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Colchester Hub Schools

Life Education Trust



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Handwriting Policy

Rationale

We aim for our children to leave in Year 6 with the ability to write using their own style of fluent, legible and sustainable handwriting, as well as other styles of writing for specific purposes. Our approach reflects The Writing Framework (July 2025) emphasis on secure transcriptional skills, early physical readiness for writing, and the importance of fluent, legible handwriting as a foundation for effective composition across the curriculum.

We understand that successful handwriting begins long before children pick up a pencil. Strong core strength, fine and gross motor control, coordination and sensory development all support children to form letters confidently and efficiently. When children develop automatic, efficient transcription skills, they free up valuable cognitive capacity for the higher-level processes of writing, such as generating ideas, selecting vocabulary, structuring sentences and shaping whole texts.

In addition to teaching handwriting during our regular handwriting lessons, we have high expectations that what is taught and practised in handwriting lessons will be used in all writing activities. We believe that handwriting is integral to a child's personal development and know that children's engagement and self-esteem can be improved by their satisfaction and pride in good quality presentation.

Aims

Handwriting is a taught skill that develops at different rates for different children. All teachers place a high priority on teaching handwriting and have high expectations across the curriculum. Our school uses Penpals for Handwriting to ensure that:

- The importance of handwriting is recognised and given appropriate time.
- The progression of handwriting is consistent across the school.
- Handwriting is acknowledged to be a whole-body activity, with emphasis on correct posture and pencil grip.
- Expectations of left-handed children are equal to those of right-handed children, with appropriate guidance and resources.
- Children learn to self-assess their writing and take responsibility for improving it.
- Children learn to write in different styles for different purposes.

Preparing Pupils for Early Handwriting (EYFS)

To ensure children are ready for formal handwriting instruction, we provide a rich foundation of early mark-making and physical development. This includes developing the physical, sensory and neurological skills that underpin fluent, controlled handwriting.

Gross motor development: climbing, balancing, dance, outdoor play, and shoulder and arm strengthening activities help children build the core stability and upper-body strength needed for controlled hand movements. These experiences also support **proprioception**, enabling children to understand where their bodies are in space and apply appropriate pressure and movement when writing.

Fine motor development: threading, tweezers, dough disco, finger gym, pegboards, construction toys and scissor skills strengthen the small muscles of the hands and fingers. These activities also promote **bilateral integration**, encouraging children to use both hands together in a coordinated way—for example, stabilising the paper with one hand while manipulating tools with the other.

Crossing the midline: children are encouraged to take part in activities that require them to reach across the centre of their body, such as painting large strokes, sweeping brushes across a surface, completing figure-of-eight movements, or passing objects from one side to the other. Developing the ability to cross the midline is essential for smooth, continuous handwriting, as it allows the writing hand to travel freely across the page without switching hands or repositioning the body.

Pre-writing patterns: large-scale pattern drawing (waves, zigzags, circles, lines) using chalk, paint, sand trays and whiteboards helps children internalise the movement patterns that form the basis of letter shapes. These activities also strengthen proprioceptive awareness and support the development of controlled, rhythmic movement.

Correct sitting position: children are taught to sit with feet flat on the floor, hips and knees at right angles, and paper positioned appropriately. This stable posture supports **bilateral coordination**, enables the writing hand to move freely across the page, and ensures that proprioceptive feedback is used effectively to maintain control and stamina during writing tasks.

Formation of Digits and Letters

We follow the Penpals progression for teaching letter and number formation:

Digits are taught using clear starting points and consistent directionality. Children learn to form numbers with:

- A single continuous movement where appropriate.
- Correct orientation to avoid reversals.
- Emphasis on size and proportion relative to letters.

Letters are taught in families based on movement patterns:

Letter Family	Examples	Key Movements
Curly Caterpillar Letters	c, a, o, d, g, q	Begin with an anti-clockwise curve
Long Ladder Letter	l, t, i, j, u, y	Downward stroke as the main movement
Zig Zag Monster Letters	v, w, x, z	Sharp, angled movements
One Armed Robot Letters	r, n, m, h, b, p, k	Downstroke followed by a curve or bounce

Children are taught:

- Starting points for every letter.
- Correct direction of movement.
- Ascenders and descenders.
- Consistent letter size and spacing.
- That capital letters and digits do not join.

In EYFS, we use the Little Wandle mnemonics to support children's early letter formation as this is our chosen SPP. These simple, memorable prompts help children recall the correct starting points and movement patterns for each letter as they learn new grapheme–phoneme correspondences. However, when a Little Wandle mnemonic differs from the formation taught in Penpals for Handwriting, for example, the letter 'k', we follow the Penpals formation in all handwriting lessons. This ensures consistency across the school. Staff explain to children that phonics mnemonics help them remember the sound and general shape of a letter, while Penpals provides the handwriting formation they will use as they progress through the school.

Frequency of Handwriting Teaching

EYFS

- Daily mark-making opportunities in the continuous provision
- 2–3 focused handwriting sessions per week using Penpals.

Key Stage 1

- 3–4 handwriting lessons per week, plus application across subjects.

Lower Key Stage 2

- 2-3 lessons per week, focusing on joins, fluency and consistency.

Upper Key Stage 2

- 1 focused lesson per week, plus emphasis on fluent, legible writing across the curriculum.

Supporting Pupils Who Struggle

Children who find handwriting difficult are identified early. Support may include:

- Additional fine motor interventions (e.g., dough disco, finger gym).
- Targeted handwriting groups using Penpals resources.
- One-to-one or small-group practice of specific letter families or joins.
- Use of adaptive equipment (pencil grips, sloped boards, wider lines).
- Occupational therapy advice where appropriate.
- Regular monitoring of progress with personalised targets.
- Teachers ensure that handwriting difficulties do not become a barrier to wider writing development.

Identifying and Addressing Handwriting Errors

Handwriting errors are picked up through:

- Live marking during lessons.
- Teacher modelling of corrections.
- Self-assessment using success criteria.
- Frequent revisiting of common errors such as:

- Reversals (b/d, p/q, 2/5).
- Incorrect starting points.
- Inconsistent size or spacing.
- Misplaced ascenders/descenders.

- Incorrect joins.

Teachers provide immediate, specific feedback and opportunities for children to practise corrected forms.

Equality of Opportunity

All children have equal access to handwriting teaching and resources. Additional support is provided where needed, and progress is monitored carefully. Children with physical disabilities are supported according to their individual plans.