

St Mary Magdalene C of E Primary School
Headteacher: Mrs S Pearson
Assistant Headteacher: Mrs R Turvey and Miss E Cave



Handwriting Policy

May 2026

Statement of intent

St Mary Magdalene C of E Primary School believes that handwriting is an important life skill and is used as a tool for learning, self-expression, and communicating language. All teachers have a responsibility to ensure that pupils develop a legible, fluent and fast handwriting style to ensure that pupils build the language skills necessary to fully access the curriculum.

Our intention is that all children:

- Learn and practise appropriate handwriting skills at each stage of development, working towards a comfortable handwriting which is legible, fluent and fast.
- Develop as confident 'hybrid writers' with the skills to communicate through both handwriting and technology.

This policy will ensure the school complies with the national curriculum and help pupils develop handwriting skills across the curriculum and, as a result, achieve well.

Handwriting Policy

Aims

Our Vision and Values

In our family, we have the courage to embody Jesus' love for us. We put others' needs above our own. We act with integrity and respect. And when others fall short of our expectations, we support them to atone and extend our forgiveness. In doing this, we prepare children to live life in all its fullness: its joys and celebrations, its sorrows and struggles. The values which are most pertinent to this policy, alongside their links, are detailed below:

Love

Jesus embodies the love and compassion of God for each person, and Christians are called to follow him in this. In RE, love impels us to consider Christian perspectives on life, such as:

- putting others' needs above our own;
- acting with humility and without entitlement;
- Supporting those experiencing suffering and sadness – in our community and beyond.

At St Mary Magdalene, we empower love for learning by supporting children's interests and embedding this within all areas of the curriculum.

"Let all that you do be done in love." (1 Corinthians 16:14)

Courage

We are called to create an environment where both children and staff aspire to be, and give, their best. Everyone is emboldened to take risks, overcome challenges and be courageous in their efforts to achieve their potential. Leaders make bold curriculum choices that enable children to:

- gain knowledge, skills and experiences to navigate life in an evolving world; and
- develop characteristics such as self-belief, ambition, and resilience to overcome life's challenges.

At St Mary Magdalene, children encounter many new experiences and opportunities; at St Mary's, we encourage and promote taking risks and celebrate alongside our children when they reach their goals.

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“Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God is with you.”
(Joshua 1:9)

Respect

We seek to model to children an ethos of living well together. The flourishing of pupils goes hand in hand with the flourishing of the wider school community: staff, families, governors and friends of the school. Just as Jesus respected people by taking the time to care for them, we endeavor to:

- celebrate the Christian faith;
- foster deep respect for other cultures, faiths and traditions;
- provide an inclusive environment where special provision is afforded to those with disabilities or special educational needs; and
- challenge inequality.

“Whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them.” (Matthew 7:12)

Forgiveness

Faults, flaws, and mistakes are an unavoidable part of human life. Though Jesus preached the importance of repentance, even in moments of great personal torture, he prayed for forgiveness for his tormentors. Therefore, in our family, we seek to:

- hold ourselves and others accountable for our/their actions;
- have a robust approach to dealing with situations when things go wrong;
- repent when we fall short of our own and others’ expectations; and
- forgive others for their indiscretions.

“If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him.” (Luke 17:3)

Honesty

An honest person makes a habit of making accurate, trustworthy statements about life, self, others, and God; they represent themselves just as they are and tell others the truth about themselves. That said, the Bible tells us that honesty should always be accompanied by gentleness (Colossians 4:6). With this in mind, we strive to build kind and trusting relationships by:

- speaking and acting with integrity;
- ensuring that children have a strong voice in every aspect of school life, and acting on this; and
- working openly and compassionately with others, even when messages might be difficult to give or receive.

“And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” (John 8:32)

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Legal framework

This policy has due regard to statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- DfE (2013) 'English programmes of study: key stages 1 and 2'
- DfE (2023) 'Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Framework'
- DfE (2023) 'Development Matters'
- DfE (2024) 'Non-statutory teacher assessment frameworks at the end of key stage 1'
- DfE (2024) 'Key Stage 2 teacher assessment guidance'
- DfE (2025) 'Writing Framework'

This policy has due regard to the most recent version of the following school policies:

- Assessment Policy
- Teaching and Learning Policy
- Special Educational Needs Policy
- Marking and feedback Policy
- St Mary's (2023) 'Writing Assessment Framework' and 'Reading Assessment Framework'
- Homework Policy

Roles and responsibilities

The governing board is responsible for:

- Ensuring a broad and balanced English curriculum is implemented in the school.
- Ensuring the school's English curriculum is accessible to all pupils.

The head teacher is responsible for:

- Appointing an appropriate subject leader.
- Establishing and sustain high-quality, expert handwriting teaching across all phases, built on an evidence-informed understanding of effective teaching and how pupils learn.
- Ensuring the teaching of handwriting is underpinned by high levels of expertise and approaches which respect the distinct nature of handwriting as a discipline
- Ensuring effective use is made of formative assessment.
- Ensuring a broad, structured and coherent handwriting curriculum entitlement which sets out the knowledge, skills and values that will be taught.
- Establishing effective curricular leadership, developing subject leaders with high levels of relevant expertise with access to professional networks and communities.
- Ensuring that all pupils are taught the fundamental skills needed through the provision of evidence-informed approaches to handwriting.
- Ensuring valid, reliable and proportionate approaches are used when assessing pupils' knowledge and application of handwriting skills.
- Establishing and sustain culture and practices that enable all pupils, including pupils with SEND, to access the curriculum and learn effectively.

The subject leader is responsible for:

- Preparing policy documents, curriculum plans and schemes of work for the subject.
- Reviewing changes to the national curriculum and advising on their implementation.
- Monitoring the learning and teaching of handwriting, providing support for staff where necessary.
- Ensuring the continuity and progression from year group to year group.
- Encouraging staff to provide effective learning opportunities for pupils

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- Helping to develop colleagues' expertise in the subject.
- Organising the deployment of resources and carrying out an annual audit of all handwriting-related resources.
- Liaising with teachers across all phases.
- Communicating developments in the subject to all teaching staff.
- Leading staff meetings and providing staff members with the appropriate training.
- Organising, providing and monitoring CPD opportunities in the subject.
- Ensuring common standards are met for recording and assessing pupil performance.
- Advising on the contribution of handwriting to other curriculum areas, including cross-curricular and extra-curricular activities.

The classroom teacher is responsible for

- Acting in accordance with this policy.
- Ensuring progression of pupils' handwriting skills, with due regard to the national curriculum.
- Planning lessons effectively, ensuring a range of teaching methods are used to cover the content of the national curriculum.
- Liaising with the subject leader about key topics, resources and support for individual pupils.
- Monitoring the progress of pupils in their class and adapting the curriculum appropriately to meet individual needs.
- Reporting any concerns regarding the teaching of the subject to the subject leader or a member of the senior leadership team (SLT).
- Undertaking any training that is necessary in order to effectively teach the subject.

The special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) is responsible for:

- Liaising with the subject leader in order to implement and develop handwriting throughout the school.
- Organising and providing training for staff regarding the handwriting provision for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).
- Advising staff how best to support pupils' needs.
- Advising staff on the inclusion of handwriting skills in pupils' individual education plans.
- Advising staff on the use of teaching assistants in order to meet pupils' needs

We aim for all children to:

- learn and practise appropriate handwriting skills at each stage of development, working towards a comfortable handwriting which is legible, fluent and fast.

To fulfil these aims, we are committed to providing:

- A consistent handwriting style. Children across all year groups will be taught a simple modern style. Individual letters are taught with exit flicks where appropriate. (see Appendix 1)

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

- An Agreed language to aid clarity and consistency (see Appendix 2)
- Children will have opportunity to develop the component skills needed to teach handwriting successfully. These will be assessed prior to formal handwriting sessions. (see Appendix 3)
- Handwriting instruction to begin early on within EYFS and to be separate from phonic provision. This will follow the following letter families.
- A [tripod grip](#) will be taught to children from the first instance and reinforced throughout
- Children will develop strong skills for handwriting within the EYFS. This will begin with development of gross and fine motor skills, strong postural control and pattern making. Handwriting will be taught separately from phonics and concentrate on letter families rather than the letters linked to the graphemes being taught. Letter formation must be under adult supervision or direct teaching.

Letter family 1

Down and off in another direction

l i t j u y

Letter family 2

Down and retrace upwards

m n r b p h k

Letter family 3

Anticlockwise round

c a d o q g e f s

Letter family 4

Zig-zag letters

v w x z

- There will be chance to rehearse their handwriting fluidity within Year 1 with revision of letter families, inclusion of capital letters and numerals.
- Children will be introduced to joins within Year 2
- Children will be taught which joins are appropriate and apply this to their spelling provision within Key Stage 2.
- The conditions for handwriting within all year groups will involve the 'P Checks' – posture, pencil, paper and pressure. (see Appendix 4)
- Handwriting will be taught in conjunction with Spelling Shed spelling lists for Key Stage 2, with careful consideration given to the joins needed to be taught for each spelling family. (see Appendix 5)
- Handwriting will be clearly modelled to the children, ensuring all can see the model. Feedback will be given in the moment with the use of pink highlighter for success and further modelling guides in blue pen.

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- Quality resources will be provided for all children. This will include a range of writing implements such as pencils and pens. Pencils will be sharpened and children positioned to see the teacher demonstration.
- A hand writer repeater will be used to ensure repetition and clarity of modelling (<https://www.handwritingrepeater.org/>)
- Handwriting practice will be regular and consistent. Daily 10-minute sessions within EYFS and Key Stage 1, three 15-20 minute sessions in Year 3 and Year 4, and at least one 10-15 minute session in Year 5 and Year 6.
- Pencils will be used for all handwriting practice. Children will be introduced to writing with pens in Year 4.
- Careful provision will be made for left-handed pupils. This will involve specific demonstration and instructions.
- Regular, termly assessments will be undertaken and gaps identified. These will inform any relevant interventions and the Teacher Assessment Framework (TAFs) in Writing.
- Marking will be in the moment and any corrections taught face-to-face. Pink highlighting should note strength. Verbal feedback and modelling should be given for any corrections needed. This should be modelling in blue pen.

Appendix 1

Handwriting agreed style

6 / 20mm

1. Style of letters used :-

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

2. Capitals :-

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

3 Numerals

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

4. Relative size of letters

A a b d h k l f t g j y p q
e i o

5. Letters that do not join:

g, j, y, q, x, z

There are no joins for letters
which end on the left (break
letters)

b, p, f and s

Letters joining from the
baseline:

a, c, d, e, h, i, k, l, m, n, t, u

Letters joining from the top:

o, v, w, r

Letters which are joined
over the top and back:

c, o, a, d, q, s

The letter 'f' joins from the
cross stroke.

Pattern making to help:
letters that join at the
bottom

w w w w w w w w w w

u u u u u u u u u u

h h h h h h h h h h

m m m m m m m m m m

e e e e e e e e e e

All letters joined in any
combination

cccccc cacacaca

mmmm

Letters that join from the
top:

vvvvv wwww

ooooo

(Pattern making should
continue after the child
has begun to write. Teachers
may include patterns that
are relevant to the lesson)

Letter families:

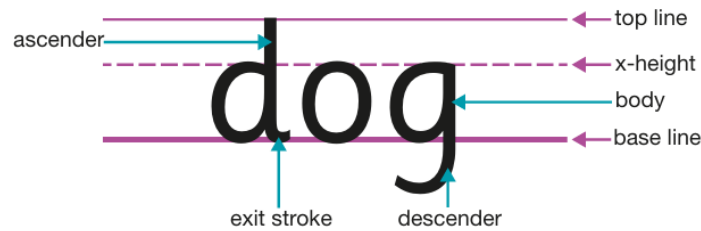
Letter family 1: litjuy
(Down and off in another direction)

Letter family 2: m n r b p h k
(Down and retrace upwards)

Letter family 3: c a d o g g e f s
(Anticlockwise round)

Letter family 4: v w x z
(zig-zag letters)

Appendix 2



Language	Definition
Handwriting	Writing done by hand using a pen, pencil, digital stylus or another mark-making implement
Unjoined or print	A handwriting style where letters are disconnected
Joined	A handwriting style where letters are predominantly joined
Mixed style	A handwriting style that has joined and unjoined letters
Simple modern	Individual letters are taught with exit flicks where appropriate <i>a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z</i>
Hybrid writers	A writer that uses both technology and handwriting as a means of communication
Upper-case letters	Letters written as capitals
Lower-case letters	Letters that are the smaller, non-capitalized versions of letters in the alphabet
Base line	The continuous line upon which the main bodies of letters rest.
Ascenders <i>(for younger children this could be described as the 'tall' part of the letter)</i>	An ascender is the upwards part of a letter that exceeds the mean line of font. For example, <i>b, d, f, h, k, l</i> and <i>t</i>
Descenders <i>(for younger children this could be described as the 'tail' part of the letter)</i>	A descender is the portion of a lowercase letter that extends below the baseline, such as, <i>g, j, p, q, y</i> and in our scheme <i>f</i> .
Short letters	Letters without ascenders or descenders, such as, <i>m, e</i> and <i>o</i> .
Letter bodies	The parts of letters which are neither ascenders or descenders, for example the rounded parts of <i>b, d</i> and <i>a</i> , and the 'arches' of <i>m</i> and <i>n</i> .
Exit stroke	Letters that finish at the baseline often have a flick in the forwards direction.
Diagonal strokes	These join from letters which finish on the baseline
Horizontal strokes	These join letters which finish at the top
Break letters	Letters, that when adjacent to each other, are best left unjoined. These letters formed with no exit flick (i.e. letters which end on the left – <i>b, g, j, o, p, s</i> and <i>y</i>)
Positional Language	Using these terms will ensure that children understand positional language when working with pencil and paper - <i>up, down, above, below. Under, top, bottom, across, around and between.</i>

Appendix 3

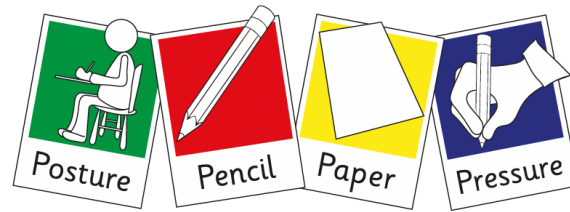
Component skills of handwriting

In order for the teaching of handwriting to be successful a child should show the following list of indicators that ensure they are ready to being learning letter formation:



Skill	Observation
<p>Gross motor factors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - They have core strength, control and postural ability - They are able to show motor planning skills (the ability to conceive, organise and execute multi-step physical movements) - The child has developed of a consistent hand preference
<p>Fine motor factors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - They have good wrist and hand function, finger dexterity - The child has developed of a pincer grip - They have a functional grip on the pencil
<p>Perceptual skill</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - They are able to show visual perception and visual memory
<p>Visual motor skill</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The child can visually observe a letter or shape and then make the required movements to produce that letter or shape with a pencil or paper.
<p>Cognitive skill</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - They have an interest in talk and communication through mark making - They have sufficient cognitive ability to pay attention, follow instructions - The child can recognise letters and remember the shapes and patterns for letters - They have an understanding of prepositional language such as up, down, in front, behind, top, bottom so that the child can follow verbal handwriting instructions.


Appendix 4

The process of handwriting – P Checks



These four checks – posture, pencil, paper and pressure – have a significant impact on the motor actions demanded of handwriting. The ‘P’ checks should be explained to children as soon as they are ready to sit at a table to write. This ensures that good handwriting habits are established from the start and become automatic.

The P Checks		
	Methodology	Guidance
Posture	<p>the need for children to maintain a stable, comfortable position to support the process of handwriting:</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Back supported by the chair • Slight tilt forwards • Hips, knees and ankles at right angles • Feet flat on the floor (or supported by a step) • Arms resting comfortably on the table • Tummy – a fist’s distance from the table • Other hand used to stabilise paper • Eyes should be a ruler’s length away from the desk
Pencil (grip/grasp)	<p>A functional grip combines a balance of control, freedom and comfort in order to produce legible script for the required duration. The dynamic tripod grip is considered optimal, to be effective this grasp must be supported by a staple wrist resting on the writing surface and positioned below the writing line. <i>(N.B. Other grasps may produce similar results in legibility and speed, so long as it is comfortable and functional this should not be changed. However, if the grasp is causing pain, discomfort or fatigue, or is seriously effecting legibility, then advice should be sought.)</i></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children need to be developmentally ready before they are expected to use a pencil • Activities should be used to develop motor strength and coordination • There needs to be a choice of pencils and pens at each stage of development • Pencil grips should be explained and modelled • Pencils should be held about 2 centimetres from the tip • Grip should be supported by a stable wrist, resting on the desk
Paper (position)	<p>The paper should be slanted parallel to the writing arm at a comfortable distance from the edge of the table. It should not be directly in front of the child but slightly offset, to the right for a right hander and to the left for a left hander. The paper or book should be held still by the ‘helper’ hand.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A smaller sized exercise book (or landscape format) is easier for young children to manage • Show how to gradually move the book upwards as the writing moves down the page

	 <p>Left-handed Position paper slightly to the left of body midline. Angle paper clockwise.</p> <p>Right-handed Position paper slightly to the right of body midline. Angle paper anticlockwise.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A single sheet of paper needs to be paperclipped to card to provide more stability.
<p>Pressure</p>	<p>This refers to the pressure or force put through the pen(cil). Ideally, this should leave a clear trace on the paper, neither too faint nor too dark, and flow along the line rhythmically. Pressure regulation is an important part of developing good, fluid handwriting.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing sessions should begin with warm up and hand relaxation exercises • Observations of difficulties need to include what is happening with the whole body • A range of pencil, pens and adaptive equipment needs to be available.

Appendix 5

	Statutory requirements	Non-statutory notes and guidance
<p>Year 1 Age 5-6</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 was) and to practise these 	<p>Handwriting requires frequent and direct teaching. Pupils should be able to form letters correctly and confidently. The size of the writing implement (pencil, pe) should not be too large for a young pupil's hand.</p> <p>Whatever is being used should allow the pupil to hold it easily and correctly so that bad habits are avoided.</p> <p>Left-handed pupils should receive specific teaching to meet their needs.</p>
<p>Year 2 Age 6-7</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 needed to join letters and understand which letters, when adjacent to one another, are best left unjoined • 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>Pupils should revise and practise correct letter formation frequently. They should be taught to write with a joined styles as soon as they can form letters securely with the correct orientation.</p>
<p>Years 3 and 4 Age 7-9</p>	<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 unjoined • 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.</p> <p>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>Years 5 and 6 Age 10-11</p>	<p>Pupils should be taught to write legibly, fluency and with increasing speed by:</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 to the task. 	<p>Pupils should continue to practise 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 example, for filling in a form).</p>