

Palace Wood Primary School

Handwriting Policy and Progression



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This policy has been impact assessed by Clare Cairns in order to ensure that it does not have an adverse effect on race, gender or disability equality.

PALACE WOOD PRIMARY SCHOOL Handwriting Policy and Progression 2025

Introduction:

The process of holding a writing implement correctly is an incredibly complex life skill. In addition, once the initial dynamic tripod grip is fully mastered, the art of handwriting beautifully requires fluidity, speed, accuracy and the ability to maintain all of this over longer periods. Before children are able to even hold a pencil they need to have developed enough gross motor and fine motor control. From the moment that a baby begins to reach for their toys and crawl, they are beginning to develop the postural stability and visual motor skills that they will require to write. At Palace Wood Primary School, we recognise that handwriting and physical development is not a one size fits all plan. Instead, children will need to develop and extend both their gross and motor skills through effective and regular rehearsal and handwriting is a staged process.

Gross Motor Control refers to the development of controlled movements of the whole body or limbs. The specific Gross Motor foci for handwriting is the development of good posture and balance. Activities such as dance, football, use of small apparatus, cycling, gripping and building large-scale construction kits, while encouraging the use of both sides of the body, all help to support this development.

Fine Motor Control refers to the development of smaller movements usually of the hand or fingers, commonly fine motor skills are needed to use pencils, scissors, construct with bricks, do up buttons and open up lunch boxes. Until children have gained a reasonable fine motor control through art, mark making and other activities, a formal handwriting programme is not deemed appropriate. Increasing a child's fine motor skills can significantly improve the quality of their written outcome as well as the speed with which they write.



Once the child has established a strong level of Gross Motor Control (they can sit correctly for extended periods of time) and Fine Motor Control (they can hold and control the pencil and manipulate the paper as they write), they will need to have also developed Motor Memory Skills (to recall how to form letters), Visual Memory Skills (to recall what a specific letter looks like), Spatial Awareness Skills (to place the letter correctly on the paper and in relation to one another), Eye Tracking Skills (the ability to scan from left to right so that letters are formed and placed correctly); it is unsurprising this takes both time and rehearsal to master.

If a child is struggling with their pencil grip or the process of handwriting, it is important to take a closer look at their physical abilities including gross and fine motor skills. If they do not have the appropriate physical strength needed to support their handwriting development, continuing to push pen to paper activities is not the answer.

Writing is a life-skill and an essential part of enabling children to express themselves, both as learners and as individuals. As humans, we have an inbuilt need to make our mark. We write to express ourselves, to find meaning, to change the world or to create an entirely new world. At Palace Wood Primary School, the teaching of writing is a thorough, well-developed and thought-out process. The following Handwriting Progression document lays out how we will approach the teaching and progression of handwriting across the school considering a child's development.

Following the introduction of the updated curriculum in 2014, there were a number of changes to the curriculum including a renewed focus on handwriting. Below are the requirements for handwriting teaching in Y1-6 in England quoted directly from the curriculum.

Quotes concerning handwriting taken from the text:

- Pupils who do not learn to read and write fluently and confidently are, in every sense, disenfranchised ('Purpose of Study' p13)
- Pupils should develop the stamina and skills to write at length, with accurate spelling and punctuation. (6.3 Language and literacy - Reading and Writing)
- Writing also depends on fluent, legible and, eventually, speedy handwriting. (Programmes of study and attainment targets - Aims of English p15)

Handwriting requires frequent and discrete, direct teaching. Pupils should be able to form letters correctly and confidently. The size of the writing implement (pencil, pen) should not be too large for a young pupil's hand. Whatever is being used should allow the pupil to hold it easily and correctly so that bad habits are avoided.

The skill of handwriting is best observed as a process rather than a finished product; a child may produce a beautifully finished product but may be forming letters incorrectly, adding in joins and taking additional time rather than having a fluent style. Observing the child in the process of writing will help with guiding their next steps rather than what they produce.

Stage 1:

Pre-writing development:

Posture and Postural Control -

In order to write a child needs to be able to keep their balance when sitting without using their hands to support themselves. They need to have strong control of their core muscles, their trunk and their shoulder muscles in order to be able to reach forward in a controlled manner.

When sitting on a chair, the child's feet should be flat on the ground, their bottom should be square in the chair and be right back in the seat with their knees and hips being bent to approximately 90°. The desk should be just above the height of the child's elbows. The paper should be tilted to the side rather than straight on in front of the child (for RH children the page should be closer to their right hand and titled to the left, for LH children the page should be closer to their left hand and tilted to the right).

Signs of poor postural control include: fidgeting constantly, wrapping feet/legs around the chair, sliding forward in their seat, leaning to the side, leaning forwards onto the desk, resting their head on the desk, using their arms to prop themselves up, keeping their arms pressed into their sides.

A sloping board can support a child who leans, this may also help wrist position.

Activities to improve postural control include: playing on large equipment like swings, obstacle courses including crawling and climbing, playing with balls/beanbags while sitting, kneeling, squatting, freeze games where a child needs to stop quickly, rolling out dough with a rolling pin and using cutters to shape dough, hand prints, cleaning tables, painting on large easels/walls, chair press ups or wall sitting.

Fine Motor Skills including Developing Finger Strength, Grasp, Pincer Movement –

A child needs to have a well-developed hand use, grasp and fine motor skills in order to manipulate and control a pencil accurately. Signs that this is developed effectively include that they are able to grasp objects with their whole hand, manipulate objects by turning them over and moving them over their fingers, pick up small objects using a pincer grip (tips of thumb and index finger), pick up object and manipulate them using a tripod grip (thumb, index and middle fingers). There are four main grasps that a child will likely progress through including: Palmar Supinate Grasp, Digital Pronate Grasp, Static Tripod Grasp and the Dynamic Tripod Grasp. A child will need to be able to use either the Static Tripod or the Dynamic Tripod Grasp in order to write.

This means that they:

- Hold the pencil between the tips of the thumb, index and middle fingers
- Hold the pencil in a relaxed way without too much pressure being applied
- The pencil rests on the hand between the thumb and the index fingers (on the webspace)
- The webspace gap should be rounded and open like a circle
- The ring and little fingers are held away from the pencil and lightly bent into the palm.

Should they find it difficult to correct their grip, pencil grips may help.

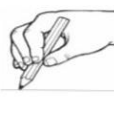
Activities to support the pencil grip development includes playing tiddlywinks, sorting coins, playing connect four, placing clothes pegs or bulldog clips around a container, picking up small objects using tweezers, threading beads, picking up cards, filling a dropper with paint and dropping it out, playing with a triggered water gun, using sticker, popping bubble wrap, making paper clip chains, colouring with very short crayons (cannot use a whole hand grip on this).

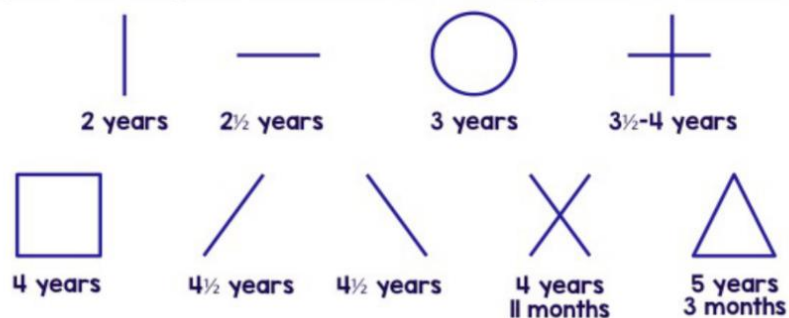
Activities to improve fine motor control include: building blocks, lacing or threading, puzzles, marbles, keyboard activities, origami, using a pegboard to develop a pattern, sewing and weaving activities, chopping, peeling and cooking activities, woodworking including using pliers, screwdrivers and hammers, Finger rhymes, counting using fingers, play with small construction toys, sand and water play including sieving, pouring, picking up things using tools, tweezers to pick up beads, pom poms etc., finger painting, clay and playdough for modelling, tracing.

As children develop pencil control, the movement changes from large shoulder movements to controlled finger movement with their forearm resting on the writing surface. This can only be achieved when shoulder stability has been established.

Pencil control begins with shoulder strength and moves down the body from the shoulder to the wrist to the hand to the fingers.

Writing readiness can be guided by the child's ability to write these first shapes, as they form the foundations of all letters and numbers:

			
1-1½ years Palmar Supinate Grasp	2-3 years Digital Pronate Grasp	3½-4 years Static Tripod Grasp	4½-6 years Dynamic Tripod Grasp



Stage 2:

Learning to print:

Letters are modelled and taught alongside the phonetic order.

Children are offered a regular choice of implements that vary shape, size and colour.

Children often use a triangular pencil and are guided in using a tripod grip in regular writing practice.

At this stage, developing and maintaining Gross-Motor, Fine-Motor and Core strength is essential for the continued improvement of handwriting.

once a photo time
then w'd a boy
with his Mumy
he tuc his cow
to the moat
he saw a old man
who say the
magic being
mumy stand there
a wal

Stage 3:

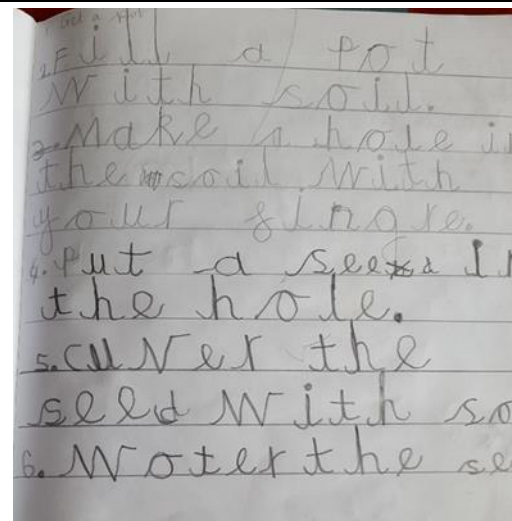
Pre-cursive Introduction:

Posture –

Pupils should be taught

- how to sit correctly (bottom back in the seat, square in the chair, feet flat on the floor)
- how to hold a pencil both comfortably and correctly
- forearms on the table
- non-writing hand supporting the paper
- begin to form lower-case letters in the correct direction, starting and finishing in the right place
- 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 practise these.

Pupils’ writing during year 1 will generally develop at a slower pace than their reading. This is because they need to encode the sounds they hear in words (spelling skills), **develop the physical skill needed for handwriting**, and learn how to organise their ideas in writing.



Stage 4:

Cursive Introduction:

Pupils should 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 un-joined
- 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.

Pupils should revise and practise correct letter formation frequently. They should be taught to write with a joined style as soon as they can form letters securely with the correct orientation.

A child is only ready to start learning to join their handwriting when:

- They have learnt to form all 26 lower-case letters correctly using pre-cursive.
- Letters are of a consistent and suitable size (not necessarily the perfect size, remember big is beautiful).
- Letters are positioned appropriately on the writing line as well as in relation to one another.

Stage 5:

Cursive Rehearsal:

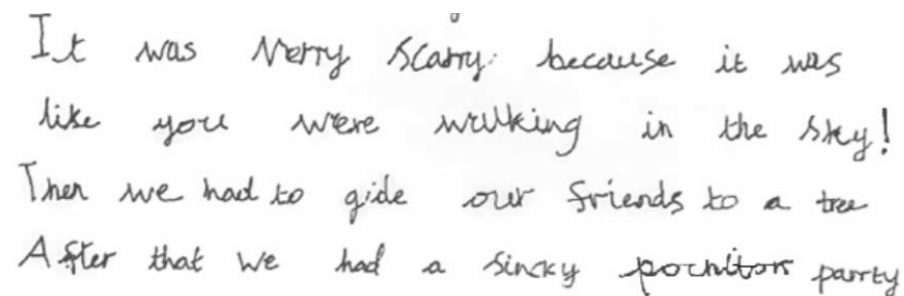
Pupils should be taught to:

- use the diagonal and horizontal strokes that are needed to join letters and understand which letters, when adjacent to one another, are best left un-joined

- 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

Pupils should be using joined handwriting throughout their independent writing. Handwriting should continue to be taught, with the aim of increasing the fluency with which pupils are able to write down what they want to say. This, in turn, will support their composition and spelling.

Joined handwriting should be the norm; pupils should be able to use it fast enough to keep pace with what they want to say.



It was very scary because it was
like you were walking in the sky!
Then we had to guide our friends to a tree
After that we had a spooky potion party

Stage 6:

Cursive Mastery:

Pupils should be taught to:

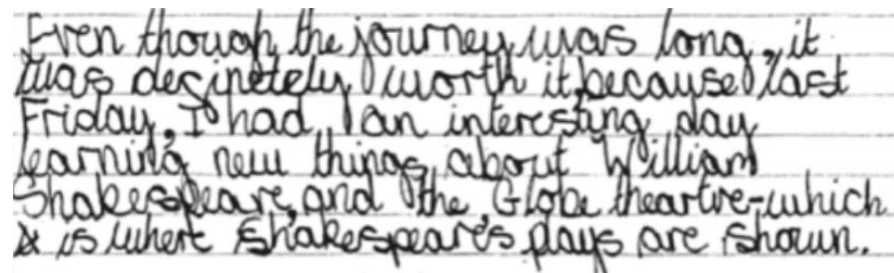
- write legibly, fluently and with increasing speed by:

- choosing which shape of a letter to use when given choices and deciding, as part of their personal style, whether or not to join specific letters
- choosing the writing implement that is best suited for a task (e.g. quick notes, letters).

Pupils should continue to practise handwriting and be encouraged to increase the speed of it, so that problems with forming letters do not get in the way of their writing down what they want to say. They should be clear about what standard of handwriting is appropriate for a particular task (e.g. quick notes or a final handwritten version). They should also be taught to use an un-joined style (e.g. for labelling a diagram or data, writing an email address, or for algebra) and capital letters (e.g. for filling in a form).

To have mastered cursive handwriting at Palace Wood, pupils should demonstrate that:

- All letters are formed correctly with clear descenders and ascenders which are consistent in size. Handwriting is neat, joined and legible.
- All capital letters and lower case letters are clear and used correctly. Letters are joined appropriately.
- All letters are written on the line with a regular space between words.
- Punctuation is the correct size in relation to the text.
- The writer writes with good pace.
- Titles use capital letters correctly.
- All written work starts from the margin.
- Any mistakes are rubbed out neatly or crossed out with one neat line.



Even though the journey was long, it
was definitely worth it because last
Friday, I had an interesting day
learning new things about William
Shakespeare and the Globe theatre which
& is where Shakespeare's plays are shown.

Letter Formation and Understanding	Behaviours / Handwriting Style
<i>Although each child should be treated as an individual (and will, therefore, need to work at their own stage) we recognise that the majority of the children in a year group will be working at roughly the same point. The following are guidelines and expectations for each year group.</i> EYFS: Recognising and recording each letter. Print letters: be taught the correct start and exit points for each letter, which should <u>not</u> include lead-in strokes from the line. Form capital letters and corresponding lower-case letters Use capital 'I' for personal pronoun.	<i>Although each child should be treated as an individual (and will, therefore, need to work at their own stage) we recognise that the majority of the children in a year group will be working at roughly the same point. The following are guidelines and expectations for each year group.</i> EYFS: Sit correctly on a chair at a table Learn to hold pencil correctly with a comfortable grip. Use spaces between words
Year 1: Children are introduced to pre-cursive writing and are explicitly taught the basic leading in and out lines for each letter. Letters are taught in families of like-formed letters: curved letters (c, a, d, g, q, e, s, f, o), tall letters (l, I, t, j, y, u), up and down letters (r, b, n, h, m, k, p) and zigzag monster letters (v, w, x, z). Pupils are encouraged to start writing in a pre-cursive script on a line as soon as they are able to. Children should be taught to name and write the capital letters. Print letters as above, orientating correctly on the line Form digits 0-9	Year 1: Use spaces between words Hold pencil comfortably and correctly Adult: model pre-cursive letters when ready Practise separate pre-cursive letters when ready
Year 2: Children are taught to join letters continuing to follow the letter families and formation rules. Form and orientate lower-case letters the correct size relative to one another Write capital letters and digits of the correct size, orientation and relationship to other letters e.g. Monday; 50p By the end of Year 2, children are expected to be writing in a legible, cursive script.	Year 2: Use spaces between words that reflect the size of the letters. Use diagonal and horizontal lines to join some lower-case letters, this is indicated by secure letter formation and secure letter orientation Introduce dictation from an adult, handwriting words in sentences

Year 3: Children should have twice weekly lessons in which they consolidate their basic handwriting joins and be working to ensure consistency in size and proportion of letters. Lower case letters are distinct from capital letters, including those of same shape e.g. cC, sS, wW Handwriting speed and fluency should be built upon by regular practice. Joined, cursive handwriting should be used for writing lessons unless the task requires print. Introduction of pen at the start of year 3. Handwriting lessons will be modelled by the teacher using a combination of the interactive whiteboard and lined books (paper).	Years 3: Join lower case letters Maintain even-sized lettering Descenders and ascenders are appropriate and parallel to each other Introducing ink pen Respond to dictation from an adult, handwriting words in sentences
Year 4: Children should have twice weekly lessons in which they consolidate their basic handwriting joins and be working to ensure consistency in size and proportion of letters. Lower case letters are distinct from capital letters, including those of same shape e.g. cC, sS, wW Check and correct any errors in letter formation Ensure even sized lower-case letters Handwriting speed and fluency should be built upon by regular practice. Joined, cursive handwriting should be used for writing lessons unless the task requires print. Handwriting lessons will be modelled by the teacher using a combination of the interactive whiteboard and lined books (paper).	Year 4: Check that lines are spaced sufficiently so that descenders and ascenders do not touch Build stamina and fluency to handwrite longer pieces Respond to dictation from an adult, handwriting words in sentences
Year 5: Twice weekly practice sessions to hone their handwriting skills (some pupils may require more regular practice at the discretion of the teacher). This is an opportunity for consolidation or practice for those who have yet to achieve a fluent and legible joined style. Experimentation with writing implements and individual style is encouraged within reason while maintaining legibility. Check accuracy	Year 5: Develop fluent and legible style Decide whether or not to join specific letters Respond to dictation from an adult, handwriting words in sentences
Year 6: Twice weekly practice sessions to hone their handwriting skills (some pupils may require more regular practice at the discretion of the teacher).	Year 6: Choose the implement and writing style best suited for the task Write legibly and fluently with increasing speed Respond to dictation from an adult, handwriting words in sentences

This is an opportunity for consolidation or practice for those who have yet to achieve a fluent and legible joined style.
Experimentation with writing implements and individual style is encouraged within reason while maintaining legibility.
Check accuracy

Helpful hints for handwriting:

Capital letters are never joined.

Most letters start and end on the line, those that join from the tail/line: a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i, j, k, l, m, n, p, q, s, t, u, x, y, z

Only 4 finish in the air, those that join from the top: o, r, v, w

Come back and dot or cross i, j, t and x.

The main body of the letters should all be the same height: a, c, e, i, m, n, o, r, s, u, v, w, x, z

Ascenders should be the same height: b, d, h, k, l (except for f and t which are slightly shorter)

Descender should be the same height: f, g, j, p, q, y

Handwriting Position:

Ideally, children should sit on a chair.

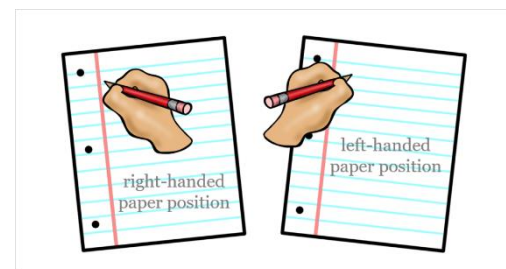
The chair should allow their hips to be 90° to their feet and their feet should be flat on the floor.

The child's head should be a reasonable distance from the paper, allowing good posture and concentration.

The paper should be placed on the same side as the writing hand and angled in the opposite direction.

The child should then place the opposite hand on the paper as they write (if they find this difficult, the paper can be stabilised with masking tape or blue-tac)

Ensure the desk around is not cluttered.



Left-handed pupils:

Left-handed pupils should receive specific teaching to meet their needs. Left-handed people make up approximately 15% of the population. They often have to face equipment and techniques that are designed solely for right-handed users.

The key principles when teaching left-handed pupils are:

- Reassure them that left-handed is ok!
- Pencil grip and paper placement will need to be different – ensure the child is supported in how to write.
- When demonstrating to a left-handed child, model in a left-handed style
- Ensure left-handed materials (pencils, scissors etc.) are available

Consider desk positioning, especially where a left-handed child might knock elbows with a right-handed child

Handwriting Join Order

Block A – Practising diagonal joins. (Y2)

at, all, cl, in, im, cr, tr, dr, lp, mp, id, ig, nd, ld, ime, ine.

Block B – Practising horizontal joins. (Y2, Y3)

op, one, ome, og, wa, wo, ol, ot, oh, wh, of, if.

Block C – Practising horizontal and diagonal joins in words. (Y3)

eel, eet, ice, ide, ode, ole, obe, ook, ool, oor

Block D – Practising horizontal and diagonal joins. (Y3)

url, irl, irt, ere, dis, ws, si, su, se, sp, sm, rs.

Block E – Practise loop joins in words (Y3, Y4)

ft, fl, fu, fr: ja, je, ju, ji,

Block F – Practice double consonant joins. (Y4)

rr, ss, ff
Block G – Revision joins in a word including prefix and suffix. (Y4)
le, ing, un, de, dis, re, pre
Block H – Practise b and p joins (Y4, Y5)
bi, bu, pi, pu, ba, bo, pa, po, bl, ph.
Block I – Size and consistency (Y5)
ly, less, ful
Block J – Speed and fluency (Y5, Y6)
er, est
Block K – Spacing (Y6)
mis, anti, ex, non, co
Block L – Revising joins in a word (Y6)
ness, ship, ing, ed, s, ify, nn, mm, ss, tt, ll, bb, pp, ff, cc, dd

Block M – Parallel ascenders and descenders (Y6)

al, ad, af, ight, ough.

Block N – Size, proportion and spacing (Y6)

lous, able, ful, fs, ves, ic, ist, ion, its, it's, ible, able.

The Structure of a Handwriting Lesson:

Handwriting lessons should happen a minimum of twice a week for 15 minutes each time.

It is necessary to teach the skills required so the specific join and focus should be modelled prior to the pupils independently rehearsing the skill.

A typical handwriting lesson might take the following format:

WARM UP 3 minutes	Gross Motor and Fine Motor Warm Up	Examples might include: - Funky fingers - Dough disco - Dot to dots - Finger warm up - Sky writing - Patterns - Scribbles - Tracing - Writing with eyes closed
MODEL 4 minutes	Teacher model the new learning, join etc. Model sizing and orientation	Examples might include: - Writing on the whiteboard using line guides, not a blank screen - Writing repeater programme on the IWB - Writing into a book under the visualiser - Tracing

REHEARSE 8 minutes	Pupil rehearsal of new skill	Depending upon age/stage this may be: - handwriting workbooks with handwriting lines (more tracing/copying) (Y1/2) - lined practice books (Y3/4) (teacher judgement if there are some children that would benefit from the lined handwriting books) - lined practice books (Y5/6) The teacher/TA would work with a focus group and provide feedback to pupils on their position and posture for handwriting, formation and orientation and overall fluency and style.
APPLY After the lesson	Look for evidence of pupils applying their new learning in their handwriting opportunities in other subjects.	