Pollington-Balne CE Primary School
Handwriting policy
Appendix
*Good Practice for Handwriting National Handwriting Association*




POSTURE GUIDELINES

- Feet flat on the floor or on a wide based raised surface
- Knees at a right angle with 2-fingers space behind the knee to avoid compression
- Sit on the chair so hips are positioned at approximately 90° with the back supported
- Sit approximately a fist-distance away from the table
- Table height adjusted so that forearms rest on the top without leaning forward (too low) or raising the shoulders/arms (too high) ● Surface - clean, smooth and uncluttered

PENCIL GRASP GUIDELINES:

- Check the child is developmentally ready before asking them to write.
- A dynamic tripod pencil grasp is the most efficient and is expected by end of Year 1. ● Address an inappropriate grasp in the early learning stages and later if it is causing discomfort or impacting speed.
- Consider corrective action using adaptive grips or specialist writing tools, but always trial several options to find the most appropriate.
- Encourage a 2 cm gap between fingertip and pencil point – and slightly greater for lefthanders.

PAPER GUIDELINES:

- Tilt and offset the paper according to the writing hand.
- Move the paper up or down to facilitate a comfortable reach and keep it in place with the non-writing hand.
- Consider glare from paper and overhead lighting.
- Consider a specialist vision assessment if visual stress continues.

PRESSURE GUIDELINES:

- The just-right pressure eases writing across the page, which is important for fluency and reducing the risk of pain during handwriting.
- Try some gross and fine motor warm ups before and during the handwriting task. Actions which include squeezing and deep pressure, resistance and/or vibration will increase body awareness.
- Check that posture/issues with postural control are not the causative factor here.

# Part 1 'S' Factors as a GUIDE TO TEACHING handwriting

## 1 Shape

EYFS: Reception
NC: KS1

**Once a child is ready to write, the first important task is to learn how to form the letters correctly – best taught as a motor skill. (This will save many problems at later stages.)**

Children learn best by:

1 Watching the letters being made and hearing a simple patter.
2 Making the letters themselves in developmentally appropriate ways using just fingers – sand, paint, sandpaper, air-writing etc.– before pencils.

Letters can be put into groups or teams according to the movement needed to make them. When children learn to write a new letter, the 'lead' letter of its team will help them to start.

- **Around letters: c a o d g q**
- **Down letters: l t b p k h l j m n r u y**
- **Curly letters: e f s**
- **Zigzag letters: v w z x**

**Taken from RWInc handwriting stage 1a: letter formations**

N.B.
These letters have exit flicks to support joining but no entry strokes which complicate the basic letter shapes and use diagonal lines that many young children find difficult at this stage.

A basic lower case alphabet in letter formation families

## 2 Space

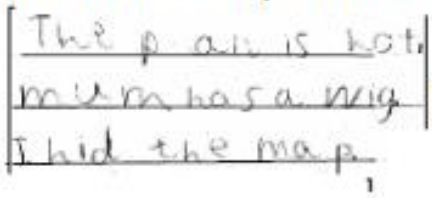
NC: KS1

**Children need to understand that spaces need to be left between words so they can be easily read.**

Gradually, they need to learn to leave an appropriately-sized space – about the size of 1 or 2 letter 'o's. Lolly sticks make good spacers for beginner writers, followed by coffee stirrers if necessary later. These work much better than the traditional finger-spacing. (Fingers grow bigger while writing becomes smaller so are ineffective when the child is older. Finger spacing is also difficult for left-handers to use).

## 3 Sitting on the line

**Once children are secure in forming letters correctly they need to know where to position them in relation to the base line.**



**Writing on a single base-line**

## 4 Size

NC: KS1

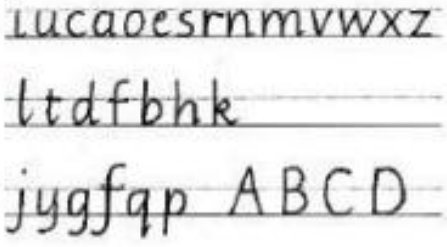
**... and also to their relative sizes:**

Small/halfway letters/x-height letters e.g. a, e, o, s
Tall letters/letters with ascenders e.g. h, l, b, k (plus all capitals)
Tailed letters/letters with descenders e.g. p, g, y, j

A visual image helps children understand the 3 levels. Suggestions are:
- sky/grass or forest/underground
- head/body/legs

While children are learning about size it is helpful to use paper marked with a base-line and a second line above for the tops of a, e, s, o etc. The tall letters and tails are written at about twice that size.

(This is preferable to traditional 'tramline' paper with 4 lines that encourages over-long ascenders and descenders).



Beginner writers, especially, need widely spaced lines to avoid cramping letters and all children need some flexibility in line spacing rather than 'one size fits all'.

5 Stringing together

NC: KS1 & KS2

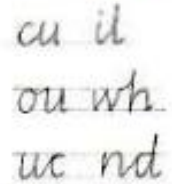
## Joined or cursive writing is the next step towards fluency.

The NC states that children 'should be taught a joined style as soon as they can form letters securely with the correct orientation' and 'understand which letters, when adjacent to each other, are best left unjoined.'

**Basic joins.**

These can be taught in a series of lessons with plenty of practice:

- Diagonal (up the hill join) to 'l' team letters, both tall and short e.g.
- Horizontal (washing line join) to both tall and short letters from o, v, w e.g.
- Joins to 'c' team letters e.g.




Practice is more fun making patterns from digraphs using felt tipped pens. (*See Tips for Teaching: Patterns* for ideas)

The NC expectation for Years 3 & 4 is that pupils will be 'using joined handwriting throughout their independent writing'. This will encourage joined writing to become automatic. Note: cursive/joined writing can have some breaks - usually after j,y,g,x,z. (See Style below)

6 Speed

NC: Y5+

## Students in KS2 & 3 need to be able to write legibly and quickly.

Students need help in understanding that increasing speed changes writing: it can improve rhythm and fluency but can cause illegibility if allowed out of control. It will help students if they are encouraged to gradually build up the speed of legible writing by repeating words, then phrases, sentences & paragraphs in short regular periods of practice. (See *Tips for Teaching: Speeding up)*

7 Style

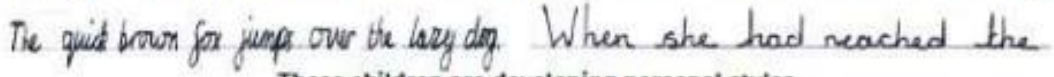
NC: Y5+

## Students should be encouraged to develop a style of writing that works for them.

Students can consider changes to their writing style that could increase speed and/or fluency, e.g.

- Adding loops to g,y,j and possibly f to increase speed and flow.
- Consider if there are any joins that do not flow well and would be better left unjoined.
- Be aware that different qualities and speeds of writing are required for different tasks: personal notes, exams, course work, job applications – and adapt accordingly.

N.B. They should also be aware of occasions when an unjoined style is appropriate: for labelling diagrams/data, e-mail addresses etc. and be able to use capital letters for form-filling.

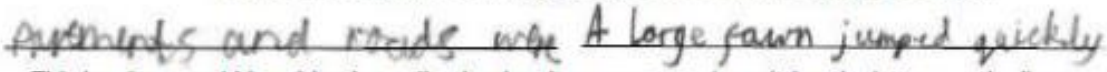



**These children are developing personal styles**

Sitting on the line

**Q Do all the letters 'sit' on the writing line?**

**Notes**
This is a good 'S' to start with as it is simple for students to understand and many can improve their performance fairly easily. Success can boost confidence and facilitate tackling perhaps more challenging questions.



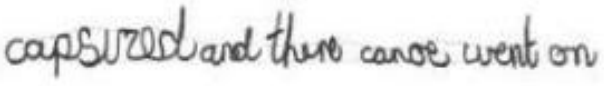

This boy improved his writing immediately when he concentrated on sitting the letters on the line.

Size

**Q1 Are the letters written at the correct size and position?**

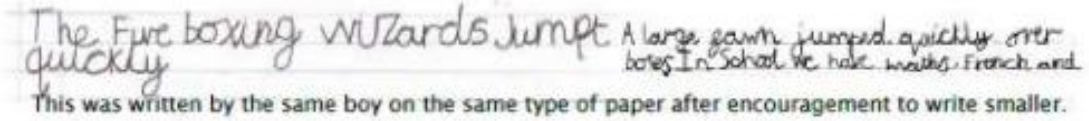
**Notes** (see the 'Size' section in Part 1)
Many children who understand the rules write particular letters too large or small; common faults being **k** and **s** written too large and letters at the end of a word written too small.

**Test**
Draw a line along the top of the small letters to show the evenness of size:




**Q2 Is the writing a suitable size?**

**Notes**
Some children write minutely small, some write too large for the space so the ascenders and descenders of the letters touch the writing above and below and become less legible. Most students, given encouragement and flexible resources, e.g. paper with different line spacing, can develop an acceptable size.




This was written by the same boy on the same type of paper after encouragement to write smaller.

Space

**Q1 Are letters spaced evenly without bumping together?**

**Notes** Letters that touch each other are difficult to read (see below). Irregularly spaced writing does not look good.



## Shape

**Q Are all the letters legible and formed correctly?**

**Notes**
As writing matures some letters can lose their legibility e.g. a, g, d, o are not closed

**Test**
Students sometimes find it easier to spot illegible letters in someone else's writing - perhaps anonymously.

**Action**
Work out the ideal way to form the difficult letter, then practise it in strings - dddd - and then in words, before attempting to use the new forms in normal work.

## Stringing

**Q Are most of the letters joined?**

**Notes**
It is helpful for a student to become confident in writing in a simple joined style before making any adaptations. (see 'Stringing' and 'Style' in Part 1)

**Action**
Writing patterns made from single letters or pairs of joined letters can be effective ways of practising.



## Speed

**Q Is the writing fast enough for the student's needs?**

**Notes**
Trying to speed up poor writing can create real problems. It is therefore advisable to address the first six 'S' Factors and achieve as high as standard as possible before attempting to speed up the writing. (see 'Speed' in Part 1)

**Test**
Students can time themselves for 1 or 2 minutes or longer when writing words or phrases.

**Action**
Increasing the speed of functional, legible writing requires regular practice. (See 'Speed' in Part 1)
Other ideas can be found in *Tips for Teaching: Speeding Up.*

## Style

**Q Is the writing consistent and fluent?** (See Style in Part 1)