

Handwriting in KS1 and KS2

Handwriting development is not taught in isolation. It supports pupils to record ideas efficiently, reducing cognitive load so that composition and transcription can happen together.

- Handwriting is taught explicitly and practised frequently.
- Teaching is progressive: accuracy → consistency → fluency → speed and stamina.
- Expectations are applied across the curriculum.
- Years 1–2 (RML) prioritise accurate non-cursive formation, with the transition in Year 2 to cursive; Years 3–6 (Letter-Join) develop fluent joined handwriting.

How Handwriting Is Taught (Years 1–6)

- Discrete handwriting lessons (short and focused) alongside application in writing lessons.
- Teacher modelling using consistent language and clear success criteria.
- Frequent, spaced practice revisiting key joins/letter families.
- Immediate feedback to prevent misconceptions becoming embedded.
- Opportunities to apply handwriting expectations in all subjects.

Year 1 Handwriting Expectations (RML)

In Year 1, pupils consolidate accurate letter formation and develop the foundations for fluent transcription. Teaching is closely linked to phonics and sentence writing.

Year 1	Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
Fine Motor & Writing Stamina	Re-establish posture, grip and writing routines; short, high-frequency practice.	Increase stamina in daily handwriting and sentence writing; reduce fatigue.	Sustain handwriting through short independent tasks; consistent control.	Write comfortably for longer lessons; independence in set-up and posture.	Automatic grip and control; handwriting supports composition without slowing.	Secure stamina for end-of-year writing demands; confident independent writing.
Letter Formation (non-cursive)	Explicit teaching of lowercase formation using RML phrases; correct start points.	Consistency across taught letters; address reversals and orientation promptly.	Apply accurate formation in words and sentences; begin standardising size.	Consistent tall/short/descender sizing; letters sit on the line.	Fluency improves; handwriting increasingly automatic in independent writing.	Most letters correctly formed and consistently sized across the curriculum.
Capital Letters & Punctuation Readiness	Introduce correct capitals; practise	Use capitals for names and sentence	Increase accuracy in capitals; avoid mixing	Secure capitals and basic punctuation;	Capitals and punctuation applied	Capitals and punctuation applied



	alongside sentence work.	starts with modelling and reminders.	upper/lowercase within words.	handwriting supports sentence clarity.	consistently in independent writing.	reliably across subjects.
Spacing & Presentation	Finger spaces explicitly taught; letters mostly sit on the line.	Consistent finger spaces; clearer word boundaries; improved line awareness.	Neatness routines embedded (date/title conventions, margins where used).	Presentation expectations applied in all subjects; self-checking begins.	Consistent neatness and line control; improved layout and organisation.	Pride in presentation: neat, legible writing maintained in longer pieces.
Application & Independence	Apply handwriting in phonics-linked tasks and short writes; adult modelling.	Apply skills in independent writing; edit for legibility and spacing.	Handwriting supports sentence writing; less time spent thinking about formation.	Independent application across curriculum; handwriting no longer a barrier.	Write fluently in longer pieces; increased speed without losing legibility.	Ready for transition to joined cursive approach (Year 3).

Year 2 Handwriting Expectations (RML)

In Year 2, pupils build fluency and consistency so handwriting is secure and legible across longer pieces of writing and across the curriculum.

Year 2	Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
Letter-Formation Cursive Formation	Introduce lead-in/lead-out strokes using RML cues	Beginning to join works with increasing accuracy	Continuing to develop confidence when joining	Consistent ascenders/descenders with cursive	Increased fluency and application of cursive	Apply cursive across writing lessons
Fine Motor & Writing Stamina	Re-establish posture, grip and writing routines; short, high-frequency practice.	Increase stamina in daily handwriting and sentence writing; reduce fatigue.	Sustain handwriting through short independent tasks; consistent control.	Write comfortably for longer lessons; independence in set-up and posture.	Automatic grip and control; handwriting supports composition without slowing.	Secure stamina for end-of-year writing demands; confident independent writing.
Capital Letters & Punctuation Readiness	Recap correct capitals; practise alongside sentence work.	Use capitals for names and sentence starts with modelling and reminders.	Increase accuracy in capitals; avoid mixing upper/lowercase within words.	Secure capitals and basic punctuation; handwriting supports sentence clarity.	Capitals and punctuation applied consistently in independent writing.	Capitals and punctuation applied reliably across subjects.
Spacing & Presentation	Finger spaces explicitly taught; letters mostly sit on the line.	Consistent finger spaces; clearer word boundaries; improved line awareness.	Neatness routines embedded (date/title conventions, margins where used).	Presentation expectations applied in all subjects; self-checking begins.	Consistent neatness and line control; improved layout and organisation.	Pride in presentation: neat, legible writing maintained in longer pieces.
Application & Independence	Apply handwriting in phonics-linked tasks and short writes; adult modelling.	Apply skills in independent writing; edit for legibility and spacing.	Handwriting supports sentence writing; less time spent thinking about formation.	Independent application across curriculum; handwriting no longer a barrier.	Write fluently in longer pieces; increased speed without losing legibility.	Ready for transition to consistent cursive approach (Year 3).



Year 3 Handwriting Expectations (Letter-Join)

In Year 3, pupils transition to a joined, cursive handwriting style through the Letter-Join programme. Teaching prioritises correct joins, consistent size and spacing.

Year 3	Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
Warm-ups & Pattern Work	Introduce Letter-Join patterns; establish a consistent warm-up routine.	Build accuracy in patterns; develop rhythm and flow.	Patterns linked to joins; pace increases slightly.	Warm-ups increasingly independent; focus on consistency.	Fluency in patterns; stamina for longer practice lines.	Automatic warm-ups; maintain cursive style across writing.
Joins & Cursive Formation	Introduce lead-in/lead-out strokes; begin basic joins.	Secure joins in high-frequency words; maintain correct letter shapes.	Extend joins across letter groups; reduce lifting and breaks.	Joins applied in sentences; consistent slant and size.	Joins increasingly automatic; letter size more consistent.	Fluent joined handwriting in most tasks; legibility maintained.
Spacing, Layout & Presentation	Reinforce spacing and ascenders/descenders on lines.	Consistent spacing between words and lines; margins respected.	Self-check routines; clear layout in books.	Presentation maintained in longer writes; consistent formatting.	Neatness and organisation strong across curriculum.	High standard sustained independently; ready for secondary.
Application Across the Curriculum	Cursive applied in English and foundation subjects.	Fluent cursive used in most independent tasks.	Handwriting supports composition, not hinders it.	Writing remains legible when writing quickly.	Adapt handwriting to purpose confidently.	Independent and consistent across all subjects.



Year 4 Handwriting Expectations (Letter-Join)

In Year 4, pupils secure joins and develop greater automaticity so handwriting becomes fluent and reliably legible.

Year 4	Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
Warm-ups & Pattern Work	Revisit patterns; refine control and consistency.	Increase speed while maintaining accuracy; smooth flow.	Target patterns to common join issues; self-correction begins.	Independent warm-ups; consistent size and spacing.	Sustained warm-up practice; improved rhythm.	Automatic; supports fast, neat handwriting in extended tasks.
Joins & Consistency	Secure joins across letter families; focus on problem joins.	Consistent joins in longer words; fewer breaks in flow.	Apply joins accurately in independent writing; reduced variability.	Maintain consistent slant and size across paragraphs.	Fluency increases; handwriting supports composition.	Joined handwriting secure, legible and consistently applied.
Spacing, Layout & Presentation	Reinforce spacing and ascenders/descenders on lines.	Consistent spacing between words and lines; margins respected.	Self-check routines; clear layout in books.	Presentation maintained in longer writes; consistent formatting.	Neatness and organisation strong across curriculum.	High standard sustained independently; ready for secondary.
Application Across the Curriculum	Cursive applied in English and foundation subjects.	Fluent cursive used in most independent tasks.	Handwriting supports composition, not hinders it.	Writing remains legible when writing quickly.	Adapt handwriting to purpose confidently.	Independent and consistent across all subjects.



Year 5 Handwriting Expectations (Letter-Join)

In Year 5, pupils develop an efficient handwriting style that supports speed, stamina and sustained writing without losing legibility.

Year 5	Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
Fluency, Speed & Stamina	Introduce pace expectations; maintain legibility.	Increase pace for note-style writing; control remains secure.	Sustain fluent joined writing for extended pieces.	Adapt speed for task (drafting vs best); consistent style.	Stamina for longer assessments; neatness maintained under time.	Automatic handwriting; efficient and readable across subjects.
Personal Style & Presentation	Refine personal style within Letter-Join expectations.	Consistency in slant/size; layout routines embedded.	Presentation expectations explicit for final pieces.	Use headings, underlining and organisation to support clarity.	High standard of neatness sustained; self-editing routines.	Presentation mature and consistent; ready for Year 6 demands.
Spacing, Layout & Presentation	Reinforce spacing and ascenders/descenders on lines.	Consistent spacing between words and lines; margins respected.	Self-check routines; clear layout in books.	Presentation maintained in longer writes; consistent formatting.	Neatness and organisation strong across curriculum.	High standard sustained independently; ready for secondary.
Application Across the Curriculum	Cursive applied in English and foundation subjects.	Fluent cursive used in most independent tasks.	Handwriting supports composition, not hinders it.	Writing remains legible when writing quickly.	Adapt handwriting to purpose confidently.	Independent and consistent across all subjects.



Year 6 Handwriting Expectations (Letter-Join)

In Year 6, pupils refine handwriting for purpose, developing adaptability (note-taking vs best copy) and maintaining legibility under timed conditions.

Year 6	Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
Purposeful Handwriting	Re-establish high expectations; handwriting for purpose introduced.	Practise faster writing for planning/notes; neat writing for final.	Sustain speed in timed tasks while remaining legible.	Consistency under pressure; exam-style stamina developed.	Independent choices about style and speed; legibility prioritised.	Transition-ready: adaptable handwriting suitable for KS3.
Legibility & Consistency	Focus on consistent size, spacing, slant and joins.	Address individual joins/letter formations; targeted practice.	Maintain legibility across longer pieces and across curriculum.	Neatness in final outcomes; efficient drafting.	High-quality presentation embedded; pride and ownership.	Meets KS2 expectations: fluent, legible, joined handwriting.
Spacing, Layout & Presentation	Reinforce spacing and ascenders/descenders on lines.	Consistent spacing between words and lines; margins respected.	Self-check routines; clear layout in books.	Presentation maintained in longer writes; consistent formatting.	Neatness and organisation strong across curriculum.	High standard sustained independently; ready for secondary.
Application Across the Curriculum	Cursive applied in English and foundation subjects.	Fluent cursive used in most independent tasks.	Handwriting supports composition, not hinders it.	Writing remains legible when writing quickly.	Adapt handwriting to purpose confidently.	Independent and consistent across all subjects.

Inclusion and Support

We recognise that handwriting development varies. Support may include targeted fine motor practice, alternative tools (e.g., pencil grips, slope boards), additional modelling, overlearning of joins, and adapted outcomes where appropriate. High expectations remain, with appropriate scaffolding to ensure all pupils can succeed.

