HIGH ASPIRATIONS

KNEBWORTH

Primary and Nursery School

Deep Roots High Aspirations

Handwriting Policy

This policy is reviewed on an annual basis
Next review date: November 2027

DEEP ROOTS

RESPECT - RESPONSIBILITY - RESILIENCE

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Aims

At Knebworth School, we want all pupils to experience writing as a means of expression and creativity. To support this, pupils need to develop fluency and automaticity in handwriting. When handwriting becomes an effortless, well-established skill, pupils can focus fully on developing and communicating their ideas without interrupting their creative thinking to consider elements of their handwriting such as letter formation and individual joins.

Pupil's ability to handwrite effectively for the rest of their lives depends on the firm foundations established in primary school. Our handwriting curriculum will teach pupils to:

- Learn and practise appropriate handwriting skills at each stage of development.
- Develop comfortable handwriting which is legible, fluent and fast.
- Work towards becoming confident 'hybrid writers', with the skills to communicate through both handwriting and technology.

The use of technology

At present, most of our statutory national assessments in the UK such as KS2 SATs, GCSE exams and A-levels require pupils to be able to demonstrate their understanding through handwritten answers (with the exception of some SEND pupils who have been granted reasonable adjustments). For the time being, this means it is still essential for pupils to learn how to write legibly and fluently by hand.

However, we also recognise the importance of technology and its uses in teaching and learning as well as in the wider world of work. By the end of their time at Knebworth, we hope that our pupils will be ***hybrid*** writers, able to use a variety of communication modes and capable of selecting the one most suitable for the task. Handwriting being just one mode in a toolbox of options.

Our Curriculum

All class teachers from EYFS to Year 6 will provide handwriting instruction on a daily basis. There is no prescribed length of time for handwriting lessons; instead, the duration and content will be adapted to meet the needs and abilities of each class. Although the teaching of spelling and phonics are inextricably linked with handwriting, the two must be taught separately.

Handwriting is a compulsory component of the National Curriculum in England. At Knebworth School, we use the ***Handwriting Teaching Overview*** and ***Handwriting Progression and Toolkit*** documents to ensure a clear and consistent progression in handwriting across all year groups, while meeting the expectations of the National Curriculum.

EYFS

At Knebworth, we recognise that pupils need to be physically and developmentally ready before they begin to write. This includes both gross and fine motor areas:

- Gross motor factors: core strength, control and postural stability
- Motor planning skills
- Development of a consistent hand preference
- Fine motor factors: good wrist and hand function, finger dexterity
- Development of a pincer grip
- A functional grip on the pencil

Further component skills of handwriting which are developed and monitored in our EYFS include visual and perception skills, visual motor coordination, talk and communication alongside mark making, letter recognition, shapes and patterns within letters and use of prepositional language in verbal instructions. Once pupils have developed these necessary skills, they will begin to learn letter shapes, usually by the Spring term in Reception. Throughout the year, EYFS practitioners will ensure pupils have daily access to mark-making tools and opportunities to mark make and write in both indoor and outdoor areas.

The Early Learning Goals that relate to handwriting are found within the **Physical Development** (Fine Motor) aspect and the **Literacy** aspect of the curriculum. These include the expectation that pupils (at the expected level of development) will:

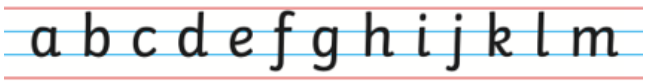
• Hold a pencil effectively – using a tripod grip in almost all cases
• Begin to show accuracy and care when drawing
• Write recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed
• Spell words by identifying sounds in them and representing the sound with a letter or letters
• Write simple phrases and sentences that can be read by others

At the end of EYFS, practitioners will make a 'holistic, best-fit judgement' about a child's development and their readiness for Year 1.

Key Stage 1 (Years 1–2)

From Year 1, teachers will continue to help pupils develop the foundational skills for handwriting that were taught in EYFS. There is a strong focus on correct letter formation and spacing between words. Once pupils reach Year 2, teachers will revise correct letter formation and only begin teaching joining once this is secure.

Year 1 and 2: simple print letters



n o p q r s t u v w x y z

Year 2: beginnings of cursive joining

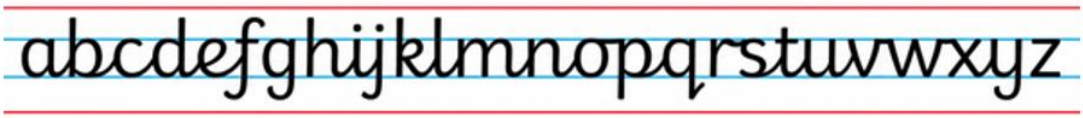


Key Stage 2 (Years 3–6)

From Year 3, the emphasis shifts to developing **fluency, speed, and legibility**, enabling pupils to write independently and efficiently for different purposes, including notes, formal writing, and creative composition.

Where appropriate, teachers may adapt the handwriting style for individual pupils to meet their specific needs. In these cases, pupils may use either a printed script or a simplified modern cursive style with fewer joins. The majority of pupils will begin using a cursive, looped style once they reach Year 5.

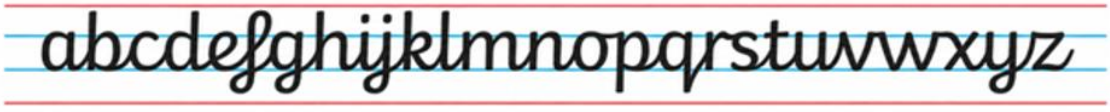
Cursive (unlooped)
Y2, Y3 & Y4
Letters f, g, j, q, and y are not joined with exit strokes. Teachers can use discretion for joining letters b, p, s and x, depending on letter formation and legibility



Adapted with break letters:



Cursive (looped)
Y5 & Y6



The National Curriculum programmes of study outline the statutory handwriting outcomes for each year group and provide additional non-statutory guidance. Our **Handwriting Teaching Overview** has been specifically designed to ensure coverage of each of these areas, providing teachers with a clear structure for teaching handwriting from EYFS to Year 6.

KS1 and KS2 National Curriculum

	Statutory requirements	Non-statutory notes and guidance
Year 1 Age 5–6	**Pupils should be taught to:** • sit correctly at a table, holding a pencil comfortably and correctly • begin to form lower-case letters in the correct direction, starting and finishing in the right place • form capital letters • form digits 0–9 • understand which letters belong to which handwriting 'families' (i.e. letters that are formed in similar ways) and to practise these.	Handwriting requires frequent and discrete, direct teaching. Pupils should be able to form letters correctly and confidently. The size of the writing implement (pencil, pen) should not be too large for a young pupil's hand. Whatever is being used should allow the pupil to hold it easily and correctly so that bad habits are avoided. Left-handed pupils should receive specific teaching to meet their needs.
Year 2 Age 6–7	**Pupils should be taught to:** • form lower-case letters of the correct size relative to one another • start using some of the diagonal and horizontal strokes needed to join letters and understand which letters, when adjacent to one another, are best left unjoined • write capital letters and digits of the correct size, orientation and relationship to one another and to lower-case letters • use spacing between words that reflects the size of the letters.	Pupils should revise and practise correct letter formation frequently. They should be taught to write with a joined style as soon as they can form letters securely with the correct orientation.
Years 3 and 4 Age 7–9	**Pupils should be taught to:** • use the diagonal and horizontal strokes that are needed to join letters and understand which letters, when adjacent to one another, are best left unjoined • increase the legibility, consistency and quality of their handwriting, for example, by ensuring that the downstrokes of letters are parallel and equidistant; that lines of writing are spaced sufficiently so that the ascenders and descenders of letters do not touch.	Pupils should be using joined handwriting throughout their independent writing. Handwriting should continue to be taught, with the aim of increasing the fluency with which pupils are able to write down what they want to say. This, in turn, will support their composition and spelling.
Years 5 & 6 Age 10 -11	**Pupils should be taught to write legibly, fluently and with increasing speed by:** • choosing which shape of a letter to use when given choices and deciding whether or not to join specific letters • choosing the writing implement that is best suited for a task.	Pupils should continue to practise handwriting and be encouraged to increase the speed of it, so that problems with forming letters do not get in the way of their writing down what they want to say. They should be clear about what standard of handwriting is appropriate for a particular task – for example, quick notes or a final handwritten version. They should also be taught to use an unjoined style, for example, for labelling a diagram or data, writing an email address, or for algebra and capital letters (for example, for filling in a form).

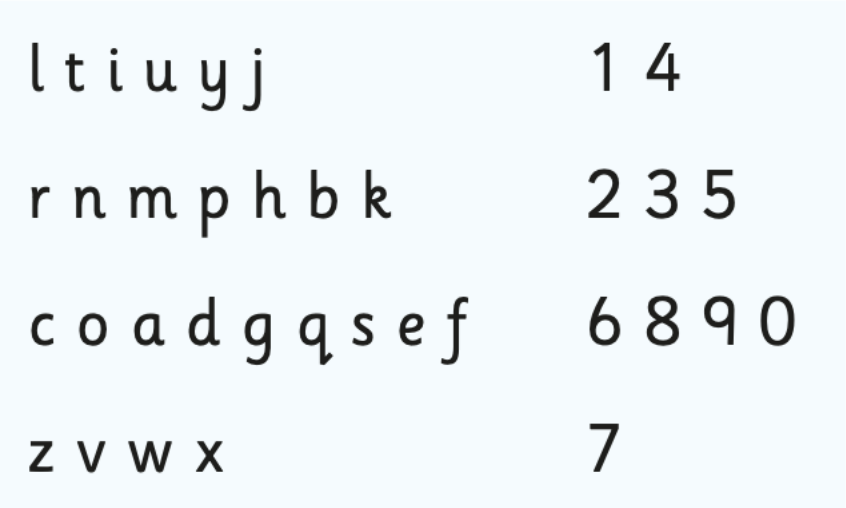
Handwriting requirements from the English programmes of study: Key Stages 1 and 2 National Curriculum in England

Letter families and font styles

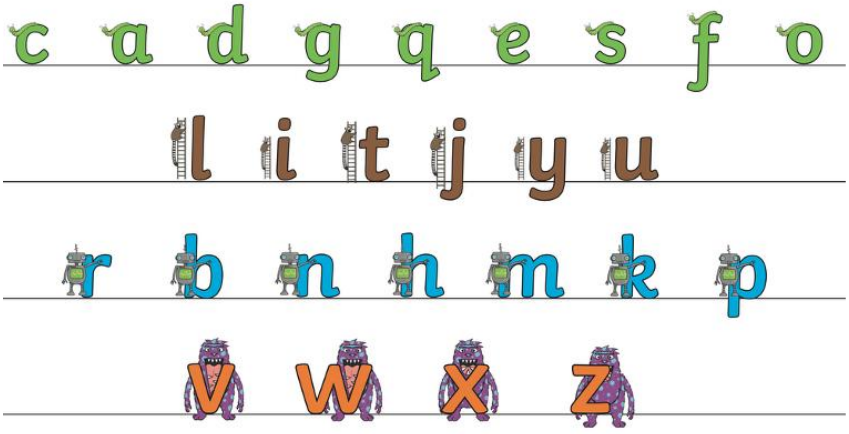
The national curriculum recommends teaching letter formations in 'letter families' (see below), which negates any need for the use of a lead-in stroke as each letter family will have a different start and exit point. Teaching the letters in movement groups also reduces the learning load and provides for reinforcement of basic movement patterns.

Letter formation teaching begins in EYFS. The movements of letters should be practised in many playful ways including painting, modelling, toy lasers, wands, salt trays, dance and music.

The Year 1 handwriting requirements also include learning the formation of digits which can be incorporated in the letter formation movement families.



Letter formation families with numbers



'curly letters'

'ladder letters'

'bouncy / one armed robot letters'

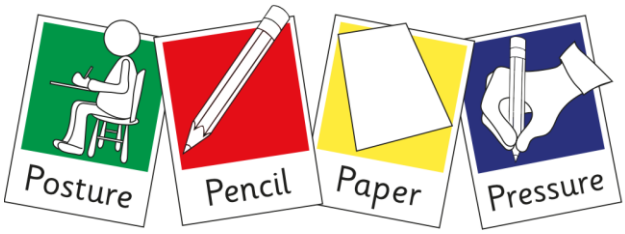
'diagonal / zig zag letters'

Typed fonts

Where possible, teachers will use the following fonts on slides, displays and worksheets:

Print - 'Twinkl school font' (Year YN, YR, Y1 and beginning of Y2)
Cursive - 'Twinkl unlooped' (Year 2, 3 and 4)
Cursive - 'Twinkl looped' (Years 5&6)

'P checks'

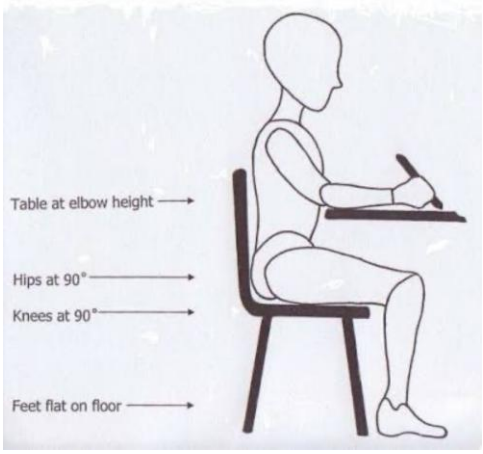


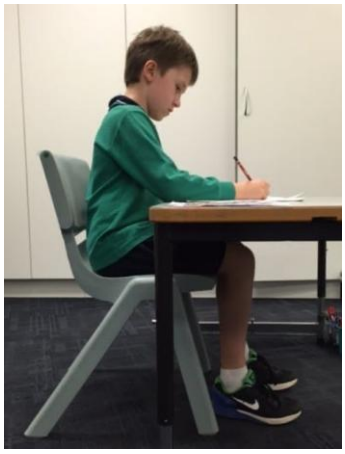
The P Checks need to be gradually explained to pupils as soon as they are ready to sit at a table to write. This ensures that good handwriting habits are established from the start and become automatic.

Posture

Pupils need to maintain a stable, comfortable position to support the process of handwriting.

- Back supported by the chair
- Slight tilt forwards
- Hips, knees and ankles at right angles
- Feet flat on the floor (or supported on a step
- Arms resting comfortably on the table
- Tummy – a fist's distance from the table
- Other hand used to stabilise paper
- Eyes should be a ruler's length away from the desk



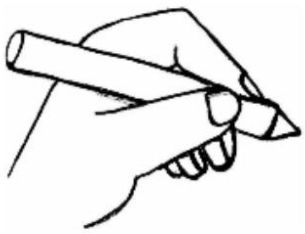


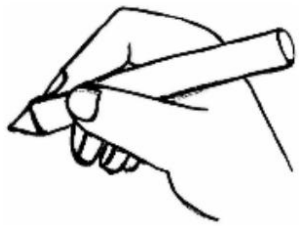
Pencil grip

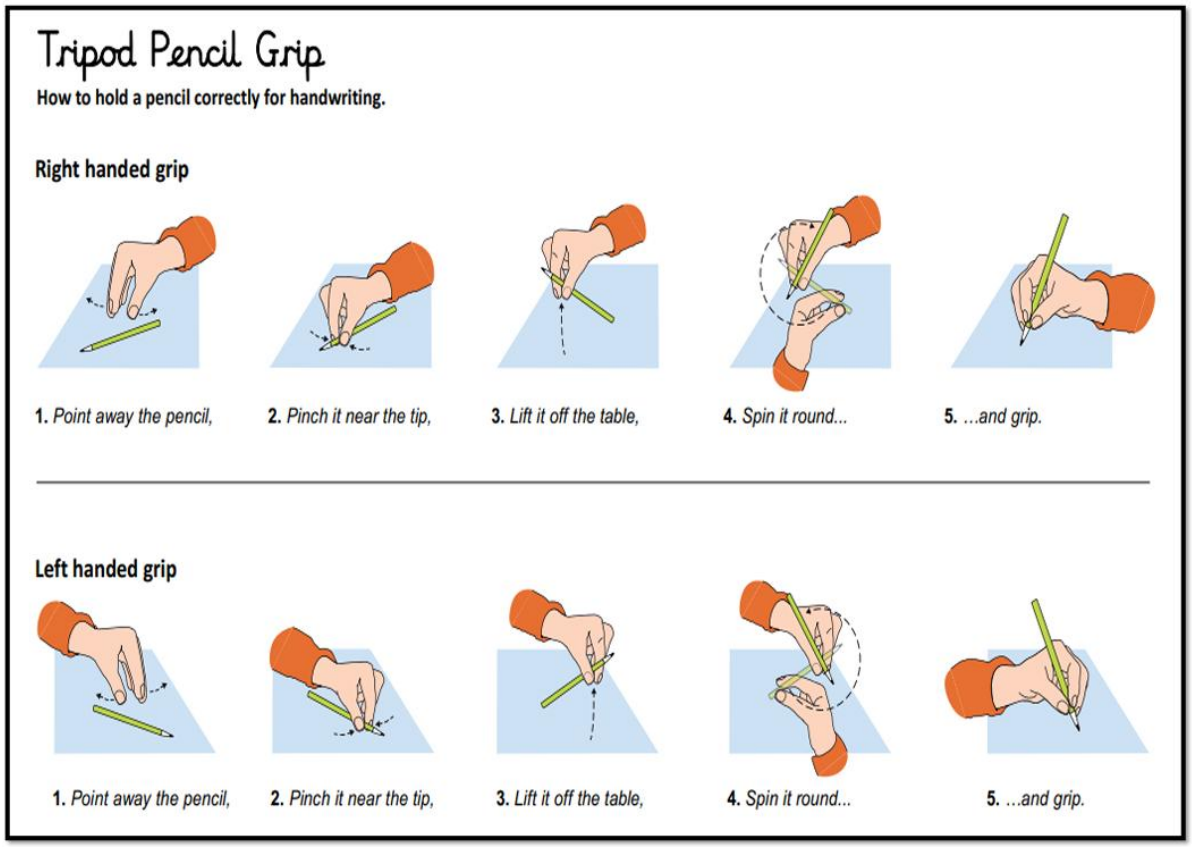
Pupils must be developmentally ready before they are expected to hold and use a pencil.

A functional grip combines a balance of control, freedom and comfort in order to produce a legible script for the required duration. The dynamic **tripod grasp** is considered optimal because it may be biomechanically more efficient in movement terms. To be effective, this grasp must be supported by a stable wrist resting on the writing surface and positioned below the writing line. The tripod grasp is expected to be secured by the end of Year 1. Pencils and pens should be held about 2cm from the tip. This distance may be slightly greater for left handers.


Tripod grasp





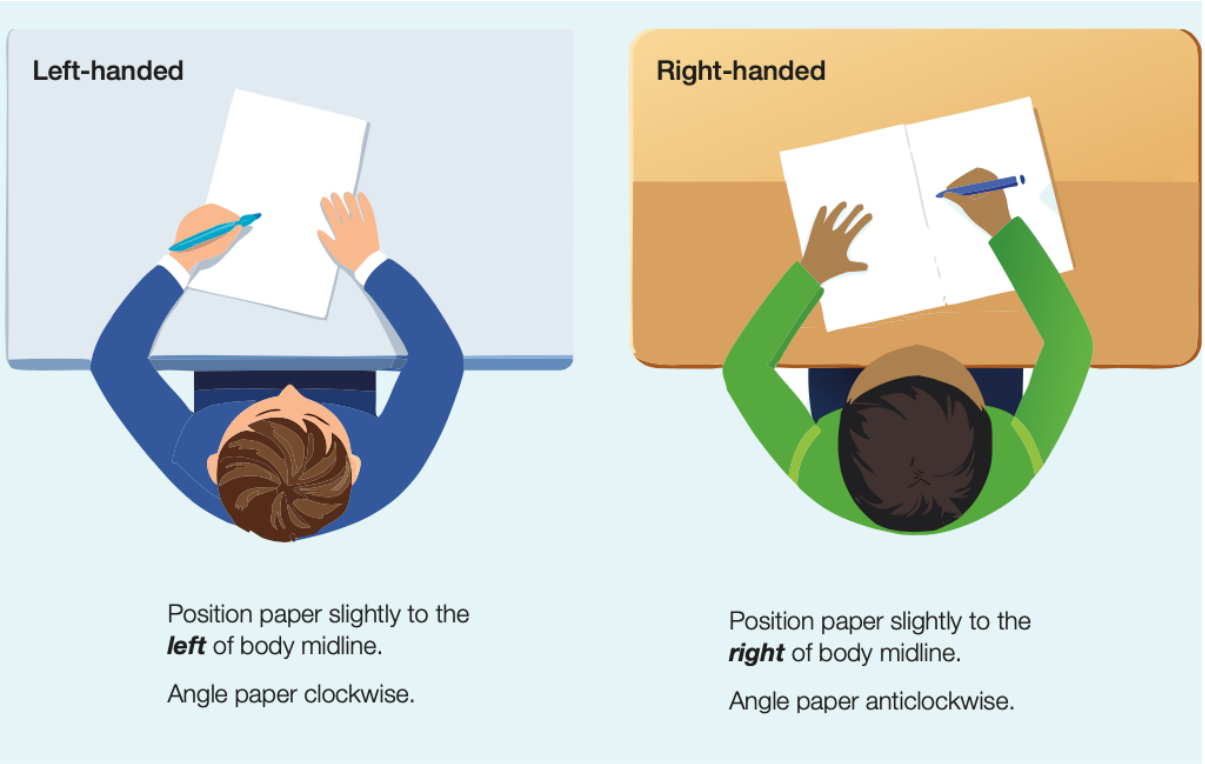


As a child grows older, it becomes increasingly difficult to change a grip. When considering whether action needs to be taken, a general rule should be applied: if the grasp is causing pain, discomfort or fatigue, or is seriously affecting legibility, then seek advice. If not, it should be left alone. It may be possible to support a more effective grip with a wider choice of pencils and pens, adaptations to posture and relaxation techniques. Where there are doubts, it is advisable to seek advice from an occupational therapist.

Paper (position)

Paper positioning can significantly impact on a writer's posture. If this strategy is left to chance when pupils first begin to write, paper may be placed in an unsuitable position. The body then adjusts to this placement, often twisting itself in the process. This can also lead to awkward pencil grasps, such as the 'hooked grip'.

Paper positioning guidance:



- Tilt and offset the paper according to the writing hand.
- Encourage the use of the non-writing hand to stabilise the paper. (This enables the writing hand to move freely and also balances the body).
- 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

This refers to the pressure or force put through the pen(cil). Ideally, this should leave a clear trace on the paper, neither too faint nor too dark, and flow along the line rhythmically.

Most handwriting or extended writing sessions should begin with warm up and hand relaxation techniques. Actions which include squeezing and deep pressure, resistance and / or vibration will increase body awareness.

Teachers may use teaching tools such as carbon paper, mechanical pencils, 'light- up' and 'squiggle' pens to demonstrate appropriate pressure.

'S factors' https://nha-handwriting.org.uk/?attachment_id=2601



The S Factors show the teaching steps for handwriting in order, starting with letter formation (shape). They correlate with the requirements of both the national curriculum and the end of key stage assessments.

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.

2 Space

NC: KS1

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

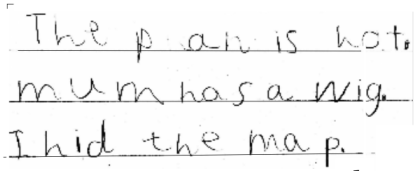
Gradually, they need to learn to leave an appropriately-sized space – about the size of 1 or 2 letter **'o**'s. Lolly sticks make good spacers for beginner writers, followed by coffee stirrers if necessary later. These work much better than the traditional finger-spacing. (Fingers grow bigger while writing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

Jamesoandotheogiantopeach

Spaces between words should be about the size of one letter o (or two)

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**

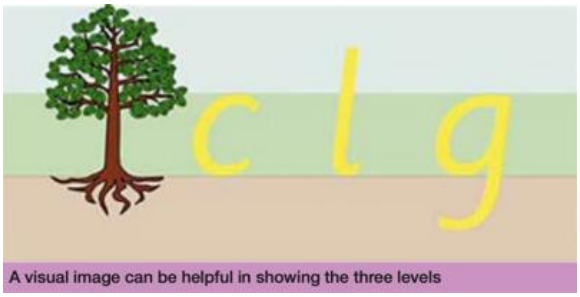
NC: KS1

… 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



A visual image can be helpful in showing the three levels

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.'

6 **Slant**

NC: KS 2

A consistent slant helps the appearance of handwriting.

A slightly forward slant is a natural movement for right-handers and helps to improve fluency and speed. (See 'Slant' in Part 2)

7 **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)*

8 **Style**

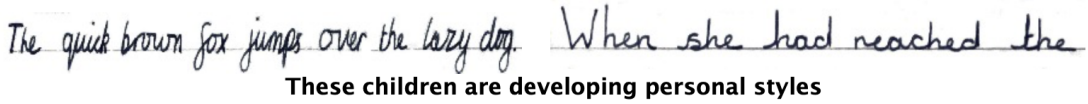
NC: Y5+

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

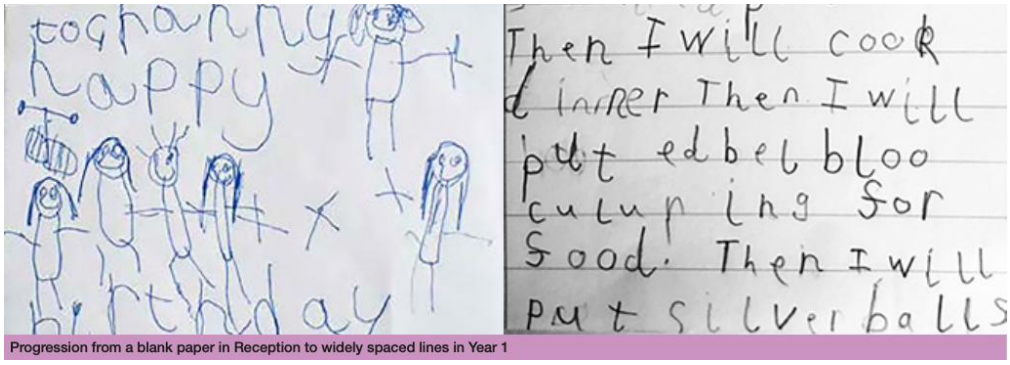
P checks and S factors.pdf

The use of pens

At all stages of learning, pupils should have access to a wide range of mark makers for different purposes. In the latter years of primary school, pupils need to practise writing with a pen as preparation for the next stage in their handwriting journey. The national curriculum for Years 5 and 6 includes a reference to choosing the writing implement that is best suited for a task. With this in mind, at Knebworth we will begin offering pupils the choice to write with a handwriting pen from Year 4 onwards. If issues arise with individual pupils, then having conversations with them and exploring other types of pens or pencils to best suit their needs would be the best approach. This discussion would be child centred, inclusive and empowering.

Exercise books and line spacing

The line spacing provided at all ages will suit the natural size of the child's writing and their stage of writing development.



Progression from a blank paper in Reception to widely spaced lines in Year 1

EYFS

Pupils will mostly write on unlined paper, progressing to adequately spaced lines to suit the natural size of their writing.

KS1

Pupils will sometimes write on unlined paper, for example on worksheets or whiteboards. However, for the most part they will use widely spaced lines.

KS2

The National Curriculum states pupils should be taught:
'that lines of writing are spaced sufficiently so that the ascenders and descenders of letters do not touch'.
Most pupils start to gradually reduce the size of their writing in key stage 2 and can make the transition to lines that are less far apart once they reach Year 3. However, teachers may use their discretion with the use of different exercise books for pupils who may need wider spacing and a more gradual introduction to lines that are less far apart.

Assessment

In EYFS, staff at Knebworth use a variety of formative assessment techniques on a daily basis. Staff are aware of which pupils are developmentally ready to begin handwriting and which pupils need more activities designed to develop their motor skills in preparation for handwriting.

At the end of the Reception, the EYFS Profile provides a summary of a child's development that year against the Early Learning Goals (ELGs). The word 'handwriting' itself is not used in the profile, but there are references to the writing process in both ELG Physical Development and Fine Motor, and ELG Literacy-Writing.

Pupils who did not meet expected levels in the Physical Development and Fine Motor elements of the EYFS will be monitored and supported. At the start of Year 1, staff observe each child writing to assess which are letters are being formed correctly and which are not. Early identification and correction of errors will prevent many later problems with handwriting.

In every year group at the beginning of each term, staff will reassess letter formation, along with other applicable 'P checks' and 'S factors'. This will continue throughout each year group, with additional 'S factor' checks as pupils become developmentally ready.

At the end of each year, staff will handover the most recent handwriting assessment information to inform future planning and to provide support to those who are experiencing handwriting difficulties.

Handwriting difficulties

Provision for left-handed pupils

Pupils who are left-handed may encounter difficulties such as:

- Some letter formation movements feel 'unnatural'
- Not being able to see what they are writing
- Work being smudged
- Having to make more pushing than pulling movements, which are harder to control

Practical support ideas for left-handed pupils:

- A higher seat
- A sloped writing surface
- Good lighting (making sure the hand does not cast a shadow)
- Sitting on the left side of a right-handed writer so that elbows do not bump
- Paper tilted clockwise in the left-handed position
- Pencils and pens to suit e.g. ergonomic grip, fast drying ink, soft lead
- Left-handed scissors

- Investigate arm, hand and pen hold positions to find those that suit
- Explore changes to letter formation and joining movements

SEND

The process of handwriting relies on the integration of component factors – motor, perceptual, cognitive and linguistic processing. Consequently, pupils with a known disability in any of these areas will most likely need support to develop effective handwriting. The severity of the conditions will have an impact, as will any co-occurrence with other conditions.

Related disabilities include: cerebral palsy, arthritis, muscular dystrophy, hypermobility syndrome, autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), ADHD, Developmental Coordination Disorder (or dyspraxia), developmental language disorder and dyslexia.

Provision ideas for SEND pupils:

- Alternative writing implements which provide differing levels of sensory feedback
- Sloped boards to improve wrist alignment and posture
- Pencil grips to encourage a low-fatigue finger hold
- Coloured paper or colour coded lines
- Personalised alphabet strips to support correct letter formation taped to desks or books
- Task chunking such as asking for a 'gold standard' line or phrase rather than a page of writing
- Hand exercises before and during handwriting
- Regular movement breaks
- 'I write, you write' adult scribing, followed by pupil copying
- Use of assistive technology when the physical act of writing blocks the child's ideas

Intervention

At Knebworth, we provide a tiered model of handwriting support for addressing handwriting difficulties.

Tier 1: Core provision – all pupils

Best practice in handwriting is provided to benefit all in school. Curriculum, pedagogy and resourcing are informed by the handwriting policy. Flexible strategies are applied to remove barriers and support individual needs. Relationship building and knowledge sharing are both fundamental.

Tier 2: Focused intervention – some pupils

Staff consider those pupils whose difficulties persist. Advice is sought from the Inclusion Team. To investigate the source of problems, the process of the child writing and the finished product are observed. If possible, referrals to other professionals are initiated. The child and family are involved in setting goals. An intervention programme to include differentiated instruction is planned, timetabled and implemented. Adjustments are made to curriculum expectations while this is happening.

Tier 3: Specialist – a few pupils

At this tier, specialist intervention is provided for those pupils who have complex needs. Some will have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and others may be in the process of application. This tier will require the intervention of a therapist to work collaboratively with family and school to provide appropriate provision. For some pupils, this may include learning to use technology as a main mode of transcription.

Glossary

Glossary	
Positional language	An essential part of teaching patterning and letter formation is to ensure that young pupils really understand positional language when working with pencil and paper. Terms include: **up, down, above, below, under, top, bottom, across, around and between**
Curly letters	Letters that begin with a curly “c” shape. Begin from the same starting point and start by going anti-clockwise.
Ladder letters	Letters that start with a long, straight downstroke (a “ladder line”) before adding any additional shapes. They help pupils learn consistent letter height and vertical control
Bouncy / one armed robot letters	Letters that are formed using a down-and-bounce movement. The pencil goes down, then bounces back up or across to complete the letter.
Diagonal letters	Letters whose shapes are made from straight, diagonal or angular lines that change direction sharply.
Descender	The part of a lowercase letter that goes below the writing line (the baseline).
Ascender	The part of a lowercase letter that extends above the main body of the letter.
Short letters	Letters without ascenders or descenders e.g. m. e, o
Letter bodies	The parts of letters which are neither ascenders nor descenders, for example the rounded parts of b, d and a, and the ‘arches’ of m and n
Dictation	Pupils listen to spoken words, phrases, or sentences and then write them down accurately and at an appropriate, developing pace.
Baseline	The part of a letter that sits on the line.
Tripod grip	Writing utensil between thumb and forefinger, side of middle finger completing the tripod.
Preferred hand	A preferred hand is the hand a person naturally chooses to use for writing and most fine-motor tasks. It is the hand that feels most comfortable, controlled, and efficient for handwriting. Most pupils begin to show a preferred hand between ages 4–6, though some take longer.
Pressure	Writing should leave a clear trace on the paper, neither too faint nor too dark, and flow along the line rhythmically.
Starting point	Where to put your pencil to begin forming the letter.
P Checks	Posture, Pencil grasp, Paper position and Pressure.
S Factors	Shape, Space, Size, Sitting, Stringing, Slant, Speed and Style - an easy way to remember important aspects of handwriting.
Exit stroke (KS2) or flick (KS1)	Letters that finish on the baseline often have a final flick in the forwards direction. This provides the potential to join when the child is ready for this step.
Diagonal strokes	Join from letters which finish on the baseline.
Horizontal strokes	Join from letters which finish at the top.
Break letters	Letters that are left unjoined.