

Linslade Lower School

Handwriting Policy

Governor Approval: March 2026

Review Cycle: Triennial

Policy review chronology:

March 2026	New policy following Ofsted inspection	Approved
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As a school we recognise that handwriting is an important skill and children's ability to write fluently for the rest of their lives depends on a good foundation of taught handwriting from the early years of their education. We believe that handwriting is a developmental process with its own distinctive stages of progression from readiness for handwriting, through to letter joins, practicing speed and fluency and higher presentation skills. A flexible, fluent and legible handwriting style empowers children to write with confidence and creativity. This is an entitlement that needs skilful teaching if each individual is to reach their full potential.

Aims

At Linslade Lower School, our aims in teaching handwriting are:

- For all children to develop a well-formed, legible style of handwriting in both joined and printed styles, with increasing fluency, confidence and speed
- To raise attainment for all pupils in handwriting through a consistent approach, guided by The Penpals (Cambridge University Press) Handwriting scheme
- That all teachers and support staff use and model the agreed cursive style of handwriting when writing on the board or marking work
- That teachers, support staff and pupils use all opportunities for writing as handwriting practice in all writing across the curriculum
- To make provision for left-handed children to develop free-flowing writing
- For all children's skills in handwriting to be reflected in the presentation of their work and their joy of writing.

To achieve this, children will be taught:

- To develop fine motor control
- The importance of correct posture and paper position, whether right or left-handed
- To use a pen/pencil and to hold it effectively
- To write from left to right and top to bottom on a page
- To start and finish letters correctly
- To form letters of consistent size and shape
- The language of writing and how to use the correct terminology (e.g. ascenders)
- To put appropriate spaces between words
- How to form upper and lower case letters
- How to join letters correctly
- How to write legibly in both joined and printed style
- To use different styles of writing for different purposes
- The importance of neat and clear presentation to communicate meaning effectively
- To develop greater control and fluency as they become increasingly confident.

Penpals Handwriting Scheme

Formal handwriting skills will be taught regularly and systematically through the use of the Penpals Handwriting scheme (Cambridge University Press).

The five stages are identified, and these form the basic organisation of the scheme:

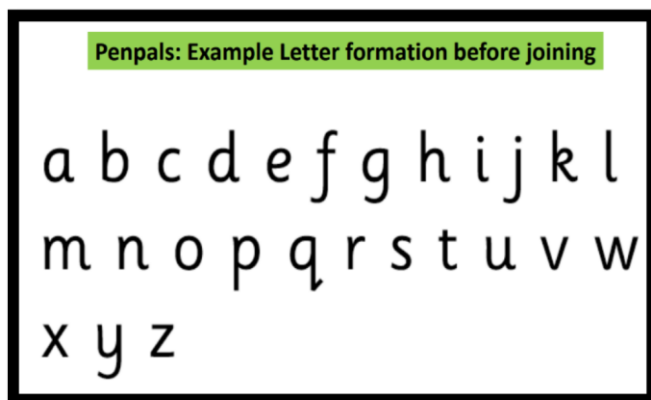
1. Readiness for writing: gross and fine motor skills leading to letter formation (Foundation)
2. Beginning to join (Lower KS1)
3. Securing joins (Upper KS1/Lower KS2)
4. Practising speed and fluency (Lower KS2)

Opportunities for linking handwriting with early phonics and spelling work are fully exploited through the Penpals scheme.

The Sassoon Font Penpals

Penpals uses the Sassoon font. All classes will have the appropriate font (before or after joining) displayed in their classroom. It is cursive, but not fully cursive. This means it:

- Does not start on the line with the lead-in, but the letters do have the exit flicks.
- Capital letters stand alone and are not joined to the next letter.
- Does not loop the f, g or y
- Teaches the 'k' with a loop



Penpals: Example Letter formation with joins

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

Teaching Handwriting

Teaching handwriting in the Early Years Foundation Stage

In the Foundation Stage, children need to develop skills which will later enable them to acquire a legible, fluent and fast handwriting style.

In Nursery and Reception, children will develop:

- Gross and fine motor skills through sensory activities
- Recognition of patterns and language to talk about shapes and movement, e.g. forming shapes and letters in sand/ shaving foam
- Shaping of patterns and basic letter movements
- A comfortable tripod pencil grip (between the thumb and forefinger with the pencil resting on the third finger) that allows for efficient control of the pencil
- Correct formation of all lower case letters (taught through Read Write Inc. phonics and Penpals scheme)

Teaching Handwriting in Key Stages 1 and 2

The highest priority is given to teaching the correct letter formation before any attempt is made at joining. All pupils have one handwriting lesson per week with further 'short burst' opportunities to revisit and practise skills.

Key Stage 1

Children will continue to develop fine and gross motor skills with a range of multisensory activities.

Teachers and support staff continue to guide children on correct letter formation using a comfortable tripod pencil grip that allows for efficient control. Through the Penpals scheme, children will begin to learn how to join letters in Year 1 and continue to practise this skill in Year 2.

Key Stage 2

Children will continue to have regular practice of handwriting, securing joins and developing speed and fluency. Children will have the opportunity to use a handwriting pen from Year 4 upwards, rather than a pencil at the discretion of the teacher.

See appendix 1 for more specific guidelines on handwriting skills and development in each year group.

Types of Paper

When writing in an exercise book, the children should write on the lines, and the ascenders and descenders should be above or below the line. When writing on a worksheet, the children should have lines printed to show them where to write. The size of the line depends on the age and stage of the child. The lines may have a dotted line to show them where the middle of the line is to guide letter sizing. The line guides have been taken from The Handwriting Association recommendations.

Recommended Timings

Penpals consist of a 15-minute whole-class lesson followed by 15-20-minute independent activity. Children will then apply their handwriting skills in all lessons and other writing opportunities.

•**Nursery and Reception** – The development of gross and fine motor skills is continuous and ongoing every day. Children are taught the correct formation of all lower-case letters through writing and phonics lessons and the Penpals scheme.

•**Year 1** – 1x30 minute session per week

•**Year 2** 1x30 minute session
per week

•**Year 3** – 1 x 30 minute session per week

•**Year 4** – 1 x 30 minute session per week

Handwriting Feedback

Marking should be timely and relevant. Staff should give immediate feedback during handwriting lessons. Modelling correct formation and joins in pupil's books before giving opportunities for the child to practise.

Assessment and Progress

On-going assessment in handwriting gives staff the chance to spot errors or inconsistencies that are likely to impede a fast, fluent handwriting style.

For pupils in KS1, there is a beginning-of-year assessment (in the Penpals teacher handbook) which assesses the previous year's work and gives an indication of what needs to be consolidated before beginning new work. Teachers in KS1 will use these at the start of the academic year.

From Year 3 onwards, the final unit in each book can be used as the basis of a summative assessment. Teachers will make a summative assessment of pupils by answering these questions in relation to the end of year expectations for their year group:

- Are all letters formed correctly?
- Are letters consistently sized?
- Are the known joins used?
- Are the known joins used correctly?
- Are ascenders and descenders parallel?
- Are the spaces within and between words regular?
- Is good handwriting carried over into other areas of the curriculum?
- What are the next handwriting targets for this child?

Inclusion

The vast majority of children are able to learn to write legibly and fluently. However, some pupils need more support. Children who are not yet ready to write are provided with a range of pre-writing activities. Children who need handwriting interventions are identified early, and intervention programs are implemented as needed. Further intervention may be arranged with specialist advice from the SENCO and other specialists, such as Occupational Therapists, who may provide targeted support for individual children. Additional resources will be provided by the SENCO, where deemed necessary, such as sloping surfaces, special seat cushions and pencil grips.

Provision for left-handed children

Left-handed children (approximately 10% of the population) are supported by being encouraged to where possible and appropriate:

- Sit with light coming from the right-hand side, to avoid working in the shadow of their hand.
- Sit on a slightly higher chair than a right-handed writer, to see over their hand more easily, and so their arm and hand have more freedom of movement.
- Sit slightly to the right of the desk space so they have plenty of room to their left.
- Sit on the left-hand side of right-handed writers – to avoid their paper and elbows bumping.
- Not sit in a hunched or stiff way. Usually, this happens because the paper position isn't right.
- Practice left-to-right exercises before writing left-to-right

The Role of Parents/Carers

Penpals scheme provides information sheets for Parents/Carers so that they are made aware of the expectations for handwriting for each year group and are encouraged to practise with their children at home. These are sent home in Reception to encourage the correct formation of letters.

Appendix 1

Handwriting Skills and Development

Foundation Stage

Children begin the Foundation Stage with a wide variety of writing skills, ranging from simply making marks to writing their own name unaided. They will move from gross to finer motor skills using a variety of tactile methods. They will be given opportunities to make marks in their own way and to gradually refine these into recognisable patterns and eventually individual letters.

In Reception, children will be prepared for handwriting by consolidating their motor control and introduced to letter shapes. It is expected that all children will be correctly forming each letter by the end of Reception. Handwriting will be taught alongside phonics, making use of the kinaesthetic learning to help children to internalise the letter shapes that go with the sounds. Children will write on wide-lined paper when they have the hand control to do it confidently.

A range of pre-writing opportunities will be provided in the learning environment to encourage and support children develop gross and fine motor skills, develop co-ordination and to promote pencil control and awareness of letter shapes and orientation.

Possible activities:

- large-scale motor movements
- Sky-writing
- Writing with a stick or finger in sand
- Letter shapes/feely letter shapes
- Tactile letter tracing using textured shapes
- Large paper and brushes to make writing patterns
- Whiteboards and pens
- Making letters with malleable materials e.g. plasticine, play dough, clay
- Roller ball
- Using paints, chalks or large felt tips
- Use sky-writing and large-scale practise
- Practise tracing over lines and shapes
- Trace over letters and simple words
- Practise copy writing own name
- Use a comfortable and efficient pencil grip
- To produce a controlled line which supports letter formation
- To write letters using the correct sequence of movements
- Introduced joined script for writing child's name – practise writing name in
- Joined script using laminated name cards.

Key Stage 1

Year 1

In Year 1, children practise forming letters and are introduced to diagonal joins, horizontal joins both to letters with and without ascenders. An introduction to joined writing can be started when a child has developed a consistent, clear print style, where letters are generally correctly formed.

Children are 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 the digits 0 to 9

• Understand which letters belong to which handwriting families (i.e. letters that are formed in similar ways) and to practise these (National Curriculum 2014).

Throughout Year 1, we reinforce a good pencil grip and correct letter formation in all writing that children do. Throughout the year, children's motor skills will improve and become more precise. Correct letter formation should become an automatic habit.

We do not make children write too small or too quickly. As with most aspects of their development, children's ability to manipulate pencils will mature at different ages.

Trying to enforce small handwriting too soon can lead to a very cramped style, which is then difficult to make fluent.

Year 2

By Year 2, children should be moving towards a joined handwriting style and be able to write on lined paper with a reasonable degree of accuracy. They practise and build on Year 1 joins until the summer term; there is no expectation that children will automatically join letters they have not been explicitly taught, although this will be encouraged if children begin to explore. For example, the movement for the join wh(i.e. horizontal join to ascender) is exactly the same as for joining

oh|, ol|, ot|, ob| and so on.

Once a join has been introduced between pairs of letters (e.g. wh|), children will always be expected to copy the model showing those joined letter pairs. In this way, children are gradually introduced to the idea of joining more than one pair of letters within a word.

In the final term of Year 2, children are introduced to other pairs of letters which are joined using the same joining strokes.

Pupils will 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.

Year 3 and 4

From Year 3, when all of the basic joins have all been taught and practised, children are encouraged to join writing across the curriculum with a degree of accuracy and fluency by the end of the year. During Years 3 and 4, children are introduced to the idea of joining through a word and to trickier joins such as joining from r, s and f. As the movement for joins becomes more familiar and fluent, the focus moves to develop a neat and even style by looking at size and proportion, parallel downwards strokes and spacing.

Pupils should be taught to:

- 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 (e.g. 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).

By the Summer Term of Year 3, children should be able to use joined-up writing for most of their work. 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.

Pen hold and hand position

Does the child:

- say it hurts to write
- have to stop often when writing
- want to write faster
- find their handwriting is distorted because the pen restricts the movement of the arm?

Different ways of holding the pen may help avoid these. Children will need to experiment to find the best way for their fingers, wrist and arms to move freely and loosely.

thumb.

Hold the pen slightly further away from the point, than a right hander would. Position the wrist by rotating the hand slightly towards the paper.

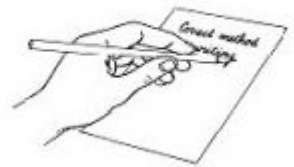
[school/extra-support-for-your-child/helping-your-child-at-school/helping-left-handed-writers](https://www.nhs.uk/health/extra-support-for-your-child/helping-your-child-at-school/helping-left-handed-writers)

The traditional way of holding a pen – the 'tripod grip' (see figure 2) – has the thumb and first finger placed either side of the pencil and the middle finger underneath.

Left-handed children should be encouraged to:

Hold the pen so that the first finger is closer to the end point than their

Figure 2: Traditional correct pen hold



There is another pen hold to consider (see figure 3) which has the pen placed between the first and middle finger, resting on the thumb.

Figure 3: Alternative pen hold

