

## **St Matthew's Primary School**

# **Fine Motor, Letter Formation and Handwriting Policy**

Date Policy Written: September 2025

Review Cycle: Annual basis or sooner if required.

Reviewed by SLT : April 2026

Next review date: May 2027

This Policy must be read in conjunction with : N/A

## **Rationale**

At St Matthew's Primary School, we recognise the importance of children developing a fluid, legible and neat handwriting style. We believe doing so will impact positively upon children's:

- Confidence with writing
- Writing stamina
- Self-esteem and pride in their work
- Ability and willingness to communicate ideas through writing
- Improve overall spelling

Therefore through the implementation of this policy and our handwriting programme, we aim for pupils to develop fine motor skills and automaticity in handwriting.

## **Expectations**

In order to support children in developing these skills, it is expected:

- All pupils in Reception will follow the 'Squiggle whilst you Wiggle' and 'Squiggle me into a writer' program.
- For pupils in Y1, they will follow the 'Squiggle me into a Cursive Writer' program.
- Reception and Y1 will learn letter rhymes that match each letter to help them remember formations for writing.
- As part of this program all pupils will form letters correctly, develop their fine motor skills and develop an appropriate pencil grip.
- All children will be explicitly taught how to position themselves correctly, whether they are left or right handed.
- Staff will have consistently high expectations that all children use correctly and neatly formed handwriting across the curriculum, and will model the appropriate writing script at all times.

## About our Handwriting Programme

Squiggle Whilst You Wiggle is an early writing program created by Shonette Bason-Wood, it incorporates dance, music and large movements to help children develop the fine muscle control they need for writing. They will learn a new gross motor movement to a piece of music while holding 'flappers' (bits of fabric) while dancing along to the music. The children then transfer these movements to floor level and swap their flappers for writing tools (crayons/pens etc) to make marks, this could be in foam, on paper, in sand etc. They then use this action to think of letters they can form that use this shape. These sessions are great fun but most importantly help our children to be confident mark makers.



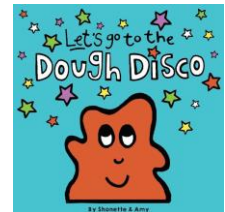
Shonette Bason-Wood is incredibly fun, motivating and excites the children to engage in this program. It's all about mark making and developing children's writing in a fun, exciting and extremely active way.

## Guidelines for Fine Motor, Letter Formation and Handwriting

At St Matthew's Primary School we believe that helping children to develop their fine motor skills is imperative to developing good handwriting later on. Across the school children need to develop their fine motor skills and letter formation in a fun and consistent manner.

In Reception all children complete 'Dough Disco' activities to develop their fine motor skills.

These guidelines suggest possible activities for teaching and practising both fine motor skills and handwriting. These suggestions are not exhaustive and our practitioners are encouraged to continue to generate fresh ideas.



These guidelines also set out the agreed letter formation that must be taught in all classes to ensure consistency across the school.

## Examples of activities used to teach fine motor skills and handwriting across school

- Dough Disco
- Colouring within lines
- Finger painting
- Kneading playdough
- Pattern making
- Threading
- Cutting with scissors



Through the above and other activities they will develop their recognition of pattern and a language to talk about movement and shapes.

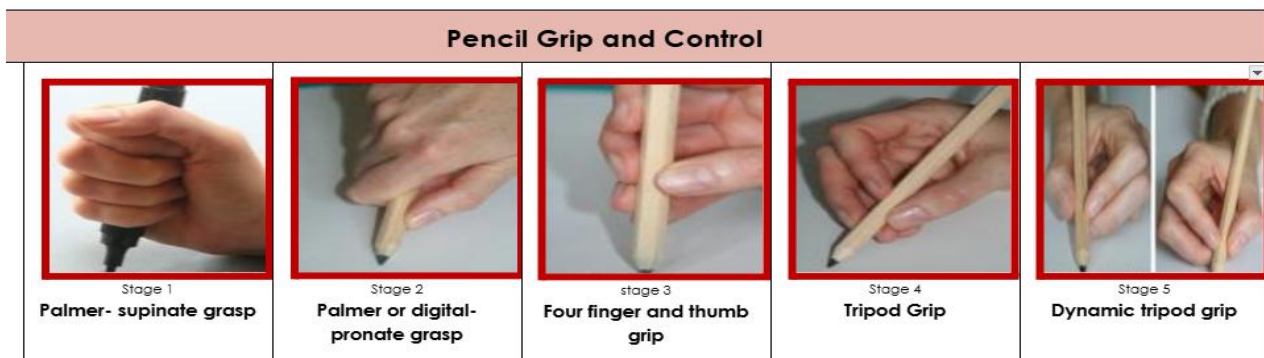
## Continuity and Progression

### Reception

The emphasis at this stage is with movement rather than neatness. Letter formation (starting at the right entry point and then moving in the right direction) learned at this early stage becomes automatic and has a profound influence on later fluency and legibility.

To aid movement, close attention is given to pencil grip, correct posture, the positioning of the paper and the organisation of the writing space. Teachers assess the children's pencil grip and work towards all children achieving the tripod grasp before they leave Reception. Teachers are vigilant to ensure that bad habits do not become ingrained and that the specific needs of left-handed pupils (for example, additional tracking and tracing of letters at the prewriting stage) and those with special educational needs are met.

In the precommunicative stage pupils play with writing and these experiments are



recognised and praised as an important stage in the child's understanding that marks on paper convey meaning. Pupils are given the opportunity to experiment with a range of writing materials and implements; a multi-sensory approach is used to help pupils feel

the movement in the hand. Pupils are taught using the scheme 'Squiggle While You Wiggle.'

Handwriting plans are created on our school planning format and the children have wide lined handwriting books to practise the weekly learning focus. These handwriting books are transitioned into Year 1 and used during the Autumn term as part of our handwriting transition program.

Handwriting is taught 3 x a week and letter formation daily as part of our Phonics Scheme Bug Club. Children are taught how to form lower case letters using letter rhymes.

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

## Year 1 and 2

Building on the Reception experience, pupils at Key Stage 1 develop a legible style. This is achieved in Year 1 by securing a comfortable and efficient tripod pencil grip. Year 1 use the 'Squiggle me into a Writer' program. Correct letter orientation, formation and proportion are taught in line with the school's agreed handwriting style. Handwriting plans are created on our school planning format. Once ready, the children transition onto new handwriting books, which have narrower line spaces and blue and red guide lines for positional support.

**Letter heights are different;** for example:

*t l f h a d a o e p m*

Children in Year 1 are also taught how to

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

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

form capital letters and their numbers.

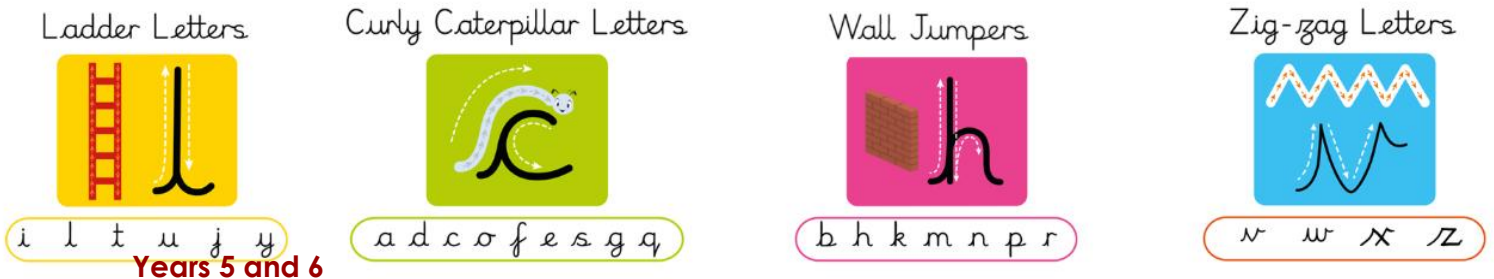
This continues in Year 2 where pupils develop a more fluent style and become more confident in their abilities. Using the Squiggle me into a Cursive Writer program children who are ready will learn 'lead ins' and 'lead outs' in readiness to begin joining, basic handwriting joins. (Diagonal and horizontal joins to letters with and without ascenders)

At this stage we are developing their automatic flow of joining. Handwriting is taught 2 x a week and letter formation daily as part of our Phonics Scheme Bug Club.

*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*

## Years 3 and 4

In Year 3 the pupils consolidate their use of basic handwriting joins, ensuring consistency in size, proportion and spacing of letters. They are explicitly taught the use of handwriting joins following the 'formation families', which link to those that are composed in a similar fashion. Handwriting speed, fluency and legibility are built up through practice. By Year 4 joined handwriting is used at all times. Pen licences are awarded once children's handwriting is consistent. These are awarded by the headteacher.



Years 5 and 6 are used to consolidate learning for those pupils who have not yet achieved a fluent and legible joined script. Those who have will develop an individual style based on the principles of good handwriting taught in previous years. Experimentation with different writing implements is encouraged with the aim of increasing speed whilst maintaining legibility. For pupils who have not yet developed a fluent and legible script they will be part of a class handwriting intervention.

Links to Phonics, Spelling and Early Reading are continuously made.

## Handwriting Development

It is imperative that children are taught to start each letter in the correct place and reinforce this every time they write a letter. Bad habits are very hard to unlearn and will create difficulties when beginning to join.

Children cannot be expected to write different letters if they do not know what they look like. It is therefore essential that they see well-formed letters at every opportunity. Children learn to form some letters correctly and learn sounds at the same time, starting with their name.

Children are encouraged to trace, copy or write their name and sound out the letters as they go, making sure they always start in the correct place. Children need encouragement to write letters and experiment with making letter shapes using a

variety of materials e.g. plasticine, play dough and pipe cleaners. They manipulate these materials over letters which may be written in front of them showing them the correct formation.

A lot of children's learning is achieved through observation; children need to be watching us, as experts write. When writing different letters, practitioners should talk about the movement being made e.g. the letter 'd' goes round, straight up, down the same line and flick.

## **Learning Outdoors**

Handwriting is a great way to get learning beyond the classroom. They can be encouraged to paint with large brushes and water on the pavement or fence, use chalks or old wallpaper and paint to encourage large movements. These activities will help children to become more familiar with letter shapes and letter formation and regularly happen in our school.

## **Key Handwriting Resources**

Children can practise writing their letters in a range of materials e.g. sand trays, cornflour and water, yogurt, soil, lentils, rice and other malleable materials spread thinly on a big tray or plastic tablecloth. These materials feel really tactile and, as such, enable the children to 'feel' the flow of a letter.

Children should be encouraged to write a letter in the air, copying an adult or drawing one for the adult to guess. (The adult needs to remember to write a mirror image of the letter if the child is guessing). Children can also play a game where they have to guess the letter they draw on each other's back. As part of our handwriting program the children learn a magic finger song and routinely write in the air.

Children need to be at ease with a writing media in their hand e.g. paintbrushes, felt pens, pencils etc. Here are some different ways children are given chance to get comfortable with writing at our school:

- Different size pencils are offered to children struggling with the width of a standard pencil
- Different fibre tipped pens, wax crayons and pencil crayons are offered. Children should hold pens and pencils correctly, firmly and comfortably. Children with awkward holds may be helped with varying grips.

## Staff key points

- Each letter should begin and finish in the correct place.
- Letter heights should be consistent and differentiated according to their letter group.
- Vertical strokes should be parallel.

Staff must remember to provide positive feedback for children; their attempts to write must always be encouraged and praised. Negative feedback will result in children feeling anxious or disinterested. Where improvements are needed, the adult should first praise the children for their attempt and then show the child their next steps in learning the correct letter formation.

Children should:

- Know the correct way to form each letter.
- Remember the approach stroke starts on the line.
- Push the approach stroke to the beginning of the letter
- Form the letter.
- Finish the letter with an away stroke.
- Push the top letters to the top line.
- Never join **capitals**

## Pen Licence

We aim for all children to develop a precise and legible handwriting style which allows them to write at speed. Children will be considered for a pen licence once this is the case and they are consistently writing in a neat and efficient cursive script where all letters are:

- formed and joined correctly
- sized appropriately with clear ascenders and descenders

Only the headteacher is able to award pen licences. Once this is awarded pupils will be allowed to complete their work in pen. The pens used in school are eziGlide Handwriters and these will also be provided by the school. When a Pen Licence has been awarded it is expected that the quality of handwriting will be maintained. This will be monitored and reviewed on a regular basis.

## The role of parents and careers

The Reception teachers all play an important role in communicating this at an early stage, for example, to ensure that parents are informed and encouraged to offer good models to their pupils by using only capital letters for the beginning of their names, practising drawing patterns together, playing joining up games which encourage left to right directionality. All members of staff are provided with appropriate handwriting models and are expected to promote the agreed handwriting style by their own example. The Reception Team Leader, in partnership with the English subject leaders, communicates with preschool agencies to encourage good practice in Handwriting and Phonics.

## Inclusion

The vast majority of pupils are able to write legibly and fluently. However, some pupils need more support and a specific individual or group programme is drawn up in consultation with the Inclusion Manager.

All teachers are aware of the specific needs of left-handed pupils and make appropriate provision:

- Paper should be positioned to the left for right handed pupils and to the right for left handed pupils and slanted to suit the individual in either case;
- Pencils should not be held too close to the point as this can interrupt pupils' line of vision;
- Pupils should be positioned so that they can place their paper to their left side;
- Left-handed pupils should sit to the left of a right-handed child so that they are not competing for space;
- Extra practice with left-to-right exercises may well be necessary before pupils write left-to-right automatically.

Teachers are alert to the fact that it is very difficult for left-handed pupils to follow handwriting movements when they are modelled by a right-handed teacher. Teachers demonstrate to left-handers on an individual or group basis, even if the resulting writing is not neat.

For children experiencing difficulty with their fine motor skills, including those with advice from other agencies such as Occupational Therapy, alternative resources may be provided to support their skills development. These can include:

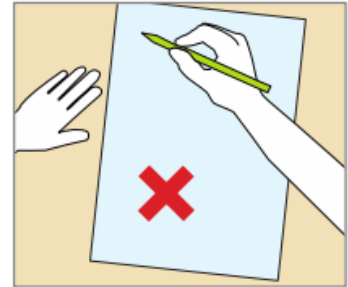
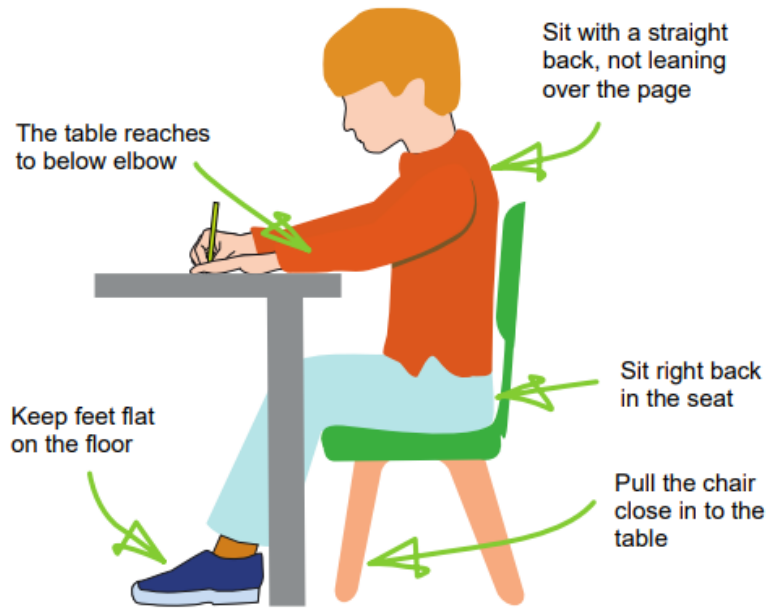
- Pencil grips
- Writing slopes
- Wider lined books
- Stabilo Easy Start handwriting pencils
- Stabilo Easy Start pens

## Appendices

### Correct posture and pencil grip for handwriting

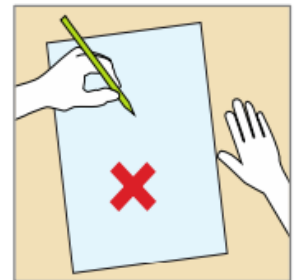
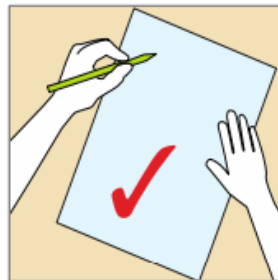
Pupils should be taught to sit correctly at a table, holding a pencil comfortably and correctly.

#### SITTING POSITION



*Paper position for right-handed children.*

### Pencil grip for handwriting for left handed children



*Paper position for left-handed children.*

## Letter formation rhymes

<b>St Matthew's Letter Formation Rhymes (Pre-Cursive)</b>				
				<b>A a</b> Round like a 'c', up and down, flick
<b>B b</b> Down, down, back to the middle, up and round the ball	<b>C c</b> Around we go, stop	<b>D d</b> Round like a 'c' for a big belly 'd' up to the top and back down, flick	<b>E e</b> Straight, round like a 'c', <u>woah</u> , stop	<b>F f</b> Round and down, down and round, then little cross
<b>G g</b> Round like a 'c', up, down, down, swing	<b>H h</b> Down, down, back to the middle and over the hump, flick	<b>I i</b> Down, flick and dot	<b>J j</b> Down, down, swing, dot	<b>K k</b> Down, down, back to the middle, round the king's belly, kick and flick

<b>L l</b> Straight down, down and flick	<b>M m</b> Down, up, hump and hump again, flick	<b>N n</b> Down, up, hump it over, flick	<b>O o</b> Round like a 'c', round we go, join it up	<b>P p</b> Down, down, back to the top and round the ball
<b>Q q</b> Round like a 'c', up, down, down, kick	<b>R r</b> Down, back up and over, stop	<b>S s</b> Over the top, across the middle and back	<b>T t</b> Down, down and flick and cross	<b>U u</b> Down, whoop the other side and straight down, flick
<b>V v</b> Down the slide and up the slide	<b>W w</b> Down the slide, up, down the slide, up	<b>X x</b> Down the slide (lift pencil) up the slide	<b>Y y</b> Down, whoop and down, down, swing	<b>Z z</b> Straight across the top, down the slide, straight across the bottom

## St Matthew's Letter Formation Rhymes (Cursive)

a

Up and over the hump, back around, join at the top, down and flick

b

Up the hill and touch the sky, down, down, back up, round and little flick

c

Up and over the hump and back around

d

Up and over the hump, back around, straight to the top, down and flick

e

Up the slope, round we go, woah, stop

f

Up and over the hump, back, down down, loop up

g

Over the hump, back around, up, down, down, swing, loop

h

Up the hill and touch the sky, down, down, back up and hump it over, flick

i

Up the slope, down, flick, dot

j

Up the slope, down, down, swing, loop, dot

k

Up the hill and touch the sky, down, down, back to the middle, round the king's belly and kick

l

Up the hill and touch the sky, straight down, flick

m

Up the slope, down, up, hump and hump again, flick

n

Up the slope, down, up, hump it over, flick

o

Up and over the hump, back around and flick

p

Up the slope, down, down, back up, back up, round and little flick

q

Up and over the hump, back around, up, down, down, kick

r

Up the slope, straight down, up, over and stop

s

Up the slope, over the top, back around, across the middle and back

t

Up the hill and touch the sky, down, flick, cross

u

Up the slope, down, whoop the other side and straight down, flick

v

Up the slope, down the slide, up and hook

w

Up the slope, down the slide, up, down the slide, up, hook

x

Up the slope, down the slide, *(remove pencil)* up the slide, hook

y

Up the slope, down, whoop, down, down, swing, loop

z

Up the slope, straight across, down through middle, straight across the bottom

## Examples of Handwriting Expectations

The quick brown fox jumps  
over the lazy dog.

The quick brown  
fox jumps over the  
lazy dog.

The quick brown fox jumps  
over a lazy dog while bright  
wizards mix jelly and pizza for  
fun. Zany robots help fix  
broken quiz boxes and wave  
glowing kites near jumpy ducks.

The quick brown fox jumps  
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bright wizards mix jelly  
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Written by Emma Matthews 26.09.2025