



Handwriting Policy

Motivate • Educate • Achieve

Date of Policy: January 2026

Reviewed: January 2026 in consultation with staff

Presented to the Full Governing Body: 27 January 2026

Date of Next Review: January 2029

Introduction

This handwriting policy is for staff, parents, carers, students and visitors. It is intended to provide a clear framework for a shared understanding of teaching handwriting and ensuring continuity across the school. Handwriting is the skill of fluid movement where memory holds the shapes because it has made them so often. This is why children need to be taught through demonstration, explanation and practise. The correct formation of letters needs to be automatic before children can move to learn a fluent, joined handwriting style.

In accordance to The Writing Framework, pupils will be taught both phonics and handwriting consistently and systematically. In Phonics lessons, pupils are taught to recognise the shapes of the letters and to write them. However, pupils need explicit handwriting teaching in addition to this to provide opportunities to observe pupils in order to spot errors in letter formation. The goal of automaticity to free up working memory for composition, stressing quality over quantity in early writing. Prioritising foundational skills like tripod grip and delaying complex joins until basic formation is solid.

At Woodcock Hill, we have adopted the Penpals for Handwriting Scheme, produced by Cambridge University Press.

Aims

Formal handwriting skills will be taught regularly and systematically through the use of the Penpals Handwriting scheme. Five stages are identified and these form the basic organisation of the scheme:

1. Readiness for writing: gross and fine motor skills leading to letter formation (Reception)
2. Beginning to join (Lower KS1- Year 1 and Year 2)
3. Securing joins (Upper KS1/Lower KS2- Year 2 and Year 3)
4. Practising speed and fluency (Lower KS2- Year 3 and Year 4)
5. Presentation skills (Upper KS2- Year 5 and Year 6)

Teaching and Learning Overview

Handwriting is taught at Woodcock Hill to enable pupils to communicate effectively in a written form that can be adapted to suit different purposes and is fluent, joined and legible. Even in the technological age, handwriting remains fundamental to our children's educational achievement and raises standards in overall attainment in writing. A flexible, fluent and legible style empower children to write with confidence and creativity. Handwriting is a developmental process which must be actively taught. By the time they leave Woodcock Hill, pupils will have developed their own style of handwriting that is fluent, joined and legible, therefore achieving the requirements of the National Curriculum.

Staff must model consistently joined, neat handwriting at all times. This includes any handwriting on whiteboards, flipcharts, all marking etc.

All staff should use consistent vocabulary when teaching handwriting. A Glossary of Terms is found in Appendix 1.

Early Years Foundation Stage

In the Foundation Stage children need to develop skills which will later enable them to acquire a legible, fluent and fast handwriting style, with correct formation in line with national expectations. In Reception children will develop:

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- Gross and fine motor skills through sensory activities –including the use of Squiggle Whilst You Wiggle - early writing programme that includes music, dance and large body movements to develop brain connections and muscle control.
- Recognition of pattern and language to talk about shapes and movement e.g. forming shapes and letters in sand/ shaving foam
- Shaping of patterns and basic letter movements
- A comfortable tripod pencil grip (between the thumb and forefinger with the pencil resting on the third finger) that allows for efficient control of the pencil
- Correct formation of all lower-case letters (taught through Read Write Inc. Phonics)

Key Stage 1

In KS1, pupils should have a daily handwriting session. Children will continue to develop fine and gross motor-skills with a range of multi -sensory activities. Teachers and support staff continue to guide children on correct letter formation using a comfortable tripod pencil grip that allows for efficient control. Through the Penpals scheme children will begin to learn how to join letters in Year 1 and continue to practice this skill in Year 2. Ideally, handwriting should be joined by the time pupils leave Year 2.

Key Stage 2

In KS2, most pupils should have an explicit handwriting focus at the start of each English lesson but teacher discretion to be used to teach as much handwriting as required. Intervention groups may also be used to support specific pupils. Children should continue to have regular practice of handwriting, securing the joins and developing speed and fluency. By the end of Year 6 pupils should have a clear, fluid handwriting style.

Organisation & Delivery

Handwriting should be taught through whole class lessons lasting between 15-20 minutes, with the frequency depending on year groups. This is in addition to the daily English lesson. Handwriting skills should also be reinforced throughout the day, during all writing opportunities. All letter formation must be modelled using the Penpal formation prior to pupil independent practice. Once modelled children should complete a handwriting exercise from their year group book.

Posture

Children should be taught the importance of sitting upright and correctly on their chair, with their feet on the floor. See Appendix 2 for Penpals Posture Poster. Incorrect posture can cause pain, discomfort and slow down a child's writing. Left-handed pupils should always sit on the left side of a right-handed pupil. Pupil chairs should be square to the table and pupils should be able to sit at the table without having to lean over it or stretch to reach it. Paper should be angled correctly according to whether the child is left or right-handed, Children should use their non-writing hand to steady the paper.

Pencil grip

Children should use a tripod grip. Children should be shown how to place their pencil on the table in front of them with it pointing towards their bodies and to then pick it up and allow the pencil to fall back into the tripod grip. The tripod grip is where the pencil is held between thumb and forefinger. The middle finger is used for extra support. See Appendix 3 for Penpals Developmental levels of pencil hold.

Letter Formation

Letters should be formed in according with Penpal formation. It is cursive, but not fully cursive. This means it:

- Does not start on the line with the lead in but the letters do have the exit flicks. Does not loop the f, g or y.
- Teaches the 'k' with a loop.
- Capital letters stand alone and are not joined to the next letter.

Penpals: Example Letter formation before joining

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

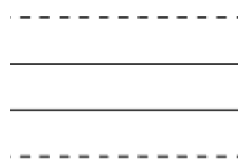
Penpals: Example Letter formation with joins

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

Handwriting Lines

Handwriting is to be completed in pupils' English books. Age appropriate tracking lines are used in English books as follows:

10mm Handwriting Lines-



10mm Handwriting Lines-
Reception



8mm Handwriting Lines-
Year 1



6mm Handwriting Lines-
Year 2



4mm Two Coloured Handwriting Lines-
Years 3- 6

Once a pupil is consistently showing a fluent, joined and legible handwriting style, class teachers can opt to use 8mm lined English books, with no guidelines, for individual pupils.

Assessment

Marking should be timely and relevant. Teaching staff should give immediate feedback during handwriting lessons, modelling correct formation and joins in pupil's books before giving opportunity for the pupil to practise.

On-going assessment in handwriting gives teaching staff the chance to spot errors or inconsistencies that are likely to impede a fast, fluent handwriting style.

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Teachers will make a summative assessment of pupils by answering these questions in relation to the end of year expectations for their year group:

- Are all letters formed correctly?
- Are letters consistently sized?
- Are the known joins used?
- Are they used correctly?
- Are ascenders and descenders parallel?
- Are spaces between words regular?
- Are joined and printed scripts used correctly?
- Is good handwriting carried over into cross-curricular activities?
- What are the next handwriting targets for this child?

Handwriting also forms part of the Writing assessment process, found in the back of pupils' English books.

Pupils who demonstrate consistently joined, neat handwriting to be awarded a pen license. There is no specific age for a pen to be given to a child. Staedtler handwriting pens to be used. Once a pupil has earned their pen license, they take their work to a member of SLT who agree. During Celebration assembly, the pupil will be presented with a certificate that they can take home and their handwriting pen.

Inclusion and Special Educational Needs

The vast majority of pupils are able to learn to write legibly and fluently. However, some pupils need more support. Children who are not yet ready to write are provided with a range of pre-writing activities. Further intervention may be arranged with specialist advice from the SENCO and other organisations who may provide targeted support for individual children. Additional resources will be provided by the SENCO where deemed necessary such as sloping surfaces, special seat cushions and pencil grips. Pupils with SEN in handwriting will have relevant targets identified on ITPs. Class teachers, SENCO and support staff will be responsible for providing additional support, materials, opportunities and resources to enable the pupil to progress towards and achieve their target.

If a pupil joins Woodcock Hill in Years 1-6, a handwriting assessment will be carried out. If the style of writing is fluent, joined and legible, the pupil will be encouraged to continue with this style. If in Years 1-2, over time, as new joins are learned, the development of styles will be merged.

Appendix 1: Glossary of Terms

- Ascenders- 'tall letters' e.g. b, d, h
- Break letters- letters that are not joined e.g. g, j, y
- Consistent- handwriting is joined and looks the same over time
- Cross Bar- used to describe the left to right line on a t and f.
- Curve- used to describe the curve on descenders e.g. y, j, g
- Descenders- letters with a 'tail' e.g. g, j, p
- Diagonal/horizontal strokes- direction of handwriting join
- Exit Flicks- the exit (ending) stroke of a letter
- Fluency- handwriting appears to be automated, the writer does not have to stop to consider joins.
- Legible- handwriting is clear enough to read
- Lower case- 'small letters' e.g. a, b, c
- Minim- a letter that is not an ascender or a descender
- Upper case- capital letters e.g. A, B, C

Appendix 2: Penpals Posture Poster



Do the **PENPALS** 7 point check!

Are you ready for handwriting? Relax!



- Are your elbows off the desk?
- Sit up and lean slightly forward
- Is your body a fist width away from the desk?
- Are your feet flat on the floor?
- Are all chair legs touching the ground?

Left Handers



- Is there a circle gap between your thumb and finger?
- Is your paper tilted at a slight angle?

Right Handers



- Is there a circle gap between your thumb and finger?
- Is your paper tilted at a slight angle?

PENPALS for Handwriting

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Appendix 3: Penpals Developmental Levels of Pencil Hold



Developmental levels of pencil hold





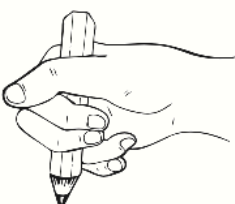
1 Whole-hand grasp: using a fist hand.

- Around 1–2 years.
- Use of upper body muscles.
- Movement comes mainly from the shoulder with the arm moving as a unit.



2 Beginning to use the fingers: no longer using whole-hand grasp.

- Around 2–3 years.
- Use of forearm.
- Movement is still quite stiff but there may be some wrist movement.



a



b

3 Holds pencil between thumb and two fingers: no longer using whole-hand grasp.

- Around 3–4 years.
- Both of these grips are the crude beginnings of the tripod grip. The hand tends to move as a unit, with limited wrist movement.

Children at this stage need more experiences that will strengthen their muscles (cutting, working with dough etc.) to increase readiness for a precision pen hold.



4 Moving towards the tripod grip.

- Around 4–6 years.
- Holds pencil near point between first two fingers and thumb and uses it with good control.
- Finger movements and wrist now in play.
- Moving to a comfortable and efficient tripod grip: a precise three-way or tripod use of thumb, index and middle fingers.

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