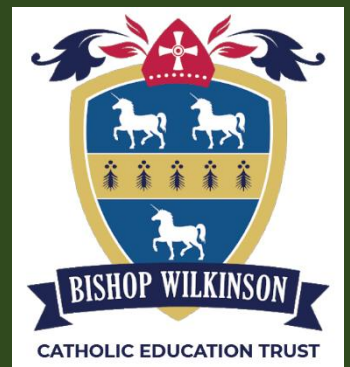




**St. Joseph's Catholic
Infant & Junior Schools
Birtley**

Handwriting Strategy

February 2025





St. Joseph's
Catholic Infant
& Junior Schools
Birtley



OUR MISSION

Let us build a house where hands will reach beyond the wood and stone, to heal and strengthen, serve and teach, and live the Word they've known.

Built of hopes and dreams and visions, rock of faith and vault of grace; here the love of Christ shall end divisions:

All are welcome in this place.

OUR VISION

Lord, in our daily lives, may we:

Love and serve like St. Joseph, care and protect like St. Joseph, work and teach like St. Joseph, show compassion and loyalty like St. Joseph, have trust and faith like St. Joseph.

We follow St. Joseph's virtues and remember our significance in God's world. Amen.



Handwriting Strategy:

St. Joseph's Catholic Infant and Junior Schools, Birtley recognise that handwriting is a basic skill that influences the quality of work throughout the curriculum. It is used as a mode of expressing and communicating language. 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 is a compulsory component of the national curriculum in England: English programmes of study for both key stages 1 and 2.

Aims and objectives:

The design of the handwriting curriculum is rooted in evidence-based practice. Leaders have constructed a curriculum that is both ambitious and designed to give all learners the skills needed to communicate by hand. The curriculum is coherently planned and sequenced towards cumulatively sufficient knowledge and skills. It aims:

- to develop a neat, legible, speedy handwriting style using continuous cursive letters, which leads to producing letters and words automatically in independent writing.
- to establish and maintain high expectations for the presentation of written work.
- 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.

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. There may be slight adjustments for the very youngest children. This list featuring some of the most important terms can be found in Appendix I.

Font:

We follow the Penpals handwriting scheme.

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.

Our 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

Our cursive font:

The five boxing wizards jump quickly.

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".

Number Formation

We teach the following number formation from EYFS.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

Break Letters

The break letters in our cursive font are:

g j x y z

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.

There is a natural progression from Reception throughout Key Stage 1, when pupils progress from 'sounds' and 'graphemes/phonemes' to letter names. It is important that this occurs in a gradual manner, in keeping with the child's phonological awareness.

Joining:

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 towards the end of Year 1. Once children can join, the expectation is that, whenever they write, they should use a joined style with the exception of specific contexts that require print (for example, labelling a diagram). In Key Stage 2, letter formation and correct joins are modelled again at the beginning of each year and expectations are set.

Key resources:

Pencils:

Ideally, children should be provided with a variety of pencils and helped to find those that provide control and comfort for them as individuals. The process is rather like choosing new shoes – one size and shape will not suit all.

The choice should consider:

- Pencil shapes: triangular and hexagonal bodies
- Tactile qualities: both textured and smooth bodies
- Sizes: variety of widths, lengths and weights
- Lead grading: both hard and soft leads
- Designs: ergonomically designed mechanical pencils for both left and right handers

Children who have well-developed fine motor skills can usually manage with standard pencils, but for children with difficulties, a well-chosen design can offer support.

Pens:

The choice of writing tools is related to the task and subject, not any attributes of maturity or prestige. The decision of when to introduce pens is flexible and based on biomechanical factors and each child's needs. We also recognise that there is much debate about the 'pen licence'. At St. Joseph's, we believe that pupils should write in pen, as a matter of course, and that pupils spend several years practicing and refining their written style. We also recognise that on occasions, pupils make mistakes, and wish to 'experiment' with their style. At St. Joseph's, we also appreciate the friction that some pens produce, enabling pupils' handwriting to become sleeker. In Key Stage 1, pupils will practice in pens, in handwriting lessons, with the aim that by the end of Year 2, pupils will routinely write with a pen.

Exercise Books – line spacing:

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 KSI 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.

Mathematics books have appropriately sized squares to support correct number formation.

Organisation of teaching:

Handwriting skills need to be taught both as a timetabled discrete subject and through ongoing reinforcement of skills in everyday written language activities. Our handwriting lessons are focused, short and at regular intervals. Handwriting sessions are in addition to phonics sessions.

Handwriting will be taught in the following sessions:

EYFS: Four morning sessions per week.

Key Stage 1: Twice weekly during Tuesday and Thursday morning registration sessions as well as two additional shorter sessions which will take place during the English sequence of learning throughout the week.

Key Stage 2: Twice weekly during Tuesday and Thursday morning registration sessions as well as two additional shorter sessions which will take place during the English sequence of learning throughout the week.

Core principles of teaching handwriting:

Our core principles of teaching handwriting are set out in appendix 2.

These are drawn from evidence-based practice and guidance from the National Handwriting Association. All staff should follow these principles.

Provision for left-handed writers:

At least ten percent of the population are left-handed – a slightly higher proportion are male.

Potential issues for left-handed writers include:

- Some letter formation movements are made in a direction that is not natural
- A left-hander often cannot see what they are writing
- Writing is more likely to get smudged

A left-hander has to make many more *pushing* movements when writing that are more difficult to control than *pulling* movements.

Staff should assess the needs of left-handed writers and consider appropriate adjustments which may include:

- A higher seat
- A sloped writing surface
- Good lighting – to 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

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.

An example of our termly assessment can be found in Appendix 2.

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 should 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 intensive and intended to support rapid catch-up as we know that poor handwriting impedes pupils' ability to engage fully with the curriculum.

Community involvement:

Knowledge sharing and relationship building are at the core of good practice in any school community and of particular importance in learning a complex skill like handwriting.

Involving parents and carers at every stage in learning ensures that key messages are implemented at both home and school. Successful practice in handwriting is based on consistency and continuity across the whole school community. In our school we involve parents in the process of handwriting by:

























- Sharing letter formation rhymes with parents at the beginning of reception.
- Showcasing handwriting progression on social media and during parent meetings.
- Working together with parents when the need for handwriting intervention has been identified.

Appendix I: Agreed language

Positional language:

An essential part of teaching patterning and letter formation is to ensure that young children really understand positional language when working with pencil and paper.

Terms include: up, down, above, below, under, top, bottom, across, around and between.

 Around the apple and down the leaf.	 Down the laces to the heel and around the toe.	 Curl around the caterpillar.	 Around the dinosaurs bottom, up his tall neck & down to his toes.	 Lift off the top and scoop out the egg.	 Down the stem and draw the leaves.
 Around the girls face, down her hair and give her a curl.	 Down the head, to his hooves and over his back.	 Down the body and dot for the head.	 Down his body, curl, dot for his head.	 Down the kangaroo's body tail and leg.	 Down the long leg.
 Down Maisie, mountain, mountain.	 Down Nobby and over his net.	 All around the orange.	 Down the pirates plait and around his face.	 Round her head, up past her earring, down her hair and flick.	 Down the robots back and curl over his arm.
 Slither down the snake.	 Down the tower, across the tower.	 Down and under, up to the top and draw the puddle.	 Down a wing, up a wing.	 Down, up, down, up.	 Down the arm and leg, repeat the other side.
 Down a horn, up a horn and under head.	 Zig-zag-zig.				

To support the correct and consistent formation of individual letters, a graphic with an accompanying rhyme is used in Reception and throughout Key Stage 1.

Similar letter shapes are grouped together to help children form letters consistently. This continues to be referenced as necessary in Key Stage 2.

Long-legged giraffe	<i>l i t u j y</i>	<i>ll</i>	<i>L I T U J Y</i>
One-armed robot	<i>r b n h m k p</i>		<i>R B N H M K P</i>
Curly caterpillar	<i>c a d o s g q e f</i>	<i>ff ss</i>	<i>C A D O S G Q E F</i>
Zig-zag monster	<i>z v w x</i>	<i>zz</i>	<i>Z V W X</i>
Letter combinations	<i>ck qu</i>	<i>ai igh oo</i>	<i>ee oa ow ch wh</i>

Capital or Upper-case letters/Small or Lower-case letters:

Each lower-case letter has a corresponding capital letter; they share the letter name and represent the same sound. Pupils are taught, for example, that both 'a' and 'A' are called /æ/ and are usually pronounced /ɑ/. The names of letters are taught once pupils have learned to say the sounds.

The base line:

This is the continuous line upon which the main bodies of letters rest.

Ascenders or Tall letters / Descenders or Tail letters:

These are the correct terms for the parts of letters that extend above or below the letter body. In Reception and Year 1, these letters are described as Tall (letters) and Tail (letters). By Year 2, children are taught the correct terms.

x-height or short letters:

These are letters without ascenders or descenders, such as m, e and o. In Reception and Year 1, these letters are described as ‘short’ letters.

Letter bodies:

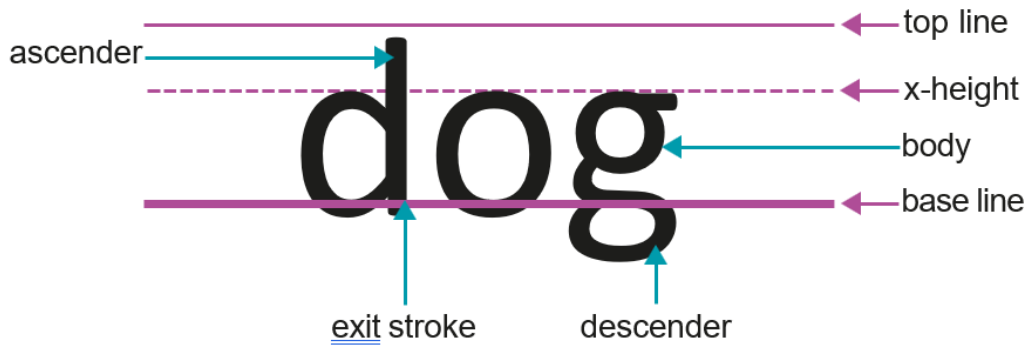
The parts of letters which are neither ascenders nor descenders e.g. the rounded parts of b, d and a and the “arches” of m and n.

Entry or Lead-in stroke:

Letters in a continuous cursive style will begin on the baseline with an entry stroke / lead-in stroke.

Exit stroke or flick:

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.



Joining strokes and break letters:

- Diagonal strokes join from letters which finish on the baseline.
- Horizontal strokes join from letters which finish at the top.
- Break letters are those which when adjacent to each other are best left un-joined.



Appendix 2: Termly handwriting assessment

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ



Reception Termly

Handwriting Tracking



Assess the following against the 'S Factors', recording progress on English Handwriting Spreadsheet:

1. Lowercase letters
2. Capital Letters
3. Numerals
4. Name



Repeat in handwriting book.

0 1 2 3 4 5

6 7 8 9 10



Write your name.

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ



Year 1 Termly

Handwriting Tracking



Assess the following against the 'S Factors', recording progress on English Handwriting Spreadsheet:

1. Lower-case letters
2. Capital Letters
3. Numerals
4. Name
5. Key joins



Repeat in handwriting book.

0 1 2 3 4 5

6 7 8 9 10



Write your name.



Diagonal join to ascender	ch	Diagonal join, no ascender	ai
Horizontal join to ascender	wh	Horizontal join, no ascender	aw



abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ



0 1 2 3 4 5
6 7 8 9 10



The five boxing wizards jump quickly.



Year 2 Termly

Handwriting Tracking



Assess the following against the 'S Factors', recording progress on English Handwriting Spreadsheet:

1. Lower-case letters
2. Capital Letters
3. Numerals
4. Key joins
5. Pangram



Repeat in handwriting book.

Join	Letters in this box	To letters in this box	Joins taught
Diagonal join to ascender	a e i l t	h k l t	ch, th, ck, al, el, ac, il, ll, ak, at, ab, af
Diagonal join, no ascender	a c d e i k l n t u	e i n r y	ai, ay, ir, or, ie, ue, ee, le, ar, ur, in, ui, oy, aw, an, ip
		a c d g s (anticlockwise letters)	ea, ig, dg, ng, ed, ce, eg, ie, ad, ug, dd, ag, as, es, os, ns, de, is, ls, ts, ks
Horizontal join, no ascender	o u w	e i n p r u v w y	ou, ou, oe, ve, or, oi, oy, on, op, ov
		a c d g s (anticlockwise letters)	oo, oa, wa, wo, ac, ag, ad, va, vo
Horizontal join, to ascender	o w	h	wh, oh

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ



0 1 2 3 4 5

6 7 8 9 10



The five boxing wizards jump quickly.



KS2 Termly

Handwriting Tracking



Assess the following against the 'S Factors', recording progress on English Handwriting Spreadsheet:

1. Lower-case letters
2. Capital Letters
3. Numerals
4. Key joins
5. Pangram



Repeat in handwriting book.

Join	Letters in this box	To letters in this box	Joins taught
Diagonal join to ascender	a c e i l t	h k l e	ch, th, ck, al, ol, at, il, ill, ok, ot, ob, ol
Diagonal join, no ascender	a c d e i k l n t u	e i n r y a c d g s (anticlockwise letters)	ai, ay, ir, or, ie, ue, ae, le, ar, ur, in, ui, ay, aw, an, ip ea, ig, dg, ng, ed, oc, eg, ie, ad, ug, dd, ag, as, es, os, ns, de, is, le, te, ke
Horizontal join, no ascender	o u w	e i n p r u v w y a c d g o s (anticlockwise letters)	aw, au, oe, ve, or, ol, oy, on, op, ov oo, oa, ua, wa, oc, og, od, vo, vo
Horizontal join, to ascender	o w	h	wh, oh
Tricky join (combined in r s f)	r s f		re, ro, se, so, ff, fo, fe