

Michaelchurch Escley Primary School



Handwriting and Presentation Policy

Reviewed: October 2025

Next Review: October 2027

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1. Rationale

At Michaelchurch Escley Primary School, we believe handwriting is more than a presentation skill — it is a key part of how children think, communicate, and express ideas.

Handwriting is a complex task, requiring both:

- Composition – generating and organising ideas.
- Transcription – the physical act of writing letters, words, and sentences.

We aim to develop both elements in balance so that pupils can write fluently, legibly, and confidently.

This policy is based on guidance from the National Handwriting Association (NHA) — Ages and Key Stages and Handwriting Teaching in a Nutshell — and reflects the DfE National Curriculum (2014) expectations and Ofsted's English Research Review (2022).

2. Aims

By the end of primary school, all pupils will:

- Develop legible, fluent, efficient handwriting suited to their needs.
- Write with correct posture, pressure, and pencil control.
- Use a consistent handwriting style across all subjects.
- Take pride in written presentation.
- Develop speed and stamina for sustained writing.

3. Meeting National Curriculum Requirements

Our handwriting teaching follows the National Curriculum for English (2014), which states that writing depends on fluent, legible and speedy handwriting.

EYFS

- Pupils hold a pencil effectively using the correct grip.
- Develop fine and gross motor control to prepare for fluent writing.
- Explore shapes, patterns, and letters through mark-making.

Year 1

- Pupils are taught to:
 - Sit correctly and hold a pencil comfortably and correctly.
 - Write lower-case letters starting and finishing in the right place.
 - Form capital letters and digits 0–9.
 - Understand which letters belong to the same handwriting families.

Year 2

- Pupils are taught to:
 - Form lower- and upper-case letters of the correct size relative to each other.
 - Leave appropriate spacing between words.
 - Understand which letters should not be joined.
 - Begin to use diagonal and horizontal joining strokes.

Years 3 & 4

- Pupils are taught to:
 - Use joined handwriting consistently.
 - Increase legibility, consistency, and quality with correct spacing and proportion.

Years 5 & 6

- Pupils are taught to:
 - Write legibly, fluently, and with increasing speed, making personal choices about letter shape and writing implement.
 - Adapt handwriting for purpose (e.g. note-taking vs final presentation).

4. Early Writing and Readiness for Writing

Writing readiness develops through physical, visual, and cognitive skills. Children must be ready before formal handwriting teaching begins.

Indicators of Readiness

Children who are ready can:

- Hold a pencil with control and comfort.
- Sit with stable posture and maintain appropriate pressure.
- Secure and position paper correctly.
- Demonstrate fine and gross motor strength.
- Track simple shapes and patterns visually.
- Understand directional vocabulary (up, down, left, right, anticlockwise).
- Communicate about movements using descriptive words such as press, pull, push.

Initial Assessment – “P Checks”

Teachers assess readiness using:

- Pencil – grip and control.
- Posture – sitting stability.
- Pressure – control of force.
- Paper – ability to steady and orientate it.

Children not yet ready focus on:

- Gross motor development (balance, climbing, large movements).
- Fine motor control (threading, cutting, construction, tweezers).
- Spatial and visual awareness (pattern play, tracing, vertical mark-making).

5. Guiding Principles (NHA-Based)

The NHA “S Factors” provide a developmental continuum for handwriting teaching and assessment:

Sitting, Shape, Size, Space, Sitting on the Line, Stringing (joining), Slant, Speed, Style.

High-quality handwriting teaching includes:

- Clear positional and directional language (e.g. anticlockwise, tall, descender, left, right).
- Letter formation by families, not by phonics order.
- Discrete handwriting lessons — quality over quantity.
- Frequent, short practice sessions to build fluency and stamina.
- Consistency of vocabulary and visuals used by all staff.

6. Letter Formation and Families

Letter formation is taught through families of movement, supporting muscle memory and pattern recognition.

Family	Letters	Key movement
Curly caterpillar	c o a g q d	anticlockwise curves
Ladder	i l t k j	Pull down
One-armed robot	r n m h p b	Pull down and push over
Zig-zag	v w u y f	Pull down and push up
Others	e s x z	mixed patterns

Each letter is formed through small, controlled movements (strokes).

7. Our School Approach

We teach handwriting discretely and progressively, guided by NHA principles:

- Posture and Grip
- Letter Formation and Families
- Size and Spacing
- Joining and Fluency (when formation is secure)
- Speed and Style (developed through regular practice in KS2)

Inclusivity

Our approach supports:

- Left-handed pupils – positioned for a clear view of writing.
- Fine motor difficulties – targeted interventions (e.g. Dough Disco, Funky Fingers).
- Pupils with SEND – may use grips, sloped boards, or technology (e.g. typing, voice-to-text).

8. Language and Consistency

All staff use consistent vocabulary when modelling handwriting:

anticlockwise, ascender, descender, entry flick, exit flick, tall letter, tail letter, spacing, sitting on the line.

Visual frameworks such as the “handwriting house” (attic, main room, cellar) reinforce letter height and proportion.

Consistency across all classes ensures children experience the same expectations and terminology throughout the school.

9. Developing Fluency and Speed

In KS2, pupils practise handwriting through short, focused sessions using repeated words or phrases.

They learn to balance speed with legibility, adapting style for purpose.

Teachers monitor slant, spacing, and comfort to prevent poor habits and fatigue.

10. Resources, Paper, and Presentation

Early stages use wider or single-lined paper; guidelines are introduced gradually.

Handwriting is taught in dedicated lessons and reinforced across the curriculum.

Teachers model handwriting in marking and on boards.

Pupils progress from pencil to pen when handwriting is fluent and consistent.

Clear expectations for margins, spacing, and layout apply in every subject.

11. Assessment and Monitoring

Teachers assess handwriting using:

- Ongoing observation of grip, posture, and fluency.
- The NHA S Factors continuum.
- Termly handwriting samples.
- Self and peer assessment using class exemplars.
- Moderation across year groups for consistency.

12. Parental Involvement

Parents are encouraged to:

- Reinforce correct grip and posture at home.
- Use the same formation language and letter families as school.
- Support fine-motor development through play and crafts.
- Celebrate neat, careful presentation and personal improvement.

13. Review and References

This policy is reviewed every two years by the English Lead and SLT.

References

National Handwriting Association (NHA):

- Handwriting Teaching in a Nutshell
- Ages and Key Stages
- Developing a Handwriting Policy: A Practical Guide for Schools

<https://nha-handwriting.org.uk>

Department for Education (DfE) – National Curriculum in England: English (2014)

Ofsted English Research Review (2022)

14. Appendices

Terminology used across the school.

Handwriting Vocabulary – Our Agreed Terms

These are the words we will all use when talking about handwriting:

Posture

- Sitting correctly with feet flat on the floor, back straight, and paper tilted slightly.

Grip

- Holding the pencil with a comfortable tripod grip (thumb, index, and middle finger).

Pressure

- How hard you press on the paper with your pencil.

Clockwise

- Moving your pencil in the same direction as a clock's hands.

Anticlockwise

- Moving your pencil in the opposite direction to a clock's hands (used for letters like c, o, a).

Ascender

- The tall part of a letter that goes up (e.g., in b, d, h, l, t).

Descender

- The part of a letter that goes down below the line (e.g., in g, j, p, q, y).

Lead-in

- The small stroke that starts a letter, ready for joining later.

Lead-out

- The small stroke that finishes a letter, ready for joining later.

Spacing

- Leaving the right amount of space between words and letters.

Sitting on the Line

- Making sure letters rest neatly on the writing line.

Letter Families

- Groups of letters with similar movements:
- **Curly Caterpillar:** c, o, a, g, q, d
- **Ladder Letters:** i, l, t, k, j
- **One-Armed Robot:** r, n, m, h, p, b
- **Zig-Zag Letters:** v, w, x, y, z