

Freeland CE Primary School



Handwriting Curriculum

Teaching handwriting is a priority at Freeland Primary School. Our handwriting curriculum is designed to ensure that pupils develop automatic, fluent handwriting so that cognitive load is reduced and pupils can focus on spelling, composition, and creativity. Secure handwriting underpins success across the wider curriculum. Children need to learn to write cursively with efficiency and speed, without having to think hard about **how** to formulate letters and join their writing by the time they go to secondary school.

By the age of 8, most children have adopted a pencil grip, formed a style and developed habits which are hard to change. It is essential that they have been taught the correct habits by this stage. It is in the Early Years and Key Stage 1 that these should be taught. Teachers in this part of the school should regularly check that children are learning the right habits from the start, such as holding a pencil correctly.

Handwriting at Freeland CE Primary School is taught in close alignment with the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised programme. Letter formation, directionality, and pencil grip are taught explicitly alongside phonics to ensure children form letters correctly as they learn to read and spell. All staff follow the agreed handwriting approach to ensure consistency and fidelity across the school.

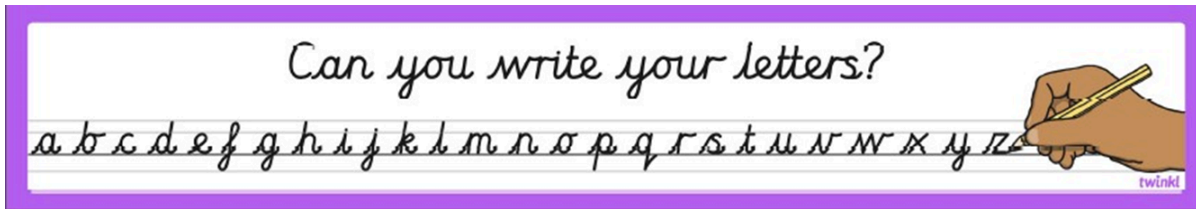
In EYFS and Year 1, handwriting practice is directly linked to phonics teaching. Children practise forming graphemes they are currently learning, ensuring accurate formation, orientation, and spacing. Errors are addressed promptly to prevent the development of incorrect habits.

Handwriting teaching is inclusive and adapted where necessary to meet the needs of pupils with SEND. Reasonable adjustments may include alternative writing tools, additional motor skill support, modified expectations, or assistive technology, ensuring handwriting does not limit access to the wider curriculum.

What is cursive handwriting?

The main features are:

- Each letter starts on the line
- Pupils keep the pen or pencil on the paper giving a very fluent style
- Pupils eventually develop the ability to produce letters without thinking
- The automatic style releases the brain to concentrate on other ideas, for example spelling, grammar, style, content and syntax.



What are the benefits of continuous cursive handwriting?

- It is beneficial to all pupils, including those with dyslexia, as the continuous motor movement means they do not have to think about the order of the letters.
- As each letter begins at the same point on the line there is less opportunity for pupils to reverse letters.
- The motor memory in a pupil's hands and fingers help him/her to learn new spellings as each word is made up of one movement.
- Natural spaces occur between words automatically.
- Fluency established by early use of joined up letters helps pupils express ideas in written form more easily.
- Improvements in spelling as the hand motions required to form the words encourage muscle memory. At the same time the natural flow helps the process become automatic.

Methodology

- An active multi-sensory approach should be used at all stages.
- Handwriting is a skill which needs to be taught explicitly. Since handwriting is essentially a movement skill, correct modelling of the style is very important.
- A mixture of whole class, small group and individual teaching is needed for all children to achieve.

Writing Position

Maintaining a good writing position is an important component to correct letter size, formation and spacing.

TOP TIPS

1. Sit comfortably with good posture.
2. Lean forward slightly.
3. Feet should be flat on the floor.
4. Both arms should be resting on the table while you work.

5. Use a correct pencil grip.
6. Be certain that your grip is not too tight or too loose.
7. If you are a right handed writer, position the paper so that the top is slanting to the left.
8. If you are left handed writer, position the paper so that the top is slanting to your right.

Other fundamental issues which must be taught to children

- Pencil must be sharp before you use it.
- Pencils less than 8 cm long should be discarded.
- All four chair legs must be on the ground – children should not be rocking.
- When writing books should be fully open, not folded over. Children should be sitting in such a way that their books are not overlapping another child's book when they are writing.
- A clutter free table is required with adequate space for a number of children to write.

A few technical terms to teach children

- ❖ The word **cursive** means joined.
- ❖ The correct name for the joining bits between letters is **ligatures**.
- ❖ The technical name for a tail is a **flourish**.
- ❖ The technical word for handwriting is **calligraphy**.
- ❖ The letters b, d, h, k, and l are called **ascenders**. The top of the letter should reach very close to the top of the line (it shouldn't touch!). The letter **t is not an ascender**.
- ❖ **t** is an unusual letter – a three quarters letter, rather than an ascender
- ❖ The letters g, j, p, q and y are called **descenders**. The flourish (the tail) of these letters goes below the line.

Key points about joining letters

- ❖ All small letters start and finish at the bottom
- ❖ Capital letters should not be joined with the rest of the word.
- ❖ Letters that end at the top join horizontally: o r v w x
- ❖ Letters that end at the bottom join diagonally: a c d e h i k l m n u t
- ❖ The letters g, j, f and y are to be looped.
- ❖ Capital letters should not be huge. They should be no higher than ascenders.
- ❖ All letters should have a lead in stroke.

Teaching methodology & time each week

Research shows that children make most progress when they have short, focused handwriting sessions.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, staff should focus closely upon the formation of correct habits. They should closely observe what children do with a writing implement and teach children the correct conventions to follow.

- In the foundation class frequent opportunities are needed for child-initiated writing. These should be established within a rich and stimulating play-based learning environment. Alongside this there should be short, focused, whole class handwriting sessions using print. In the Summer term, and if children are ready, cursive handwriting will be modelled and taught.
- In Year 1, three 15 minute handwriting sessions are needed each week, focusing on letter formation. If specific children are ready, cursive handwriting will be modelled and taught.
- In Years 2 to 6, two 15 minute handwriting sessions are needed each week using continuous cursive. It may also be useful to create other opportunities for the children if and when appropriate. One specific issue should be concentrated on in each session. Looking at more than one issue is potentially confusing to the children.
- Children will use a handwriting book for handwriting lessons **but** transfer of skills should be expected.
- Children from Year 3 should always use a pen for their writing.
- When a teacher is teaching handwriting, modelling should be done using 4 lines as in the children's handwriting books.

Other Guidance

Displaying words - All notices, displays, titles and signs in the classroom and around the school should be in joined script if they are hand written. The more examples of cursive script there are around the school environment – including word joined word processing – the greater the assistance pupils receive to appreciate this writing convention.

Marking - When they are writing comments in a children's book, teachers should always write in cursive that the children can read. It is crucially important that children can read their teacher's handwriting: if it isn't legible to the child, what kind of message is being communicated?

Modelling - The teaching of handwriting is essentially a non-creative activity which involves training, tracing, copying, and practicing. It is essential that children watch their teacher demonstrating how to formulate and join letters. Having done so they should try to emulate the teacher's model.

Self/peer-assessment - Children should then be taught to compare their results very critically with what the teacher has written. Older children can also be taught to peer assess. Alongside this, teachers should continually find and share the very best examples produced by children.

Teaching Handwriting (15 minutes)

- ❖ Begin the session with a short warm up (1-3 minutes).
- ❖ Then using 4 drawn lines on the whiteboard or using IWB model to the children how letters should be formed and joined using guidelines set out below.
- ❖ Give children time to practice the letters and joins – reminding them of posture and positioning.
- ❖ Teacher to 'live mark' books during the lesson modelling/correcting in books.

❖ Children to self or peer assess.

Formation of letters should be taught in the following order:

Group 1: Straight line continuous cursives i, l, t, z

Group 2: Forming curves starting continuous letters c, a, d, g, o, q, As above more complex e s,

Group 3: Forming tunnel continuous cursive letters b, h, m, n, p, u Information from teachhandwriting.co.uk

Group 4: Forming top exit continuous cursive letters r, v, w, x

Group 5: Forming hooks lines and loops f, j, k, y

First joins: Continuous cursive bottom letter joins ai, but, ch, ck, er, sh, th, ip, ig

Second joins: Continuous cursive bottom to 'c' shaped letter joins as, ea, ed, ing, sat, ss

Continuous cursive bottom 'e' letter joins be, her, ie, men, se

Third joins: Continuous cursive top e letter joins ere, oe, re, ure, ve, we

Fourth joins: Continuous cursive top letter joins oa, oh, oi, on, oo, or, ou, ov, ow, oy, wh

Capital letters never join lower case letters.

Progression Across the School

In nursery and reception we begin by:

Developing good gross and fine motor control including how to hold a pencil correctly.

Pattern formation (spirals, zigzags, waves)

Introducing a language to talk about shape and movements

Introducing the letter families

Ensuring letter formation is perfect using printed handwriting

Long ladder family: i, j, l, t, u, v, w	One armed robot family: b, h, k, m, n, p, r numbers: 2, 3, 5	Curly Caterpillar family: c, a, d, e, g, o, q, f, s numbers: 0, 6, 8, 9	zigzag family: v, w, x, z numbers: 1, 4, 7
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We use Little Wandle to link handwriting with phonics

Reception progression

Autumn term	Preparation and practice (suggested time 4 weeks)	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teach the 'Ready to write' checklist Engage in motor development activities Practise with patterns 	
	Unit 1: Practising patterns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Horizontal lines, Vertical lines, Wavy lines, Circles (Week 1) Up curves, Down curves, Mixed-height curves, Letter C (Week 2) Spirals, Crosses, Turrets, Diagonals (Week 3) Zig-zags, Sideways V, Letter X, Triangles (Week 4)
	Teach lower-case letter formation (suggested time 9 weeks)	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teach the lower-case letters in families Use Assessment for Learning to reteach and review 	
	Unit 2: Curly letter family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> c, a, d (Week 5) g, o, q (Week 6) e, s, f (Week 7)
Unit 3: Long letter family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> l, i, t (Week 8) j, u, y (Week 9) 	
Unit 4: Bouncy letter family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> m, n, r (Week 10) b, p, h (Week 11) 	
Unit 5: Zig-zag letter family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> v, w, x (Week 12) z, k (Week 13) 	
End or start of term	Assess and review week	Review lower-case letters as needed (Week 14)

Spring term	Teach capital letter formation (suggested time 11 weeks)	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teach capital letters Review lower-case letters alongside capitals Use Assessment for Learning to reteach and review 	
	Unit 6: Capital letters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cc, Aa, Dd (Week 15) Gg, Oo, Qq (Week 16) Ee, Ss, Ff (Week 17) Ll, Ii, Tt (Week 18) Jj, Uu, Yy (Week 19) <p>Assess and review week (Week 20 - before or after half-term)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mm, Nn, Rr (Week 21) Bb, Pp, Hh (Week 22) Vv, Ww, Xx (Week 23) Zz, Kk (Week 24)
End or start of term	Assess and review week	Review capital letters as needed (Week 25)

Summer term	Practise in digraphs, trigraphs and words (suggested time 9+ weeks)	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess and review lower-case and capital letters as needed Practise letter formation in digraphs and trigraphs Practise letter formation in words Use Assessment for Learning to reteach and review 	
	Unit 7: Digraphs and trigraphs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ff, ll, ss (Week 26) zz, ck, qu (Week 27) ch, sh, th (Week 28) ng, nk, ai (Week 29) ee, igh, oa (Week 30) <p>Assess and review week (Week 31 - before or after half-term)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> oo, ar, or (Week 32) ur, ow, oi (Week 33) ear, air, er plus Assess and review (Week 34)
End of term	Assess and review week	Week 35 (onwards): Assess and review all letters as needed

In Year 1 we begin by:

Revising the letter families taught in reception

Continuing to develop good gross and fine motor control

Once the child's letter formation is accurate and the teacher assesses the child as being ready, joins are then introduced (joining two letters together using vertical and horizontal joins) in, am, ab, ch, oa, wo, wh, ob

Once a child is ready, cursive handwriting will be introduced and taught, in preparation for Year 2.

In Year 2 we begin by:

Consolidating the letter families taught in previous years

Teaching horizontal and vertical joins to ensure continuous cursive is being used by the majority of the children

First join; un um ig id ed eg an or in gung	Second join; ch sh th tl ll ill sli slu ck ack st sti ink unk	Third join; od pg re ve oon oom	Fourth join; wl vl of ff fl flo
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In Year 3 we begin by:

Consolidating joins taught in Year 2

Teaching main letter joins: in, ine, ut, ute, ve, vi, ok, oh, you, oi

Joining to and from letters:

s: sh, as, es	r: ri, ru, ry, er, ir, ur	a: oa, ad, as, ai (with ascender eg h/descenders eg y): ha, ta, fa, al, ay, ag	e: ee, ea, ed, (practicing horizontal join toe): re, oe, fe	o: ow, ov, os, (with ascenders eg l /descenders eg g): ot, ol, ok, og, od	y: ky, hy, ly	u: fu, wu, vu (practicing horizontal join to u)
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In Year 4 we begin by:

Revising joins taught in Year 3

Teaching joins:

Main letter joins: ning, ping, ting, cod, ake, ome, are, fla, flo, fle, who, wha, whe, inly, ick, uck, ack, fte, fir, fin	Silent letters:wra, wri, kni	Double letters: tt, ll, oo, pp, ss	Spacing: ew, ev, ex	Proportions: th, ht, fl	Punctuation: ! ? " () £
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In Years 5 and 6 we begin by:

Revising prior learning from Years 3 and 4

Recap harder letters and words :l, y, g, q, b, p, k, v, s, r, f, z, x, yell, eye, jaw, jay, gag, going, quay, queen, kept, vans, rest, fox, zoo, oxen, fuzzy

Children to work on dictation materials with a focus on speed and accuracy.

Where possible, teachers should try to tie in spelling patterns using 'Spelling Shed' with some handwriting practice each week.

By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils are expected to write fluently, legibly, and at speed using a consistent cursive style, enabling them to meet the demands of the secondary curriculum with confidence.

Assessment of handwriting:

Teachers regularly assess handwriting informally during lessons and within wider writing. Pupils who struggle with letter formation, grip, or fluency are identified quickly and given additional targeted support to prevent handwriting becoming a barrier to writing composition.

Monitoring the impact of our approach

Handwriting is monitored through book scrutiny, lesson observation, and pupil voice. Leaders ensure consistency of approach and provide support or training where needed to maintain high standards across the school.