

Great Dalby Primary School

Handwriting Policy

2024-2025

Reviewed	July 2024
Frequency of Review	Annual
Written by	Headteacher/ Deputy Headteacher
Approved by:	Local Advisory Board

Rationale

At Great Dalby Primary School, we believe that good handwriting skills are; essential for effective communication, contribute to academic success by supporting spelling accuracy and composition and allow children to write with fluency and at length. Pupils must be able to write with fluency, speed and legibility. Ensuring that pupils have mastered a fluid, cursive style by the end of Year 3, allows pupils to apply their cognitive skills into the content and structure of their writing rather than focusing on the formation of letters. Handwriting skills are taught systematically throughout school and to ensure consistency and promote the importance of handwriting, the following handwriting policy has been developed:

Developmental factors

Handwriting is a complex perceptual–motor skill that is dependent upon the maturation and integration of a number of cognitive, perceptual and motor skills. Achievement demands the orchestration of multiple skills involving the eyes, arms, hands, memory, posture and body control as well as managing pencil, paper and following instructions.

Neatness and Legibility:

All pupils are expected to write in a neat and legible manner and this is modelled by all staff in school. This includes; proper letter formation, spacing between words and consistent sizing of letters. The use of appropriate line spacing and margins should be followed in all written work.

Letter Formation:

Pupils should practice and consistently using the prescribed letter formation for both uppercase and lowercase letters.

Letters should be written with clear and distinct strokes, ensuring that they are recognisable and easy to read.

Spacing:

Pupils should maintain consistent spacing between letters, words and sentences. Adequate spacing allows for clarity and easy readability of written work.

The use of appropriate margins helps organise written work and allows for additional comments and corrections by teachers.

Penmanship:

Pupils should strive to maintain a consistent slant or alignment of letters within words and sentences.

Proper pen grip and posture should be taught and practiced to ensure control and comfort while writing.

Practice and Improvement:

Regular handwriting practice exercises will be incorporated into the curriculum to reinforce proper letter formation and neatness.

Teachers will provide guidance and feedback on individual handwriting skills, assisting pupils in improving their penmanship.

Support and Collaboration:

Parents and guardians are encouraged to support their child's handwriting development at home. Engaging in activities such as tracing, copying, and practicing writing can be beneficial.

Teachers and parents/guardians should maintain open lines of communication to address any concerns or provide additional support for pupils struggling with handwriting.

Individual Differences:

While consistency and legibility are important, we recognise that each pupil's handwriting style may vary. Teachers will focus on legibility and improvement within the context of each pupil's unique style.

We believe that developing legible handwriting skills is an ongoing process. With consistent practice, guidance and support from both school and home, pupils can achieve improved handwriting that contributes to their overall academic success.

Handwriting position

At Great Dalby Primary School, we explicitly teach children the correct handwriting position:

- feet flat on the floor
- bottom at the back of the chair
- body one fist from the table
- shoulders down and relaxed
- back leaning forward slightly
- left/right hand holding the page
- left/right hand ready in a tripod grip

At Great Dalby Primary School, we follow the Read Write Inc. approach for teaching handwriting. This approach follows clear steps which ensure that handwriting development carefully progresses.



Initial Sound and Letter teaching

- Pupils rapidly learn sounds and the letters that they need to represent them when they begin on the Read Write Inc. Phonics scheme (Set 1 Speed Sounds).
- Simple and enjoyable mnemonics help all pupils to grasp the letter sound correspondences quickly especially those who are at risk of making slower progress or those who are new to learning English.
- This knowledge is taught and consolidated every day.
- Once pupils have been introduced to a new sound, they will be taught how to form this letter/s.
- The teacher begins by air-writing the letter shape/s and the pupils copy this.
- The next step is to model writing the letter on the board and referring to the handwriting phrase.
- Pupils then practice writing their own letter whilst repeating the phrase to themselves. They should be encouraged to write the letter numerous times.
- The pupils will be given the opportunity to write previously learnt sounds without the teacher modelling them first. See appendix for overview of handwriting phrases.
- Pupils will be given a sheet containing the focus sound where they can practice reading and writing this at home.

Speed Sounds Set 1

m	a	s	d	t
i	n	p	g	o
c	k	u	b	f
e	l	h	sh	r
j	v	y	w	th
z	ch	qu	x	ng

Stage 1A Letter Formation

These lessons are taught while pupils read the Red, Green, Purple, Pink and Orange Storybooks. The online 'checklists' for each letter are in the Handwriting files in Read Write Inc. Phonics Online.

Stage 1a: Pupils practice correct letter formation.

Stage 1b: Pupils learn where to place the letters on the writing line.

In this stage, we follow guidance linked to the RWI Phonics program.

- Pupils learn correct letter formation using the same picture mnemonics they have already learnt in the

Speed Sounds Set 1 Lessons in Read Write Inc.

- These letters are now taught in handwriting groups:
- 'Around' letters: c a o d g q
- 'Down' letters: l t b p k h i j m n r u y
- 'Curly' letters: e f s
- 'Zig-zag' letters: v w z x.
- Staff will model the formation of the letter by referring to the picture mnemonic as they write it.
- The pupils then write their own letter slowly and carefully.
- We do not ask pupils to copy letters or words off the board.
- We help the pupils learn to visualise the letter as a picture and not refer to the written checklist.

Stage 1B – Relative Size of Letters

In this stage, we follow guidance linked to the RWI Phonics program.

- Once pupils can form the letters correctly, they learn how to place the letters on the line.
- Pupils should be taught to form capital letters clearly in the correct orientation and size in relation to lower case letters.
- Staff may use picture mnemonic to assist pupils with placement if they feel this will help their pupils.
- Pupils will be provided with a book or sheet with guidelines to assist with placement.

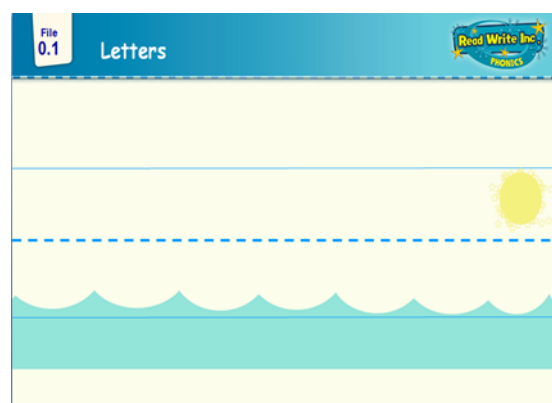
Explain that:

- **Some letters are the same size as the boat and are called 'boat letters':**
a c e i m n o r s u v w x z.

- **Some letters go below the water line and are called 'water letters':**
g j p q y.

- **Some letters are as tall as the sun and are called 'sun letters':**
b d h k l (f and t are just a little bit smaller).

- When modelling, staff should use guidelines on the board.
- Staff will demonstrate to pupils where to start the letter on the guidelines on the board.
- The pupils then write their own letter slowly and carefully.
- We do not ask pupils to copy letters or words off the board.



Stage 2: Introducing a Mature Style of Handwriting

Stage 2

These lessons are taught while pupils read the Yellow, Blue and Grey Storybooks. The online 'checklists' for each letter are in the Handwriting files in Read Write Inc. Phonics Online. Pupils learn a mature style of writing that will lead to joined-up writing.

At this stage, pupils are introduced to new characters that they are going to use to help them develop a grown-up style of writing that will lead to joined-up writing. New pictures will help them to visualise the new shapes.

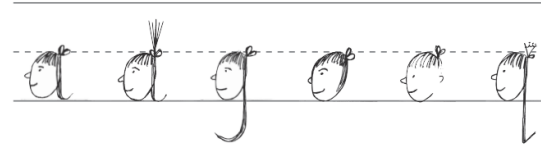
Introduce the formation family: six sisters, two uncles and their two pets.

The six sisters – Annie, Dina, Gabi, Olivia, Carina and Queenie – all look the same. Their mother tells them that they must all have a different haircut so people can tell them apart!

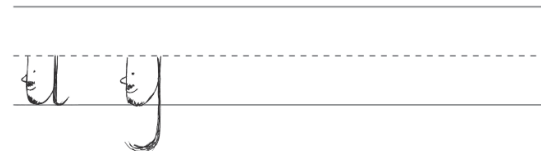
The uncles – Uncle Umberto and Uncle Yaseen – look just like the sisters, except they are bald on the top of their heads. The family have a dog and a bunny whose faces are very similar too, but they have long ears.

Teach a mature style of handwriting for the following letters: a d g o c u y b p.

The six sisters – Annie, Dina, Gabi, Olivia, Carina and Queenie – all look the same. Their mother tells them that they must all have a different haircut so people can tell them apart!



The uncles – Uncle Umberto and Uncle Yaseen – look just like the sisters, except they are bald on the top of their heads.



The family have a dog and a bunny whose faces are very similar too, but they have long ears.






Stage 3:




These lessons are also taught while pupils read the Yellow, Blue and Grey Storybooks. The online 'checklists' for each letter are in the Handwriting files in Read Write Inc. Phonics Online.

Pupils learn the two basic joins: the arm join (diagonal) and the washing line join (horizontal) and the two variables for each join.

The arm join has three variations:

- arm to boat 
- arm to sun 
- arm to sister. 

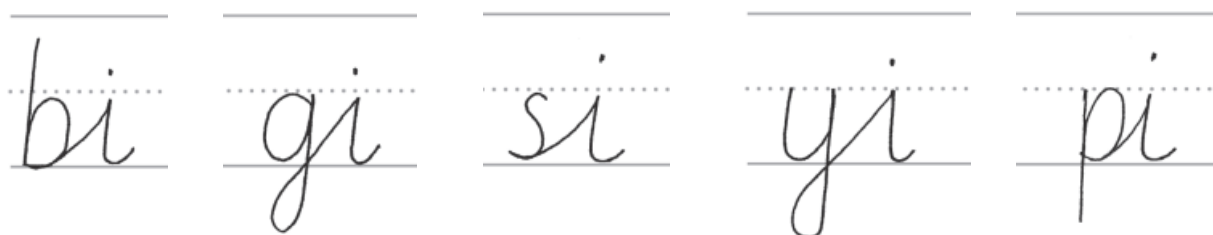
The washing line join has three variations:

- washing line to boat 
- washing line to sun 
- washing line to sister. 

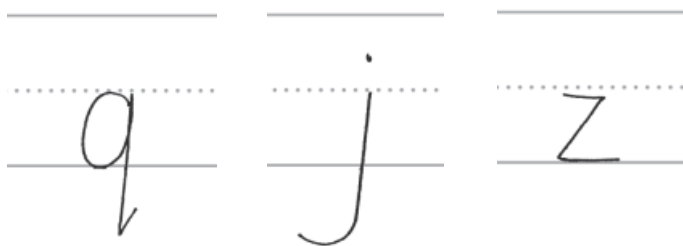
Agreed Joins at Great Dalby Primary School.

It is up to schools to decide whether or not to join the following letters **b, q, g, j, s, y, z** on to the next letter. It is not a statutory requirement of the National Curriculum 2014 that children use joined up writing until Year 3, although it notes that children would be taught to write with a joined-up style as soon as they can form letters securely with the correct orientation.

At Great Dalby Primary School, we join the letters **b, g, s, y, p** to the next letter.



We do not join **q, j, z**.



Teaching Capital Letters

We teach phonics using lower case letters in the Speed Sounds Lessons.

Pupils are introduced to reading words with capital letters in the Storybooks.

We display lowercase letters written alongside the equivalent capital letters to support pupils to recognise and write these. See the chart opposite.

Note that capital letters are not joined in either formal or casual cursive scripts.

'Hold a sentence' and 'Proofread' activities teach pupils to use capital letters correctly in their writing.

These weekly activities provide lots of practice to recognise, write and identify missing capital letters.

We:

- explain that we use capital letters at the start of a sentence, for proper nouns and for the pronoun I.
- use TOL when we model writing to explain why a capital letter is needed.
- use a consistent punctuation mime to help pupils remember a capital letter (make a triangle shape with your arms above your head – fingers together and elbows apart).

During each Write About, we model how to write a sentence using capital letters and correct punctuation before pupils write their own.

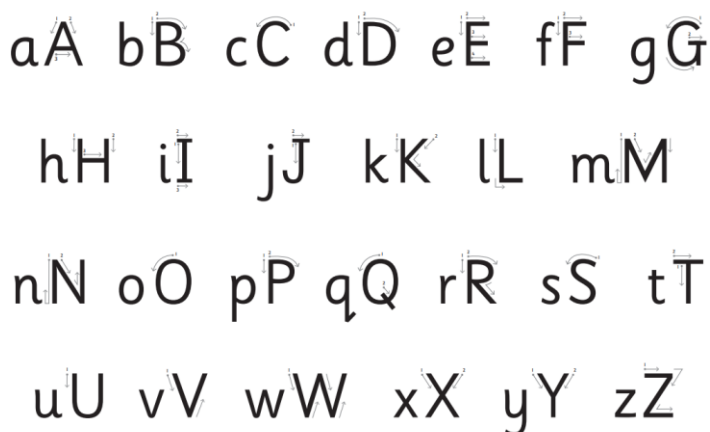
After writing, pupils proofread their compositional writing with their partner and check for correct use of capital letters.

Intervention and Support

- Pupils may take part in guided motor-skill or handwriting sessions with a Teaching Assistant/Teacher.
- Highlighting a line in a book may be used to improve letter size in relation to capitals or letters with ascenders/descenders.
- Specific implements may be used to support pupils with their handwriting and presentation (for example, providing chunky pencils, pencil grips, crocodile rulers and writing slopes).



Read Write Inc.
Phonics




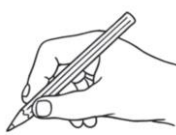


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Left Handed Pupils

- Left handed pupils should always sit on the left side of right-handed pupils, so that they are not competing for space.
- They are encouraged to find a comfortable orientation for their paper, usually slightly to the left of centre of their body.
- Teachers are alert to the fact that it is very difficult for left-handed pupils to follow handwriting movements when they are modelled by a right-handed teacher.

Understanding Developing Pencil Grip

Type of grip				
	Palmar Supinate	Digital Pronate	Static Tripod	Dynamic Tripod
Age Range	16-26 Months	22-36 Months	30-50 Months	40-60 Months
Description	Children younger than one year old, typically reach for and hold items with their entire fist. When using a pencil or crayon, a young child will hold the item their closed fist with their little finger closest to the paper and thumb on top.	As children gain fine motor control, they typically progress from using a fist grip to a four-fingered grip. With a four fingered grip, a child uses all four fingers together to hold an object against their thumb. This grip gives the child greater control when holding a small item.	Once children develop strong fine motor skills, a true pincer grip emerges. With this grip, a child uses only their thumb and index finger to hold and manipulate small objects. With a pincer grip a child can easily twist dials, turn the pages of a book, open and close a zip, and use crayons or pencils with precision.	Most children reach a mature three fingered grip by age 5 or 6. In this hand grip a utensil is held between thumb, index and middle fingers. They might have tense fingers at first and continue to use wrist movements as they did with the five-finger grip, but they will eventually gain more fine motor control and will start to use finger movements to make shapes and letters.

The development of a proper pencil grip is crucial for efficient and comfortable handwriting. Here are some guidelines and strategies to help pupils develop and improve their pencil grip:

Correct Pencil Position:

- Encourage pupils to hold the pencil with a relaxed and comfortable grip.
- The pencil should be held between the thumb and index finger, resting on the middle finger for support.
- The grip should be firm enough to control the pencil but not so tight that it causes strain or fatigue.

Triangular Pencils or Grips:

- Provide pupils with triangular-shaped pencils or pencil grips designed to facilitate a correct grip.
- Triangular pencils and grips naturally encourage the fingers to rest in the proper position, promoting a tripod grip (thumb, index, and middle finger).

Fine Motor Exercises:

- Engage pupils in activities that strengthen their hand muscles and fine motor skills.
- Encourage activities such as squeezing stress balls, playing with putty or clay, using tweezers to pick up small objects, and engaging in finger exercises like tapping or squeezing.

Pencil Control Exercises:

- Practice controlled pencil movements to develop muscle control and coordination.
- Activities like tracing lines, shapes, and letters can help students refine their pencil control and reinforce proper grip.

Visual Cues and Verbal Reminders:

- a. Use visual cues, such as posters or charts displaying correct pencil grip, to remind students of the proper hand positioning.
- b. Provide gentle verbal reminders during writing activities, praising students when they demonstrate a correct pencil grip.

Break It Down:

- a. Break down the steps of proper pencil grip and practice each step individually with pupils.
- b. For example, start by focusing on thumb and index finger placement, then gradually introduce the middle finger support.

Modeling and Demonstration:

- a. Show pupils how to hold a pencil correctly by demonstrating the proper grip.
- b. Consider using oversized or transparent demonstration pencils to help pupils see the correct finger placement.

Patience and Encouragement:

- a. Understand that developing a proper pencil grip takes time and patience.
- b. Provide continuous encouragement and praise as students make progress with their grip.

Year group expectations

As stated in the National Curriculum, 'pupils in Lower Key Stage 2 should be using joined handwriting throughout their independent writing'. Therefore, at Great Dalby, we have the expectation that all pupils will be writing with a joined cursive style by the end of Year 3. Following this, handwriting will continue to be taught, with the aim of increasing fluency. Any inaccuracies in joins will be identified by teachers and support staff and corrected appropriately. The language used and joins taught will be consistent throughout school. Teachers will choose passages of writing to allow children to practice the fluency and speed of their handwriting. Any pupils requiring support with their handwriting after Year 3 will be identified by the class teacher and intervention will be put in place.