

# Aston Clinton School

Together we: Aspire, Care and Succeed



## Handwriting Policy

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<b>Date agreed by the Governing Body</b>	<b>Autumn 2021</b>
<b>Updated and Reviewed</b>	<b>Spring 2021</b>
<b>Date to be reviewed</b>	<b>Spring 2024</b>
<b>Governors' Committee accountable for review</b>	<b>Curriculum and Standards</b>

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## **Statement of intent**

Aston Clinton School believes handwriting is a skill which, like reading and spelling, affects written communication across the curriculum. It is a complex skill which involves a wide range of cognitive, linguistic and perceptual-motor abilities; as such it can affect children's progress and achievement across the entire curriculum. When taught effectively, handwriting is mastered by the majority of children during the primary phase, allowing them to develop a more effective style of handwriting by the time they begin secondary school.

One of the most successful methods for ensuring consistent teaching and learning across the school is by having a clear policy in place. This policy has been developed in consultation with all the teaching staff and the special educational needs coordinator (SENCO), in order to ensure clear and consistent methods for teaching handwriting across the school.

It is our aim that by the time our children leave us they have automaticity to their handwriting which enables them to produce clear, neat cursive handwriting which equips them with the skill of effective written communication in a range of contexts without impacting on their executive functioning.

### 1. Early Years Framework/ National curriculum standards

- This policy is underpinned by the Early Years framework 2021 and the National curriculum 2014. It ensures that all members of school staff have regard to these documents.
- We have developed our own progression at Aston Clinton this is to support children's ability to 'write'. We use a number of resources to teach handwriting, but primarily the Letterjoin handwriting scheme. The agreed letter shapes we teach are given below (see appendices), showing the correct starting point, formation and direction of each letter. A poster is on display in every classroom throughout the year. It is our whole-school policy that the children are consistently taught this specific style of letter formation, with these agreed starting points and directions of pen(cil) flow.

### 2. Early Years

- In Early Years/Foundation stage all learning is underpinned the characteristic of effective learning. Children will focus on readiness to write and on mastering the gross and fine motor skills needed to begin the process of letter formation. The teaching focus will initially be placed on **developing patterns and basic letter movements** and will be delivered mostly through continuous provision. This will be achieved initially through a range of activities focusing on pattern making, responding to music, investigating straight line patterns, investigating loops, investigating circles, investigating angled patterns and investigating eights and spirals (see appendix).
- In Reception, the children experience a variety of hand-eye co-ordination activities, including hand gym, dough gym, painting patterns and letter shapes, tracing and pattern work. Indoors and outdoors they overwrite, underwrite and learn letter shapes, as well as practicing handwriting linked to their phonics progression. They work with a range of writing mediums; ranges of different writing surfaces are provided at all key inside and outside work stations to encourage the children to record and mark make.
- The children will have open access to a range of suitable writing mediums and shall have daily opportunities planned to practice writing skills/pre-writing skills.

The two primary objectives during this time are to:

- to ensure the children are introduced to a comfortable and efficient tripod pencil grip (see appendix)
- to write letters using the correct sequence of movements (following guidelines set out in appendix)

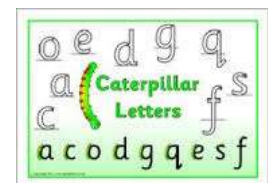
### 3. EYFS to Year 1

- As the year progresses/children move through into Year 1 the children will have specific formal handwriting input linked closely to transcription/phonics work to introduce children to the letter families.
- To help with the consistency of vocabulary and formation we divide the letters into 4 main families:



1. Long Ladders/straight down letters (down and off in another direction) – l, i, j, t, u, y

2. One armed robots/down up and over (down and off in another direction down and retrace upwards) – b, h, k, m n, p, r



3. Curly Caterpillars/ up backwards and around (anti-clockwise round)– c, a, d, e, g, o, q, f, s



#### 4. Zooming Zig Zag letters – v, w, x, z

#### 4. Practising handwriting

- All classes practise handwriting weekly and we aim to teach:
  - KS1 Daily handwriting activities in discrete 10 minute sessions
  - LKS2 Twice weekly sessions of at least 10 minutes with intervention for children who need additional support
  - UKS2 Twice weekly session with a focus on cross curricular links such as: spelling, dictated sentences, stamina for writing and fluency and speed.
- As ‘writing/ transcription’ is a cross curricular activity all children are encouraged to practise their handwriting skills on a daily basis through other activities
- It is vital that children develop the correct handwriting techniques. With this in mind, teachers and teaching assistants ensure that any errors are immediately corrected, and children can practise their corrections.
- At the beginning of Reception, a letter is sent to parents/carers explaining the school’s methods for teaching handwriting. This letter will also explain how parents/carers can encourage children to practise at home.
- Short and frequent handwriting sessions are more productive than long practice sessions.

#### 5. Teaching and learning

- Children at Aston Clinton are taught to be cursive ‘handwriters’ by the end of Year 6. There is clear progression in the teaching of cursive handwriting, which includes the correct formation of single letters leading to cursive joins. There are clear links between the formation of letters and links to the teaching of phonics and spelling.
- Teachers’ model cursive handwriting at all times.
- Children are taught to take pride in their work and teachers expect this standard in all areas of the curriculum.
- Most often, handwriting is taught with spelling/phonics/SPaG or other curriculum work, but always with handwriting skills explicitly taught and put into practice throughout that time. Children then put these skills into practice in independent work. Where this is not happening, children will be given intervention time in small groups to reinforce the correct letter formation.
- Every class must have a specific display to show children how letters should be formed (see appendix)

#### 6. Basic structure of a handwriting session:

- relaxation/gross motor skills work
- Posture check, feet flat on the floor, back touching the chair (see appendix)
- Teaching/ Reinforcement of the ‘tripod’ grip (see appendix)
- Teaching/ Reinforcement of ‘slanting’ of the page (see appendix)
- Teacher modelling
- Children practising independently with teacher model, then from memory
- Dictation of sentences to ensure correct application in writing
- Self/peer/teacher assessment

## 7. Progression of Skills

The curriculum coverage in KS1 follows the National Curriculum objectives for transcription/handwriting

### EYFS/ Key Stage One

- It is expected that by the end of this key stage, the majority of children will be writing cursively unaided, using capitals where appropriate and presenting their written work legibly. In Year 1, children practise forming letters and are introduced to the terms ascenders and descenders. In Reception, the children are encouraged to begin using a controlled flick to end letters in readiness for joining and in phonics sessions the children are introduced to digraphs and trigraphs being joined. “The holistic approach to learning handwriting and phonics together is an ideal basis for emergent writing because children become used to thinking about letter shapes and sounds together. As children begin to join letters to write digraphs and some high frequency words, their writing and spelling will become increasingly accurate.”

### Early years:

- Teachers need to demonstrate the agreed correct letter formation and to ensure that this style is modelled in their own handwriting.
- Children are taught to recognise and appreciate patterns and lines.
- Children are supported in finding a comfortable and effective grip for holding their writing implement.
- Children are encouraged to hold their writing implements correctly, away from the point to ensure the line of vision is not interrupted. The children are taught to use the tripod grip when holding their pencils (see appendix).

### During and at the end of the **Foundation Stage Summer term/Year 1 Autumn term:**

- Use a pencil, and hold it effectively to form recognisable letters (with ascenders and descenders), **most** of which are correctly formed. They begin to add ‘lead outs’ onto letters to help with joining later.
- Children are begin to join vowel digraphs and trigraphs and consonant digraphs linked to phonics teaching.

Phase 3 cursive groups to be taught cursively throughout Reception and Year 1

qu	ng	igh	ar	air	sh	ai
oa	or	oi	ure	th	ee	oo
ur	ear	er				

### Year One:

- 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 (see pre-cursive appendix).
- 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 practice these (see EYFS above).
- Write most letters, correctly formed and orientated (with ascenders and descenders), using a comfortable and efficient pencil grip (frog resting on a log, see appendix)
- Understand that capital letters should not be in the middle of words
- Write with clear finger spacing between words.
- Begin to add small lead ins to letters and lead outs building on their joining skills from Foundation stage. (lead ins from curly caterpillar letters – using the WHOOSH technique for superhero writers a, c, d, g, q, f)
- Continue to join vowel digraphs and trigraphs and consonant digraphs linked to phonics teaching.

- Write capital letter formation and understand their appropriate use (proper nouns, start of sentences and therefore not joined)

#### Year 2

- By Year 2, children should be moving towards a comfortable joined handwriting style and be able to write on lined paper with a reasonable degree of accuracy and an increasing consistency of size. They are introduced to diagonal joins and latterly, horizontal joins.
- Pupils should be introduced to loop backs (to starting point) in the letters f, g, j and y (see appendix)
- Write legibly, using upper and lower-case letters appropriately and correct spacing within and between words
- Form and use diagonal and horizontal handwriting joins
- Form lower-case letters of the correct size relative to one another.
- 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.

#### Year 3

- It is our aim that the majority of children entering Year 3 will have learnt the letter families and throughout Year 3 the whole range of joins will be reinforced. In the first 2 terms, children will consolidate joins from Y2 and will be taught to join parallel descenders and ascenders. The third term will focus on consistency of spacing, layout, speed and fluency practice. Handwriting pens will be introduced to those children who the teacher feels are ready.
- There is an expectation that by the end of Year 3 all children will be writing in pen. Where there is concern surrounding children's letters formation, the school's SENCo will have been notified and the teacher and parent offered advice to support transition into pen.

#### Year 4

- Formation of capitals, lower case letters and the two basic join types (horizontal and vertical) should now be familiar and secure. Fluent, cursive handwriting should now be the norm. Whilst there is continued emphasis on using the movements of handwriting to support spelling through the revision of common letter patterns, they will also be given opportunities to develop speed and accuracy.
- The children should also be starting to vary their handwriting for purpose (print for notes/labels etc) Teaching should include a focus on the downstrokes of letters ensuring they are parallel and equidistant; that lines of writing are spaced sufficiently so that the ascenders and descenders of letters do not touch. Pupils should be using joined handwriting throughout their **independent** writing.

#### Years 5 and 6

- By Years 5 and 6, it is expected that most children will be writing fluently and are joining their writing across the curriculum. In these year groups, the emphasis is on increasing stamina, speed and developing presentation skills alongside learning how to use different styles for different purposes. Children should have developed an individualised style that is both legible, 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 and the writing style that is best suited for a task (eg, email addresses should be in print, forms should be in block capitals and labels on diagrams should be printed etc)

## 8. Pre-cursive to Cursive

- In EYFS and Year 1 the focus is on pencil control/grip, engaging children in writing and on basic letter formation, this is known as the pre-cursive phase (see appendix).
- Reception – basic letter formation, flicks out, joining vowel digraphs/consonant blends
- Year 1 – continued focus on the 4 letter formation families and focus on finishing letter with controlled flicks, starting positions reinforced with a clear lead in (children taught to lead in to curly caterpillar letters a, c, d, g, o, q, f)
- 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 **b g j p q s x y** (letters in bold have additional notes)
- When joining t or x pens are taken off the page and the lines are crossed when the whole word is written.
- In year 1 where the children are moving into the cursive style from the pre-cursive the following letters are NOT joined b, q, s, x, y and z as the focus is on the lead in from the next letter. From Year 2 onwards, when the children are predominantly taught cursive in their style then a closed b and a looped join from g, j, y should be taught. The q should be joined to the u with a clear diagonal.
- A full s should be used up to Year 4, after which point a child's individualised style may use the half s.
- The f should be tall and looped at the top (nearly touching top line in handwriting book) and should loop low under descender line. Letters with tall ascenders (l) should be taught not to loop. However, the child's own personal style may develop this way in UKS2 as pace and fluency develop.
- Joins traditionally are *never* made **from the letter z**.

The 4 basic joins (revised in Year 3 and 4):

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

## 9. Cross-Curricular links

- Teachers discuss handwriting and presentation in all subjects. They model good handwriting themselves. Teachers are **explicit** about different types of handwriting for example, personal note-taking or best handwriting for presentation, but are mindful that not all the children will be able to achieve this by the end Key Stage one
- Good quality handwriting and presentation can improve all work

### Maths

- Children need to learn the correct way to form numbers
- Teachers aim to make handwriting lessons relevant to the curriculum, by providing a purpose to the work where possible, encouraging the children to view handwriting as part of our overall presentation policy (see Agreed practices handbook for further details)

## **10. Children who are left-handed**

- Teachers are alert to the fact that it is very difficult for left-handed pupils to follow handwriting movements when a right-handed teacher models them. Teachers demonstrate to left-handers on an individual or group basis (see appendix).
- Our left-to-right writing system is “the wrong way round” for the 10% of children who are left-handed, which can make handwriting difficult for them.
- Paper is always positioned to the far right for left-handed children and slanted to suit their individual needs (see appendix)
- Left-handed children are always seated to the left of a right-handed pupil in order to avoid competition for space.
- Left-handed children are given additional supervision and practice time to ensure they are making the same progress as other children.
- They may need individual demonstrations of how to form letters, with the teacher using her/his left hand.
- Left-handers may also benefit from having a slightly higher seat than would otherwise be the case as this makes it easier for them to see what they write.
- To avoid smudging their work:
  - left-handed children should be encouraged to position their fingers about 1.5 cm away from the end of their writing implement;
  - the pencil should sit in the “V” between thumb and forefinger, sitting parallel to the thumb;
  - the wrist should be straight.
- Some left-handers adopt a “hooked” pen-hold with the writing hand over the top of the work. If the pupil manages well like this, no attempts need to be made to change it just because it looks awkward to a right-hander.
- A left-hander should turn the writing surface slightly clockwise when writing.
- The writing tool used by left-handers needs to be comfortable to the hand and also one which will not smudge if the writing hand passes over it.

## **11. Special Educational Needs/Inclusion/Equal Opportunities**

- All children should have access to high quality handwriting teaching and learning opportunities regardless of ability, race, gender, belief or social background
- The Special Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) will monitor the attainment of children whose handwriting ability is significantly below the expected level for their age and will provide appropriate intervention and support
- Children who show a particular aptitude for handwriting should have the opportunity to be challenged and extended by means of differentiated tasks
- Commercial rubber pencil grip or triangular pencils can be used to encourage an appropriate pencil hold
- Slanting boards and special seat cushions can be provided for those who need it
- Children with language disorders and those who struggle with reading and spelling may find handwriting difficult and may need additional support
- Children with physical disabilities such as muscular weakness or rigidity may only be able to write slowly with a special pen
- Certain children may need a scribe for demanding written tasks or may be encouraged to use a word-processing programme
- Emotional factors can also affect handwriting

## **12. The Language of Handwriting**

- Consistency in the use of terminology is essential to ensure that children are able to make good progress across the curriculum
- The terms “capital letters” and “small letters” are used
- The base line is the continuous line upon which the main body of all letters reside
- The terms ascenders and descenders are introduced
- Entry strokes – a lead in from the baseline to ensure that all letter formation starts from the bottom
- Exit strokes - a final “flick” in a forward direction is to be encouraged, in preparation for joining to the next letter
- Up and down, left and right - teachers need to check that young children understand the concept of “up” and “down” as it is used in handwriting, along with the concepts of left and right

## **13. Children New to the School**

- Children who join the school later and who have already established a fluent and legible style should be encouraged to maintain their existing form of handwriting.

## **14. The learning environment**

- In all classes, writing boxes with suitable materials are available for pupils to work at their own tables. Writing areas/boxes are equipped with a range of writing implements, line guides, word lists and dictionaries. A model of the agreed handwriting style should be displayed in all classrooms. (see appendix)

## **15. The role of parents and carers**

- Parents and carers are introduced to the school’s handwriting style through a leaflet.
- All members of staff (including teaching assistants, supply teachers, and students) are provided with appropriate handwriting models [included in staff/student and supply staff handbooks] and are expected to promote the agreed handwriting style by their own example. Whenever possible a joined cursive style should be modelled and used by the KS2 teacher in everyday writing (on the board) and the children should be introduced to reading cursive writing in KS1.

## **16. The Role of the Writing Lead**

- To take the lead in policy development and to monitor, evaluate and review the implementation of the policy.
- Support colleagues in their development of programmes of work and in assessment and record keeping activities.
- To use assessment data to monitor progress in spelling and advise the Head teacher on action needed.
- Take responsibility for the purchase and organisation of resources for handwriting.
- Keep up-to-date with developments in handwriting and to support staff with new ideas, resources and materials relevant to the policy.

## **17. Assessment and recording**

- Teachers regularly monitor the progress of children during lessons. When observing children, teachers consider the following questions:
  - Is the pupil’s posture correct?
  - Is the pupil holding the pencil properly?
  - Is the pupil using the correct movement when forming and joining letters?
  - Are the letters reversed or inverted?
  - Does the pupil have a fluent writing style?

- Is the writing eligible?
- Is the pupil making the expected progress set out in the national curriculum?
- Children receive regular and timely feedback to ensure that they make good handwriting progress.
- Teacher's feedback is used to inform future teaching and learning.

#### **18. Equal Opportunities**

- We ensure that each individual child receives an equal learning experience regardless of ability, culture and gender.

#### **19. Further Resources**

- Pencils triangular and ordinary/grips
- Paper and books
- The Phonics Handbook offers sound advice on developing correct pencil grip.
- LCP Phonics
- BBC Words and Pictures Magic Pencil
- Spectrum Handwriting Programme (intervention texts)
- Dough Disco (intervention gross and fine motor skills exercises)
- Handwriting for Windows
- Kent trust handwriting looper
- Handwriting tracers

#### **20. The research**

This policy is based on extensive research from the NHA and Think Write. As a school we acknowledge that there is no definitive conclusion on the benefits of cursive handwriting, we have, however based our policy on the principles of 'Think Write' and on the 'Letter join' scheme.

[https://thinkwrite-learning.co.uk/article\\_detail.php?title=part1-the-neurological-benefits-of-cursive-writing](https://thinkwrite-learning.co.uk/article_detail.php?title=part1-the-neurological-benefits-of-cursive-writing)

#### **21. Review**

- This policy will be reviewed biannually in line with the school's policy review programme. The subject leader is responsible for reporting to the governors' 'Curriculum and Standards' committee about the quality of its implementation and its impact on standards. In the light of this, policy amendments may be made.

## Appendix 1 - Activities and exercises to develop Gross Motor Control:

*Gross Motor Control* is the term used to describe the development of controlled movements of the whole body, or limbs such as the legs or arms. Of particular importance in relation to handwriting is the development of good posture and balance. Activities such as:

- Dancing and skipping
- Running and jumping to music
- Use of small apparatus e.g. throwing, rolling, catching, kicking and bouncing balls
- Cycling
- Gripping climbing frames
- Building with large-scale construction kits
- Hammering
- Consolidate vocabulary of movement by talking about movements such as, *going round and round, making curves, springing up and sliding down, making long, slow movements or quick, jumpy movements*
- Make large movements in the air with arms, hands and shoulders with dance ribbons, use music

*Fine Motor Control* is the term used to describe smaller movements, usually of the hand and fingers (or of the feet and toes).

Activities and exercises to develop Fine Motor Control:

- Folding paper
- Cutting out shapes from paper and card
- Fitting things into frames like geometric shapes
- Model making
- Building and stacking bricks
- Screw toys and wood working tools
- Pegboards
- Modelling with malleable materials like Playdoh, plasticene and clay
- Drawing in sand and sand and water play in general, including sieving, pouring and picking up toys using tools e.g. fishing rods and cranes
- Sewing and weaving
- Chopping and peeling when cooking
- Develop the pincer movement by using tweezers to pick up sequins, beads and feathers, sprinkling glitter, sand and salt
- Scribbling and drawing with chalk, dry wipe pens, felt tip pens and paints on small, large boards and easels and on small and large paper
- Playing with tactile and magnetic letters
- Puzzles
- Games and miming involving finger and wrist movement e.g. finger puppets
- Use increasingly finer tools to make patterns of lines

**Lazy 8's** - A very large horizontal eight or infinity sign is drawn. The child traces repeatedly along the curves by either using a finger or drawing with a marker or chalk. The large, exaggerated movements create rhythm and flow that promotes eye-hand coordination. Lazy Eights develop visual tracking skills as the child watches his own hand movements. Students should perform the tracing activity three to five times with each hand and then several more times using both hands together on the marker. The up and down, left and right curvy movements teach children how to make the same movements needed to form letters. However, tracing the large eight shape involves the whole body including the shoulder muscles—making it a multi-sensory experience. Some children may find using a marker that glides on a white board easier at first and then after practice begin using chalk on a blackboard. The chalk offers more resistance requiring the child to use the small hand muscles in preparation for forming letters and numbers.

**Double doodles** - involves colouring or “doodling” with a piece of chalk or marker in each hand at the same time. The teacher might ask the child to form simple shapes, faces, letters or designs. This forces children to coordinate using both hands together and to pay attention to the direction of their movements. This activity promotes body awareness since if the child looks directly at one of her doodling hands, she will need to move the other hand without looking at it—by using her kinesthesia sense—that tells her how she is moving.

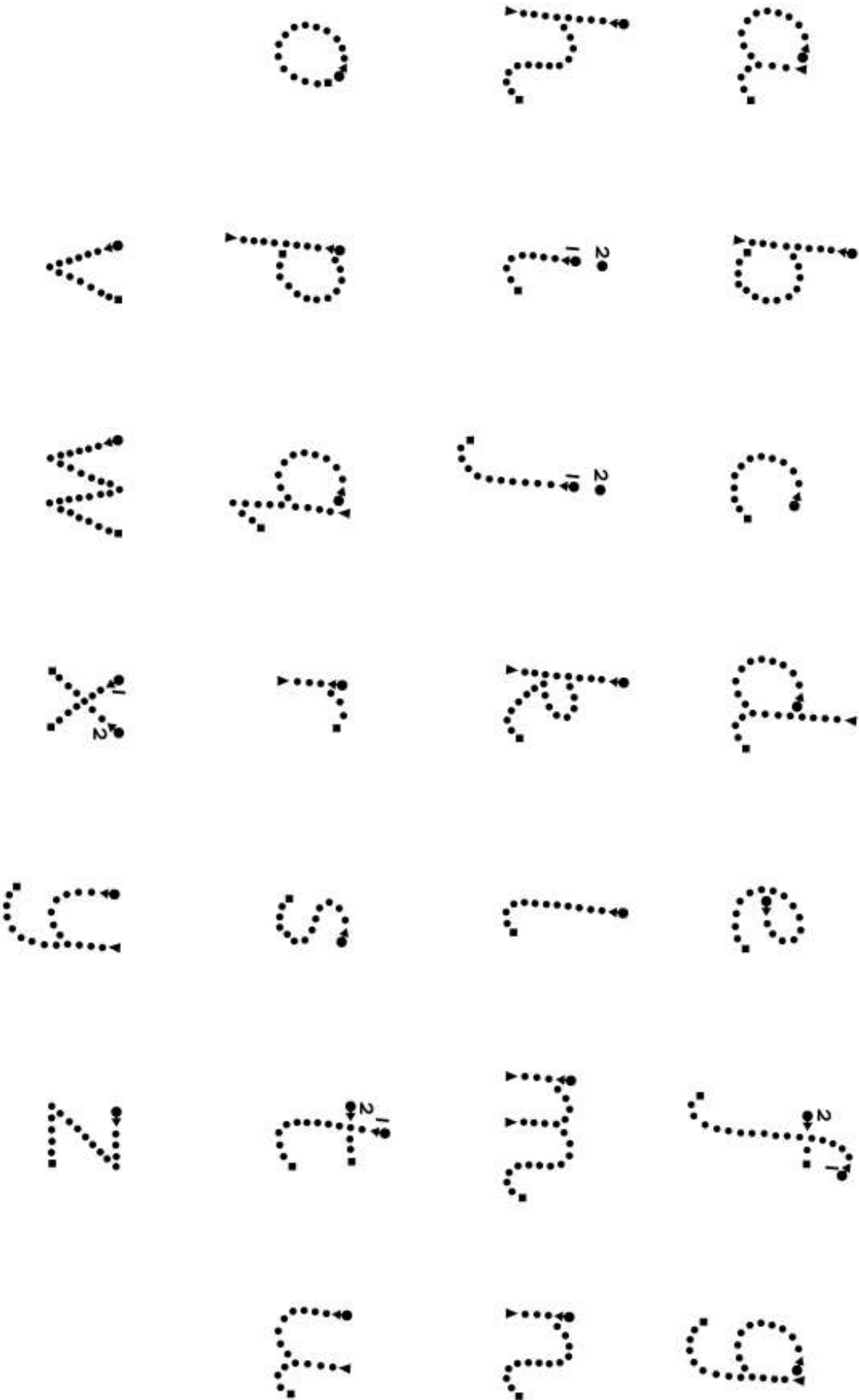
#### Hand gym/miming activities to relax fingers and hands before writing

- Washing
- Wringing, rubbing, shaking and folding clothes
- Brushing hair
- Stroking a cat
- Playing a musical instrument
- Playing with snow, bubbles, feathers, balloons
- Picking up sweets to put in a dish or your mouth

#### Later on:

- Sit in the writing position but with arms dangling limply. While in this position let the hands flutter loosely
- Let the forearms lay limply on the table in the correct writing position. Raise and lower the elbows several times
- Place elbows on the table with the forearms held upright. Let the hands flap loosely backwards and forwards
- Clench and unclench the fists
- Drum lightly with fingers on the table
- Circle the hands, inwards, then outwards
- Hold the pen in the tripod grip lightly. With the forefinger tap the pencil lightly

Appendix 2: Pre-cursive style from Reception onwards



Appendix 3: Cursive style from Yr 2 onwards

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

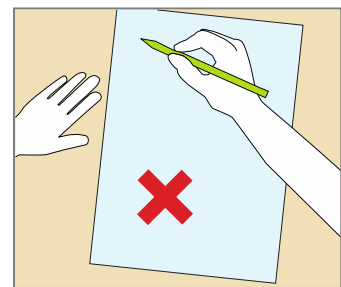
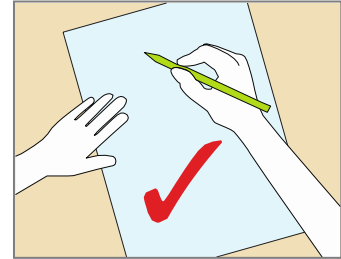
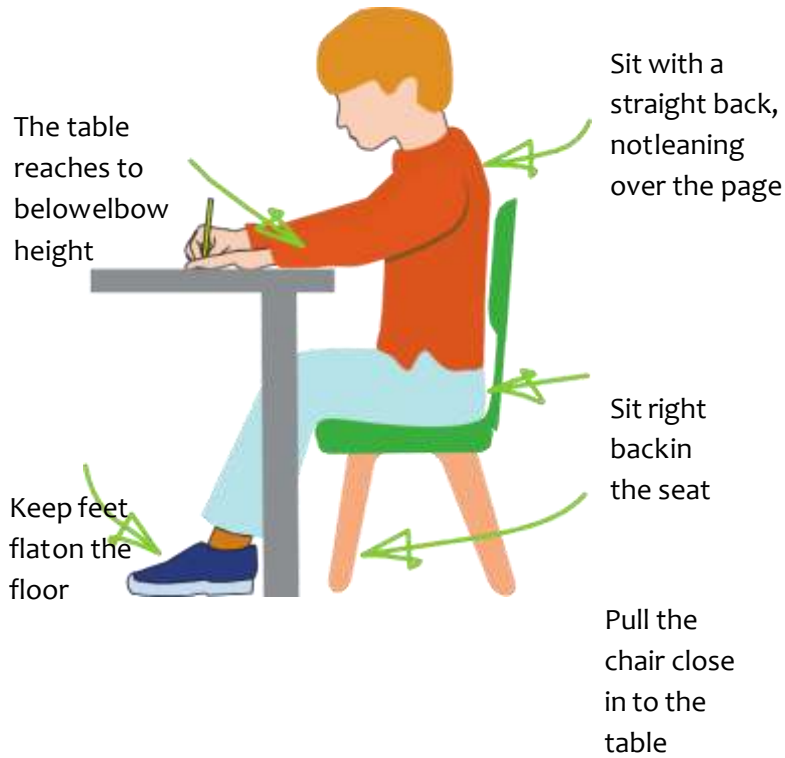
Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii  
Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr  
Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz

## Appendix 4 - Posture

### Correct posture and pencil grip for handwriting

Pupils should be taught to sit correctly at a table, holding a pencil comfortably and correctly.

#### SITTING POSITION



Paper position for right-handed children

## Appendix 5 - Grip

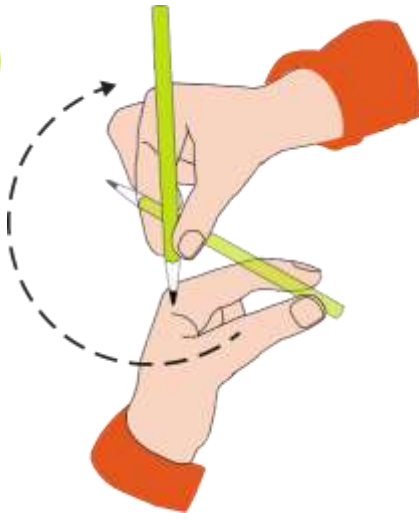
### THE TRIPOD PENCIL GRIP

Both right and left handed children should be encouraged to use the tripod grip which allows the pen/pencil to be held securely whilst allowing controlled movements of the pen/pencil nib.

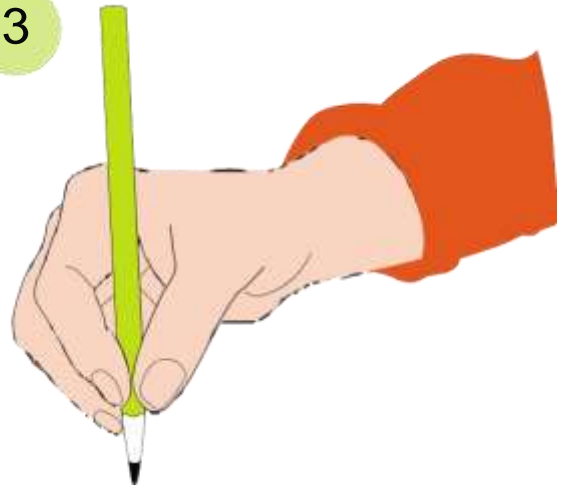
1



2



3



1) Grip the pencil with your index finger and thumb with the nib pointing away.

2) With your free hand, spin the pencil from underneath.

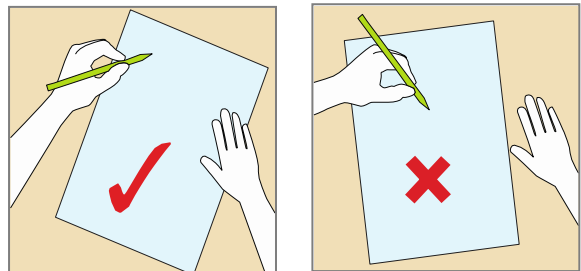
3) Use your middle finger to support the underside of the pencil.

## Appendix 7 – Left Handed Children

Left-handed children may find it difficult to follow right-handed teachers as they demonstrate letter formation (and vice versa). Teachers should demonstrate to left-handerson an individual or group basis.



- Left-handed pupils should sit to the left of a right-handed child so that they are not competing for space.
- Pupils should position the paper/book to their left side and slanted, as shown.
- Pencils should not be held too close to the point as this can interrupt pupils' line of vision.
- Extra practice with left-to-right exercises may be necessary before pupils write left-to-right automatically.



Paper position for left-handed children

