



# Handwriting in the EYFS- Ruby Class

This document sets out the handwriting, fine motor and early writing expectations for children in Ruby Class across Nursery and Reception, outlining how skills are taught, practised and developed over time. It reflects our high aspirations for children and our commitment to ensuring that Reception leavers enter Year 1 confident, fluent and ready to meet KS1 expectations.

The guidance is informed by:

- *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)*
- *Development Matters (2023)*
- *Birth to Five Matters*
- Research-informed EYFS best practice

Handwriting development is not taught in isolation. It sits at the intersection of:

- **Physical Development** (gross and fine motor control)
- **Communication and Language** (talking about marks, meanings and sounds)
- **Literacy** (phonics, spelling, transcription and composition)

Our approach to handwriting reflects a well-sequenced, ambitious curriculum, designed to ensure children know more, remember more and can do more over time.

- Handwriting begins long before pencil and paper, rooted in physical development and movement
- Learning is carefully sequenced from gross motor control to fluent transcription
- High expectations are underpinned by appropriate scaffolding and timely support
- Handwriting is taught explicitly and systematically, closely linked to phonics
- Children are given frequent opportunities to practise and apply skills in meaningful contexts
- Adults model, explain and revisit learning to support retention and automaticity

## How Handwriting Is Taught in Ruby Class

Handwriting teaching in Ruby Class is intentional, cumulative and progressive. Skills are revisited and built upon so that learning is securely embedded.

Children experience a clear teaching sequence:

1. **Gross motor movement** – developing posture, balance and shoulder stability
2. **Fine motor strengthening** – building hand strength, dexterity and finger isolation
3. **Pattern and shape awareness** – rehearsing pre-writing movements
4. **Phonics application** – linking sounds directly to letter formation
5. **Controlled letter formation** – accurate orientation, starting points and direction
6. **Fluency and stamina** – applying handwriting automatically when writing for meaning

Teaching is supported through daily practice and high-quality interactions, ensuring children revisit prior learning and make sustained progress over time.

## Letter Formation and Language

Across Nursery and Reception, adults use consistent language to support letter formation:

- *Sky letters* (tall letters)
- *Grass letters* (sit on the line)
- *Ground letters* (drop below the line)

We follow a lowercase-first approach, in line with phonics teaching, ensuring children:

- Start letters in the correct place
- Move in the correct direction
- Avoid reversals becoming embedded

# Nursery Handwriting Expectations

In Nursery, the focus is on physical readiness for writing, communication, and confidence with making marks. Children are not expected to form letters correctly but are supported to build the foundations needed for later success.

## Nursery Progression by Term

Nursery	Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
<b>Gross Motor</b>	Explore large movements (arms, shoulders)	Control movements with tools	Begin purposeful movements	Increased coordination	Confident large-scale control	Secure control and balance
<b>Fine Motor</b>	Whole-hand grasp	Begin finger strength	Tripod emerging	Increased finger isolation	Controlled tool use	Precision and stamina
<b>Mark Making</b>	Random marks	Named marks	Intentional marks	Meaningful marks	Represent ideas	Early symbols/letters
<b>Phonics Link</b>	Environmental sounds	Rhythm & rhyme	Oral blending	Sound awareness	Initial sounds	Recognisable letter-like forms
<b>Handwriting Tools</b>	Paint, chalk, dough	Crayons, chunky pencils	Tools with control	Variety of tools	Choice of tools	Preference and confidence

## End of Nursery Expectations

By the end of Nursery, most children will:

- Demonstrate secure engagement in all five aspects of Phase 1 phonics (environmental sounds; instrumental sounds; body percussion; rhythm and rhyme; alliteration; voice sounds; oral blending and segmenting)
- Listen attentively and discriminate between sounds in the environment and in speech
- Join in with rhymes, songs and sound games with confidence
- Recognise some single letter sounds with adult support
- Write their own name, using recognisable letters (not necessarily all correctly formed)
- Show enjoyment and confidence in mark making and early writing
- Use tools with increasing control and intention
- Demonstrate the physical readiness to begin formal phonics-linked letter formation in Reception

# Reception Handwriting Expectations

In Reception, handwriting becomes explicitly linked to phonics and writing for meaning. Teaching is systematic, well-modelled and regularly revisited. By the end of the year, children are expected to be working at or above EYFS expectations, entering Year 1 with confidence.

## Reception Progression by Term

Reception	Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
<b>Fine Motor</b>	Strengthen grip	Secure tripod	Control & endurance	Increased stamina	Automatic control	Fluent handwriting
<b>Letter Formation</b>	Some letters correct	Most letters correct	All taught letters correct	Consistent formation	Size consistency	Speed & accuracy
<b>Phonics Link</b>	Write sounds	Write CVC words	Write words & captions	Simple sentences	Expanded sentences	Independent writing
<b>Line Awareness</b>	Emerging	Beginning to sit on line	Mostly accurate	Secure line use	Consistent sizing	Presentation pride
<b>Writing Purpose</b>	Labels & names	Captions	Sentences	Narrative & recount	Independent composition	KS1 readiness

## End of Reception (EYFS+) Expectations

Our Reception leavers are expected to exceed the minimum EYFS requirements and enter Year 1 confident and secure in early literacy skills. By the end of Reception, children will:

- Read, write and use Set 1 and Set 2 tricky words confidently within their reading and writing
- Apply secure phonic knowledge to read and spell words and simple sentences
- Write expanded sentences, including the use of conjunctions such as *and* or *because*
- Form most lowercase letters correctly, with accurate starting points and direction (non-cursive)
- Use appropriate sizing and orientation for letters, with increasing consistency
- Maintain a secure tripod grip and write with stamina and control
- Apply handwriting automatically when writing independently, without over-conscious effort
- Demonstrate pride in presentation and confidence as a writer

These expectations are intentionally ambitious, ensuring children begin Year 1 already working at *expected* standards and ready to progress within the KS1 curriculum.

# Inclusion and Support

We recognise that handwriting and literacy development vary. Support may include:

- Targeted fine motor or phonics interventions
- Alternative tools, surfaces and writing opportunities
- Short, purposeful practice sessions
- Multi-sensory and movement-based approaches
- Close liaison with parents, SENCo and external professionals

High expectations remain, with appropriate scaffolding to ensure every child can succeed.

Handwriting in Ruby Class is:

- Developmentally informed
- Carefully sequenced
- Explicitly taught
- Closely linked to phonics and communication
- Joyful, purposeful and ambitious

Our approach ensures that every child is prepared, confident and proud of their writing journey.

## Rationale for Ambitious Reception Expectations

Our curriculum is designed with ambition and clarity of intent, ensuring that all children are supported to achieve highly. While the EYFS framework outlines statutory expectations, we recognise these as minimum standards. Our curriculum ensures children are secure within these expectations and able to apply their learning independently by the end of Reception.

This ambition is achieved through:

- A clearly sequenced curriculum across Nursery and Reception
- Consistent, high-quality teaching and modelling
- Regular opportunities to practise and revisit key skills
- A strong emphasis on automaticity, reducing cognitive load as children move into Year 1

# Expanded Progression Maps

*This document presents the detailed progression tables for handwriting, fine motor and phonics-linked writing in Ruby Class. The focus is on what children are learning, how skills are taught, and why each stage matters, in line with EYFS best practice and ambitious expectations.*

*\*Inclusive practice is embedded throughout all EYFS teaching in Ruby Class. In line with the school's SEND Information Report, provision is underpinned by quality first teaching, with adaptations made through reasonable adjustments, graduated support and early intervention, ensuring all children are supported to access learning alongside their peers. The approaches described in this document represent quality first teaching for all children, with adaptive strategies used routinely so that every child can access the same ambitious curriculum. Support for children with SEN is therefore woven through everyday practice rather than treated as an additional or separate layer.*

## Inclusion and SEND in Ruby Class

Inclusion is embedded throughout all handwriting, fine motor and early writing teaching in Ruby Class. All children access the same ambitious curriculum, with adaptations made through scaffolding, adult support, alternative tools and targeted interventions where appropriate.

Across Nursery and Reception, we use the following key programmes to support inclusive practice:

- **Write Dance** – whole-body and fine motor movement to music to develop writing readiness
- **Dough Disco** – daily hand-strengthening and finger isolation activities
- **Pen Disco** – targeted pencil control, grip and fine motor precision
- **Drawing Club** – developing language, imagination, composition and early writing through talk and drawing
- **Read Write Inc. (RWI)** – systematic phonics teaching linking sounds directly to letter formation and writing
- **Verbo Communication and Language Interventions** – targeted support for listening, attention, vocabulary and expressive language

Adaptations may include smaller group teaching, visual supports, repetition and overlearning, alternative recording methods, and flexible expectations around output while maintaining high aspirations.

## Nursery Handwriting, Fine Motor and Phonics Progression

Area	Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
<b>Gross Motor</b>	<p><b>Focus:</b> Body awareness and large movements.</p> <p><b>On track:</b> Child confidently uses arms and shoulders to make large marks and enjoys climbing, pushing and pulling.</p>	<p><b>Focus:</b> Control of large movements.</p> <p><b>On track:</b> Child controls force when using large tools and shows improving coordination.</p>	<p><b>Focus:</b> Purposeful movement.</p> <p><b>On track:</b> Child repeats simple movement patterns intentionally.</p>	<p><b>Focus:</b> Balance and coordination.</p> <p><b>On track:</b> Child crosses the midline naturally and moves with balance.</p>	<p><b>Focus:</b> Sustained large movements.</p> <p><b>On track:</b> Child sustains large-scale movements with control.</p>	<p><b>Reception ready:</b> Child shows postural stability, balance and shoulder control to sit, attend and write for short periods in Reception.</p>
<b>Fine Motor</b>	<p><b>Focus:</b> Hand strength and sensory exploration.</p> <p><b>On track:</b> Child engages willingly in fine motor play using whole hand.</p>	<p><b>Focus:</b> Finger strength.</p> <p><b>On track:</b> Child begins to use fingers independently rather than whole hand.</p>	<p><b>Focus:</b> Early grip development.</p> <p><b>On track:</b> Child shows an emerging tripod grip during supported activities.</p>	<p><b>Focus:</b> Control and precision.</p> <p><b>On track:</b> Child uses fingers with increasing control.</p>	<p><b>Focus:</b> Tool control and stamina.</p> <p><b>On track:</b> Child sustains fine motor activity and chooses appropriate tools.</p>	<p><b>Reception ready:</b> Child has sufficient strength, control and stamina to hold a pencil and attempt writing in Reception Autumn 1.</p>
<b>Mark Making/ Early Writing</b>	<p><b>Focus:</b> Sensory exploration and movement.</p> <p><b>On track:</b> Child makes marks confidently and with enjoyment.</p>	<p><b>Focus:</b> Meaning through talk.</p> <p><b>On track:</b> Child names marks and talks about what they represent.</p>	<p><b>Focus:</b> Intentional mark making.</p> <p><b>On track:</b> Child makes marks to convey an idea or message.</p>	<p><b>Focus:</b> Purposeful communication in play.</p> <p><b>On track:</b> Child uses marks within play to communicate meaning.</p>	<p><b>Focus:</b> Representing ideas visually.</p> <p><b>On track:</b> Child represents ideas using drawings and symbols.</p>	<p><b>Reception ready:</b> Child produces recognisable letter-like forms, writes own name, and understands that writing carries meaning.</p>
<b>Phonics Link (Phase 1)</b>	<p><b>Focus:</b> Listening and attention.</p> <p><b>On track:</b> Child listens attentively to environmental sounds.</p>	<p><b>Focus:</b> Rhythm and rhyme.</p> <p><b>On track:</b> Child joins in with rhymes and repeated patterns.</p>	<p><b>Focus:</b> Oral blending.</p> <p><b>On track:</b> Child blends sounds orally with adult support.</p>	<p><b>Focus:</b> Sound discrimination.</p> <p><b>On track:</b> Child identifies initial sounds in words.</p>	<p><b>Focus:</b> Sound–symbol awareness.</p> <p><b>On track:</b> Child recognises some single sounds with support.</p>	<p><b>Reception ready:</b> Child engages confidently in sound-linked mark making and is ready to begin Read Write Inc. phonics.</p>

<p><b>Attention, Engagement &amp; Readiness</b></p>	<p><b>On track:</b> Child attends to an adult-led activity for <b>1–2 minutes</b>, with support, particularly when the activity is sensory or movement-based.</p>	<p><b>On track:</b> Child remains engaged in an adult-led activity for <b>2–3 minutes</b>, with adult support and modelling.</p>	<p><b>On track:</b> Child attends to a short, focused adult-led task for <b>3–5 minutes</b>, especially when routines are familiar.</p>	<p><b>On track:</b> Child manages transitions into learning routines and sustains attention for <b>5–7 minutes</b> during adult-led activities.</p>	<p><b>On track:</b> Child sustains attention for <b>7–10 minutes</b> in small-group or whole-class sessions, with reduced adult prompting.</p>	<p><b>Reception ready:</b> Child can sit, attend and engage for 10–15 minutes in a whole-class or group session, with appropriate movement breaks and support as needed.</p>
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## Reception Handwriting Progression

Area	Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2 – Year 1 Ready
<b>Fine Motor &amp; Writing Stamina</b>	<p><b>Teaching focus:</b> Establish correct pencil grip, posture and writing routines.</p> <p><b>On track:</b> Child uses a developing tripod grip and writes for short focused periods.</p>	<p><b>Teaching focus:</b> Secure grip and reduce fatigue.</p> <p><b>On track:</b> Tripod grip is secure; child writes for longer without fatigue.</p>	<p><b>Teaching focus:</b> Build stamina during adult-led writing sessions.</p> <p><b>On track:</b> Child sustains writing through short adult-led sessions.</p>	<p><b>Teaching focus:</b> Increase independence and endurance.</p> <p><b>On track:</b> Child writes daily with increasing stamina.</p>	<p><b>Teaching focus:</b> Automaticity.</p> <p><b>On track:</b> Grip and control are largely automatic.</p>	<p><b>Year 1 ready:</b> Child writes comfortably for sustained lesson periods.</p>
<b>Letter Formation (non-cursive)</b>	<p><b>Teaching focus:</b> Explicit teaching of correct letter formation linked to phonics.</p> <p><b>On track:</b> Some lowercase letters correctly formed.</p>	<p><b>Teaching focus:</b> Consistency across taught letters.</p> <p><b>On track:</b> Most lowercase letters correctly formed.</p>	<p><b>Teaching focus:</b> Secure formation of all taught letters.</p> <p><b>On track:</b> All taught letters correctly formed and oriented.</p>	<p><b>Teaching focus:</b> Application within writing.</p> <p><b>ELG secure:</b> Correct formation maintained in writing.</p>	<p><b>Teaching focus:</b> Legibility and presentation.</p> <p><b>ELG+:</b> Letters consistently sized and legible.</p>	<p><b>Year 1 ready:</b> Handwriting is mostly correct, fluent and automatic.</p>
<b>Phonics-Linked Writing</b>	<p><b>Teaching focus:</b> Sound–symbol correspondence in writing.</p> <p><b>On track:</b> Child writes single sounds to represent words.</p>	<p><b>Teaching focus:</b> Word building through segmenting.</p> <p><b>On track:</b> Child independently writes CVC words.</p>	<p><b>Teaching focus:</b> Independent application.</p> <p><b>On track:</b> Child independently writes captions using phonics and known tricky words.</p>	<p><b>Teaching focus:</b> Sentence construction.</p> <p><b>On track:</b> Child independently writes phonetically plausible simple sentences.</p>	<p><b>Teaching focus:</b> Sentence expansion.</p> <p><b>On track:</b> Child writes phonetically plausible expanded sentences using and or because.</p>	<p><b>Year 1 ready:</b> Child independently writes sentences across the curriculum.</p>
<b>Sentence Structure &amp; Composition</b>	<p><b>Teaching focus:</b> Oral rehearsal and sentence formation.</p>	<p><b>Teaching focus:</b> Matching spoken language to written word order.</p>	<p><b>Teaching focus:</b> Meaningful captions.</p> <p><b>ELG emerging:</b> Captions convey clear</p>	<p><b>Teaching focus:</b> Independent sentence writing.</p> <p><b>ELG secure:</b> Simple sentences are</p>	<p><b>Teaching focus:</b> Quality and detail.</p> <p><b>ELG+:</b> Expanded sentences add detail and clarity.</p>	<p><b>Year 1 ready:</b> Writing is cohesive, confident and independent.</p>

	<b>On track:</b> Child can say a sentence before writing.	<b>On track:</b> Child writes words in the correct order to match a spoken caption.	meaning and are readable.	meaningful and readable by others.		
<b>Line Awareness &amp; Presentation</b>	<b>Teaching focus:</b> Awareness of baseline. <b>On track:</b> Child attempts to sit letters on the line.	<b>Teaching focus:</b> Control and consistency. <b>On track:</b> Most letters sit correctly on the line.	<b>Teaching focus:</b> Accuracy across writing. <b>On track:</b> Writing is mostly aligned.	<b>Teaching focus:</b> Consistency. <b>ELG secure:</b> Line use is consistent.	<b>Teaching focus:</b> Pride and presentation. <b>ELG+:</b> Presentation is neat and readable.	<b>Year 1 ready:</b> Child independently checks and improves presentation.
<b>Writing Purpose &amp; Independence</b>	<b>Teaching focus:</b> Writing for a clear purpose. <b>On track:</b> Child labels pictures and resources.	<b>Teaching focus:</b> Caption writing with meaning. <b>On track:</b> Child writes captions with meaning.	<b>Teaching focus:</b> Independent choice. <b>On track:</b> Child independently chooses to write captions in learning and play.	<b>Teaching focus:</b> Sustained sentence writing. <b>On track:</b> Child writes sentences linked to stories and experiences.	<b>Teaching focus:</b> Independence across curriculum. <b>On track:</b> Child writes independently for a range of purposes.	<b>Year 1 ready:</b> Child writes independently, fluently and with confidence.

## Criteria for an On Track assessment (Rec)

Area	Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
<b>Comprehension</b>	<b>On track:</b> Listens attentively to stories and discussions. Responds to simple questions about events or characters.	<b>On track:</b> Retells key events from familiar stories using talk. Explains ideas in simple sentences.	<b>On track:</b> Discusses stories and sequences events orally using full sentences.	<b>On track:</b> Answers questions about texts using full sentences and begins to make simple inferences.	<b>On track:</b> Demonstrates secure understanding of stories, characters and settings. Explains ideas clearly.	<b>ELG secure:</b> Demonstrates understanding of what has been read. Discusses texts and responds appropriately to questions.
<b>Word Reading</b>	<b>On track:</b> Recognises some taught letter sounds. Begins oral blending with support.	<b>On track:</b> Blends CVC words using taught sounds. Recognises some taught tricky words.	<b>On track:</b> Reads CVC words and simple captions independently. Recognises taught tricky words.	<b>On track:</b> Reads simple sentences independently, applying phonic knowledge to unfamiliar words.	<b>On track:</b> Reads sentences and short texts independently with accuracy.	<b>ELG secure:</b> Reads simple sentences and texts using phonic knowledge and recognises taught tricky words.
<b>Writing</b>	<b>On track:</b> Gives meaning to marks and letters. Writes some recognisable letters and attempts to represent words using initial sounds.	<b>On track:</b> Writes CVC words using phonics. Writes labels and begins to write captions with support.	<b>On track:</b> Writes captions independently that convey meaning and can be read by others.	<b>On track:</b> Writes simple sentences that are meaningful and readable by others.	<b>On track:</b> Writes simple sentences using phonics; most letters are correctly formed.	<b>ELG secure:</b> Writes recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed. Writes simple sentences that can be read by others.

# Inclusive Practice in Action: What This Looks Like in Practice

## Example 1: Child with Fine Motor Needs

**Curriculum Intent:** The child accesses the same handwriting and writing curriculum as their peers.

### Implementation:

- Daily participation in Dough Disco, Write Dance and Pen Disco, with adapted resistance and pacing
- Use of alternative tools (chunky pencils, slope boards, floor or vertical writing)
- Short, purposeful writing opportunities with movement breaks
- Adult modelling and occasional hand-over-hand support

### Impact:

- Increased hand strength and control
- Improved engagement and stamina
- Growing confidence to record ideas independently

## Example 2: Child with Speech, Language and Communication Needs

**Curriculum Intent:** The child develops writing through secure communication and language foundations.

### Implementation:

- Targeted Verbo communication and language interventions alongside whole-class teaching
- Use of Drawing Club to rehearse language, vocabulary and sentence structure orally before writing
- Pre-teaching and overlearning of phonics through Read Write Inc.
- Sentence stems, visual supports and adult-facilitated talk

### Impact:

- Increased confidence to communicate ideas verbally
- Improved ability to translate spoken sentences into written form

- Clear progress in phonics-linked writing and sentence construction

### **Example 3: Child with Attention, Regulation or SEMH Needs**

**Curriculum Intent:** The child accesses the same handwriting and writing curriculum, supported to regulate, sustain attention and engage purposefully in learning.

#### **Implementation:**

- Predictable routines and clear visual cues to support transitions into writing activities
- Short, highly focused writing opportunities embedded within movement-based approaches such as Write Dance, Dough Disco and Pen Disco
- Use of choice, movement breaks and flexible positioning (standing, floor, outdoor writing)
- Adult co-regulation, modelling calm engagement and positive reinforcement
- Writing opportunities carefully timed when the child is most regulated and ready to learn

#### **Impact:**

- Improved ability to sustain attention during fine motor and writing activities
- Reduced anxiety and avoidance around writing tasks
- Increased engagement, confidence and independence as a writer