



Handwriting policy

Date Reviewed: November 2025

Date of next review: November 2026

Dunmore Primary School

Great to be inspired, inspired to be great.

Handwriting Policy - Whole school approach to handwriting.

This policy outlines the intent, implementation and intended impact for the teaching, leadership and assessment of Handwriting at Dunmore Primary School. The school's policy for Handwriting is guided by the statutory requirements of the 2014 National Curriculum Framework, the Writing Framework 2025 and the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework.

INTENT

At Dunmore Primary School, we recognise the importance of children being able to write legibly, fluently and at a reasonable speed. As part of a high-quality English curriculum, we believe that promoting high standards of written language are essential in giving children the confidence to communicate competently and to be prepared for the next stage of their education. With these skills, children have a much greater chance of being able to reach and demonstrate their true potential throughout their school careers and in their lives beyond school.

In the EYFS, we teach the foundations of a handwriting style which is fast, accurate and efficient. Planned opportunities are provided for the children to develop the gross and fine motor skills needed to start writing. Our Nursery children are encouraged to mark make in lots of different ways, leading towards being able to write some letters correctly. In Reception the children are taught to form lower case, capital letters and digits correctly using a print style. Children develop the use of effective pencil grip throughout their time in EYFS.

In Key Stage One, handwriting is taught explicitly throughout the week. Lessons focus on ensuring that children form lower-case letters of the correct size relative to one another. In Year 1, children continue to write in print with the introduction of learning the explicit formation of capital letters and digits. Children will begin to be taught how to write in cursive script from Year 2, if deemed ready, starting to develop their use of the diagonal and horizontal strokes. They also develop accuracy in writing capital letters and digits of the correct size, orientation and relationship to one another and to lower-case letters and use spacing between words that reflects the size of the letters.

Throughout Key Stage Two, emphasis is placed on children's development of a cursive script. Children are taught to use the diagonal and horizontal strokes needed to join letters and understand which letters, when adjacent to one another, are best left un-joined. There is a strong focus on writing legibly, fluently and with increasing speed.

IMPLEMENTATION

How handwriting is planned and taught:

To ensure a consistent approach across the school, we follow an agreed progression in skills and knowledge; teaching through the Debbie Hepplewhite Handwriting progression of skills.

Children are explicitly taught handwriting from EYFS, through Key Stage 1 and into Lower Key Stage 2. In Upper Key Stage 2, handwriting continues to be modelled and taught through weekly handwriting lessons and where necessary, small groups of children access handwriting intervention to further support them in reaching age-related expectations.

Across the school, high expectations for handwriting are modelled by the teacher and support staff.

Fine and gross motor skills - ensuring children are ready to begin writing

Handwriting is a complex skill to learn and starts well before a child is ready to pick up a pencil and make marks on paper. There are a range of fine and gross motor skills and strengths which are learnt and developed in stages as a child grows.

Squiggle Whilst You Wiggle (Nursery)

Squiggle Whilst You Wiggle is an early writing program created by Shonette Bason-Wood. Squiggle Whilst You Wiggle 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 holding 'Flipper Flappers' (bits of fabric) while dancing along to the music. The children then transfer these movements to floor level and swap their flipper flappers for writing tools (crayons/pens etc) to make marks. They will then use this action to think of letters they can form that use this shape. These sessions are great fun but most importantly help your child to be confident mark makers. Squiggle whilst you wiggle is incredibly fun, motivating and excites the children to engage in gross motor skills and writing. It's all about mark making and how to develop children's writing in a fun, exciting and active way.

Squiggle me into a Writer (Reception)

Squiggle me into a Writer continues using dance, music and large movements to develop the fine muscle control needed for writing. There is a dance routine for each letter of the alphabet, which starts as large movements already experienced in 'Squiggle Whilst You Wiggle'. The children then start to form the letter shape in the air, gradually getting smaller using their magic fingers and finally moving on to paper, whiteboards or chalk boards to write the letters. The sessions are exciting and lively; the children have a lot of fun with their writing.

Good Practice for Handwriting – stages of learning handwriting.

We expect all children to be able to use the mature/dynamic tripod pencil grip to write. This is considered the most appropriate grip for handwriting, for both right and left-handed writers because it allows the fingers and wrist to move freely without putting strain on the hand, helping to improve correct letter formation ability and making handwriting a more comfortable experience. When children begin to write using a pen/pencil, they are taught how to correctly hold their writing implement. There are several developmental stages children need to go through before they can confidently use the tripod grip to write with. These stages are tracked through EYFS and children are supported as they progress from one stage to another (as above). By Year 1 some children may need extra support in developing the right grip. Teachers can provide them with special tripod grip pencils.

POSTURE:

- 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 left-handers.

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

Lesson structure and frequency of handwriting lessons

We follow the Debbie Hepplewhite order of teaching letter formation and joins across the school.

EYFS	<p>In Nursery, pupils experience a range of activities to develop gross and fine motor strength and control. This includes following the movements as set out in 'Squiggle Whilst you Wiggle' by Shonette Bason-Wood.</p> <p>In Reception, pupils continue to develop their gross and fine motor strength and control whilst also working on using an effective pencil grip. This is demonstrated using the 'Mr Alligator' rhyme. In the Autumn term letter formation is taught using 'Squiggle me into a Writer' by Shonette Bason-Wood. This builds on the movements started in Nursery. From January, we start explicit handwriting sessions in groups to practise pencil grip and letter formation.</p>
Year 1	<p>Pupils are taught to print letters in explicit handwriting sessions, no joins. Practised explicitly in the back of English books on wide lines.</p> <p>Audit at end of Year 1 to identify who is ready for cursive script in Year 2.</p>
Year 2	<p>Pupils are taught through a weekly handwriting session directly led by the teacher using the joins and words in the order suggested by Debbie Hepplewhite. Handwriting is practised in handwriting books.</p> <p>Handwriting is also taught in small adult supervised groups once a week.</p> <p>Children who have not mastered print, as identified in year 1, continue to print letters, they will follow the same letter ordering as their peers but not doing the joins. Additional adult support will be given to these pupils.</p>

Year 3	<p>Pupils complete weekly early work handwriting on their spelling words in handwriting books, then have a lesson on cursive letter joins following Debbie Hepplewhite progression (individual letters and words)</p> <p>Those that are not joining correctly are assessed with in class marking and 'think pink' corrections.</p> <p>Weekly in-class intervention for those that have not mastered print letter formation.</p>
Years 4 - 6	<p>Pupils complete early work handwriting on their spelling words, then have a teacher-led lesson on letter joins and words using cursive.</p> <p>Weekly handwriting Intervention for years 4 – 6 with a focus on cursive letter formation and joins for those children who can print but have not mastered cursive writing.</p>

At each KS2 assessment point, children are assessed on their fluency of cursive writing. This guides selection of children for the intervention group and is monitored in the Insight writing objectives.

Handwriting and Inclusion

We believe every child will have equal opportunity to achieve their full potential and access an ambitious and coherent curriculum that leads to deep learning and an understanding of a sustainable world. Regardless of race, gender, cultural background, ability or Special Educational Needs or Disability.

If a child has a special educational need of disability, we will do our very best to ensure we meet that child's individual needs when learning to write. This may mean that for some children the approach is adapted, or children are offered alternate ways to record their work through the use of technology.

We comply with the requirements set out in the SEND Code of Practice. If a teacher has concerns about the progress of a child, then they will liaise with our SENDCO, Sarah Smith, to arrange appropriate assessment of need and set up personal provision through initially writing a Personalised Provision Plan.

IMPACT

Assessing Progress Formative Assessment:

In EYFS, the children's gross and fine motor skills will be assessed as they work towards their Early Learning Goals. Pencil grip development will be observed and tracked so that children not meeting their age-appropriate developmental stage can receive the support they need.

In Key Stage 1 and 2, pupils' progress will be assessed using regular formative assessment in English lessons and across the curriculum. This may include but is not limited to: - Assessment of pupil work in books - Observations of handwriting - Pupil voice - Independent assessments Teachers will regularly use this assessment to plan and adapt further teaching, address gaps and provide feedback to ensure children make progress in their handwriting development. Summative Assessment: Handwriting progress will be assessed summatively at the end of each English learning journey after children have produced a published and independent final writing outcome. Teachers will assess handwriting against the teach assessment framework in the back of their books and use this to make teacher assessment judgements over the course of the year.

Appendix 1:

Pencil Grip Developmental Stages

Nursery age normal development: splayed or 4 finger grip

Explorers (Reception) age normal development: static tripod moving towards dynamic tripod grip.

Fisted grip or palmer supinate grip	Digital pronate grip	Splayed or 4 finger grip	Static tripod grip	Dynamic tripod grip
				

