

# Handwriting and Letter formation



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## Objective

Handwriting is a basic skill that influences the quality of work throughout the curriculum. By the end of Key Stage 2 all pupils should have the ability to produce fluent, legible and, eventually, speedy joined-up handwriting, and to understand the different forms of handwriting used for different purposes.

Our intention is to make handwriting an automatic process that does not interfere with creative and mental thinking.

Handwriting remains an important life skill as an effective means of self-expression and communication with others. It is, however, not a *natural skill* like walking or jumping. As with reading and maths, the skill of handwriting needs to be *taught*. Effective teaching requires an awareness of the complexity of this process and the many factors which contribute to success. Handwriting should be of a left to right orientation.

## What are the aims of our handwriting curriculum?

Aims:

- Pupils should experience coherence and continuity in the learning and teaching of handwriting across all school years and be encouraged to take pride in the presentation of their work in order to establish and maintain high expectations for the presentation of written work.
- To teach children in Early Years and lower Key Stage 1 a consistent and carefully chosen set of letters and numbers from the start of their education.
- To ensure consistency from all staff members across all lessons and to encourage conversations about letter formation and choices.

- These letters are built upon towards the end of Year 1, where children are introduced to the idea of joining letters.
- Children in Year 2 are taught to join in detail, with a particular focus still given to consistent and accurate letter formation.
- Throughout Key Stage 2, the children are taught to develop a neat, legible, speedy handwriting style using continuous cursive letters, which leads to producing letters and words automatically in independent writing.
- For pupils to understand, by the end of Year 6, the importance of neat presentation and the need for different letterforms (cursive, printed or capital letters) to help communicate meaning clearly.

### The teaching steps – S factors



The S Factors show the teaching steps in order. They correlate with the requirements of both the National Curriculum and the end of Key Stage assessments. To aid memory, these all begin with the letter S, so are called The S Factors. Each S Factor represents a step in a developmental sequence, beginning with learning letter formation (Shape).

### Shape

## S for Shape – Font and letter formation

We follow the LetterJoin handwriting scheme and make amendments to these plans as necessary in response to the needs of the class.

The handwriting style that we follow can be described as simple print moving to cursive. Cursive is the use of diagonal and horizontal strokes that are needed to join letters with some letters left un-joined.

### Letter formation choices

#### Print letter formation

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee  
 Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj  
 Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo  
 Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt  
 Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz

0123456789

#### Cursive letter formation

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee  
 Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj  
 Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo  
 Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt  
 Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz

0123456789

### Font

The pre-cursive font is not used in our school. In the ‘Reading Framework’ July 2023, it states that children should “be taught the correct start and exit points for each letter, which should **not** include ‘lead-in’ strokes from the line”. As such, we do not use ‘lead-ins’ or ‘lead-outs’ in print or ‘lead-ins’ in cursive writing.

As a school, we use the Letter Join simple print font:

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

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

We also use the Letter Join cursive font without lead-ins.

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

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

The exception to this is the LetterJoin 'f', which differs from our preferred form (f). Staff are instructed to use the cursive LetterJoin form of the f when producing display or worksheet tasks but to model the preferred form (f) when teaching handwriting and to explicitly highlight the differences. Handwriting rhymes should also employ the correct form of the f.

## Letter families

Letter families, as a broad rule, are letters which are grouped together based on having the same formation starting point.


Teachers will benefit from teaching these letters in groups, rather than in alphabetical order

Curly caterpillar family




a d c o f e s g q

Long ladder family



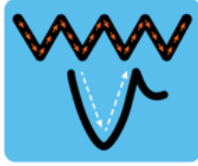
i l t u j y

One-armed robot family



b h k m n p r

Zig-zag family



v w x z

A key component of legibility is accurate letter formation. It is vital that children are taught how to form the letters of the alphabet correctly from the beginning. This means knowing the right starting point for each letter and following the correct movement pathways.

If children are not taught how to do this, they will invent their own ways of writing the letters, and although the letters may look right, the incorrect way of forming them will soon become established in the pupil's movement memory and effectively hamper progress in developing fluent joined writing later. These faults will need to be corrected at some stage if the pupil is to progress. This is always more difficult for both pupil and teacher than teaching the right movement from the start.

Teaching the letters in movement groups reduces the learning load and provides for reinforcement of basic movement patterns. This is a statutory requirement for Year 1 of the National Curriculum: *'understand which letters belong to which handwriting 'families' (letters that are formed in similar ways) and to practise these.'*

As letter formation begins in Reception, it makes sense to introduce the families there. The movements of letters should be practiced. Research on motor learning in children emphasises the importance of self-talk and verbal mnemonic scripts. These letter patterns help young children to remember how each letter is formed. It is helpful if there is consistency in the patterns used in school, especially in EYFS. These should be shared with parents.

## The use of exit strokes

For the majority of children, adding an exit flick to the appropriate letters is manageable and leads quite naturally into joining later on. It is helpful to explain this function of flicks to children so that they are motivated to use them. Examples of joining from everyday life can help the understanding.

## Capital Letters

It is important to teach the capital letters and their formation quite specifically. Pupils should also be sure of the upper case and lower-case forms of each letter and be able to relate them to one another. The policy should clarify the use of letter names, not sounds when talking about writing.



Space

## S for Space – between letters and words.

There needs to be a small space between letters in a word. Exit flicks and joining strokes can provide this.

There needs to be appropriate spaces between words for the sake of legibility. The spaces should be even, match the size of the writing and be about the same size as one letter o or two – oo. Children need to gradually visualise a suitable space between words, but before this is established, a lolly stick or coffee stirrer can help. Using the traditional 'Finger space' is not helpful in the long run as fingers grow bigger and writing gets smaller.



Size

## S for Size - the relative positioning of letters

Once children are secure in forming letters correctly, they need to learn where to position them. Sitting the letters on the writing line helps legibility. After sitting, the next step is to understand the relative sizing of letters.

To enable all letters to be appropriately aligned, the lines in all exercise books need to be sufficiently spaced to accommodate the child's natural writing size. If the spacing is too narrow, writing becomes cramped and incorrectly aligned. A short period using simple

double lined paper will help scaffold learning of size and position. As the size of children's writing will vary, it is advisable to print this format in differing widths and use that most suitable for each child.

### Sitting

## S for Sitting (Posture, paper position and pencil grip)

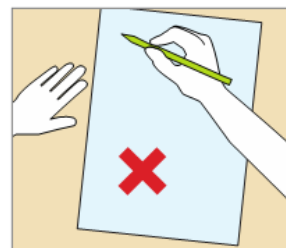
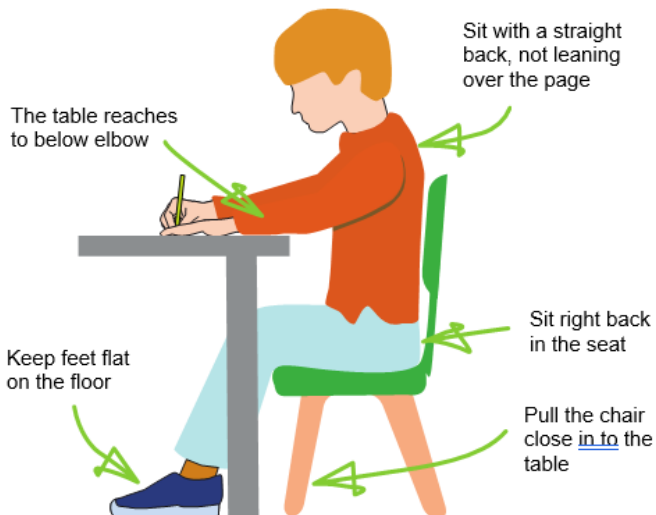
Children need to maintain a stable, comfortable position to support the process of handwriting.

- Back should be 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.

### 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.

The issue of paper position and how it can impact on a writer's posture need to be understood. If this strategy is left to chance when children 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 grasp, such as the hooked grip.

It should be explained to the child how to position the paper or exercise book on the table and hold it still with the 'helper' hand. The paper should be slanted parallel to the writing arm at a comfortable distance from the edge of the table. It should not be directly in front of the child but slightly offset, to the right for a right hander and to the left for a left hander.

Other points to include:

- A smaller sized exercise book (or landscape format) is easier for young children to manage
- Show how to gradually move the book upwards as the writing moves down the page
- A single sheet of paper needs to be paper-clipped to card to provide more stability

## Left-handed children

Left-handed children may find it difficult to follow the movements of right-handed teachers as they model letter formation (and vice versa). Teachers should demonstrate to left-handers on an individual or group basis.

Left-handed pupils should sit to the left of a right-handed child so that they are not competing for space.

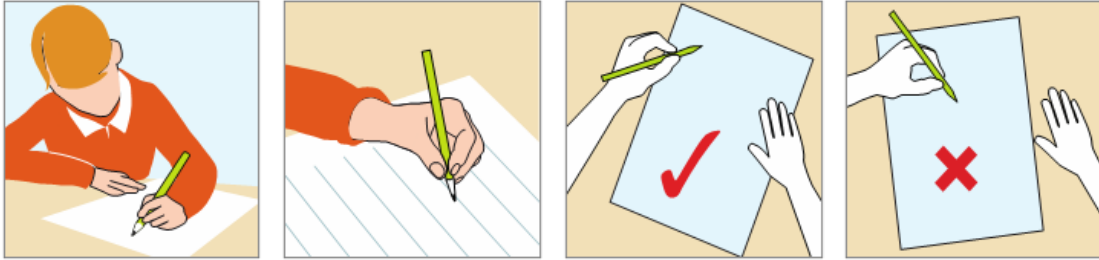
Pupils should position the paper/book to their left side and slanted, as shown below. Pencils should not be held too close to the point as this can interrupt pupils' line of vision.

Extra practice with left-to-right exercises may be necessary before pupils write left-to-right automatically.

Practical support ideas may include:

- A higher seat
- A sloped writing surface
- Good lighting - make sure the writing hand does not cast a shadow on the writing
- Sit on the left- hand side of right handed writers so elbows do not bump
- Paper tilted clockwise in the left-handed writer position

- Pencils and pens to suit - ergonomic good grip, soft lead, fast drying ink
- Left-handed scissors
- Investigate arm, hand and pen hold positions to find those which suit
- Explore changes to letter formation and joining movements



*Paper position for left-handed children*

## Pencil Grip

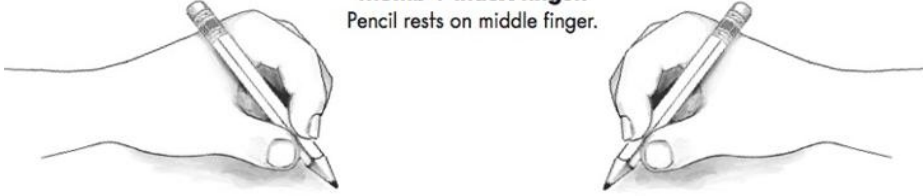
A functional grip combines a balance of control, freedom and comfort in order to produce a legible script for the required duration. The dynamic tripod grasp is considered optimal because it provides stability and allows the precise movements needed to form letters. To be effective, this grasp must be supported by a stable wrist resting on the writing surface and positioned below the writing line.

Both right and left handed children should be encouraged to use the tripod grip which allows the pen/pencil to be held securely whilst allowing controlled movements of the pen/pencil nib.

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 grip 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. Pencils should be held about two centimeters from the tip. Grip should be supported by a stable wrist, resting on the desk.

### Tripod Grip

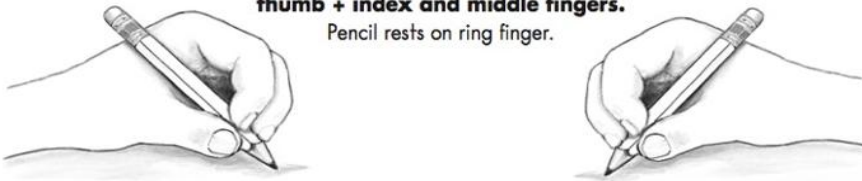
Standard grip: Hold pencil with **thumb + index finger.**  
Pencil rests on middle finger.



**Tripod Grip**

### Quadropod Grip

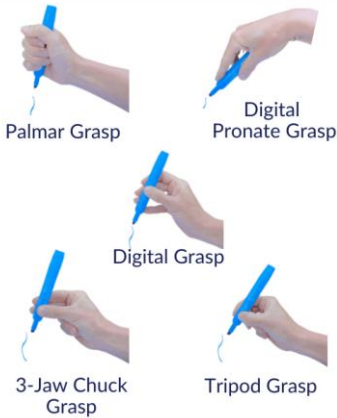
Alternate grip: Hold pencil with **thumb + index and middle fingers.**  
Pencil rests on ring finger.



**Quadropod Grip**

Children in Early Years may use other grips as they develop the fine motor skills necessary for the tripod grip. See below.

### Pencil Grasp Development



## S for Stringing (Joining)

The basic principle of joining is quite straight forward: instead of lifting their pencil after forming each letter, children are taught to keep their pencil on the page. Once this simple concept is secure, break letters are introduced. Learning to join is unlikely to take more than about four instructional writing sessions. Fluency is then established through regular practice.

Children should be taught to join their handwriting as soon as they can accurately and automatically form each letter. It is important they are taught to join before their speed of printing increases significantly.

In our school, joining is typically taught in Year 2 but some pupils may be ready to join towards the end of Year 1.

Once children can join, the expectation is that, whenever they write, they should use a joined style. In Key Stage 2, letter formation and correct joins are modelled again at the beginning of each year and expectations are set. These are then modelled further every week during handwriting lessons.

The National Curriculum statutory notes and guidance for Year 2 state that they should *“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.”*

The non-statutory notes and guidance adds *“they should be taught to write with a joined style as soon as they can form letters securely with the correct orientation.”*

Some children may be ready to join before Year 2, but it is crucial that ‘starting to join’ is not given elevated esteem or some children will feel pressured to try doing it before they are developmentally ready.

There are three basic rules for joining.

- Diagonal or up the hill joins - Letters which finish on the baseline join diagonally
- Horizontal or across the bridge joins - Letters which finish at the top join horizontally
- Un-joined or break letters - Some letters are best left un-joined.



## Break Letters

Break letters are those which children may choose not to join if this seems easier or if the join may appear clumsy. The break letters in our cursive font are:

f q

## Progression in teaching joins

If the school is using a published scheme, this will provide a structure which should be followed consistently. If there is not a scheme, then staff will need to draw up an agreed teaching progression, introducing the joins both to and from each letter and giving the children plenty of practice with short words.

This should begin with adjacent letters which occur most frequently e.g., it, he, th, ee. Once learnt, the joins should be applied to the high frequency words, digraphs, trigraphs and consonant clusters required to be learnt in phonics.

As soon as children are able to join letters, they should use this for all of their written work so that it gradually becomes automatic. This is also the requirement for Years 3 and 4 in the National Curriculum.

Slant

## S for Slant

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. This step is included in the National Curriculum for Years 3 and 4. Slant can be practised through writing small words using letters l,h,b,l,u,y: hill, little etc with a focus on parallel down strokes.

Speed

## S for Speed

Speed and style are the aspects of handwriting to be secured in Years 5 and 6. Speed is a measure of automation, so it will not develop until the other S factors are embedded. Children need help in understanding that increasing speed changes writing. More speed can

improve rhythm and fluency but too much can cause illegibility.

There needs to be awareness that competent writers have two kinds of handwriting - one which is good quality and is used for more formal purposes and the other - a fast, note-taking 'rough' hand which is used when speed is needed.

Building up speed takes short regular practice of appropriate tasks: repeating words, phrases, then sentences and paragraphs.

There are some children who learn to write legibly but will have disabilities which preclude them from writing at speed (e.g. children with cerebral palsy or DCD). This is where the school handwriting and SEN policies must be coordinated so that special provision can be made for this group.

### Style

## S for Style

As handwriting develops, children should be encouraged to develop a style of writing that works for them individually and is accessible to a reader. Slight changes to style could also increase fluency and speed. The teaching needs to include how to adapt style to different writing demands, including emails, labels, block capitals and decorative fonts.

## Resources: Pens, pencils and exercise books

Children will start handwriting using a pencil. When fine motor skills have been established a pen can be used. Children from Year 3 are encouraged to use pen to increase their fluidity and speed. Where necessary, certain children may choose to return to pencil if they are having particular difficulties.

We use exercise books with line-markings and margins for all writing tasks. The line spacing provided at all ages is selected to suit the natural size of the child's writing and their stage of writing development.

It is especially important that developing writers in EYFS and KS1 have widely spaced lines and a margin so that writing is not cramped. Adequate spacing continues into Key Stage 2 as highlighted in the National Curriculum. The requirements for Years 3 and 4 are that pupils should be taught that lines of writing are spaced sufficiently so that the ascenders and descenders of letters do not touch.

Where children are required to write on worksheets, correctly sized lines will be provided.

Equally, whiteboards are lined to support children with correct formation and spacing.

Maths books should have appropriately sized squares to support correct number formation.

## Motor Skills in EYFS

In Early Years, we must ensure that children are physically and developmentally ready to be successful writers. A curriculum to address the following gross motor factors is vital:

- Core strength, control and postural stability
- Motor planning skills
- Development of a consistent hand preference
- Ability to coordinate both sides of the body together
- The ability to reach across the midline of the body

In the autumn term of Reception, there should be an intense focus on supporting those children who struggle to control and regulate the movement of their large muscles of the shoulders, hip girdle, trunk, neck, elbows, wrist and knees.

Learning gross motor skills helps children to develop fine motor skills. A joined-up approach to physical development is important.

Fine motor skills give children more control over objects. For example, children will go from whole-hand grasping, to a pincer grip using the thumb and forefinger, to a pincer grip using the thumb middle finger and index finger.

This eventually gives them the ability to hold and control small tools with ease and confidence. They will need repeated practice to develop the muscle strength and hand–eye coordination needed.

Staff need to give opportunities within the curriculum to develop:

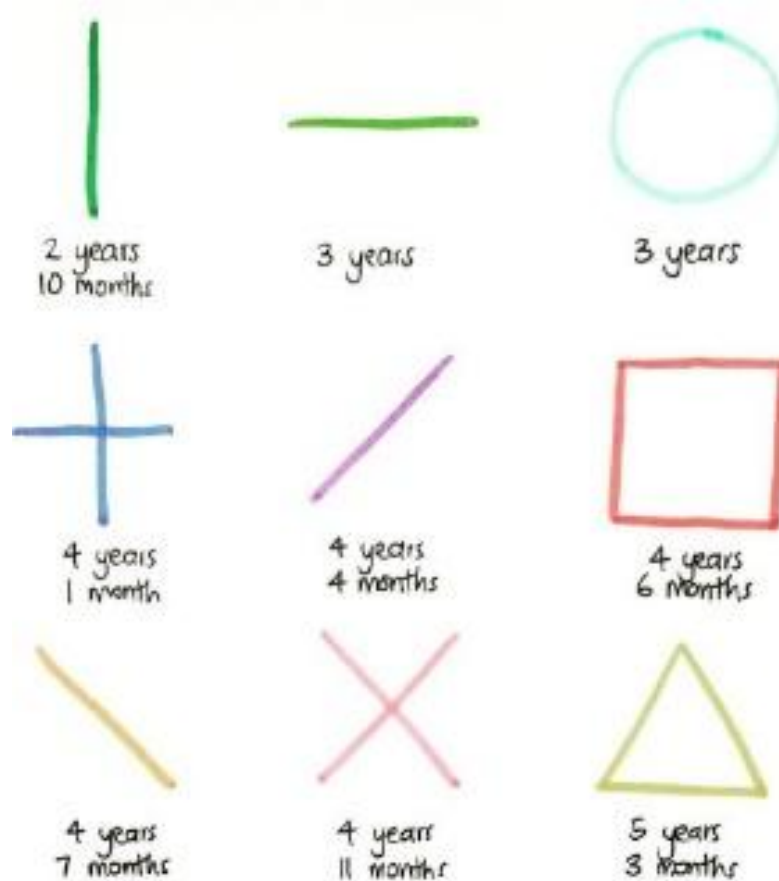
- Flexibility, stability and strength in wrist, hand and fingers
- Separation of the two sides of the hand
- Ability to maintain the thumb-web space
- Finger isolation
- Development of pincer grasp

Once children have secured gross and fine motor skills – there is an expectation that they swiftly move to correct pencil grip and accurate formation of letters.

Handwriting is also a visual motor skill that uses both your eyes and your muscles to

coordinate a task - visual sense and motor sense working together. Children need to visually observe the letter and then make the required movements to reproduce the letter with a pencil on paper. If a child struggles with visual motor skills, they may have incorrectly formed letters, letters of different sizes that are not on the line, and/or difficulty with grasping the writing tool.

The ability to copy a vertical line, circle, horizontal line, right oblique line, square, left oblique line and an oblique cross have been recognised by therapists as an indication of a child's readiness to integrate visual-motor skills to begin handwriting instruction.



## Handwriting at Home

Pupils are encouraged to practise their handwriting at home by using the Pupil log-in for Letter-join. Teachers can set Home Learning Tasks, which may include:

- Magic Patterns
- Magic Words
- SoundMatch
- PhonicsMatch
- LetterMatch
- LetterLotto
- Letter Families activity
- Word Search
- Word Bank
- Spelling lists
- Write it Right!



Children can also watch the word and letter animations and practice and explore other handwriting resources on Letter-join.

### Information for school staff:

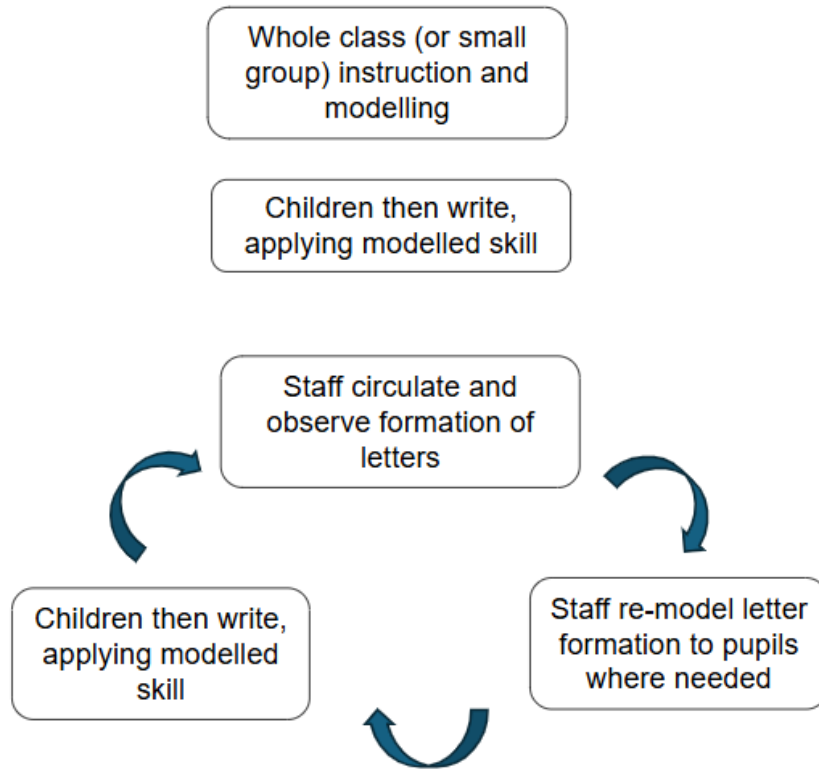
### Handwriting Curriculum:



What are the children taught?	What is the end of year expectation?
<p><b>Aims of the Reception curriculum:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Core strength, control and postural stability</li> <li>● Motor planning skills</li> <li>● Development of a consistent hand preference</li> <li>● Ability to coordinate both sides of the body together</li> <li>● The ability to reach across the midline of the body</li> <li>● enhancing gross motor skills such as air-writing, pattern-making and physical activities</li> <li>● exercises to develop fine motor skills such as mark-making on paper, whiteboards, sensory trays, iPads, tablets, etc.</li> <li>● Numerals 0-9</li> <li>● becoming familiar with letter shapes, their sounds, formation and vocabulary</li> <li>● correct sitting position and pencil grip for handwriting</li> </ul>	<p><b>End of Reception outcome:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Staff need to give opportunities within the curriculum to develop:</li> <li>● Flexibility, stability and strength in wrist, hand and fingers</li> <li>● Separation of the two sides of the hand</li> <li>● Ability to maintain the thumb-web space</li> <li>● Finger isolation</li> <li>● Development of pincer grasp</li> <li>● Children demonstrate appropriate posture and pencil grip</li> <li>● Children should be able to recognise and form most, if not all of, the printed, lowercase letters of the alphabet.</li> <li>● Children are able to correctly form the numerals 0-9</li> </ul>
<p><b>Aims of the Year 1 curriculum:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ensure consistent practise at letter formation to ensure that all children are able to recognise and form all the printed, lowercase letters of the alphabet.</li> <li>● Continuing with gross and fine motor skills exercises</li> </ul>	<p><b>End of Year 1 outcome:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● All children are able to recognise and form all the printed letters of the alphabet in both lower and upper case.</li> <li>● Children are able to correctly form the numerals 0-9, as well as some</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Letter families and why these letters are grouped together</li> <li>• Printed letters - upper and lower case</li> <li>• Numerals 0-9</li> <li>• Punctuation, maths symbols and others</li> <li>• Introducing pre-cursive patterns and cursive letters in Summer</li> </ul>	<p>punctuation marks, maths symbols and others.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children are aware that some letters will change slightly as we learn to join.</li> </ul>
<p>Aims of the Year 2 curriculum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children are taught how some letters change slightly as we learn to join.</li> <li>• Joining techniques</li> <li>• Cursive letters and words</li> <li>• Dictation exercises</li> </ul>	<p>End of Year 2 outcome:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most children are able to join most of their handwriting correctly and with appropriate joining techniques and formation.</li> </ul>
<p>Aims of the Lower Key Stage 2 curriculum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children consistently use accurate letter formation and joining techniques</li> <li>• Children join across subjects, not just within handwriting lessons</li> <li>• Children are able to form all lower and upper case letters, as well as numerals and other symbols.</li> <li>• Writing is becoming neater and smaller, with letters and spaces of an appropriate size in relation to one another.</li> <li>• Dictation exercises</li> </ul>	<p>End of Lower Key Stage 2 outcome:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children are joining their handwriting at all times. (unless there is a particular reason for not doing so, such as fine motor difficulties)</li> <li>• Writing is becoming neater, smaller and more consistent</li> </ul>
<p>Aims of the Upper Key Stage 2 curriculum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing is neat, small, accurately formed and consistent across all subjects.</li> <li>• Dictation exercises</li> <li>• Writing is becoming more automatic and fluent.</li> </ul>	<p>End of Upper Key Stage 2 outcome:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing is neat, small, accurately formed and consistent across all subjects.</li> <li>• Writing is becoming more automatic and fluent in order to aid speed and comfort during longer pieces of writing.</li> </ul>

### What do handwriting lessons look like?



### Handwriting frequency

Handwriting is a cross-curricular task and will be taken into consideration during all lessons. Formal teaching of handwriting will be carried out three times weekly to ensure Key Stage targets are met.

### Expectations

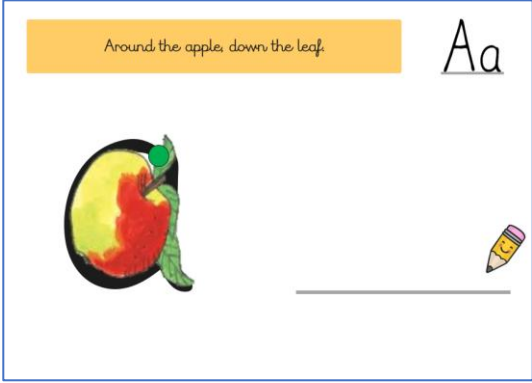
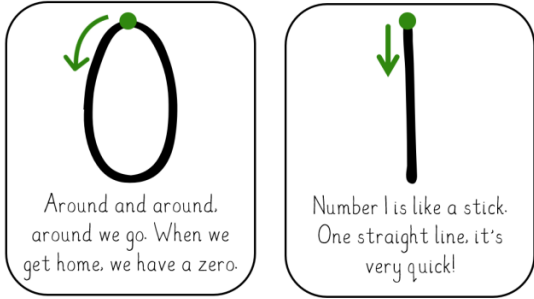
All staff are encouraged to model the printed or cursive style of handwriting chosen for each year group in our school in all their handwriting, whether on whiteboards, displays or in pupils’ books. This includes the correct formation of all letters.

Pupils should experience coherence and continuity in the learning and teaching of handwriting across all school years and be encouraged to take pride in the presentation of their work. Our objective is to help pupils enjoy learning and developing their handwriting with a sense of achievement and pride.

### Agreed language

Many problems in the teaching of handwriting have their origin in the misunderstanding of common terms. Developing an agreed vocabulary for handwriting helps to avoid confusion when staff communicate with one another and with pupils.

The same words should be used throughout school.

<p><b>Letter formation rhymes to use when describing movement and shape</b></p>	<p>School uses an adapted version of the Read, Write, Inc. letter formation and rhymes to support children’s knowledge of letters and sounds from Reception. This adapted format is followed for both print and cursive forms.</p> 
<p><b>Number formation rhymes to use when describing movement and shape</b></p>	<p>See number formation posters</p> 
<p><b>Base line</b></p>	<p>This is the continuous line in exercise books on which the main bodies of letters rest.</p>
<p><b>Capital letters and lowercase letters</b></p>	<p>Some community languages use just one case, so this feature may need to be explained to both children and parents.</p>
<p><b>Ascenders</b> <b>Descenders</b></p>	<p>These are the correct terms for the parts of letters that extend above or below the letter body.</p>

<p><b>Short letters</b></p>	<p>These are letters without ascenders or descenders, such as m, e, and o.</p> <p>Younger children might prefer to use 'short' letters.</p>
<p><b>Letter bodies</b></p>	<p>The parts of letters which are neither ascenders nor descenders e.g. the rounded parts of b, d and a and the "arches" of m and n.</p>
<p><b>Lead-in stroke</b></p>	<p>Letters in a continuous cursive style will begin on the baseline with an entry stroke / lead-in stroke.</p> <p>We do not recommend the use of lead-ins</p>
<p><b>Exit stroke or flick</b></p>	<p>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.</p>
<p><b>Joining strokes or Stringing</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Diagonal strokes join from letters which finish on the baseline.</li> <li>▪ Horizontal strokes join from letters which finish at the top.</li> <li>▪ Break letters are those which when adjacent to each other are best left un-joined.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Break letters</b></p>	<p>Break letters are those which children may choose not to join if this seems easier or if the join may appear clumsy. The break letters in our cursive font are:</p>

	F q
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## Inclusion

For children who experience handwriting difficulties due to fine motor development, those who are left-handed or those with special educational needs, appropriate additional support will be put into place. This may include focused support during handwriting lessons or additional intervention sessions to work on fine motor skill practice letter formation.

## Provision for EAL children

When supporting children transitioning from a different script or handwriting style, teachers should be aware of several potential challenges:

**Directionality differences:** Some scripts are written from right to left (e.g., Arabic, Hebrew), while others are left to right (e.g., English, Latin scripts). Adjusting to a new writing direction can be confusing for pupils.

**Character complexity:** Scripts like Chinese or Japanese involve intricate characters, whereas Latin scripts have simpler letter forms. Pupils may need time to adapt to the different levels of complexity.

**Baseline orientation:** In scripts like Arabic and Persian, certain letters have parts that descend below the baseline, contributing to the script's distinctive flowing appearance. Understanding these variations is crucial for teachers.

Strategies that staff should consider:

- Recognise the specific script or handwriting style the pupil is accustomed to. This awareness helps in identifying potential challenges they may face when adapting to a new writing system.
- Explicit instruction: Provide clear and direct teaching of the new handwriting style. Demonstrate proper letter formation, spacing, and alignment to establish a solid foundation.
- Gradual transition: Ease the pupil into the new handwriting style by starting with larger writing spaces and gradually moving to standard sizes. This approach allows for a comfortable adjustment period.

- Consistent practice and feedback: Encourage regular practice and provide constructive feedback. Positive reinforcement helps build confidence and reinforces correct techniques.
- Cultural sensitivity: Acknowledge and respect the pupil's original writing system. Incorporating elements from their native script can create a more inclusive learning environment.

## Assessment of handwriting

Early identification and correction of errors will prevent many later problems with handwriting. Assessment needs to be an integral part of the teaching sequence of every new step within the handwriting curriculum.

Any feedback and marking of handwriting must reflect an awareness of the complexity of the task and individual needs of the pupil. Wherever possible, targeted feedback should be provided as promptly as possible, preferably within the lesson. Written feedback on handwriting should be explained, modelled and practised face-to-face with the child. Any written comments should be focused on structured learning steps and avoid descriptors such as 'neat' and 'untidy' or 'take care with your handwriting' as these are not specific enough, and do not provide the modelling which evidence-led practice recommends. Exercise books should evidence the timely, consistent, active correction of any errors.

Assessment can be completed using the assessment frame:

SHAPE	MASTERED	DEVELOPING	INSECURE
Curly caterpillar letters: <i>a d c o f e s g q</i>			
Long ladder letters: <i>l t u j y</i>			
One-armed robot letters: <i>b h k m n p r</i>			
Zig-zag letter: <i>v w x z</i>			
<b>SIZE and SPACE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is writing sitting on the line?</li> <li>• Are letters an <u>appropriate size</u> on the page (not too big, not too small)?</li> <li>• Are the letters of a <u>consistent size</u> to one other?</li> <li>• Are <u>spaces between letters</u> and <u>between words</u> of an appropriate size?</li> </ul>			
<b>SITTING</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the child using appropriate <u>pencil grip</u>?</li> <li>• Is the child <u>sitting</u> in an appropriate manner with <u>slanted paper</u>?</li> </ul>			
<b>STRINGING (Joining)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are children <u>joining where</u> appropriate? (Break letters – f and q)</li> </ul>			
<b>SPEED</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the child managing to complete tasks? Is the writing slowing them down?</li> </ul>			
<small>Additional 5 factors SLANT and STYLE:            Children may develop a slanted handwriting style or a specific style such as for <u>note-taking</u>. This is not a requirement.            Are they using a slant for their handwriting? If no does the writing still look neat? <u>Is</u> the children developing their own style?            If not, ignore, as long as legible</small>	<b>Overall judgement:</b>		
	MASTERED	DEVELOPING	INSECURE

## Supporting children with handwriting difficulties

Where assessment or monitoring indicates that pupils are struggling with handwriting, care should be taken to ensure that a full diagnostic assessment is undertaken to understand the barriers to fluent and automatic handwriting. This will enable interventions and support to be precisely tailored to pupils' needs. Staff will ensure that, where pupils struggle significantly with transcription, written tasks are adapted appropriately. Pupils should not be expected to write beyond their phonic understanding. A short term reliance on oral composition may be appropriate while the pupil is supported to rapidly secure automatic handwriting.

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

Related disabilities include: Cerebral Palsy, Arthritis, Muscular Dystrophy, Hypermobility syndrome, Sensory impairments, ASD, ADHD, Developmental Coordination Disorder (or Dyspraxia), Developmental Language Disorder and Dyslexia.

## Intervention

Intervention should be based on children's needs as identified through an assessment of their handwriting. Intervention could be 1:1, 1:2 or small group. Adult observation/supervision and guidance are essential to reduce the risk of poor habits developing and becoming embedded. In our school, intervention is intended to support rapid catch-up as we know that poor handwriting impedes pupils' ability to engage fully with the curriculum.

## Appendix: Teacher Resources

### [Letter formation mat](#)

*Print and cursive versions available*

<p>Print letter formation</p> <p>Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee</p> <p>Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj</p> <p>Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo</p> <p>Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt</p> <p>Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz</p> <p>0123456789</p>	<p>Cursive letter formation</p> <p>Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee</p> <p>Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj</p> <p>Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo</p> <p>Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt</p> <p>Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz</p> <p>0123456789</p>
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## Letter families posters

*Print and cursive versions available*

<p>Curly caterpillar family</p> <p>a d c o f e s g q</p>	<p>Long ladder family</p> <p>i l t u j y</p>
<p>One-armed robot family</p> <p>b h k m n p r</p>	<p>Zig-zag family</p> <p>v w x z</p>

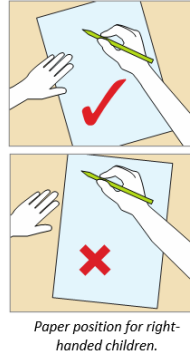
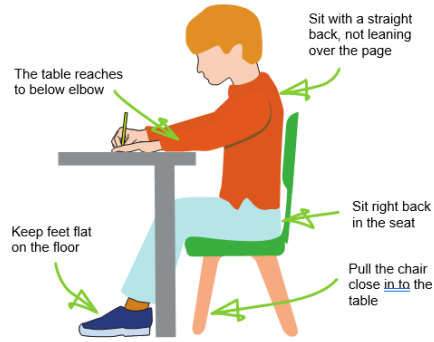
## Pencil Grip poster

<p><b>Tripod Grip</b></p> <p>Standard grip: Hold pencil with <b>thumb + index finger</b>. Pencil rests on middle finger.</p>	<p>Tripod Grip</p>
<p><b>Quadropod Grip</b></p> <p>Alternate grip: Hold pencil with <b>thumb + index and middle fingers</b>. Pencil rests on ring finger.</p>	<p>Quadropod Grip</p>

## Posture poster

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

### SITTING POSITION



## Handwriting assessment frame

Handwriting Assessment Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School			
SHAPE	MASTERED	DEVELOPING	INSECURE
Curly caterpillar letters: a d c o f e s g q			
Long ladder letters: i l t u j y			
One-armed robot letters: b h k m n p r			
Zig-zag letter: v w x z			
SIZE and SPACE			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is writing sitting on the line?</li> <li>Are letters an appropriate size on the page (not too big not too small)?</li> <li>Are the letters of a consistent size to one other?</li> <li>Are spaces between letters and between words of an appropriate size?</li> </ul>			
SITTING			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is the child using appropriate pencil grip?</li> <li>Is the child sitting in an appropriate manner with slanted paper?</li> </ul>			
STRINGING (Joining)			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are children joining where appropriate? (Break letters - f and q)</li> </ul>			
SPEED			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is the child managing to complete tasks? Is the writing slowing them down?</li> </ul>			
Additional S factors SLANT and STYLE: Children may develop a slanted handwriting style or a specific style such as for <u>note-taking</u> . This is not a requirement. Are they using a slant for their handwriting? If no does the writing still look neat? <u>Is</u> the children developing their own style? If not, ignore, as long as legible	Overall judgement:		
	MASTERED	DEVELOPING	INSECURE

## Handwriting curriculum

### Handwriting Curriculum



What are the children taught?	What is the end of year expectation?
<p><b>Aims of the Reception curriculum</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>enhancing gross motor skills such as air-writing, pattern-making and physical activities</li> <li>exercises to develop fine motor skills such as mark-making on paper, whiteboards, sensory trays, iPads, tablets, etc.</li> <li>Numerals 0-9</li> <li>becoming familiar with letter-shapes, their sounds, formation and vocabulary</li> <li>correct sitting position and pencil grip for handwriting</li> </ul>	<p><b>End of Reception outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children demonstrate appropriate posture and pencil grip</li> <li>Children should be able to recognise and form most, if not all, of the printed, lowercase letters of the alphabet.</li> <li>Children are able to correctly form the numerals 0-9</li> </ul>
<p><b>Aims of the Year 1 curriculum</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure consistent practice at letter formation to ensure that all children are able to recognise and form all the printed, lowercase letters of the alphabet.</li> <li>Continuing with gross and fine motor skills exercises</li> <li>Letter families and why these letters are grouped together</li> <li>Printed letters - upper and lower case</li> <li>Numerals 0-9</li> <li>Punctuation, maths symbols and others</li> <li>Introducing pre-cursive patterns and cursive letters in Summer</li> </ul>	<p><b>End of Year 1 outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All children are able to recognise and form all the printed letters of the alphabet in both lower and upper case</li> <li>Children are able to correctly form the numerals 0-9, as well as some punctuation marks, maths symbols and others</li> <li>Children are aware that some letters will change slightly as we learn to join.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Aims of the Year 2 curriculum</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children are taught how some letters change slightly as we learn to join</li> <li>Joining techniques</li> <li>Cursive letters and words</li> <li>Dictation exercises</li> </ul>	<p><b>End of Year 2 outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most children are able to join most of their handwriting correctly and with appropriate joining techniques and formation.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Aims of the Lower Key Stage 2 curriculum</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children consistently use accurate letter formation and joining techniques</li> <li>Children join across subjects, not just within handwriting lessons</li> <li>Children are able to form all lower and upper case letters, as well as numerals and other symbols</li> <li>Writing is becoming neater and smaller, with letters and spaces of an appropriate size in relation to one another</li> <li>Dictation exercises</li> </ul>	<p><b>End of Lower Key Stage 2 outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children are joining their handwriting at all times, (unless there is a particular reason for not doing so, such as fine motor difficulties)</li> <li>Writing is becoming neater, smaller and more consistent</li> </ul>
<p><b>Aims of the Upper Key Stage 2 curriculum</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Writing is neat, small, accurately formed and consistent across all subjects</li> <li>Dictation exercises</li> <li>Writing is becoming more automatic and fluent</li> </ul>	<p><b>End of Upper Key Stage 2 outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Writing is neat, small, accurately formed and consistent across all subjects</li> <li>Writing is becoming more automatic and fluent in order to aid speed and comfort during longer pieces of writing.</li> </ul>

## Modelling PowerPoint - Cursive and Print

*Print and cursive versions available*

Handwriting

Letter Formation – Print

Around the apple, down the leaf.

Aa

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## Formation rhymes posters – Cursive and Print

*Print and cursive versions available*



### Letter formation rhymes – Print



 Around the apple, down the leaf.	 Down the laces to the heel, round the toe.	 Curl around the caterpillar.	 Round his bottom, up his tall neck and down to his toes.	 Lift off the top and scoop out the egg.
 Round the flower, add the root, lift off and cross the leaves.	 Back around her face, down her hair and give her a curl.	 Down the head to the hooves, back up and over his back.	 Down the body, add a dot for the head.	 Down his body, curl and dot.
 Down the kangaroo's body, lift off and add his tail.	 Down the long leg.	 Maise, mountain, mountain.	 Down Nobby, up over his net.	 All around the orange. Lead out from the top.
 Down the plait and over the pirate's face.	 Round her head, up past her earrings, down her hair and flick.	 Down his back, up and curl over his arm.	 Slither down the snake.	 Down the tower, lift off and cross the tower.
 Down and under, up to the top and add the puddle.	 Down a wing, up a wing and out.	 Down, up, down up and out.	 Down the arm and leg and repeat the other side and out.	 Down a horn, up a horn, loop under his head and up to his ear.
 Zig zig zig				

## Number formation posters

Around and around,  
around we go. When we  
get home, we have a zero.

Number 1 is like a stick.  
One straight line, it's  
very quick!

## Parent letters for at-home practice (LetterJoin)

### Letter-join Pupil log-in

Dear Parents,  
Our school is now part of the Letter-join  
handwriting scheme and our pupils can log in to  
the Letter-join website at home on iPads, tablets  
and computers.  
There you will find the same, easy-to-use  
handwriting resources that we use at school.



#### PC DESKTOP AND LAPTOP LOG-IN

Log in at [www.letterjoin.co.uk](http://www.letterjoin.co.uk) and use the  
Desktop log-in option with these details:

Username: **qr5617**  
Password: **home**

PC Browsers:  
Letter-join will work on the following  
browsers on PCs/Macs:  
• Google Chrome  
• Safari  
Do not use Internet Explorer.

#### IPAD AND TABLET LOG-IN

Go to [www.letterjoin.co.uk](http://www.letterjoin.co.uk) and use the  
Tablet log-in option with these details:

Username: **qr5617**

Swipe code  
(starting at top left):



Tablet/iPad Browsers:  
Letter-join will run on the following tablets:  
• iPads running iOS7 and above through the  
Safari browser.  
• Windows 8 tablets (8 inch and bigger)  
using the built-in browser.  
• Android tablets (8 inch and bigger) using  
Google Chrome.

#### Choose a Classroom

Letter-join

Choose your class name

Free Play	Richmond
Greenhouse	Stonington
Overseer	Wainlock
Castle	Barnburgh

Once logged-in, choose your child's classroom and you can  
use Letter-join's resources and fun activities to reinforce the  
handwriting we teach at school. You can trace over the  
letters and words and play the games on your tablet.

Your teacher may suggest specific activities to  
complete each week or on occasion.



# Handwriting Policy

## Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School

