



BJS Federation of Schools

Handwriting Policy

Policy Adopted by Executive Headteacher on: May 2022

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Parker', is written over a light blue rectangular background.

Signed _____
Ms A. Parker Executive Headteacher

1. Handwriting

1.1 When communicating ideas in writing, it is important that children use a handwriting style which is neat and legible. The importance of handwriting should not be under-estimated. It is vital that children can write quickly, comfortably and legibly as it is a skill needed in many curriculum areas. Children's self-esteem is also heightened when they are able to take pride in their handwriting

Aims and Objectives

- To enable each child to write legibly, fluently and at a reasonable speed.
- To encourage children to take pride in the presentation of their work.
- To ensure a consistent approach to handwriting and presentation throughout the school.
- To adopt a common approach towards handwriting by all adults when writing in children's books, on the whiteboard, on displays and resources.

1.2 As a federation we have chosen to use the Nelson Handwriting Scheme as this provides a clearly structured programme with full coverage of the technical aspects of writing (including letter formation, basic joins, printing, speedwriting and slant).

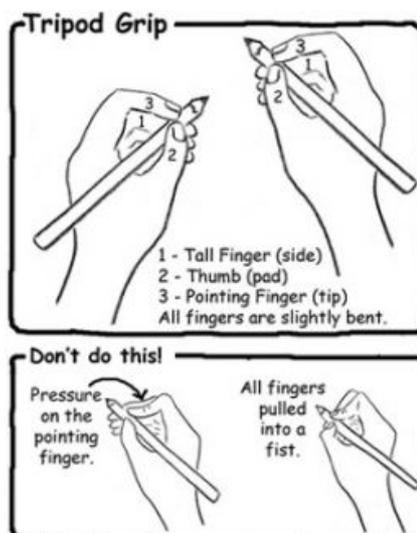
2. Progression of Skills

2.1 Nursery

Children are supported to develop their gross motor and fine motor skills through a range of play and mark-making activities. As children begin to develop control and coordination, their marks begin to take shape and include patterns. Children are encouraged to participate in fine motor activities daily to develop correct pencil grip. (see appendix 1 for patterning progression) This will include the introduction of a Write Dance lesson during the summer term.

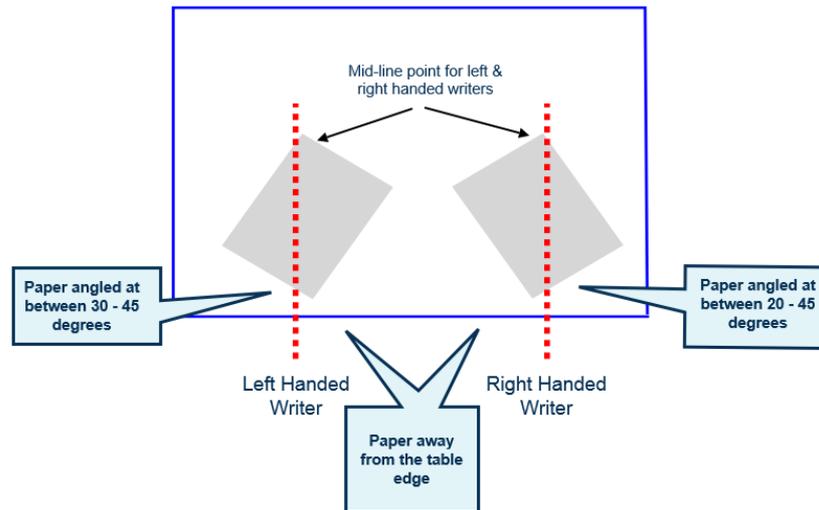
2.2 Reception

Writing skills are encouraged through physical play, mark making and eventually using phonic knowledge to write words. Fine motor skills are developed further to support correct pencil grip, which becomes a priority. Write Dance will continue to be used to help children work on their coordinated mark-making skills in a fun and imaginative way, using movement to help make the shapes they will need to form letter shapes. Children should be taught correct letter formation using the Nelson scheme, with letter beginning and ending at the correct point.



2.3 Year 1

Children continue to learn how to sit correctly at a table and hold a pencil comfortably and correctly. Children are explicitly taught how to tilt their exercise book so as to see their writing more easily. They form lower case letters in the correct direction, starting and finishing in the right place. Pupils form capital letters and digits 0-9 and are taught which letters belong to which handwriting 'families' (i.e. letters that are formed in similar ways). Children learn which letters are ascenders and which are descenders.



2.4 Year 2

In Year 2 children will begin to use a handwriting pen. Children are taught to form lower case letters of the correct size relative to one another and ensure that capital letters and digits are the correct size relative to lower case letters. Children position ascenders and descenders correctly in relation to the line. Children will begin to learn how to join their letters within handwriting lessons, with the expectation that letters will begin to join within other areas of the curriculum during the summer term.

2.5 Years 3 and 4

In Years 3 and 4 children learn 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. They increase the legibility, consistency and quality of their handwriting (for example, by ensuring that the downstrokes of letters are parallel and equidistant, and that lines of writing are spaced sufficiently so that the ascenders and descenders of letters do not touch).

2.6 Years 5 and 6

By Years 5 and 6, children should be using joined handwriting consistently in all their work and be able to write with increasing speed. They are also taught to choose the writing implement and style which is best suited for the task.

3. Teaching and Learning

3.1 As handwriting is a movement skill, demonstration by a competent adult is essential. **All adults are expected to model the correct handwriting style at all times in accordance with this policy and to use the same language of letter formation to ensure consistency throughout the school** (see Appendix2: Reference Guide and Appendix3: The Language of Letter Formation).

3.2 Nelson Handwriting groups the letters into sets based on **handwriting families**. These are letters that are formed in similar ways.

- Set 1: c a o d g q s f e
- Set 2: i l t u j y
- Set 3: r n m h k b p
- Set 4: v w x z

3.3 The **joining groups** divide the letters according to how they will join to other letters:

- Group 1: a c d e h i k l m n s t u (13 letters with exit flicks plus s).
- Group 2: a c d e g i j m n o p q r s u v w x y (19 letters which start at the top of the x- height).
- Group 3: b f h k l t (6 letters which start at the top of the ascender).
- Group 4: f o r v w (5 letters which finish at the top of the x-height).
- Break letters are the 8 letters after which no join is made. Joins are not made to or from the letter z: b g j p q x y z. Capital letters and numerals are never joined.

3.4 Four different **types of joins** are taught:

- The first join: Group 1 to 2 (diagonal joins to letters without ascenders)
- The second join: Group 1 to 3 (diagonal joins to letters with ascenders)
- The third join: Group 4 to 2 (horizontal joins to letters without ascenders)
- The fourth join: Group 4 to 3 (horizontal joins to letters with ascenders)

3.5 Handwriting Lessons

Teachers are expected to deliver one **dedicated twenty-minute handwriting lesson every week**, with additional practise of that week's letter formation being provided during registration time. In Reception (and during the transition into Year 1), it is more appropriate to deliver handwriting lessons to small groups of children with similar levels of readiness and motor control.

3.6 Handwriting lessons will usually be structured as set out below:

2. Warm up activities to develop motor skills and prepare children to write.
3. Children should be reminded of the 'Getting Ready to Write' guidelines (posture, pencil/pen grip and angle of paper).
4. The teacher should introduce and model the key objective for the session. Children will often be invited to practice this using their 'magic finger'.
5. Children will use a lined exercise book in order to practise letter formation in Years 1 – 6.
6. Teachers and support staff should observe children carefully and be ready to intervene with support and encouragement throughout the lesson.

3.7 Vocabulary

There are some technical terms which are extremely useful in discussion about handwriting. Teachers should ensure that children have a clear understanding of their meaning (at an age appropriate level) and refer to them throughout handwriting lessons. These terms include: clockwise, anticlockwise, vertical, horizontal, diagonal, parallel, ascender, descender, consonant, vowel, joined, slanted, x-height.

3.8 Presentation of Work

Children will be expected to form letters correctly and take pride in the presentation of their work during every lesson.

3.9 The Classroom Environment

The classroom environment is key in promoting the correct handwriting style and should be seen as an integral part of teaching and learning. As mentioned above, it is imperative that all adults model the correct handwriting style at all times both in written feedback in books and in the classroom environment (on whiteboards, working walls etc.)

3.10 Other expectations for the classroom environment include:

- The handwriting posters demonstrating correct letter formation should be displayed in the classroom
- At least one display within the classroom should include some handwritten labels.
- The Nelson Handwriting software allows teachers and support staff to prepare resources, activity sheets, display labels etc. using the correct handwriting style. This should be used whenever possible.

4. Left Handers

4.1 Teachers need to be aware of left-handers in the classroom as they do have different needs. It is very important that a right-handed child is not seated on the left-hand side of a left-handed child as their elbows will collide.

4.2 The left-handed, like the right-handed child, needs to be shown as early as possible how to hold a writing implement correctly.

4.3 The hand should be kept below the writing line. This enables the children to see what they are writing and encourages correct pen hold.

4.4 The grip the left-hander uses means the pencil is pushed as the child writes, whereas the right-hander pulls their pencil across the page as they write. It is important therefore that the left-hander's pencil is not too sharp so that it will run smoothly across the page.

4.5 The left-hander often crosses the 'F' and 'T' from right to left. Many left-handers therefore will find it easier to leave the 'F' unjoined.

4.6 The left-hander will find it easier if the paper is tilted slightly to the right, at about 8°. The higher the angle the harder it is for most children to write efficiently. The right hand is used to steady the paper, above the writing line.

4.7 Bad habits are easily learnt and many left-handers adopt a hooked pencil hold which can result in a tired grip and affect the quality of their writing. When they begin to use a pen their hand can easily smudge the ink as they write.

If a child already has a 'hooked' pencil hold, teachers should not force them to change as it is very difficult to alter the way a child has learnt to hold a pencil and confidence can easily be destroyed. Adults should encourage them instead to angle their paper 8° to the left, i.e., the same angle used for a right-handed child.

5. Children who require additional support

5.1 Some children find will inevitably find handwriting more difficult and will require additional support. Identifying problems early is very important (e.g., pencil grip, letter formation) as this can prevent children from developing bad habits which can quickly become ingrained.

6. Monitoring

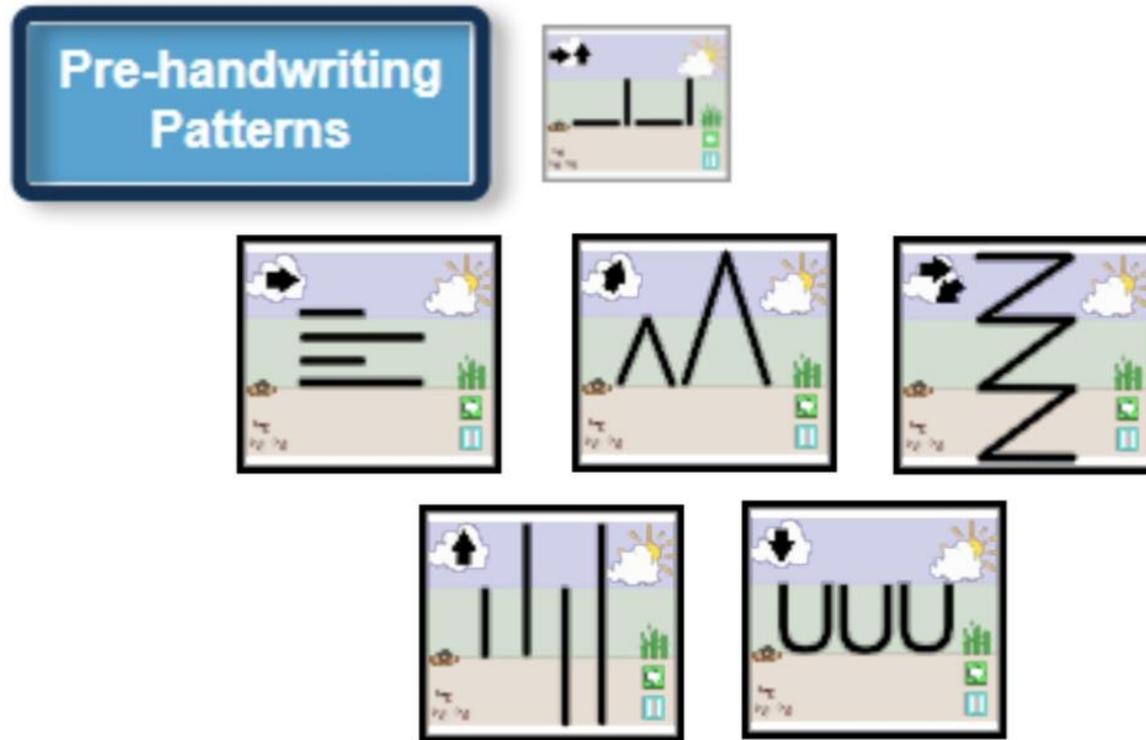
6.1 The English Leader will monitor standards of handwriting across the school through book scrutiny and learning walks and provide support and training as appropriate. Whilst monitoring the standards of handwriting across the school is predominately the responsibility of the English leader, all subject leaders are encouraged to play a role in promoting good handwriting when monitoring work from across the curriculum.

Appendices:

Appendix 1

Patterning progression

Handwriting - Stage 1



Pre-handwriting patterns are the first stage in supporting a child to handwriting success. They help the child to learn the shapes and directional pushes and pulls required to form letters. All letters are a combination of these shapes and lines.

Young children can start to learn these patterns through their play, long before they are ready to pick up a pencil, moving toys back and forth across the floor or whirling them around in the air. To a child it is just play and fun, but you are doing something far more powerful and constructive by helping them to develop the motor memory patterns and directional movement skills they will need for handwriting.

READY REFERENCE GUIDE

The letter forms

The lower-case alphabet for Starter Level:

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

The lower-case alphabet for Books 1 to 6:

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

A letter slant of 8° from the vertical to the right is introduced in Pupil Book 3:

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

The lower-case print alphabet:

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

The capital letters and numerals:

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
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

These are the same throughout the scheme.

The letter groups

Letter families

In year one, *Nelson Handwriting* groups the letters into sets based on handwriting families. These are letters that are formed in similar ways.

Set 1

c a o d g q s f e

Set 2

i l t u j y

Set 3

r n m h k b p

Set 4

v w x z

Joining groups

The joining groups divide the letters according to how they will join to other letters.

Group 1

a c d e h i k l m n s t u

Thirteen letters with exit flicks plus s.

Group 2

a c d e g i j m n o p q r s u v w x y

Nineteen letters which start at the top of the x-height.



Group 3

b f h k l t

Six letters which start at the top of the ascender.

Group 4

f o r v w

Five letters which finish at the top of the x-height.

The break letters

b g j p q x y z

Eight letters after which no join is made. Joins are not made to or from the letter z.

The joins

	Group	→	Group	
The first join	1	→	2	in am
The second join	1	→	3	ab ch
The third join	4	→	2	oa wo
The fourth join	4	→	3	wh ob
The break letters				bigger

The joined style

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

Letter size

Book	x-height of letter (mm)
Starter Workbook A	10
Starter Workbooks B & C	8
Book 1A and 1B	6
Book 2	5
Book 3	4
Book 4	4
Book 5	3
Book 6	3

Guidelines are provided in the Resources and Assessment Books and printable versions are available online.

- The Resources and Assessment sheets for Starter have tramlines with an x-height of 8mm.
- The Resources and Assessment sheets for Books 1 and 2 have tramlines with an x-height of 6mm.
- The Resources and Assessment sheets for Books 3 and 4 have tramlines with an x-height of 4mm.
- The Resources and Assessment sheets for Books 5 and 6 have plain ruled lines.



TECHNIQUES FOR TEACHING LETTER FORMATION

Techniques for teaching letter formation

- Provide demonstrations when introducing and teaching letter shapes. The *Nelson Handwriting* online teaching software is useful for this; you can also use whiteboards or flipcharts.
- Observe individuals as much as possible while they practise. This enables the teacher to recognise and correct bad habits as they arise.
- Talk the children through the process using appropriate language.
- Encourage children to verbalise what they are doing from time to time. This gives a window into the thought processes they are using as they write.
- Writing involves visual and motor skills. Use the following ideas to reinforce the teaching of letter shapes:
 - Encourage children to form letters by drawing them in the air.
 - Finger trace over tactile letters, on desk or table tops.
 - Write over dotted or 'shadow' writing.
 - Draw round templates.
 - Write in sand with a finger or stick.
 - Write with chalk on a chalkboard.
 - Write letters boldly with a wax candle and then apply a colour wash.
 - Form letters with pegs on a pegboard or with beads in Plasticine.
 - Finger trace the outline of a letter on the back of the person in front of you.
 - Form letters with fingers and/or bodies, individually and in groups.
- Draw attention to the connection between letters and the related writing patterns. Encouraging children to use the basic handwriting patterns both for practice and for decorative purposes is a valuable technique for fostering fluency and rhythmic movement.

THE LANGUAGE OF LETTER FORMATION

It is helpful if all staff and parents use a clear, consistent set of instructions for describing the correct letter formation. Some schools will have developed their own set of instructions and will feel comfortable using. A suggested set of instructions is given below. These instructions are used on the teaching software for Starter Level and Book 1A and 1B, and on the flashcards.

Letter/number	Audio
0	Start at the top and go round.
1	Start at the top and go down.
2	Start at the top, curve round and down, and across.
3	Start at the top. Go round, and round.
4	Start at the top. Go down, across, lift your pencil and go down.
5	Start at the top. Go down, and round. Lift your pencil up to the top, and across.
6	Start at the top right. Curve down, up, and in till you touch.
7	Start at the top, across, and diagonally down.
8	Start at the top, go round, and curve back the other way, and up, cross, and up till you touch.
9	Start near the top. Go round, up and down.
a	Start at the top. Go all the way round, up to the top, down and flick.
A	Down, lift, down, lift and across.
b	Start at the top. Go straight down, back up, and all the way round.
B	Down, lift, and round till you stop, and round till you stop.
c	Start at the top, and go round.
C	Round.
d	Start at the middle. Go all the way round, all the way up to the top, straight down, and flick.
D	Down, lift, and round.



e	Start near the bottom. Go up, around, and down.
E	Down, and across, lift, across at the top, lift, across in the middle.
f (print)	Start at the top. Go round, and straight down. Lift your pencil, and cross the 'f' in the middle.
F	Down, lift, across at the top, lift, across in the middle.
f (cursive)	Start at the top. Go round, straight down, and round. Lift your pencil, and cross the 'f' in the middle.
g	Start at the top. Go all the way round, up to the top, straight down, and round.
G	Round, up, and down.
h	Start at the top. Go straight down, up and over, down, and flick.
H	Down, lift, down, lift and across in the middle.
i	Start at the top. Go straight down, and flick. Lift your pencil and put a dot at the top.
I	Down.
j	Start at the top. Go straight down, and round. Lift your pencil and put a dot at the top.
J	Down, and round.
k (print)	Start at the top, and go straight down. Lift your pencil and place it next to the middle. Go into the middle, out from the middle, and flick.
K	Down, lift, out from the middle up, lift, out from the middle down.
k (cursive)	Start at the top. Go straight down, back up, over and round, down and flick.
l	Start at the top. Go straight down, and flick.
L	Down, and across.
m	Start at the top. Go down, up and over, down, up and over, down, and flick.
M	Down, lift, down and across, up and across, and down.
n	Start at the top. Go down, up and over, down and flick.
N	Down, lift, down and across, and up.
o	Start at the top, and go all the way round.
O	Round.
p	Start at the top. Go straight down, up to the top, and all the way round.
P	Down, lift, and round till you stop.
q	Start at the top. Go all the way round, up to the top, straight down, and flick.
Q	All the way round, lift, and down.
r	Start at the top. Go straight down, back up and over, and flick.
R	Down, lift, and round till you stop, out from the middle, and down.
s	Start at the top. Go round, down, and back round.
S	Round, and back round.
t	Start at the top. Go straight down, and round. Lift your pencil, and cross the 't'.
T	Down, lift, and across.
u	Start at the top. Go down, round, back up to the top, down, and flick.
U	Down, round, and up.
v	Start at the top. Go down, and back up to the top.
V	Down, and up.
w	Start at the top. Go down, back up to the top, down, and back up to the top.
W	Down, up, down, and up.
x	Start at the top. Go down to the bottom. Lift your pencil to the top, and down across the other way.
X	Down and across, lift, down and across.
y	Start at the top. Go down and round, back up to the top, then straight down, and round.
Y	Down and across, lift, and all the way down and across.
z	Start at the top. Go straight across, diagonally to the bottom, and across.
Z	Straight across, down and across, and straight across.

