



# Bishop's Castle Primary School

## Our Handwriting Policy

Handwriting is a skill which, like reading and spelling, affects written communication across the curriculum. Children must be able to write with ease, speed and legibility. Cursive handwriting teaches pupils to join letters and words as a series of flowing movements and patterns. Handwriting skills should be taught regularly and systematically. The guidance on handwriting in the Primary National Curriculum is at the core of the progression of skills within the school and is given in the appendix.

### Handwriting Aims

At Bishop's Castle Primary School our key aims in teaching handwriting are that the pupils will:

- Achieve a neat, legible style with correctly formed letters in accordance with the cursive font
- Develop flow and speed
- Encourage pupils to gain satisfaction from a neatly presented piece of work, and to grow in confidence at their ability to make ideas clearer through consistent, well-formed handwriting.

### Teaching and Learning

To achieve these aims when teaching handwriting, children should:

- Experience coherence and continuity in learning and teaching across the school. Handwriting is a skill that needs to be formally taught and practised regularly.
- Develop a recognition and appreciation of pattern and line and be given support in finding a comfortable grip.
- Be encouraged to take pride in the presentation of their work, as well so understand the importance of neat presentations in order to communicate meaning, so that they study handwriting with a sense of enjoyment and achievement.
- Be supported in developing correct spelling quickly through a multi-sensory approach to handwriting.
- Be shown how to be able to write quickly, whilst maintaining legibility, to aid expressing themselves creatively and imaginatively across the curriculum and for a range of purposes.
- Be encouraged to use their skills with confidence and pride in real life situations.

# Knowledge, Skills and Understanding

## Early Years

A range of writing implements and media should be used to encourage, develop and extend the pupils' conceptions of pattern and form. Children take part in activities to develop their fine and gross motor-skills and recognition of patterns. Physical development of gross motor skills should take place before that of fine motor skills. Work should include activities that develop muscle strength, pincer grips, tearing and weight bearing.

In addition, further development can be encouraged through creating patterns with mops or brooms, retracing vertical lines, or make anticlockwise circles and zig zags, gradually making finer movements over time so that children can begin to form letters using their index finger in sand, or by using paint. When working on paper, children should begin with large pieces and felt tips, gradually reducing the paper size and introducing lines, on which children will write with chunky short pencils.

Letter families and mnemonics for letter formation will begin to be learned, as laid out in the Little Wandle phonics scheme (see appendix). Also, children should begin to learn how to correctly hold a pencil with a triangular grip, then how to use a pencil, holding it effectively to begin to form recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed.

## Key Stage 1

Children will continue to develop fine and gross motor-skills with a range of multi-sensory activities. Handwriting should be taught discretely and in context, applied to Little Wandle phonics sessions. Letter formation should be based on the agreed handwriting script set out by Little Wandle phonics.

When children have completed the phonics scheme, they can then move on to using the Nelson Handwriting Scheme (See Key Stage 2).

Teachers and support staff continue to guide children on how to write letters correctly, using a comfortable and efficient pencil grip. Children should now be leaving spaces between words accurately. By the end of Key Stage 1 children will be able to write legibly, using upper and lower-case letters appropriately and correct spacing between words, where graphemes are joined, and in many cases children from Year 2 upwards should be encouraged to join all their handwriting in some of their writing.

## Key Stage 2

During this stage the children continue to have direct teaching and regular practice of handwriting. The Nelson Handwriting scheme is followed to help children with their letter formation (see appendix). Accuracy, speed and flow are essential aspects of handwriting skills and need to be practised, especially so that children build up stamina so that they can sustain longer writing without discomfort. All pupils will be expected to use a clear, fluent and joined script by the end of KS2, adapting their handwriting for different purposes, such as a neat, legible hand for finished, presented work, a faster script for note making and the ability to print for labelling diagrams etc.

## Provision for left-handed children

At least 10% of the population are left-handed, the majority of whom are boys. All teachers are aware of the specific needs of left-handed pupils and make appropriate provision:

- paper should be positioned to the left for right-handed pupils and to the right for left-handed pupils and slanted to suit the individual in either case
- pencils should not be held too close to the point as this can interrupt pupils' line of vision
- pupils should be positioned so that they can place their paper to their left side
- left-handed pupils should sit to the left of a right-handed child so that they are not competing for space
- extra practice with left-to-right exercises may well be necessary before pupils write left-to-right automatically.

Teachers are aware of the fact that it is very difficult for left-handed pupils to follow handwriting movements when a right-handed teacher models them. Teachers will demonstrate to left-handers on an individual or group basis if necessary.

## Classroom Strategies

The key skills that children need to practice to develop confident, flowing handwriting are non-negotiable. These are the basic necessary building blocks:

1. Posture– To achieve the best handwriting, it is important to be sitting in the most comfortable position with the table and chair at the correct height.
2. Support – the paper that a child is writing on should be stabilised with the non-writing hand close to the writing line.
3. Pencil-grip – The writing pencil or pen should be lightly supported and not gripped tightly. It should be possible to remove the pen from the pupil's grip without lifting their hand at the same time. Children should practice producing fainter and fainter marks to get a sense of how much pressure is needed. Plastic triangular or ergonomic grips may be needed to help children reduce pressure and hold a pencil correctly.
4. Paper Position – The paper should be angled comfortably according to the hand of the writer (approximately 30 degrees to the right for a right-handed pupil and 30 degrees to the left for a left-handed pupil) and supported with the non-writing hand. Children need to see the marks that they are making. NB: left-handed children may develop the classic crooked wrist because they are trying to see their writing as they produce it.

## Other strategies to deploy

- Discussion – with the whole class, putting forward positive suggestions as to how pupils can help themselves to more efficient, legible handwriting.
- Modelling - Teachers should ensure that when teaching handwriting, their own handwriting on the board should be clear and legible and conforms to school policy. Handwriting feedback should be modelled clearly by the teacher.
- Feedback – Ensure that any feedback made of a pupil's handwriting is positive and constructive, with comments indicating how improvements can be made.

## The Learning Environment

The following apply in all classes:

- Classrooms are equipped with a range of writing implements, pencil pots and line guides (in KS2) for pupils to work at their own tables.
- Writing Surface – Pupils may be asked to write on a range of papers, or using a range of implements, to develop their handwriting. This may be with large sheets of paper using felt tip pens in EYFS, which may be on the floor or on a wall, or with single sheets of paper (lined or unlined) using a pencil.
- Writing Implement – For most handwriting, children should work in pencil of appropriate size and hardness for the child's level of development. For young children, a pencil with a triangular cross-section may be appropriate. Older children with a fluent, joined hand may be encouraged to work in pen.
- Light – Light levels in the classroom should be sufficient for pupils to see their work clearly.
- Books – Handwriting books should be provided for children to practice in that use an agreed guide-line layout for the delivery of handwriting lessons. In the case of EYFS and KS1, children use a conventional exercise book with wide line spacing for initial letter formation, moving to a narrower lined page as greater control is achieved.

## Support and SEND

Support will be given to pupils as and when required. Guidance on the needs of children with specific fine or gross motor skills problems that affect handwriting will be addressed on an individual basis, in accordance with reports from outside agencies such as occupational therapy.

Pupils may write untidily for any number of reasons and teachers consider the following difficulties when beginning to help children:

- They may be rushing.
- They may not be clear about what they want to say. Encourage the use of the composition strategy of "Think it, say it, write it, check it."
- They may have difficulty in spelling and produce ambiguous letter formation to conceal this fact.
- They may not have a clear concept of words and write letters in a continuous stream.
- They may lack the co-ordination to write neatly. Encourage the use of daily shape practice to develop a rounder, more fluent hand.
- They may have visual perception difficulties.
- They may not have absorbed the correct way to form letters.
- They may have not been taught the correct joins.

Some means of identifying the underlying causes of poor handwriting and a response to those difficulties may be needed and advice should be sought from the SEND Coordinator. A constructive programme should offer both assessment and how to improve in one package.

During the first few weeks of a new term, the teacher should make an assessment of those pupils experiencing serious difficulty. Pupils requiring assistance will usually fall into one or more of the following categories:

- Those not joining letters correctly; often caused by incorrect letter formation and lack of forward movement in writing.
- Those who have had insufficient joining practise and therefore tend to revert to print.
- Those through frequent school moves have adopted a confusing mixture of styles.

When the problem has been identified, the following strategies may be used:

1. **Faulty letter formation** – Pupils need explanation and modelling of flowing letter patterns, correct pen/pencil use before following onto repetitive letter sequences in the problem letter group.
2. **Irregular slope** – Pupils must decide themselves which angle is to be used consistently and reminded and encouraged to stick to the chosen angle. It is worth pointing out that slight forward slope and oval letters will help to establish a consistent slope.
3. **Combination of incorrect letter formation and irregular joins** – This is the most difficult problem to correct. These pupils have two stages to unlearn before rebuilding and need to go back to early flow patterns and correct letter formation.
4. **Pen/pencil grip** – Cramped writing is often the result of tension and/or uncomfortable pencil grip. This is extremely difficult for older pupils to alter. Some pupils may require triangular grips, or ergonomic pens and pencils, to help place the position of their fingers correctly.
5. **Writing which is either too large or too small** – Over-large writing gets muddled as the lines mesh together. Tiny writing is frequently a sign of tension. It may also be used in an attempt to disguise poor spelling or even eye problems. Tramline paper may be used to draw attention to unduly small or large writing.
6. **Inadequate or uneven spaces between letters and words** – It is difficult to give rules regarding the spacing of joined up letters. They must hold together as words but each letter must be recognisable. Large loosely spaced letters need more space between the words than smaller, more compact ones. The space between words varies with the size of the letter and the width of the joining stroke. For cursive writing, the pupil needs the space of an 'o' with the joining stroke between words. It is all related to the size of the writing, but when spaces are too wide, white patches distract the reader. Young pupils are frequently told to use a 'finger' space between words; however, this is inappropriate for the older pupil as the fingers have grown and the writing has reduced in size over the years. For older children struggling with spacing issues advise using a pencil width to assist.
7. **Alterations** – Frequent alterations denote tension and lack of confidence. The pupil may be rushing to keep up with the mechanical writing without giving enough thought to spelling. A helpful approach to this problem is to practice in writing common words in cursive script, so that the pattern of the letters in a word can be produced automatically. It is often also helpful to vocalise the words to be written.
8. **Inability to keep on the line** – It is logical to show how letters relate by working from two points:
  - Where the letter starts.
  - where the individual letters start in relation to the base.

Double 'tram-line' paper will be useful because the mid-zones of letters can be written between the two lines. The ascenders go above the top line and descenders go below the bottom line. For pupils with spatial or motor problems, paper with four parallel lines can be particularly useful.

It may be required that children will need to use a writing slope or footrest and these are available in school to use,

# Appendix

## Contents:

- Little Wandle formation guides
- Letter formation and letter joins
- Sample handwriting paper
- Handwriting progression

## Little Wandle letter formation agreed by staff and SLT



Little Wandle Phase 2  
Pronunciation guide



Little Wandle Phase 2  
Sheet 2 Pronunciation

## Letter formation agreed by staff and SLT, as laid out in Nelson Handwriting Scheme

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.

## Letter joins agreed by staff and SLT, as laid out in Nelson Handwriting Scheme

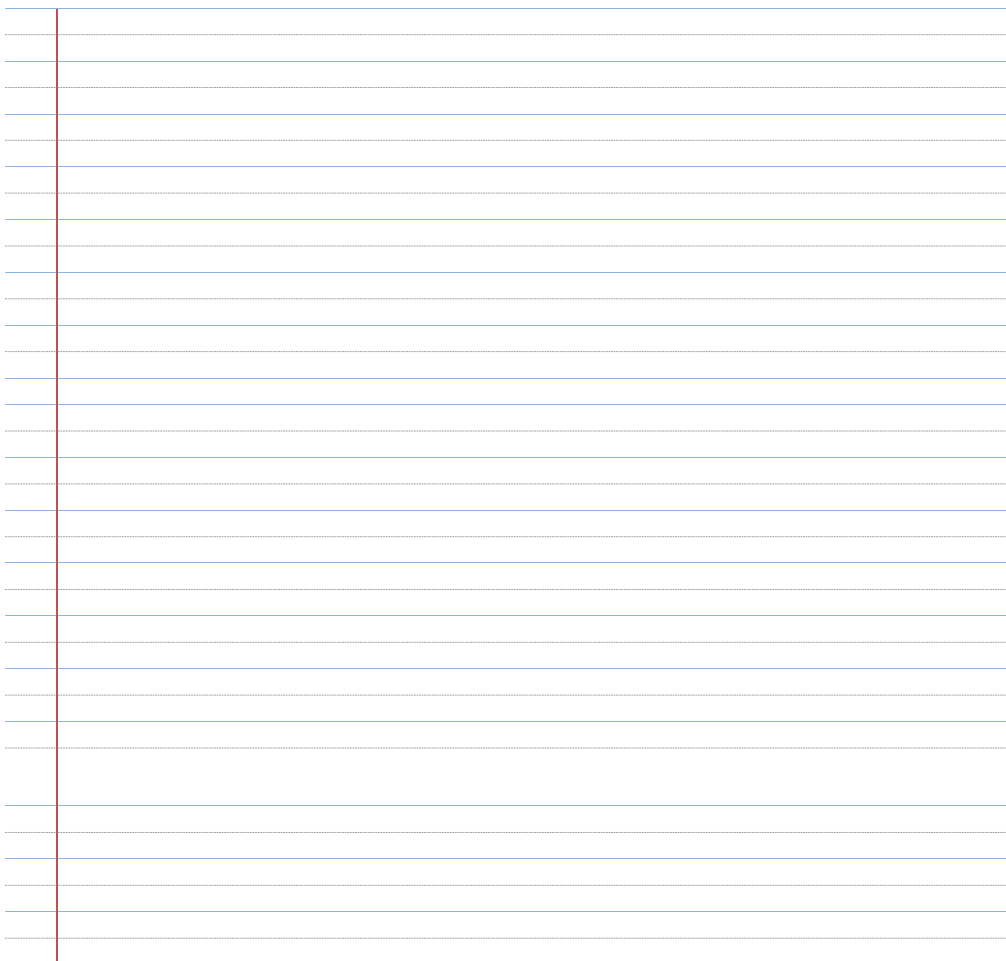
The following outlines the necessary joins which should be taught.



NH\_TB\_the\_joins\_FM.  
pdf

### Sample handwriting paper in use in school:

This paper is used to support children forming letters of even size, with double height ascenders, and double length descenders, then transferring that skill to a conventional lined page.





# Bishop's Castle Primary School

## Our Handwriting Progression

Strand	EYFS	Y1	End of KS1 (Y2)	Mid KS2 (Y4)	End of KS2 (Y6)
<b>Letter formation, placement and positioning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To draw lines and circles using gross motor movements.</li> <li>To use one-handed tools and equipment, e.g. makes snips in paper with child scissors.</li> <li>To hold a pencil near point between first two fingers and thumb, and uses it with good control.</li> <li>To copy some letters, e.g. letters from their name.</li> <li>To show a preference for a dominant hand.</li> <li>To begin to use anticlockwise movement and retrace vertical lines.</li> <li>To begin to form recognisable letters.</li> <li>To use a pencil and hold it effectively to form recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed.</li> <li>To show good control and co-ordination in large and small movements.</li> <li>To handle equipment and tools effectively, including pencils for writing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>sit correctly at a table, holding a pencil comfortably and correctly</li> <li>begin to form lower-case letters in the correct direction, starting and finishing in the right place</li> <li>form capital letters</li> <li>form digits 0-9</li> <li>understand which letters belong to which handwriting 'families' (i.e. letters that are formed in similar ways) and to practise these</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>form lower-case letters of the correct size relative to one another</li> <li>write capital letters and digits of the correct size, orientation and relationship to one another and to lower case letters</li> <li>use spacing between words that reflects the size of the letters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>write legibly, fluently and with increasing speed by:</li> <li>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</li> <li>choosing the writing implement that is best suited for a task</li> </ul>
<b>Joining</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>start using some of the diagonal and horizontal strokes needed to join letters through learning graphemes as joined letters.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>start using some of the diagonal and horizontal strokes needed to join some letters.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>confidently use the diagonal and horizontal joining strokes throughout their independent writing to increase fluency.</li> <li>strokes that are needed to join letters and understand which letters, when adjacent to one another, are best left unjoined</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To recognise when to use an unjoined style (e.g. for labelling a diagram or data, writing an email address or for algebra)</li> <li>and capital letters (e.g. for filling in a form).</li> </ul>