

Hanslope Primary School – Handwriting Progression 2026/27

Aligned with Penpals for Handwriting, the National Curriculum and school-agreed practice.

1. Purpose and Aims

This document sets out the agreed approach to handwriting across Hanslope Primary School. It is intended to support consistency in teaching, modelling, vocabulary, progression, practice, assessment and presentation from EYFS to Year 6.

Our school uses Penpals for Handwriting as the core scheme for handwriting teaching. Teachers use the relevant year group materials alongside assessment and professional judgement so that all pupils can make progress from their starting points.

Whole-School Aims

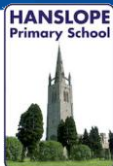
- to ensure that all pupils develop accurate letter formation
- to teach pupils to sit correctly and use an appropriate grip
- to develop consistency in letter size, orientation, proportion and spacing
- to teach pupils when to join and when not to join letters
- to build fluency, speed, stamina and pride in presentation
- to ensure handwriting supports pupils' composition rather than becoming a barrier to writing
- to provide clear support and adaptation for pupils who find handwriting difficult

2. National Curriculum Context

The National Curriculum places handwriting within writing transcription, alongside spelling. It states that writing depends on fluent, legible and eventually speedy handwriting. Handwriting should therefore be taught explicitly, practised regularly and reinforced across the curriculum.

The National Curriculum also states that handwriting requires frequent, **discrete and direct teaching**. Pupils should be able to form letters correctly and confidently, and left-handed pupils should receive specific teaching to meet their needs.

Phase	National Curriculum handwriting focus
Year 1	Sit correctly at a table, hold a pencil comfortably and correctly, form lower-case letters, capital letters and digits, and understand handwriting families.
Year 2	Form lower-case letters of the correct size, begin using diagonal and horizontal strokes needed to join letters, know which letters are best left unjoined, and use appropriate spacing.
Years 3 and 4	Use the diagonal and horizontal strokes needed to join letters, understand which letters are best left unjoined, and increase the legibility, consistency and quality of handwriting.
Years 5 and 6	Write legibly, fluently and with increasing speed, making appropriate choices about letter shape, joining and writing implement.



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3. Intent, Implementation and Impact

Intent

At Hanslope Primary School, we want all pupils to develop a fluent, legible and confident handwriting style that enables them to communicate their ideas effectively across the curriculum. We believe secure handwriting is an important part of transcription and supports pupils to write with independence, stamina and pride.

Implementation

- Handwriting is taught using Penpals for Handwriting.
- Each class has one short, focused handwriting input lesson per week.
- Daily independent handwriting practice follows the weekly input and lasts approximately 5-10 minutes as 'morning work'.
- Teachers explicitly model the agreed handwriting style, including posture, pencil or pen grip, paper position, formation, joins and presentation expectations.
- Teachers adapt practice according to pupils' current handwriting stage, especially in mixed-year classes.
- Handwriting expectations are reinforced in English and across the wider curriculum.
- Completed practice sheets are stuck into pupils' English books so practice is visible and easy to monitor.

Impact

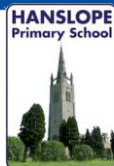
Pupils will develop accurate formation, increasing fluency and a clear, legible handwriting style. As handwriting becomes more automatic, pupils can focus more of their working memory on the content, structure and quality of their writing. By the end of primary school, pupils should be able to write legibly, fluently and with increasing speed, making appropriate choices about whether to join.

4. Whole-School Agreed Practice

Area	Agreed practice
Teaching frequency	One short, focused handwriting input lesson per week, followed by daily 5-10 minute independent practice sessions.
Scheme	Teachers use Penpals for Handwriting as the core scheme and follow the appropriate year group or stage materials.
Modelling	Teachers model before pupils practice, using the agreed handwriting style and agreed vocabulary.
Practice sheets	Teachers photocopy the agreed handwriting practice sheet. Completed sheets are stuck into English books.
Formation before joining	Pupils should not be moved on to joining until letter formation is secure, accurate and consistent.
Application	Handwriting expectations are reinforced in English and in wider curriculum books (like Topic books).
Monitoring	Practice sheets, English books and wider curriculum books are monitored to check consistency and transfer.

5. Teaching Handwriting in Mixed-Year Classes

In mixed-year classes, handwriting will usually be taught through a shared whole-class input followed by differentiated independent practice matched to pupils' handwriting stage. Pupils may work on the same broad focus while completing different levels of practice.



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Shared focus	Earlier-stage pupils	Expected-stage pupils	More fluent pupils
Diagonal joins	Practice individual letter formation first.	Practice the join in words.	Apply the join in sentences, focusing on fluency and spacing.
Letter size	Practice tall, small and tail letters.	Practice words with ascenders and descenders.	Apply in curriculum-linked sentences or a short paragraph.
Fluency	Copy short words accurately.	Write short sentences with joins.	Write at speed while maintaining legibility.

Mixed-Year Principle

In mixed-year classes, pupils are assessed against their year group expectations, but practice is matched to their current handwriting stage. A pupil should not move on to joining if formation, size, orientation or spacing is not yet secure.

6. Year Group Handwriting Progression of Skills

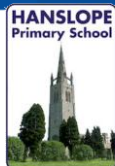
EYFS / Reception	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
- Develop the foundations of a handwriting style which is fast, accurate and efficient. - Write recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed. - Hold a pencil effectively in preparation for fluent writing, using the tripod grip in almost all cases.	- Sit correctly at a table, holding a pencil comfortably and correctly. - Begin to form lower-case letters in the correct direction, starting and finishing in the right place. - Form capital letters. - Form digits 0–9. - Understand which letters belong to which handwriting families and practise these.	- Form lower-case letters of the correct size. - Use some of the diagonal and horizontal strokes needed to join letters and know which letters are best left not joined. - Write capital letters and digits of the correct size, orientation and relationship to one another and to lower-case letters. - Use spacing between words that fits with the size of the letters.	- Use more of the diagonal and horizontal strokes needed to join letters and know which letters, when they are next to one another, are best left not joined. - Write so that most of the letters are easy to read, all the same way up and the same size. - Space writing out properly so that letters do not overlap.	- Use some of the diagonal and horizontal strokes needed to join letters and know which letters, when they are next to each other, are best left not joined. - Write so that most of the letters are easy to read, all the same way up and the same size. - Space writing out properly so that letters do not overlap.	- Write increasingly legibly, fluently and with increasing speed, through improving choices of which shape of letter to use when given choices, and deciding whether or not to join specific letters. - Write increasingly legibly, fluently and with increasing speed, by choosing the writing implement that is best suited to the task.	- Write increasingly legibly, fluently and with increasing speed, through improving choices of which shape of letter to use when given choices, and deciding whether or not to join specific letters. - Write increasingly legibly, fluently and with increasing speed, by choosing the writing implement that is best suited to the task.

7. Letter Formation, Letter Families and Joining Guidance

EYFS and Key Stage 1: Letter Families

In EYFS and Key Stage 1, pupils should be taught letters in formation groups, also known as letter families. Staff should use consistent language so that pupils understand where each letter starts, how it moves and where it finishes.

Letter collection	Letters	Teaching focus and language
Curly caterpillar letters	c, a, d, e, g, o, q, s, f	Begin with a curved movement. Use prompts such as: Start like a curly caterpillar; curve around carefully; keep the letter sitting on the line.



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Letter collection	Letters	Teaching focus and language
One-armed robot letters	b, h, k, m, n, p, r	Begin with a downwards movement, then move back up or around. Use prompts such as: Start at the top; go down first; back up and over.
Long ladder letters	i, j, l, t, u, y	Begin with a straight downwards movement. Use prompts such as: Start at the top and go straight down; remember to dot or cross after the letter is formed.
Zig-zag letters	v, w, x, z	Use straight, controlled angled movements. Use prompts such as: Use straight lines; make sharp, controlled movements; keep the zig-zag sitting on the line.

Key Stage 2: Joining Guidance

In Key Stage 2, pupils should continue to develop legibility, consistency, fluency and speed. Pupils use the diagonal and horizontal strokes needed to join letters, while also understanding that some letters are best left unjoined. Joining should support fluency and legibility; it should never make writing harder to read.

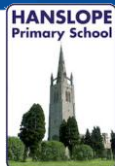
Joining area	Agreed guidance
Letters not joined to or from	Capital letters and digits are not joined to or from. These are always written separately.
Letters not joined from at early joining stages	Penpals refers to break letters as letters which are not joined from at that stage. In the Year 3 sequence, break letters are introduced as: g, j, y, f, b, p, x, z .
Letters later taught as joining letters	Some break letters are introduced later as joining letters. For example, Penpals introduces joining from f in Year 3, joining from p and b in Year 4, and style-for-speed work involving g, j, y, f, b, v, w, x and z in Year 6.
Letters not joined to	Pupils should not force a join to any letter if it distorts the starting point, letter shape, spacing or legibility. Teachers should model the specific Penpals unit focus and leave awkward combinations unjoined.
Teacher judgement	If a join makes the word unclear, pupils should lift the pencil or pen, form the next letter correctly and revisit the relevant join through guided practice.

Agreed Joining Principles

- correct formation comes before joining
- capital letters and digits are not joined
- pupils should not force joins if this reduces legibility
- pupils should know that some letters are best left unjoined
- teachers should follow the relevant Penpals unit when modelling joins
- joins should support flow, not distort the letter shape or spacing

Common Issues and Teacher Responses

Issue	Teacher response
Pupil starts letters in the wrong place	Return to letter collection practice and model the starting point clearly.
Pupil joins before formation is secure	Pause joining temporarily and revisit individual letter formation.
Joins make the word hard to read	Model the word with selected letters left unjoined.
Letter size becomes inconsistent	Use the agreed guide lines and focus on ascenders, descenders and x-height.



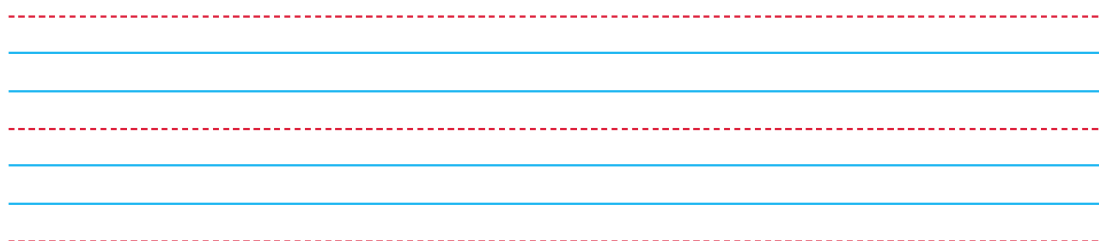
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Issue	Teacher response
Spacing becomes unclear	Practise word spacing and short dictated phrases.
Pupil joins capital letters or digits	Remind pupils that capital letters and digits are never joined.

8. Agreed Handwriting Practice Sheets and Vocabulary

Agreed Handwriting Practice Sheets

Teachers will model the handwriting focus first, using the agreed school handwriting style. Pupils will then complete independent practice on photocopied handwriting sheets. Completed sheets will be stuck into pupils' English books so that handwriting practice is clearly recorded, easy to monitor and linked to pupils' wider writing development.

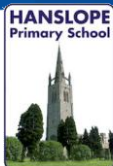


Visual reference: a snip from the agreed handwriting sheet. The solid lines show where the body of the letter should sit. The dotted lines act as guides for ascenders and descenders. Pupils should keep the main body of lower-case letters between the solid lines, with ascenders reaching towards the upper dotted guide and descenders reaching towards the lower dotted guide.

9. Adaptive Teaching

Adaptive teaching in handwriting ensures that all pupils can access the curriculum and make progress from their starting points. Teachers should maintain high expectations while adapting support, scaffolding, practice and challenge according to need.

Barrier	Possible adaptation
Incorrect letter formation	Return to modelling, air writing, tracing and guided practice.
Poor pencil grip	Model grip and consider pencil grips or shorter pencils where appropriate (pinch and flip)
Inconsistent size	Use handwriting lines, highlighted spaces and model letters.
Poor spacing	Use finger spaces, spacing prompts or visual reminders.
Difficulty joining	Practice separate letters first, then joins in small steps.
Slow writing speed	Build fluency through short daily practice.
Low writing stamina	Use short bursts of practice and gradually increase writing length.
Poor transfer into books	Reinforce expectations during English and wider curriculum lessons.



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Supporting Left-Handed Pupils

- ensure pupils have enough space to write comfortably
- avoid seating pupils where elbows clash with a right-handed pupil
- support appropriate paper angle and hand position
- ensure pupils can clearly see teacher modelling
- do not expect left-handed pupils to copy a right-handed grip or paper position exactly

Stretching Pupils Who Are Secure

- apply the weekly focus in sentences or curriculum-linked writing
- develop speed while maintaining legibility
- build stamina across longer pieces of writing
- make purposeful choices about when to join and when not to join
- choose the writing implement best suited to the task

10. Assessment Points and Checklists

Purpose of Assessment

Handwriting assessment is used to identify pupils who are secure, pupils who require further practice and pupils who need targeted support or intervention. Handwriting should be assessed in practice sheets, English books and wider curriculum books.

When Handwriting Should Be Assessed

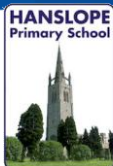
- during weekly handwriting input lessons
- during daily 5-10 minute independent practice sessions
- through independent writing in English
- through writing across the wider curriculum
- through book looks
- through formal termly teacher assessment

Termly Assessment Points

Term	Assessment focus	Action
Autumn	Establish starting points: posture, grip, formation, size, spacing, paper position and readiness to join.	Identify pupils needing adapted practice or intervention.
Spring	Review progress in accuracy, consistency, sizing, spacing, joins, fluency, presentation and application across subjects.	Adjust practice groups and intervention.
Summer	Make an end-of-year judgement against year group or stage expectations.	Pass on next steps to the next teacher.

Whole-School Handwriting Assessment Checklist

Assessment area	Look for
Posture and position	sits correctly; uses helping hand; paper is positioned appropriately; avoids leaning too heavily



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Assessment area	Look for
Pencil or pen grip	holds pencil or pen comfortably; uses efficient grip; applies appropriate pressure; avoids discomfort
Letter formation	starts and finishes letters correctly; forms lower-case letters, capitals and digits accurately; uses correct direction
Size and proportion	keeps body of letters consistent; ascenders and descenders are clear; letters sit correctly on the line
Spacing	spaces between words are clear; letters do not overlap; spacing remains consistent
Joins	uses diagonal and horizontal joins where appropriate; knows which letters are best left unjoined
Fluency and speed	writes smoothly; maintains legibility when writing at length; handwriting supports composition
Presentation	applies handwriting expectations in English and wider curriculum books; takes pride in written work

Phase Checklists

Phase	Assessment checklist
EYFS and KS1	effective pencil grip; recognisable letters; correct formation; correct starting and finishing points; capital letters and digits; handwriting families; spacing between words; early joins when ready
Lower Key Stage 2	diagonal and horizontal joins; letters best left unjoined; letters the correct way up; consistent size; spacing; legibility in independent writing; application across the curriculum
Upper Key Stage 2	increasing legibility, fluency and speed; appropriate letter shape choices; decisions about joining; appropriate writing implement; legibility at length; handwriting for different purposes

Identifying Pupils for Additional Support

- incorrect letter formation or persistent reversals beyond expected developmental stage
- inefficient or uncomfortable grip
- inconsistent size, orientation or spacing
- letters overlap or do not sit on the line
- joining before formation is secure
- very slow writing speed or low stamina
- handwriting that is not applied outside handwriting lessons
- avoidance of writing because handwriting feels difficult

11. Monitoring

- Handwriting is monitored through practice sheets, English books and wider curriculum books.
- Monitoring should check that pupils are transferring handwriting skills into independent writing.
- Leaders and teachers should review the use of agreed sheets, modelling, vocabulary and adaptive teaching.
- Assessment information should be used to identify pupils who need additional support.