

St Chad's Primary School

Handwriting Policy

Policy Rationale

At St Chad's Primary School, we recognise that fluent, legible handwriting is a fundamental life skill which underpins effective communication and supports success across the curriculum. This policy aligns with the **DfE Writing Framework**, particularly its emphasis on transcription (handwriting and spelling) as a key component of high-quality writing.

Intent

Our intent is that all pupils at St Chad's Primary School:

- Develop **clear, legible and fluent handwriting** which enables them to communicate their ideas confidently and effectively.
- Build **automaticity in letter formation and joins**, reducing cognitive load so they can focus on composition, spelling and sentence structure.
- Take **pride in their written work**, understanding the importance of presentation for different audiences and purposes.
- Access the full curriculum without barriers related to handwriting difficulties.

In line with the **DfE Writing Framework**, our handwriting curriculum prioritises:

- Early mastery of **correct letter formation** (capital and lower-case)
- Secure **fine motor control and posture**
- Progression from print to **joined, cursive handwriting**
- Developing **speed, stamina and fluency** alongside accuracy
- Inclusive approaches so that all pupils, including those with SEND, can succeed

Implementation

Curriculum Design and Progression

Handwriting is taught explicitly and progressively from Early Years to Year 6:

- **Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)**
 - Focus on gross and fine motor development through play-based activities (e.g. dough disco, threading, tweezers).
 - Correct pencil grip, posture and control are modelled and practised.
 - At the start of Reception, children will practise the different types of strokes and curves they will need to use in letter formation, including horizontal and vertical lines, up and down curves, crosses and zig-zags. This will follow the Little Wandle 'Practising Patterns' Guidance.
 - As letters are introduced in phonics lessons, children will learn their forms and practise these through daily phonics and small group writing sessions.

- Later, letter formation is revised following our letter families teaching progression
- Consistent language, expectations and modelling used by all adults.
- **Key Stage 1**
 - Handwriting practise begins all writing lessons.
 - Explicit teaching of correct letter formation, starting points and orientation happens at least once a week.
 - Correct pencil grip, posture and control are modelled and practised.
 - Introduction to pre cursive letter formation once letter formation is secure (usually in Year 2)
 - Consistent language, expectations and modelling used by all adults.
- **Key Stage 2**
 - Handwriting practise begins all writing lessons
 - Progression to teaching fluent, joined handwriting when children are ready (usually in Year 3 / 4)
 - Explicit teaching of consistency in size, spacing and alignment at least once a week
 - Correct pencil grip, posture and control are modelled and practised.
 - Consistent language, expectations and modelling used by all adults
 - Year 5 children move to using a black biro for their writing when deemed most appropriate by their class teacher. This is a whole class transition and not child specific.

Consistency and Environment

- A consistent handwriting style is used across the school.
- Handwriting lessons contain direct, explicit teaching through modelling, followed by practice.
- Hand warmups begin explicit handwriting lessons
- Staff model correct handwriting in all written interactions, including on displays.
- Children are given opportunities to practise skills in isolation and apply them in meaningful writing contexts
- All year groups teach and regularly refer to the 4 Ps of handwriting instruction: Posture, Pencil grip, Paper position and Pressure. These form some of our non-negotiables for writing lessons.

The 4 Ps

Posture

What it is: Sitting upright with feet flat on the floor (or a footrest), back straight, and elbows comfortably on the desk.

Why it matters: Provides stability and reduces strain, allowing for better concentration and smoother movement.

Pencil Grip

What it is: Holding the pencil with a dynamic tripod grasp (thumb, index, and middle finger).

Why it matters: Allows for precision, control, and reduces hand fatigue, developing from an early age.

Paper Position (or Placement)

What it is: Angling the paper to match the natural arc of the writing arm (slightly tilted).

Why it matters: Facilitates arm movement, prevents smudging, and supports correct alignment, differing for left- and right-handers.

Pressure

What it is: Applying the right amount of force, not too hard (causing pain/fatigue) or too light (making it faint).

Why it matters: Impacts fluency, legibility, and comfort; can be adjusted with different tools (e.g., softer pencils).

Inclusion and SEND

- Adjustments are made for pupils with additional needs, including adapted resources, pencil grips or alternative recording methods where appropriate.
- Handwriting interventions are targeted, time-limited and monitored.
- Decisions about alternative methods (e.g. typing) are made carefully and reviewed regularly.

Impact

The impact of our handwriting curriculum is that pupils:

- Write with **increasing fluency, speed and confidence** as they move through the school.
- Demonstrate handwriting that is **legible, consistent and appropriate** for their age and stage.
- Are able to focus on the **content and quality of their writing**, rather than the mechanics of transcription.
- Show pride in their work and understand the importance of presentation.

Monitoring and Assessment

Impact is measured through:

- Regular scrutiny of pupils' work

- Lesson observations
- Pupil voice and feedback
- Intervention reviews and progress tracking for targeted pupils

Through consistent implementation and high expectations, St Chad's Primary School ensures that handwriting supports, rather than limits, pupils' success as writers.

Written: H Ives January 2026

Review:

St Chad's Handwriting Style

Print:

a b c d e

f g h i j k

l m n o p

q r s t u

v w x y z

Pre-cursive / Cursive:

a b c d e

f g h i j k

l m n o p

q r s t u

v w x y z

Teaching Progression

Letters are introduced and taught in Reception in line with the Little Wandle phonics progression. After all letters have been covered, we teach in the letter families below.

NB: Unit 1 'Patterns' is taught at the start of Reception and follow the Little Wandle guidance and progression.

Unit 2: Curly letter family

Letter mnemonic	Formation phrase	Letter mnemonic	Formation phrase
	Curl around the cat.		Around the queen's face, down her robe and a flick at the end.
	Around the astronaut's helmet and down into space.		Around the elephant's eye and curl down its trunk.
	Around the duck's body, up to its head and down to its feet.		Down the snake from head to tail.
	Around the goat's face and curl under its chin.		Down the flamingo to its foot and across its wings.
	All around the octopus.		

Unit 3: Long letter family

Letter mnemonic	Formation phrase	Letter mnemonic	Formation phrase
	Down the lollipop stick.		Down the jellyfish and dot its head.
	Down the iguana and dot the leaf.		Down and around the umbrella and back to the ground.
	Down the tiger and across its neck.		Down, around the yo-yo and curl around the string.

Unit 4: Bouncy letter family

Letter mnemonic	Formation phrase	Letter mnemonic	Formation phrase
	Down, up and over the mouse's ears.		Down the bear's back, up and around its tummy.
	Down, up and over the net.		Down the penguin's back, up and around its head.
	From the cloud to the ground and over the rainbow.		Down, up and over the helicopter.

Unit 5: Zig-zag letter family

Letter mnemonic	Formation phrase	Letter mnemonic	Formation phrase
	Down to the bottom of the volcano and back up to the top.		Across the top of the zebra's head, zig-zag down its neck and along.
	Down and up and down and up the waves.		Down the kite, up to the top corner and down to the bottom corner.
	From the top, across the box to the bottom. From the top again, across the box to the bottom.		

Joining Techniques

Joining techniques



Horizontal joins



Double letters



Diagonal joins



Tricky letters

The 4 Ps

Little Wandle 'Ready to Write' Rhyme:

'Ready to write' rhyme

Let's sit up straight, feet nice and flat,
Tilt your paper - just like that!
Pinch your pencil, give it a flip,
Check your hold and then your grip.
Now we can begin to write,
But not too hard and not too light.



Widigt Symbols:

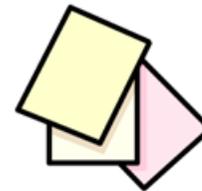
The 4 Ps



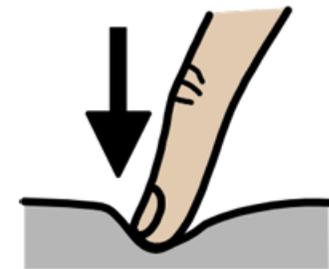
posture



pencil
grip



paper
position



pressure

An Example Handwriting Lesson

Timings	Input	Timings	Activity and Adaptions
<p>10 mins</p>	<p>Engage: Hand warm up exercises x 3 (see LW examples), e.g. Finger circle tug -Form a circle with the thumb and index finger. Then form another circle with the other hand, within that circle, and try to pull them apart. Revise letter formation / diagraph / tricky joins from last week. Quick I do / We do cycle.</p> <p>I do: Model writing the focus letter(s). Face the same way as the children and model drawing it in the air. Say the formation phrase as you model.</p> <p>We do: Copy me. Say the formation phrase and write the letter in the air together. Repeat, checking that the children are starting and finishing in the correct position and are using the correct orientation</p> <p>I do: Now let's practise writing the letter [say the letter name] on our palms. Repeat the formation phrase as you model forming the letter on the palm of your hand.</p> <p>We do: Your turn. Observe the children as they form the letter on their palms.</p> <p>I do: Model writing the letter on a lined tripod whiteboard, emphasising the starting and end points, correct orientation and any specific features. Recite the formation phrase as you write.</p> <p>We do: Your turn. Observe the children as they form the letter(s) on their WBs. Recite the formation phrase to support as needed.</p>	<p>15 mins</p>	<p>You do: Remind the children of the 4 Ps once they are settled at their tables. Use widgeit symbols and LW rhyme - <i>Let's sit up straight, feet nice and flat, Tilt your paper – just like that! Pinch your pencil, give it a flip, Check your hold and then your grip. Now we can begin to write, But not too hard and not too light</i></p> <p>Children write the focus letter(s) in their English books, copying the teachers modelled example sheet.</p> <p>Teacher circulates to provide individual support and additional modelling where needed. Check the pencil grip of every child, adjusting as needed, and check that they are starting from the correct point.</p> <p>Adaptations: Use yellow fine felt tip pens to model letter formation for children to trace</p> <p>Mark the page with a dot where each letter should start, e.g. on the line</p> <p>Have letters / diagraphs / words pre-written in certain children's books so they do not have to navigate looking back and forth from a sheet</p> <p>Books with yellow highlighted lines to show where letters sit to be given to children who are earlier in the transcription skills acquisition</p> <p>Support materials: Modelled handwriting example in the style suited to the child's ability (print, pre-cursive or cursive)</p>

An Example Writing Unit (Year 2 – Year 6)

Oracy Lesson / Drama Hook Lesson

Handwriting starter

Practicing skills that will be useful for the unit outcome



Grammar Lesson (Try it)

Handwriting starter

Learning and practising a new skill / reteaching grammar gaps, in the context of your focus book



Try it (not always needed)

Handwriting starter

Short write to apply grammar skills. Could be a slow write / include some dictation.



Plan (only needed for writing that spans over more than one lesson)

Oral and drawn / written plan. Scaffolded sections.

Plan in time for oral rehearsal.



Use it

Handwriting starter

Writing to apply the new grammar skills – more independent ideas and structuring. Oral composition.



Class Conferencing

Give whole class feedback – What's going well? What do we need to work on? Model responding to this. Children respond through editing, improving and / or redrafting their writing

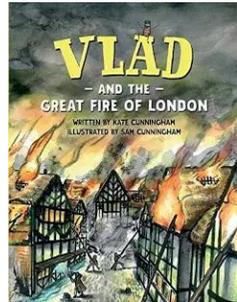
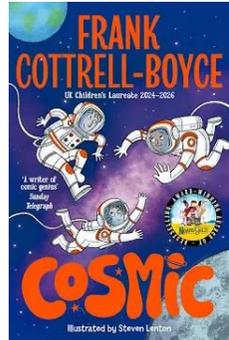
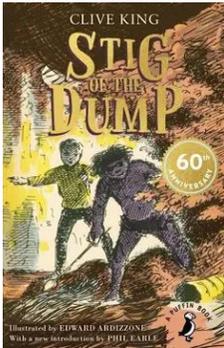
Dictation (20 - 30 mins)

Lesson linked to spelling patterns taught that week, recorded in English books

Handwriting (20 - 30 mins)

Lesson following our handwriting progression, recorded in English books

NB: Handwriting and dictation sessions happen every week, even if the unit takes more than 1 week. These lessons can be taught anywhere in the cycle.



An Example Writing Unit (Year 1)



	MINI MOMENT 1 VOCABULARY DAY 1-5	MINI MOMENT 5 MODELLED DRAWING DAY 1 CHARACTER	MINI MOMENT 5 MODELLED DRAWING DAY 2 LOCATION	MINI MOMENT 5 MODELLED DRAWING DAY 3 ADVENTURE TIME 1	MINI MOMENT 5 MODELLED DRAWING DAY 4 ADVENTURE TIME 2	MINI MOMENT 5 MODELLED DRAWING DAY 5 ADVENTURE TIME 3
	EXHILERATED PREPARED ADVENTUROUS ORGANISE SKILLFUL DEVASTATE WARNING INCREASING	ROCKET ON HER SURFBOARD	UNDER THE SEA	ROCKET WANTS A MACHINE TO MAKE IT SUPER EASY TO COLLECT UP ALL THE PLASTIC	GRAMMY WANTS TO SHARE HER SPECIAL SAUCE RECIPE WITH US – WHAT DO WE THINK IS IN IT?	INVENT A WAY TO SPOT WHALES FROM THE BEACH EVEN IF THEY ARE A LONG WAY AWAY

Character

Introduce grammar focus.

Mini moment 4 (codes) – Handwriting focus

Oral composition and / or dictation practice.

Location / Setting

Mini moment 4 (codes) – Handwriting focus

Oral composition and / or dictation practice.

Segmenting to spell

Individual verbal feedback and next steps

Adventure Time 1

Mini moment 4 (codes) – Handwriting / Spelling focus

Oral composition and / or dictation practice.

Segmenting to spell

Individual verbal feedback and next steps

Adventure Time 2

Mini moment 4 (codes) – Handwriting / Spelling focus

Oracy, Assessment and Grammar – Mini moment 8

Oral composition

Segmenting to spell

NB: Handwriting and dictation lessons can be taught anywhere in the cycle.

Handwriting Explicit Lesson

Lesson following our handwriting progression, recorded in English books

Dictation (30 mins)

Lesson linked to phonics taught that week, recorded in English books

An Example Writing Unit (EYFS)

EYFS: Drawing club

