

# St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Inspiring everyone to **REACH** through Faith, Hope, Love

At St Joseph's, we strive for academic excellence through encouraging resilience, empathy, aspiration and challenge. We have high expectations for ALL so that we can be 'The best we can be.' With Faith, Hope and Love at the heart of our school family, our children feel safe, secure and supported.



## Handwriting and Presentation Policy June 2026

**Reviewed by:** Joni Knight

**Review Cycle:** Annually

**Next Review due:** June 2027

## Handwriting and Presentation

At St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, we believe that when communicating ideas in writing it is important for pupils to develop a handwriting style that is fluent, legible and presented with pride. Handwriting is a vital life skill which supports learning across the curriculum and enables children to write quickly, comfortably and confidently. We recognise that children's self-esteem and confidence are strengthened when they take pride in the presentation of their work.

Strong foundational skills are prioritised from EYFS onwards, including correct posture, pencil grip, letter formation and fine motor development. These early skills are progressively built upon to develop fluent, joined and independent handwriting across the primary phase.

### Aims and Purposes

- To develop a confident, joined handwriting style that is clear, fluent and legible.
- To foster a positive attitude towards writing and presentation.
- To establish and maintain high expectations across all areas of the curriculum.
- To ensure that pupils' recorded work supports and adds value to their learning.
- To build secure foundational handwriting skills which enable pupils to write comfortably, accurately and efficiently.
- To provide an inclusive approach through adaptive teaching and appropriate scaffolds so that all pupils can achieve success.

### Provision for Handwriting

At St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, we follow the *Unlocking Letters and Sounds (ULS)* handwriting progression to ensure consistency and progression from EYFS to Year 6. Handwriting is explicitly taught across the school through discrete lessons and regular practice opportunities. Teaching is carefully sequenced to develop foundational skills before progressing towards fluent joined handwriting.

Teachers use evidence-informed Teaching WalkThrus strategies to model handwriting expectations in small, manageable steps. This includes clear modelling, guided practice, scaffolding and opportunities for independent application. Adaptive teaching approaches ensure that all learners, including pupils with SEND and EAL, are supported appropriately and can access the handwriting curriculum successfully.

To promote high expectations and motivation, the school operates a *pen licence* system. In line with national expectations, children working at greater depth by the end of Year 2 are encouraged to join their handwriting fluently, while by the end of Year 6 all children are expected to produce joined, legible and fluent handwriting.

As children move through the school, increasing emphasis is placed on the presentation of work across all curriculum subjects. Teachers and support staff act as role models by demonstrating accurate, fluent handwriting when writing on boards, providing feedback and modelling presentation expectations. Displays and written resources throughout the school environment also reflect these high standards, with typed text predominantly using ULS-recommended fonts.

Attention is given to posture, seating arrangements and pencil grip to support effective handwriting development. Staff are mindful of the needs of left-handed pupils and make appropriate adjustments to seating arrangements to support comfort and reduce difficulties such as smudging work.

Where pupils experience specific difficulties with handwriting, adaptive provision and targeted support are implemented. This may include the use of slanted writing boards, pencil grips, alternative writing tools, fine motor interventions and additional guided practice. Individual cases may be referred to the SENDCO where appropriate. Incorrect letter and number formation are addressed through timely feedback, regular practice and targeted support in line with each child's stage of development

### Correct posture and pencil grip for handwriting

Following the ULS guidelines, pupils should be taught to sit correctly at a table, holding a pencil comfortably and correctly.

### Writing Position

It is essential that pupils are taught how to sit in the correct writing position at a table with the correct posture to support them to write comfortably. To support this, pupils require a chair which enables their feet to be flat on the floor and their knees to bend at a right-angle. The table should be at a height that leaves space between the knees and the underside of the table. When considering the height of the table, children should be able to place the elbow of their dominant hand on the table surface comfortably.

To achieve the correct writing position, children must do the following:

1. Sit to the back of the chair.
2. Tuck the chair in.
3. Put both feet flat on the floor.
4. Straighten their back and lean slightly forward.



5. Position and tilt the paper.  
The non-dominant hand should be used to keep the paper still and to slide the paper up as the child writes instead of the child's writing hand moving lower down the table.

**Left-handed** children should place the paper slightly over to the left-hand side and tilt the page slightly to the right.



Unlocking Letters and Sounds Unlocking Handwriting

**Right-handed** children should place the paper slightly over to the right-hand side and tilt the page slightly to the left.



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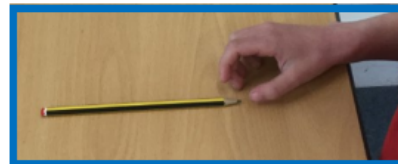
## Pencil Grip

To support pupils to write fluently and with pace, it is essential that the correct pencil grip is mastered and maintained in order to enable efficient pencil control. It is important to get pencil grip right from the very start to avoid inaccurate habits being embedded. It is suggested that a triangular shaped pencil is used in the early stages of writing to support pupils to manipulate their fingers into the correct position and maintain the correct grip. Using a thin pencil too soon can encourage a pencil grip that is too firm.

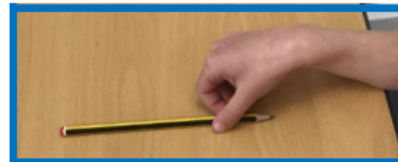
Pupils are taught how to use the correct pencil grip with the strategy '**Point, Pinch and Flip**'.

To achieve the correct pencil grip, children must do the following:

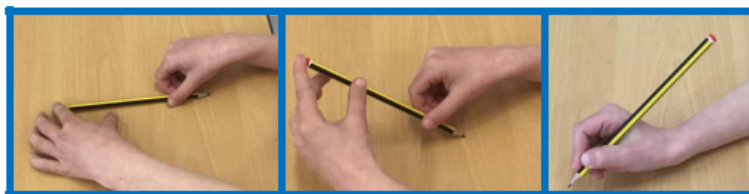
- 1) Place the pencil on a flat surface, with the sharp end of the pencil pointing towards their body.



- 2) Use their thumb and index finger on their writing hand to pinch near the pointed end of the pencil. This should be approximately 2-3cm above the tip.



- 3) Use their non-dominant hand to push the blunt end up and over to flip the pencil into position.



## Left-handed children

- We must be mindful that left-handed children may find it challenging to mimic skills modelled to them by a right-handed teacher. It is therefore integral that we know which children in our class are left-handed and provide these children with individual/group modelling. This is important for pencil grip, writing position, paper position and also for teaching letter formation.
- When planning seating arrangements for left-handed children, consider seating left-handed pupils to the left of a right-handed child to give them the space needed to write without arms clashing.
- If a left-handed child holds the pencil too close to the tip, it will impede their ability to see the letters they have formed. Therefore, left-handed children should hold the pencil slightly further up the pencil than a right-handed peer.
- It is important to note that a left-handed child will push the pencil when writing as oppose to pulling it across the page like a right-handed child. For this reason, left-handed children should not use a pencil that is too sharp as this will inhibit their ability to write smoothly.

## Key Stage Teaching

### Early Years Foundation Stage

- Sit in the correct position and hold a pencil correctly to allow fluid movement of the nib.
- Improve fine and gross motor skills by enjoying drawing pre-cursive patterns in a variety of writing materials such as modelling clay, air writing, sand trays, felt pens, crayons, pencils, IWB, tablets.
- Understand the language need to describe pencil movements in preparation of letter formation.
- Hold a pencil in an effective manner for writing and be encouraged to correct any errors in grip or stature.
- Understand that letters are written on a base line.
- Have an understanding of writing their own name.
- Understanding different shaped letter families

### Key Stage 1

- Write legibly using upper and lower case letters, from Year 2 this will be with correct joins.
- Ensure that letters sit on the base line and are consistent in size with ascenders and descenders that are the correct length and formation.
- Leave the correct space between words.
- Form capital letters and use where appropriate.
- Form numerals that are consistent in size and sit on the base line.
- Begin to form printed letters and understand when they are to be used.
- Improve the speed of writing and begin to write automatically so promoting creativity in independent writing.

### Key Stage 2

Improve quality, speed and stamina of handwriting.

- Quality: Ensure letters are consistently sized with equal word spacing and that ascenders and descenders are parallel and do not touch words on the lines above and below.
- Speed: Improve speed of handwriting to allow creative writing to take precedence over the task of handwriting and be able to take 'quick notes' at a faster pace.
- Stamina: Have the strength and mobility to be able to write for longer periods of time without fatigue.

Have full knowledge and ability of the different forms of handwriting for different purposes:

- Neat, joined, cursive letters for writing passages and large amounts of text, lists and letters.
- Printed or capital letters for posters, notices, headings, labelling, and form filling.
- Speedy handwriting for note-taking and dictation where neatness is not as important and shortcuts, such as + instead of 'and', can be used.

### Expectations for Presentation

It is very important to achieve consistency towards presentation of work across St Joseph's Catholic Primary School. The following guidelines will be used to ensure this consistency, taking into account the age and ability of pupils as appropriate:

- English

Key Stage One pupils will write in pencil until they demonstrate sufficient ability to write fluently and legibly, thus earning a 'handwriting pencil.' If a child in Year 2 is able to meet the required standard for a pen licence after learning all of the cursive (joined) script

Key Stage Two pupils will write in pencil until they demonstrate sufficient ability to write fluently, cursorily and legibly, thus earning a 'pen licence'. Pen licences will be renewed each academic year, in order to reinforce and maintain high standards of presentation. Pupils will only use pens provided by the school. Biro or gel pens should not be used (unless they are appropriate to a specific task, such as writing a greeting card).

- Mathematics

Pencil should always be used for Mathematics work. Any lines drawn will be done so with a ruler and where shapes are drawn they should be accurate, using appropriate mathematical knowledge and resources. Lines and shapes should also be drawn using the squares within the books as guidelines, where appropriate.

- Published Work

Display of writing could take the form of a class book or work displayed throughout the classroom or school corridors. Pupils will be encouraged to redraft written work for display, understanding the purpose and audience for which they are writing. Any written work displayed will be of the highest standard for that individual pupil. A pen will only be used for pupils who have a pen licence. Teachers must ensure that published work is representative of the whole class, demonstrating the highest standard for each pupil.

- Books

All books should have a printed label on the front with the pupil's full name and the subject of the book. Pupils are expected to keep their books well presented. They should not 'doodle' on the front cover, or on the pages inside. Books which are not kept well-presented may be remedied through the use of an eraser or pupils should be asked to re-write work on paper to be stuck over messy work – unacceptable presentation must be rectified and doodles removed. Inadequacies of presentation will be addressed through marking and feedback. Felt tip pens should not be used in pupil books.

- Home Learning

Parents will be encouraged to support their children to produce high quality work following the handwriting and presentation policy guidelines. Pupils will be expected to take the same care with home learning as they do with their class books and the same standards will be expected.

## Pen Licence

To be awarded a pen licence you must always:

- Sit letters on the line with appropriate ascenders and descenders
- Form letters in a consistent size
- Represent and use upper and lower case letters accurately
- Present letters in the correct orientation
- Form letters accurately
- Have a tripod grip
- Include appropriate finger spaces
- Write in a legible style
- Demonstrate a fluent, joined script using letter joins that have been taught
- The standard of a child's handwriting must be consistent and evident in all work across the curriculum.

Class teachers should identify pupils who they feel have reached the required standard for a Pen Licence.

Pen Licences will then be awarded to pupils by the English Leader and presented in assembly on a Friday.

Pupils will need to maintain a high standard of presentation to retain their licence, failure to do this will result in the pen licence being removed from them.

Pen Licences will be renewed each academic year.

When a Pen Licence is awarded, a certificate will be presented to the pupil (Appendix 2).

Please note that it may be appropriate for a specific child to use a supportive pen although they do not hold a pen licence. This will be agreed by the SENDCO.

## Appendix 1

The progression is structured broadly in units which are broken down into multiple sessions, offering a clear focus for each discrete handwriting lesson. Similar to the structure of Unlocking Letters and Sounds, Unlocking Handwriting provides 'Mastery' units for children to embed and secure the knowledge they have previously learnt. The programme also provides frequent opportunities for children to revisit previous learning and embed this before further refining their handwriting skills.

The progression is organised as follows:

| Year group | Unit | Number of lessons | Focus   |
|------------|------|-------------------|---|
| Pre-school | 1    | ongoing           | Developing Gross and Fine Motor Skills                            |
|            | 2    | ongoing           | Pre-Writing Skills  |
| Reception  | 1    | ongoing           | Developing Gross and Fine Motor Skills Mastery                    |
|            | 2    | ongoing           | Establishing the Correct Pencil Grip and Writing Position         |
|            | 3    | 6                 | Pre-Writing Skills Mastery  |
|            | 4    | 14                | Lowercase Letter Formation  |
|            | 5    | 13                | Forming Letter Families   |
|            | 6    | ongoing           | Name Writing  |
|            | 7    | 6                 | Number Formation  |
| Year 1     | 1    | ongoing           | Establishing the Correct Pencil Grip and Writing Position Mastery |
|            | 2    | ongoing           | Name Writing mastery  |
|            | 3    | 6                 | Number Formation Mastery  |
|            | 4    | 14                | Lowercase Letter Formation Mastery                                |

|        |   |         |  |
|--------|---|---------|--|
|        | 5 | 14      | Uppercase Letter Formation   |
|        | 6 | 12      | Forming Letter Families Mastery  |
|        | 7 | 12      | Uppercase Letter Formation Mastery   |
|        | 8 | 8       | Form Lowercase Letters of the Correct Size Relative to One Another   |
| Year 2 | 1 | 4       | Revisit Number Formation   |
|        | 2 | 6       | Revisit Lowercase Letter Formation   |
|        | 3 | 6       | Revisit Uppercase Letter Formation   |
|        | 4 | 14      | Cursive Letter Formation   |
|        | 5 | 16      | Letter Joins   |
|        | 6 | 16      | Letter Joins Mastery   |
|        | 7 | 3       | Form Lowercase Letters of the Correct Size Relative to One Another Mastery   |
|        | 8 | 5       | Uppercase Letters and Numbers Correctly Sized in Relation to One Another   |
|        | 9 | 3       | Spacing Within and Between Words Which Reflects the Size of the Letters  |
| Year 3 | 1 | 3       | Revisit Number Formation   |
|        | 2 | 6       | Revisit Uppercase Letter Formation   |
|        | 3 | 8       | Cursive Letter Formation Mastery   |
|        | 4 | 16      | Revisit Letter Joins   |
|        | 5 | 5       | Revisit Forming Lowercase Letters of the Correct Size Relative to One Another Mastery ( <i>including Y3&amp;4 NC statutory spelling list</i> )             |
|        | 6 | ongoing | Uppercase Letters and Numbers Correctly Sized in Relation to One Another Mastery   |
|        | 7 | 4       | Spacing Within and Between Words Which Reflects the Size of the Letters Mastery ( <i>including correctly formed Y3&amp;4 NC punctuation requirements</i> ) |
|        | 8 | 6       | Spacing Lines of Writing Sufficiently so Ascenders and Descenders Do Not Touch   |
|        | 9 | ongoing | Increase the Legibility, Consistency and Quality of Handwriting  |



## Pen Licence

Congratulations to \_\_\_\_\_

for earning your pen licence –  
keep up the great work!

From \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



St Joseph's Catholic Primary School