the buttons in a controlled way. Alternatively they could phone up puppets.

iPad and iMac - Encourage free play. Draw attention to the correlation between finger actions and what appears on the screen.

GRASPS

Spherical grasps - These can be encouraged with tennis, or other similar sized balls - pick up, hold and throw. Alternatively use apples or oranges in the home corner - can they pass them to dolly?

Pincer grasps - These can be encouraged by picking up raisins etc., popping bubble wrap, turning pages of a book, pointing at picture or words in a book, holding marbles or money.

Cylindrical grasps - These can be encouraged by holding cups without handles, kaleidoscopes, rainmakers or other cylindrical shakers.

Tripod grasp - These can be encouraged by holding small pieces of chalk or Hand-Hugger (triangular) pencils or pens.

Three jaw chuck grasp - These can be encouraged with holding blocks or cubes.

RELEASES

Connect Four - give each student a colour each and take it in turns to pick up and release pieces into the frame. Could focus on making patterns rather than playing the game.

Lids - putting lids on pens, bottles, etc.

Towers - building towers with wooden bricks and releasing them accurately

Marble run - releasing marbles into a marble run accurately

PENCIL CONTROL SKILLS

Colouring in, focusing on marking a specific area of the picture

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Colouring in, focusing on staying between the lines

Draw around own or others hand, trying to stay close to fingers

Draw around stencils, trying to follow contours of shape

Draw vertical lines with control, stopping before the edge of the paper

Draw vertical lines of varying lengths, with control

Draw horizontal lines with control, stopping before the edge of the paper

Draw horizontal lines of varying lengths, with control

Draw diagonal lines with control, stopping before the edge of the paper

Draw diagonal lines of varying lengths, with control

Draw enclosed shapes, joining the starting and finishing point

Draw circles of various sizes, with control

Follow straight tramlines, staying within boundaries

Follow wavy or zigzag tramlines, staying within boundaries

Trace then copy wavy lines with control

Trace then copy zigzag lines with control

DRAWING SKILLS

Copy a modelled drawing of a face, making a mark for each of the basic features Draw a face, focusing on including all the basic features (eyes, nose, mouth, hair) Draw a face, focusing on the correct positioning of features

Draw a face, including more detail, such as eyebrows, eyelashes, lips, teeth, ears, glasses, etc.

Copy a modelled drawing of a house / cat / person / etc.

Draw a house / cat / person / etc. including the basic features Draw a house / cat / person / etc. including more detail.