

ROCKMOUNT PRIMARY SCHOOL

Handwriting Policy 2025

Review: January 2027

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 Rockmount, 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.

In order 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 in order 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:

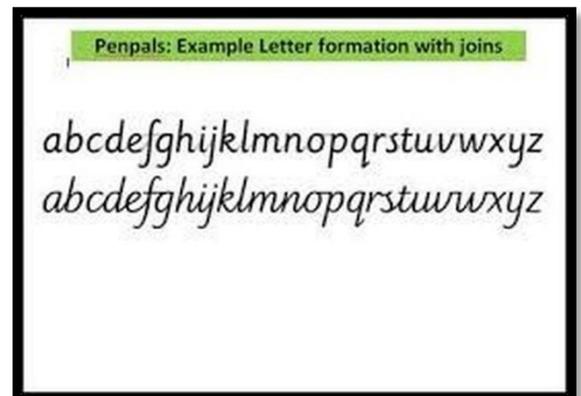
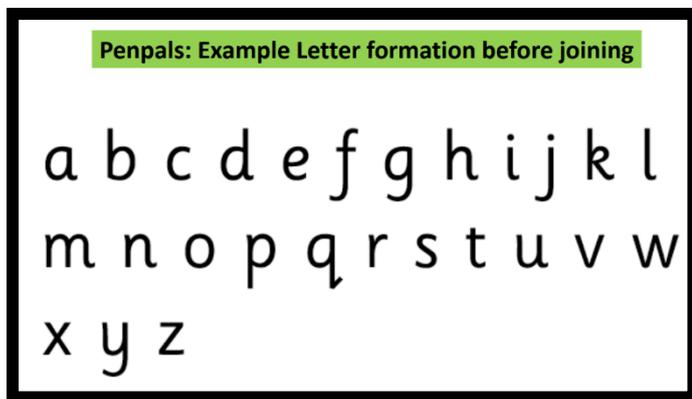
1. Readiness for writing: gross and fine motor skills leading to letter formation (Foundation)
2. Beginning to join (Lower KS1)
3. Securing joins (Upper KS1/Lower KS2)
4. Practising speed and fluency (Lower KS2)
5. Presentation skills (Upper KS2)

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



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 pattern 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 Stage 1 and 2

The highest priority is given to teaching the correct letter formation before any attempt is made at joining. All pupils have at least two 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. By the end of Year 6, children should have a clear, fluid handwriting style. Children will have the opportunity to use a handwriting pen from Year 3 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.

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 within all lessons and other writing opportunities.

- **Nursery and Reception** – The development of gross and fine motor skills are continuous and ongoing everyday. Children are taught correct formation of all lower case letters through Read Write Inc phonics and Penpals scheme.
- **Year 1** – 3 x 15 minute sessions per week
- **Year 2** – 3 x 15 minute sessions per week
- **Year 3** – 1 x 30 minute session per week
- **Year 4** – 1 x 30 minute session per week
- **Year 5** – 1 x 30 minute session per week
- **Year 6** – 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 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, such as Bubble Writing Handwriting Scaffold, 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:

- 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

See Appendix 2 for additional advice on supporting left handed writers

The Role of Parents/Carers

Read Write Inc Phonics (letter formation taught in the Foundation Stage) and 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 available as downloads for each year group from the school website.

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 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. To form lower case letters correctly in a script that will be easy to join. To practise handwriting in conjunction with phonics, spelling and independent writing, ensuring correct letter orientation, formation and proportion, in a style that makes letters easy to join.

Children are be 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. The Bubble Handwriting Intervention Programme to reinforce inaccurate or messy joins. 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.

Year 5

In Year 5, a slightly more sloped style is introduced to enable speedier writing. All previous taught letters and joins are revisited to enable children to practise the slope in familiar contexts. Children focus on issues of proportion, size, legibility and different styles for different purposes.

Children are taught to write legibly and fluently and with increasing speed by:

- Choosing which shape of a letter to use and deciding whether or not to join specific letters.
- Choosing the writing implement that is best suited to a task.

Children revisit and reinforce all of the joins to build increased speed and fluency using a sloped style of handwriting. Many children will now be writing primarily in pen.

In Years 5 and 6, children will be taught to:

- Write legibly, 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 that is best suited for a task.

Year 6

The emphasis is on developing a personal, fast, fluent and legible handwriting style. Children are given opportunities to practise a range of ways of joining with the expectation that they will develop a style that 'works' for them. Additionally, children continue to focus on key issues for legibility and speed as well as styles and implements for different purposes.

Appendix 2

Helping left handed writers

Sometimes children who are left-handed can find handwriting difficult. Having to push the pen across the page towards their body can be awkward for them. Changing their body, paper or hand position for writing, their pen hold or changing the equipment they use can all help them achieve a fast, fluent writing style.

Body position

Left-handed writers should:

- 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.

Equipment

- Try different types of pens, to see how they affect children's writing. Avoid using fountain pens for left-handed children – use ones especially for left-handers. Attaching a 'pencil-grip' can help if the pencil/pen is slippery.
- Write on a pad of paper or something similar that provides a smooth surface that 'gives' a little.
- Writing on a sloping surface can help. Speak to the SENCO regarding sloping writing surfaces or perhaps use a ring binder turned sideways.

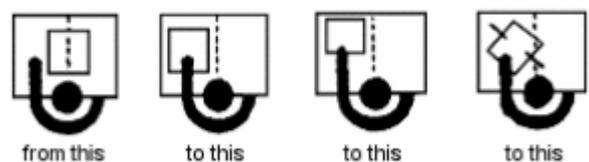
Books with advice for left-handed people on a variety of topics are available, including those by handwriting expert Beverley Sassoon, author of 'Helping your Handwriting'. Speak to the SENCO regarding equipment specifically designed for left-handers.

Paper position

A key way of improving handwriting by left-handers is by positioning the paper correctly.

- Place the paper alongside your child on the left.
- Push the paper away from them slightly.
- Turn the paper so the top is angled to the right towards the table.

Figure 1: Correct positioning of paper for left-handed writer



This allows freer movement and for the writing to be more vertical. children's hand is in a more comfortable position below the writing, making it easier for them to see what's being written and avoid smudging.

If children have developed a 'hooked hand' position (with their hand above the writing line) and finds it difficult to change, there is one method of 'hooking' better than others. To encourage this:

- place the paper as for right-handed writers
- ask your child to place their wrist on its edge rather than flat
- flex the wrist when writing.

A smooth pointed pen – for example, ball-point – should be used, rather than a fountain pen.

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 pens 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.

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.

Figure 2: Traditional correct pen hold



Left-handed children should be encouraged to:

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

Figure 3: Alternative pen hold



Source: <https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/schools-and-learning/schools/at-school/extra-support-for-your-child/helping-your-child-at-school/helping-left-handed-writers>