

GREAT MARSDEN ST. JOHN'S PRIMARY – A Church of England Academy

HANDWRITING POLICY

Our Vision

Empowered by God's love, we uphold a culture where everyone is encouraged and supported to reach their full potential.

Our Mission

Rooted in God's love, inspiring all to aim high.

Aim: to ensure each child develops a legible, fluent and automatic style of joined-up writing.

The 2025 Writing Framework states:

For skilled writers, transcription is mainly automatic and unconscious, but novice writers need to expend considerable attention and effort on it. The EEF says: 'If children have to concentrate to ensure their handwriting and spelling is accurate, they will be less able to think about the content of their writing. Gaining automaticity with both requires explicit teaching, extensive practice and effective feedback.'

Pupils should be taught handwriting precisely, in a clearly sequenced progression, starting from reception, to support their gradual acquisition of skills. Teachers should expect consistently high standards, making sure pupils practise handwriting regularly and consistently throughout primary school to develop and maintain fluency and legibility. However, asking them to copy from the board or book, trace around dotted letters or practise without supervision can hinder their ability to build a strong mental model of the movement patterns that underpin letter formation

Reception

The teaching of handwriting begins in conjunction with the teaching of phonics.

At Great Marsden St. John's (GMSJ) we follow the Red Rose Letters and Sounds scheme.

This provides handwriting guide cards to show individual letters and links them to both a rhyme and an image.

'It is recommended that when teaching letter formation, a phrase is used in order to embed the directionality. All adults who teach letter formation are encouraged to use the same approach as children learn effectively through repetition.'

Red Rose Letters and Sounds 2022.

The taught formation of letters begins in Phase 2 Week 1 as the letters are introduced.

Initially, children in Reception will be taught to print the letters. Once they have mastered printing letters correctly, they will be taught to use a lead in stroke. This will take place in the Summer Term.

The adult observes the child in order to ensure that the correct direction is used from the outset as it is hard to unlearn bad habits.

This is in addition to the ELGs as found in the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage:

Fine Motor Skills

Children at the expected level of development will:

- hold a pencil effectively in preparation for fluent writing
- use the tripod grip in almost all cases;

Writing

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Write recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed;
- Write simple phrases and sentences that can be read by others.

Once children have been taught all the individual letter sounds (beginning of Phase 3) they should then begin to practise writing letters in 'families' in order to recognise letters that are formed in similar ways.

- **c a d g o q / i l t j k / r n m h b p / v w / u y / e / f / s / x / z**

The Writing Framework 2025 states that ideally children should have daily handwriting lessons in addition to any handwriting that forms part of teaching phonics.

Year 1:

Children will be able to form all letters in correct orientation with clear ascenders and descenders **ending with flicks** by the end of the year.

Alongside the teaching of letter formation, there are other key skills that must be taught. These are taken from The English Programmes of Study:

Sit correctly at a table and hold a pencil correctly.

Hold a pencil with an effective grip.

Form digits 0-9 correctly.

Form capital letters correctly (not joining.)

The following order may be used:

Curves: C O S

Straight lines: A E F H I K L M N T V W X Y Z

Curves and straight lines: B D G J P Q R U

Year 2:

Form lower-case letters of the correct size relative to one another.

Start using some of the diagonal and horizontal strokes needed to join letters and understand which letters, when adjacent to one another, are best left unjoined.

Write capital letters and digits of the correct size relative to one another and to lower case letters.

Use spacing between words which reflects the size of the letters.

The teacher models the handwriting and ensures the children are forming the letters correctly.

Walking the floor ensures that correct direction is used and misconceptions are addressed.

Some children are expected to be using joined writing in everyday work by the end of the year.

KS2

In Key Stage 2, the National Curriculum focuses on increasing legibility, consistency and quality of children's handwriting, with the aim of increasing fluency and speed with which they are able to write down what they want to say. (Writing Framework 2025)

Year 3

In Year 3, children should be taught to form and use the four basic handwriting letter joins again, systematically during the Autumn Term.

These should be timetabled lessons twice a week, one of which can be during spelling lessons.

Children should need less time on being taught handwriting by the end of the Spring Term but should continue with practice sessions to increase fluency.

Children who are ready, learn to use pen in all daily work excluding Maths.

All children should be using joined script for everyday work in the Spring Term.

Years 4-6

Children continue to have short, regular handwriting practice (about 10 minutes) if needed.

If errors seem to be occurring, then reteaching of joins or direction is needed to address misconceptions.

Children should be using pen for daily work excluding Maths.

In Year 5, discuss with children when it is appropriate to print e.g. labelling a scientific diagram.

Year 6

In Year 6, all children will be given the opportunity to write with a pen. The very best writers may begin to develop their own style. However, letters must be correctly formed and of relative size. Do not allow circles for dots and insist on school style for loops.

In all Year groups, teachers should have high expectations for handwriting in all areas of the curriculum. Work that is not of an acceptable standard should be redone.

Common difficulties in joining script

- Relative size: this needs a lot of emphasis – small letters of equal size, tall letters and descenders equal. Encourage the children to check size by levelling a ruler horizontally across the tops of a line of letters
- Loops: children tend to curve these. They must drop in a straight line.
- Letter r: children find the shape of the top and the way it joins difficult.
- Letter x: the children have to be taught how to form the letter in two parts.
- Dotted letters: teach the children to place the dot carefully just above the i or j.

Writing tools

When children in Reception are ready to begin letter formation practice, they use plain paper. By the Spring Term, they progress to 15mm lines which they continue to use throughout Year 1 and the beginning of Year 2 if still required. The majority of children in Year 2. should be using 8mm lines from the Autumn term.

Children are encouraged to use a variety of writing tools from Reception onwards. Chubby infant pencils are more commonly used in Reception, progressing to a school HB pencil in Year 1 for most writing. From Year 3 onwards, children are taught to use pens when their handwriting is consistently presented neatly and correctly formed.

If children are not using lined paper, then line guides should be used wherever possible.

Do not use “handwriting ruled paper”.

Ensure pencils are kept sharp.

Teachers’ writing

Teachers model the school handwriting script in their writing in children’s books and on boards.

Children experiencing difficulties

At all stages, teachers are aware of the specific requirements of individuals and will adapt lessons to meet individual needs. Individuals and groups pinpointed as needing further support are given extra time to practise handwriting. Opportunities to continue to develop fine motor skills are planned and provided as appropriate.

Teachers also give further support to children who still have not established correct letter formation and may need to include this in an IEP.

When marking, teachers offer opportunities to practise specific letters that children are struggling with.

Pencil grips and ergonomic pens are provided for children where required

Left-handers

Ensure you know who these are. They should be seated in a position so that their arm is not blocking the light source. Encourage them to tilt the paper so that they are comfortable. Some left handers find it helps to place the paper or book on a closed ring binder so that it tilts downwards. Acknowledge, encourage and check them as you are teaching direction.