



Handwriting Policy

Lead member of staff	Helen Williamson
Approval Level	Full Governing Body
Signed by	Nicola Waters, Chair of Governors
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Handwriting remains an important life skill as a tool for learning, self-expression, and communicating language. We recognise that children's ability to handwrite effectively for the rest of their lives depends on the firm foundations established in this primary school.

Our aims are for all children to:

- Learn and practise appropriate handwriting skills at each stage of development, working towards comfortable, cursive handwriting which is legible, fluent and fast which allows a child to attend to the higher-level aspects of writing composition and content.
- Develop as confident 'hybrid writers' with the skills to communicate through both handwriting and technology.

Key Terms:

- **Positional language**

An essential part of teaching patterning and letter formation is to ensure that young children really understand positional language when working with pencil and paper.

Terms include: up, down, above, below, under, top, bottom, across, around and between.

- **Capital or Upper-case letters**

- **Small or Lower-case letters**

- **The base line**

This is the continuous line upon which the main bodies of letters rest.

- **Ascenders**

- **Descenders**

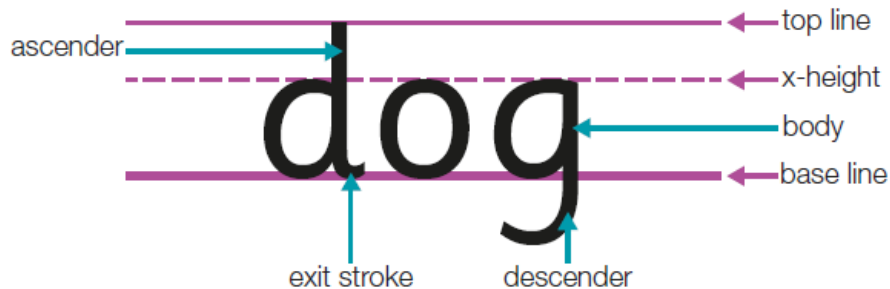
These are the correct terms for the parts of letters that extend above or below the letter body. For younger children it is sometimes easier to describe these as Tall and Tail.

- **x-height or short letters**

These are letters without ascenders or descenders, such as m, e, and o.

- **Letter bodies**

The parts of letters which are neither ascenders nor descenders e.g. the rounded parts of b, d and a and the “arches” of m and n.



Entry or Lead-in stroke

Letters in a continuous cursive style will begin on the base-line with an entry stroke / lead-in stroke.

Exit stroke or flick

Letters that finish on the baseline often have a final flick in the forwards direction. This provides the potential to join when the child is ready for this step.

Joining strokes and Break letters

The National Curriculum refers to 'the diagonal and horizontal strokes needed to join letters and letters which adjacent to each other are best left un-joined.'

Diagonal strokes join from letters which finish on the baseline.

Horizontal strokes join from letters which finish at the top.

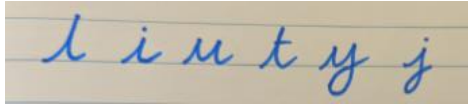
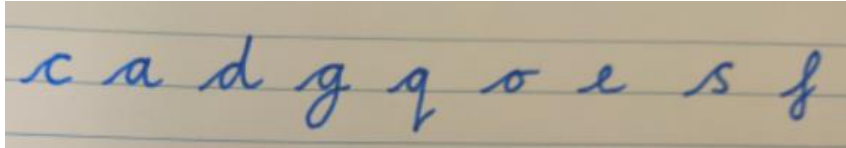
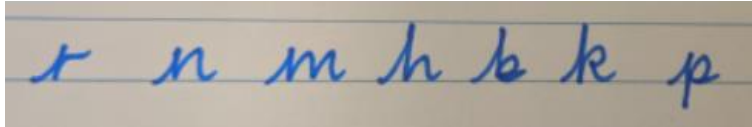
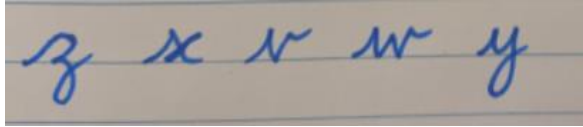
Break letters are those which when adjacent to each other are best left un-joined.

Continuous cursive / fully joined

In this style, letters begin on the baseline with a lead in stroke. All lower-case letters are joined.



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Year Group	NC Objectives	Handwriting Skills Development	Assessment
EYFS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses a pencil and holds it effectively to form recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed. Early Outcomes: Physical Development 40-60 months • They write simple sentences which can be read by themselves and others. Early Learning Goal 10: Writing: Expected Level <p>Transition EYFS – Y1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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' (i.e. letters that are 	<p>Developing fine motor skills Develop patterns and basic letter movements</p> <p>Letter Formation Families Teaching the letters in movement groups reduces the learning load and provides for reinforcement of basic movement patterns. Introduce letter formation families.</p> <p>The 'l' team:</p>  <p>The 'c' team:</p>  <p>The 'r' team:</p>  <p>The 'zig-zag' team:</p>  <p>Movements of letters should be practised in many playful ways including painting, modelling, toy lasers, wands, salt trays, dance and music. The child must be able to sky write the letter movements correctly before any paper and pencil activities begin.</p> <p>The formation of digits which can be incorporated in the letter formation movement families:</p>	

formed in similar ways) and to practise these.

l t i u y j 1 4
r n m h b k p 2 3 5
c a d o s g q e f 6 8 9 0
z v w x 7

SHAPE: The use of entry and exit strokes

For the majority of children, adding an entry and exit flick to the appropriate letters is manageable and leads quite naturally into joining later on. It is helpful to explain this function of flicks to children so that they are motivated to use them. Examples of joining from everyday life can help the understanding

Capital Letters

It is important to teach the capital letters and their formation quite specifically. Pupils should also be sure of the upper case and lower-case forms of each letter and be able to relate them to one another.

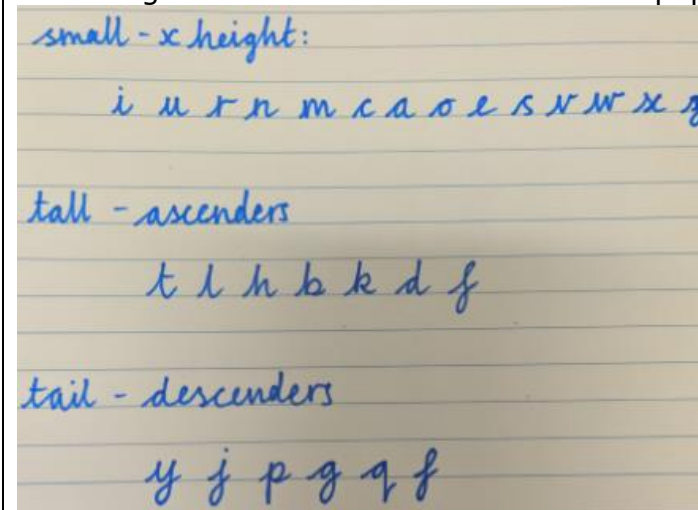
L, I, T, U, J, Y
C, A, D, O, S, G, Q, E, F
R, B, N, H, M, K, P
Z, V, W, X

<p>Year 1</p>	<p>Pupils should be taught to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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' (i.e. letters that are formed in similar ways) and to practice these. <p>Children 'should be taught a joined style as soon as they can form letters securely with the correct orientation' and 'understand which letters, when adjacent to each other, are best left unjoined.'</p>	<p>SHAPE: The use of entry and exit strokes</p> <p>For the majority of children, adding an entry and exit flick to the appropriate letters is manageable and leads quite naturally into joining later on. It is helpful to explain this function of flicks to children so that they are motivated to use them. Examples of joining from everyday life can help the understanding.</p> <p>Capital Letters</p> <p>It is important to teach the capital letters and their formation quite specifically. Pupils should also be sure of the upper case and lower-case forms of each letter and be able to relate them to one another.</p> <p>SPACE– between letters and words.</p> <p>There needs to be a small space between letters in a word. Exit flicks and joining strokes can provide this. There needs to be appropriate spaces between words for the sake of legibility. The spaces should be even, match the size of the writing and be about the same size as one letter o or two – oo. Children need to gradually visualise a suitable space between words, but before this is established, a lolly stick or coffee stirrer can help. Using the traditional 'Finger space' isn't helpful in the long run as fingers grow bigger and writing gets smaller.</p> <p>SIZE - the relative positioning of letters</p> <p>If possible, children should begin this stage by sorting and positioning plastic letters into the three sizing bands: x height/short, ascenders/tall and descenders/tail.</p> <p>Small/halfway letters/x-height letters e.g. a, e, o, s Tall letters/letters with ascenders e.g. h, l, b, k (plus all capitals) Tailed letters/letters with descenders e.g. p, g, y, j</p> <p>A visual image helps children understand the 3 levels.</p>	<p>Children who did not meet expected levels in Physical Development and Writing at ELG will need to be monitored and supported.</p> <p>At the start of Year 1, staff need to observe each child writing to assess which are letters are being formed correctly and which are not.</p> <p>Teachers can assess against the 'S' Factors Checklist:</p> <p>Shape Space Size</p>
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Suggestions are: • sky/grass or forest/underground • head/body/legs

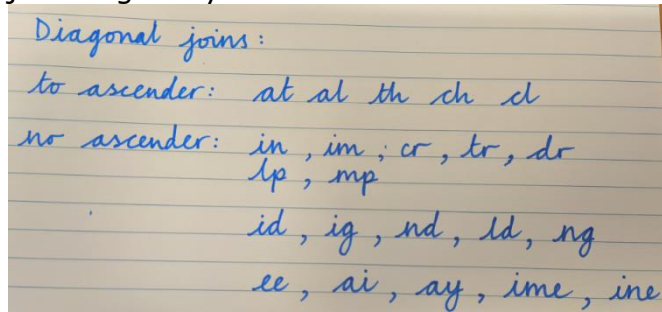


Practising the size families on double lined paper follows next:

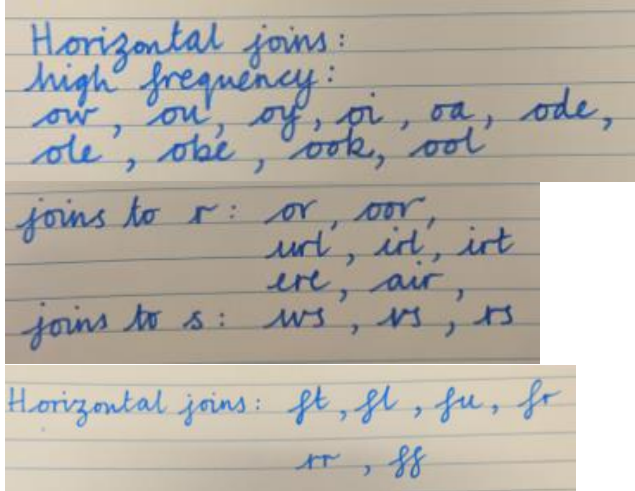


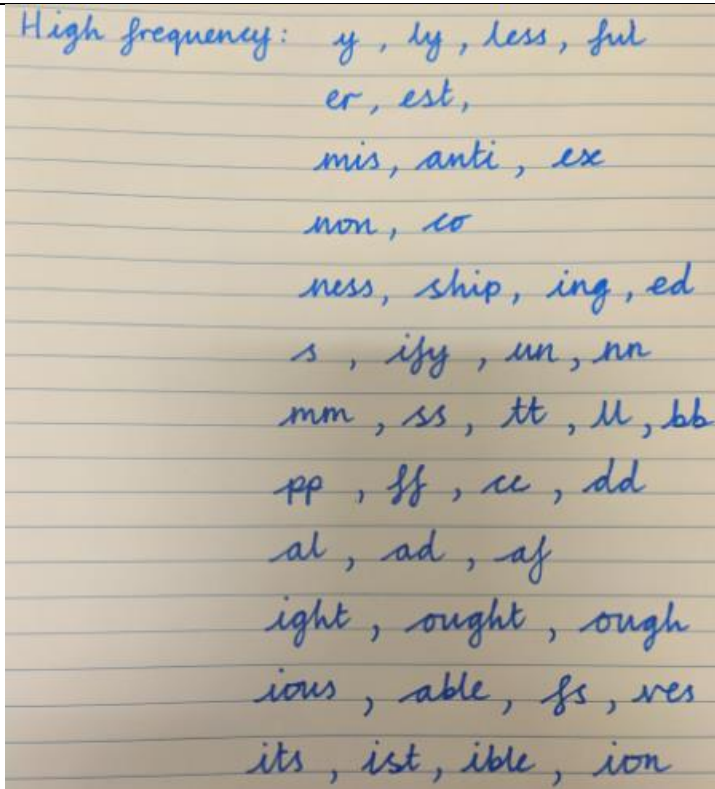
SITTING on the line - Once children are secure in forming letters correctly, they need to learn where to position them. Sitting the letters on the writing line helps legibility. After sitting, the next step is to understand the relative sizing of letters.

A short period using simple double lined paper will help scaffold learning of size and position. As the size of children's writing will vary, it is advisable to print this format in differing widths and

		<p>use that most suitable for each child. In Years 1-2, this will need to include 6mm, 5mm and 4 mm spacings between the two lines (see https://nha-handwriting.org.uk/shop/printable-line-guides/ for printable guidelines of varying sizes). Children will need to use their eyes to judge the sizing of 'tall' and 'tail' letters. Once this awareness of sizing becomes embedded, the child can return to using normal lines.</p> <p>STRINGING - Joining should be introduced when the previous S Factors are well established. Some children may be ready to join before Year 2 (see below). * It is crucial that 'starting to join' is not given elevated esteem or some children will feel pressured to try doing it before they are developmentally ready.</p>	
Year 2	<p>Children 'should be taught a joined style as soon as they can form letters securely with the correct orientation' and 'understand which letters, when adjacent to each other, are best left unjoined.'</p> <p>Pupils should be taught to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • form lower-case letters of the correct size relative to one another • start using some of the diagonal and horizontal strokes 	<p>STRINGING - Joining should be introduced when the previous S Factors are well established. Some children may be ready to join before Year 2. * It is crucial that 'starting to join' is not given elevated esteem or some children will feel pressured to try doing it before they are developmentally ready.</p> <p>The mechanics of joining: There are two basic rules for joining.</p> <p>Diagonal or up the hill joins - Letters which finish on the baseline join diagonally</p>  <p>Horizontal or across the bridge joins - Letters which finish at the</p>	<p>At the start of Year 2, staff need to observe each child writing to assess which are letters are being formed correctly and which are not.</p> <p>Teachers can assess against the 'S' Factors Checklist:</p> <p>Shape Space Size Sitting on the line Stringing</p>

	<p>needed to join letters and understand which letters, when adjacent to one another, are best left un-joined</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 reflects the size of the letters. 	<p>Teachers should introduce the joins both to and from each letter and give the children plenty of practice with short words. This should begin with adjacent letters which occur most frequently e.g., it, he, th, ee. Once learnt, the joins should be applied to the</p> <div data-bbox="663 339 1314 643"> <p>Horizontal joins:</p> <p>no ascender: op, oy, one, ome, oa, og, wa, wo,</p> <p>to ascender: ot, ol, wh, oh of, if</p> </div> <p>high frequency words, digraphs, trigraphs and consonant clusters required to be learnt in Letters and Sounds. As soon as children are able to join letters, they should</p> <p>use this for all of their written work so that it gradually becomes automatic.</p> <div data-bbox="663 768 1293 1424"> <p>Diagonal joins:</p> <p>high frequency: eel, eet, a-e, ice, ide</p> <p>joins to r: ir, ur, er</p> <p>joins to s: dis, sh, si, su, se, sp, sm</p> <p>Diagonal joins: ea, ear qu, ss</p> <p>Diagonal joins:</p> <p>b and p: bi, bu, pi, pu, ba, bo, pa, po bl, ph</p> </div>	
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		 <p>Horizontal joins: high frequency: ow, ou, oy, oi, oa, ode, ole, obe, ook, ool</p> <p>joins to r: or, oor, url, irl, irt ere, air,</p> <p>joins to s: ws, rs, rs</p> <p>Horizontal joins: ft, fl, fu, fr rr, ff</p> <p>Children who struggle with joining: There needs to be awareness and understanding that some children struggle with the coordination issues involved in learning to join. For these children, it is advisable to spend the time improving the legibility and fluency of a basic un-joined style. However, it is important to note that for children to be working at the expected standard in writing at the end of KS2 they need to have evidence that they can maintain legibility in joined handwriting when writing at speed.</p>	
Year 3 and Year 4	<p>Pupils should be taught to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use the diagonal and horizontal strokes that are needed to join letters and understand which letters, when adjacent to one another, are best left un-joined 	<p>STRINGING</p> <p>Using the Year 2 examples as a starting point, children should continue to develop fluency with joining, progressing through the different diagonal and horizontal joins.</p> <p>Children can move on to practice high frequency joins found in spelling patterns, such as:</p>	<p>At the start of Year 3 and 4, staff need to observe each child writing to assess which are letters and joins are being formed correctly and which are not.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> increase the legibility, consistency and quality of their handwriting [for example, by ensuring that the downstrokes of letters are parallel and equidistant; that lines of writing are spaced sufficiently so that the ascenders and descenders of letters do not touch. <p>Pupils should be using joined handwriting throughout their independent writing. Handwriting should continue to be taught, with the aim of increasing the fluency with which pupils are able to write down what they want to say. This, in turn, will support their composition and spelling.</p>	 <p>SLANT A consistent slant helps the appearance of handwriting. A slightly forward slant is a natural movement for right-handers and helps to improve fluency and speed. Slant can be practised through writing small words using letters: l,h,b,I,u,y: hill, little etc. with a focus on parallel down strokes.</p>	<p>Teachers can assess against the 'S' Factors Checklist:</p> <p>Shape Space Size Sitting on the line Stringing</p>
Year 5 and Year 6	Pupils should be taught to write legibly, fluently and with increasing speed by:	<p>SPEED Speed and Style are the aspects of handwriting to be secured in Years 5 and 6.</p>	<p>Children to self-assess against the 'S' Factors Checklist and</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • choosing which shape of a letter to use when given choices and deciding whether or not to join specific letters • choosing the writing implement that is best suited for a task. <p>Pupils should continue to practice handwriting and be encouraged to increase the speed of it, so that problems with forming letters do not get in the way of their writing down what they want to say. They should be clear about what standard of handwriting is appropriate for a particular task, for example, quick notes or a final handwritten version.</p> <p>They should also be taught to use an unjoined style, for example, for labelling a diagram or data, writing an email address, or for algebra and capital letters, for</p>	<p>Speed is a measure of automation, so it will not develop until the other S factors are embedded. Children need help in understanding that increasing speed changes writing. More speed can improve rhythm and fluency but too much can cause illegibility.</p> <p>There needs to be awareness that competent writers have two kinds of handwriting - one which is good quality and is used for more formal purposes and the other - a fast, note-taking 'rough' hand which is used when speed is needed.</p> <p>Building up speed takes short regular practice of appropriate tasks: repeating words, phrases, then sentences and paragraphs.</p> <p>There are some children who learn to write legibly but will have disabilities which preclude them from writing at speed (e.g. children with cerebral palsy or DCD).</p> <p>STYLE</p> <p>Students should be encouraged to develop a style of writing that works for them.</p> <p>Students can consider changes to their writing style that could increase speed and/or fluency, e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adding loops to g,y,j and possibly f to increase speed and flow. • Consider if there are any joins that do not flow well and would be better left unjoined. • Be aware that different qualities and speeds of writing are required for different tasks: personal notes, exams, course work, job applications – and adapt accordingly – see list of ideas below. <p>N.B. They should also be aware of occasions when an unjoined style is appropriate: for labelling diagrams/data, e-mail addresses etc. and be able to use capital letters for form-filling.</p>	<p>identify personal target</p> <p>Teachers can assess against the 'S' Factors Checklist and focus on any areas of need identified, using the Year 2, 3 and 4 progression:</p> <p>Shape Space Size Sitting on the line Stringing Slant</p>
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	example, for filling in a form.		
		Ideas for spelling activities to practise the 'S' Factors: Speed: Note making; address; Size: Posters; Style: Posters; labels; headings; letter 'in role' as a character e.g. a WW2 Evacuee	

S factors check list for assessment:



Q Do all the letters 'sit' on the writing line?

(This is a good 'S' to start with as it is simple for students to understand and many can improve their performance fairly easily. Success can boost confidence and facilitate tackling perhaps more challenging questions.)



Q Are all the letters legible and formed correctly?

Test: Students sometimes find it easier to spot illegible letters in someone else's writing - perhaps anonymously.

Action: Work out the ideal way to form the difficult letter, then practise it in strings - dddd - and then in words, before attempting to use the new forms in normal work.



Q1 Are letters spaced evenly without bumping together?

Q2 Is the space between words consistent?

Test: Children can test the evenness and size of their spacing by using a contrasting colour to draw in as many o's as will fit between words.

Size

Q1 Are the letters written at the correct size and position?

Test: Draw a line along the top of the small letters to show the evenness of size.

Q2 Is the writing a suitable size?

Stringing together

Q Are most of the letters joined?

Action: Writing patterns made from single letters or pairs of joined letters can be effective ways of practising.

Slant

Q Is the writing slanting/sloping in a consistent direction?

Test: Use a coloured pen to make all the down lines longer so inconsistencies are easy to see. (Ignore rounded or diagonal letters)

Action: Practise writing small words using letters l,h,b,I,u,y: hill, little etc. and concentrate on parallel down strokes.

Speed

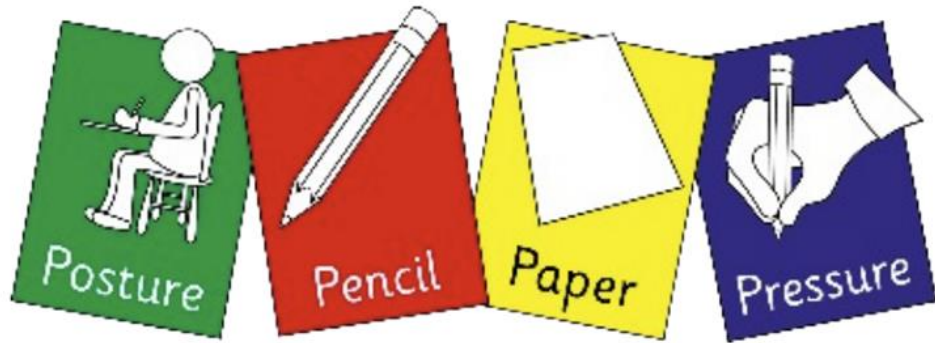
Q Is the writing fast enough for the student's needs?

Style

Q Is the writing consistent and fluent?

*For further guidance see National Handwriting Association Good Practice for Handwriting guide.

'P' Checks – Preparing to write:



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Posture - Poor posture can be a root cause of common handwriting difficulties such as pain or fatigue and will present as a reluctance to write, poor presentation or legibility, slow writing speed and reduced output.

POSTURE GUIDELINES:

- Feet flat on the floor or on a wide based raised surface
- Knees at a right angle with 2-fingers space behind the knee to avoid compression
- Sit on the chair so hips are positioned at approximately 90° with the back supported
- Sit approximately a fist-distance away from the table AND
- Table height adjusted so that forearms rest on the top without leaning forward (too low) or raising the shoulders/arms (too high)
- Surface - clean, smooth and uncluttered

For more tips and guidance see National Handwriting Association 'P' Checks

Pencil - Children and adults can be seen to use a wide range of different pencil grasps, often because they have not learnt differently or as compensation for postural instability elsewhere. An inefficient pen/cil grasp can cause discomfort, impacting motivation, fluency and legibility and create difficulty in sustaining speed.

PENCIL GRASP GUIDELINES:

- Check the child is developmentally ready before asking them to write.
- A dynamic tripod pencil grasp is the most efficient and is expected by end of Year 1.
- Address an inappropriate grasp in the early learning stages and later if it is causing discomfort or impacting speed.
- Consider corrective action using adaptive grips or specialist writing tools, but always trial several options to find the most appropriate.
- Encourage a 2 cm gap between finger tip and pencil point – and slightly greater for left-handers.

For more tips and guidance see National Handwriting Association 'P' Checks

Paper - Correct paper position is vitally important during the early years of handwriting development as bad practice can lead to compensatory strategies that are difficult to remedy in later years.

PAPER GUIDELINES:

- Tilt and offset the paper according to the writing hand.
- Move the paper up or down to facilitate a comfortable reach and keep it in place with the non-writing hand.
- Consider glare from paper and lighting.
- Consider a specialist vision assessment if visual stress continues.

For more tips and guidance see National Handwriting Association 'P' Checks

Pressure - The act of writing should leave a clear trace on the paper, neither too faint nor too dark, and flow along the line rhythmically.

PRESSURE GUIDELINES:

- The just-right pressure eases writing across the page, which is important for fluency and reducing the risk of pain during handwriting.
- Use teaching tools such as carbon paper, mechanical pencils, 'lightup' and 'squiggle' pens to demonstrate appropriate pressure.
- Try some gross and fine motor warm ups before and during the handwriting task. Actions which include squeezing and resistance will increase body awareness.
- Check that posture/issues with postural control are not the causative factor here.

For more tips and guidance see National Handwriting Association 'P' Checks