

## Handwriting

### Learning to write by hand is a skill.

At Rushen Primary School we have a shared belief and understanding that writing by hand needs to be legible and fluent if it is to be an effective form of communication and meet the wide range of purposes required. We understand the importance of neat presentation and the need for different letterforms (cursive, printed or capital letters) to help communicate meaning clearly. The school has an annual subscription to Letter-join. Parents and children are provided with login details:

<https://www.letterjoin.co.uk/log-in.html>

As there are so many factors involved and incremental to the development of such a skill, age-related expectation is a general marker for monitoring progress, rather than a benchmark for attainment. However, by the time children leave the primary phase, almost all will be able to use the continuous cursive style.

School can and do teach these skills and provide opportunities for the children to develop their handwriting, but it is the **time, concentration, effort and a determination** to succeed that leads to success and a sense of pride. Parents and carers are essential in supporting their children and the progress they make, particularly in the early stages when the children are first introduced to writing. Just a few minutes practice each day, with the caring hand and support of the child's parent/carer really does make all the difference. You know your children best and are therefore best placed to motivate and encourage the commitment to the time, concentration and determination needed for the necessary practice, practice, practice!

By the end of primary school age, it is expected that children have the ability to produce fluent, legible and eventually, speedy joined-up writing, and to understand the different forms of handwriting used for different purposes. Our aim is to make handwriting an automatic process that does not interfere with either the creative or mental thinking processes, but that it will enhance and influence the quality of written work across the whole curriculum and later, in life.

### British Dyslexia Association states:

*Dyslexic children sometimes have problems with handwriting. When learning to read, children first have to link the shape of the word on the page with the sound it makes. Then, when it comes to writing, they have to recreate that shape back onto paper. For children with dyslexia, decoding these patterns and making these links can often be very difficult.*

*It is recommended that children learn the **continuous cursive style**. Typically, when first learning to write, children 'print' their letters. They then move on to 'joined up' writing at a later stage. For children with dyslexia, learning two styles of handwriting can add an extra layer of difficulty and cause confusion. It is, therefore, much more helpful if a young child can learn to use a single system of handwriting right from the start.*

*The most widely recommended handwriting style is called continuous cursive. Its most important feature is that each letter is formed without taking the pen off the paper – and consequently, each word is formed in one, flowing movement.*

*The key advantages to this system are:*

- By making each letter in one movement, children's hands develop a 'physical memory' of it, making it easier to produce the correct shape;*
- Because letters and words flow from left to right, children are less likely to reverse letters which are typically difficult (like b/d or p/q);*
- There is a clearer distinction between capital letters and lower case;*
- The continuous flow of writing ultimately improves speed and spelling.*

<https://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk>

For some pupils with dyslexia and/or dyspraxia, the difficulties associated with handwriting can mean that the only way that they can achieve the speed of writing needed for success in the education system is to use a computer. If this is the case, then learning to touch type will be beneficial. You could try these websites at home:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/zf2f9j6/articles/z3c6tfr>

<https://www.typingclub.com/>

## Beginning writing

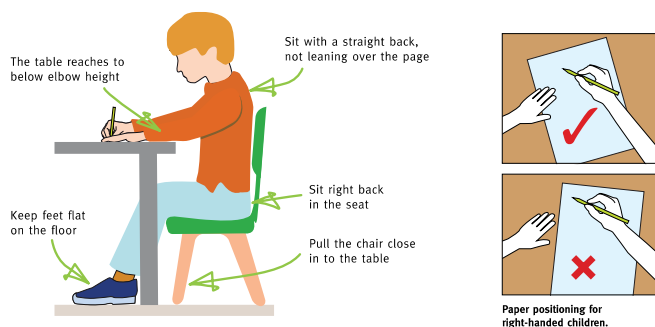
Good handwriting begins with the correct posture:

### Correct Posture for Handwriting

EXTRA RESOURCES

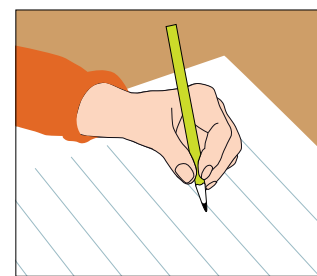
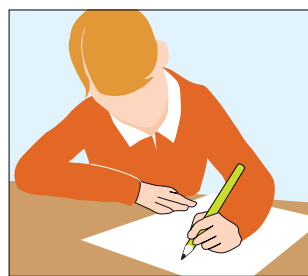
Sitting comfortably and holding the pencil correctly will aid neater handwriting and help pupils write for longer periods.

#### How to sit comfortably



#### Seating and handwriting positioning for left-handed children

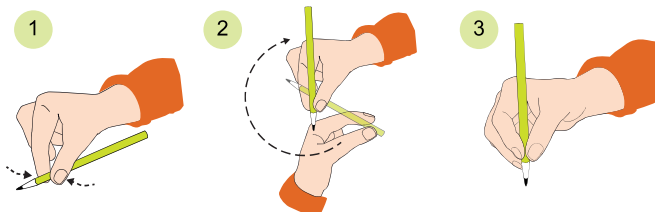
Left-handed children may find it difficult to follow right-handed teachers as they demonstrate letter formation (and vice versa). Teachers should demonstrate to left-handers on an individual or group basis.



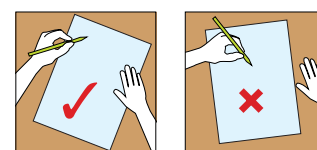
#### How to hold a pencil correctly using the tripod pencil grip

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.

- Grip the pencil with your index finger and thumb with the nib pointing away.
- With your free hand, spin the pencil from underneath.
- Use your middle finger to support the underside of the pencil.



- 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.

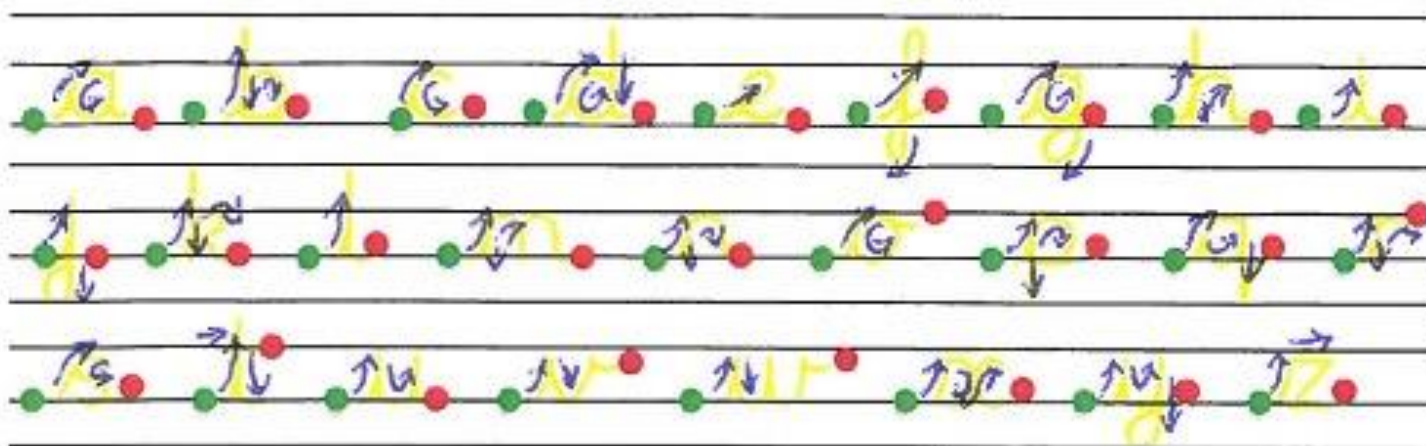
#### Inclusion

Children whose handwriting is limited by problems with fine motor skills, including left-handed children, and children with special educational needs, should be given one-to-one tuition to help achieve their optimum handwriting level.

#### Pens and pencils

Children are encouraged to start handwriting using a soft pencil. When fine motor skills have been established a handwriting pen can be used. More competent pupils can use a ballpoint pen.

We teach the children a continuous cursive handwriting script from the early stages of Reception through to Year 6. This is the form of each letter:



The children learn to begin every letter on the line - the green spot, follow the arrows along the yellow lines and stop on the red spot (a traffic light system of green for 'Go!' and red for 'Stop!'). Tracing over and under such letter forms, as well as 'writing' them in the air is supported by a range of fine motor skills activities, which help support and develop children's handwriting grip and control.

The continuous cursive style allows for a more fluent progression from print to joined handwriting. When the letters are taught in isolation in the early stages, they are taught as beginning and ending with a 'flick'. Later, this enables children to join letters as they have already been learning a fluid style, rather than re-learning a joined letter formation.

Seeing letters in this fluid, connected way from an early stage also **aids progression in phonics**. Children can progress towards applying the skills of blending and segmenting sounds, learning spelling patterns and common letter strings, such as 'ea', 'ou', 'oi', 'ch', 'str', '-tch' and 'ing', endings etc., as they will already be familiar with seeing letters as 'chunks' of sounds.

Children also require a secure understanding of the concept of numbers, before attempting to write them. In school your child will learn to count objects, sing number songs, play number and counting games, look for numbers in the environment, sort, match and order numbers. Parents and carers can support their children by doing these things at home too.

When your child is interested and reaches the stage of wanting to write numbers, it is important that the formation taught remains consistent. The following number formation is used:



## Age-related expectation

### Foundation Stage:

- Introduced to pre-cursive and continuous cursive script at the earliest stages of writing.
- Sit in the correct position and hold a pen correctly to allow fluid movement of the nib.
- Hold a pen in an effective manner for writing and be encouraged to correct any errors in grip or stature.
- Understand that letters are written on a base line and that all cursive letters 'start on the line' and 'end with a hook'.
- Begin to form some recognisable joined-up cursive letters, capital letters and numerals.
- Have an understanding of writing their own name.
- Understand different shaped letter families.
- Practise movements to improve and to enhance fine and gross motor skills by enjoying drawing pre-cursive patterns in a variety of writing materials such as modelling clay, dancing, air writing, sand trays, felt pens, crayons, chalks, pencils, iPads....

- Understand the language needed to describe pen movements in preparation of letter formation.
- Letter learning to familiarise letter shapes, formation and vocabulary.
- Children should be writing in the pre-cursive script to enable an easier transition into Year 1. However, the expectation is that by the end of Reception pupils will start to transfer towards a cursive script depending on their skill and ability.

### Years 1 to 3

- Regular gross and fine motor skills exercises.
- Continuous cursive handwriting reinforcement, learning and practice.
- Numerals, capitals and printed letters: where and when to use, learning and practice.
- Write legibly using upper and lower case letters with correct joins.
- Ensure that letters sit on the base line and are consistent in size with ascenders and descenders that are the correct length and formation.
- Leave the correct space between words.
- Form capital letters and use where appropriate.
- Form numerals that are consistent in size and sit on the base line.
- Begin to form printed letters and understand when they are to be used.
- Improve the speed of writing and begin to write automatically so promoting creativity in independent writing.
- Phonics, spellings, relevant key vocabulary or sentences/paragraphs related to core texts will be modelled by an adult then practised by children. **Practice is monitored.**
- Lined paper is used for specific exercises with line spaces gradually reducing to single lines about 5mm apart. Some children will benefit from using four-lined handwriting paper.

### Years 4 - 6

Improve quality, speed and stamina of handwriting.

- **Quality:** Ensure letters are consistently sized with equal word spacing and that ascenders and descenders are parallel and do not touch words on the lines above and below.
- **Speed:** Improve speed of handwriting to allow creative writing to take precedence over the task of handwriting and be able to take 'quick notes' at a faster pace.
- **Stamina:** Have the strength and mobility to be able to write for longer periods of time without fatigue.

Have full knowledge and ability of the different forms of handwriting for different purposes:

- Neat, joined, cursive letters for writing passages and large amounts of text, lists and letters.
- Printed or capital letters for posters, notices, headings, labeling, and form filling.
- Speedy handwriting for note-taking and dictation where neatness is not as important and shortcuts, such as + or & instead of 'and', can be used.