



Holy Rood Catholic  
Primary School, Swindon



Handwriting Parents' Guide  
2017

This leaflet is to explain why and how we teach handwriting at Holy Rood Catholic Primary School. It also includes ideas on ways in which you can help to develop your child's handwriting.

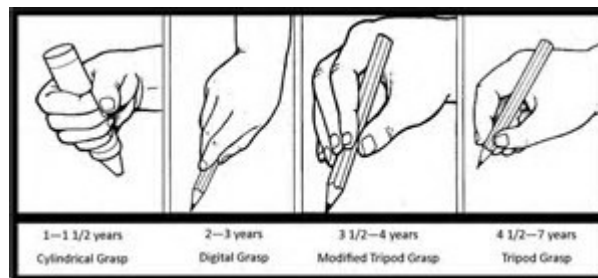
At Holy Rood, our aim is that handwriting becomes an automatic process, which frees children to focus on the content of their writing. It is a developmental process with its own distinctive stages of progression, from readiness for handwriting through to letter joins, speed and fluency. In order for this to occur, handwriting is taught regularly and systematically through the use of the PENPALS Handwriting scheme.

Five stages are identified and these form the basic organisation of the scheme:

1. Readiness for writing: gross and fine motor skills leading to letter formation (Foundation)
2. Beginning to join (Lower KS1)
3. Securing joins (Upper KS1/Lower KS2)
4. Practising speed and fluency (Lower KS2)

### **Pencil/Pen Grip**

The pen or pencil should be gripped comfortably between forefinger and thumb with the second finger below to steady it. If you pick up a pen, which is lying on the table in front of you, with its nib towards you in line with your forearm, you instinctively pick it up in the correct grip.



### **Posture**

Developing a good posture is as important as developing a good pencil grip. Children will be able to sustain writing for longer if they become used to sitting comfortably.

- Ensure feet are flat on the floor.
- Children should sit up and push themselves into the back of the chair.
- Children should use their non-writing hand to steady the paper and bear some body weight.
- The paper should be tilted slightly.



## Foundation Stage 1

At Foundation stage, your child will be focusing on developing the necessary fine and gross motor skills in readiness for handwriting. They will practise a range of patterns including dots, waves and zig zags to prepare them for letter formation.

*Preparation for handwriting involves developing four key areas:*

- 1. Gross motor control:** The control and co-ordination of the big movements the body can make.
- 2. Fine motor control:** Being able to fine-tune the movements of the arm, hand and fingers.
- 3. Visual control:** Making sure hand and eye movements are working well together.
- 4. Spatial control:** Helping children to be able to move themselves confidently in a space with an awareness of direction (left/right) and plane (horizontal/vertical) and eventually helping them to transfer that sense of space on to paper.

*As part of developing confidence in these key areas children begin to explore patterns and basic letter shapes. We experiment with the following six basic patterns and their variations as they provide excellent preparation for more formal work on letter formation:*

- Investigating dots.
- Investigating straight lines and crosses.
- Investigating circles.
- Investigating curves, loops and waves.
- Investigating joined straight lines and angled patterns.
- Investigating eights and spirals.



Enjoy exploring these patterns at home in as many different ways as possible. Make patterns using paint, water, sand, flour, etc. Don't always rush to find a pencil.

*Here are some things you can do at home to develop these key areas:*

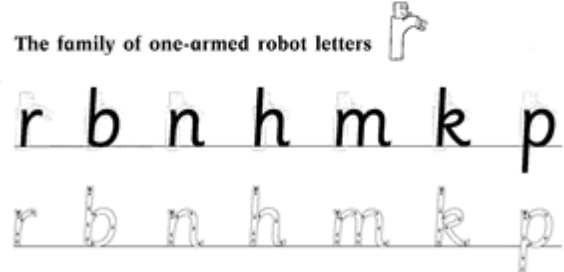
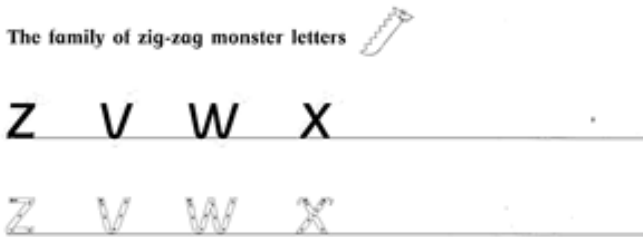
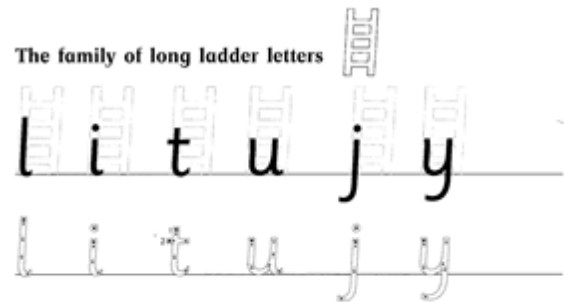
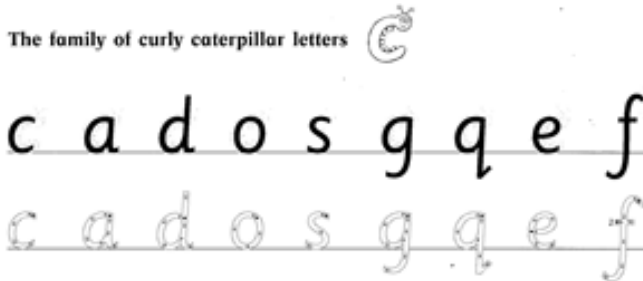
- Play with a ball, e.g. kick, catch, throw and bounce.
- Play with hoops, frisbees and stilts (the upside-down flowerpot kind).
- Encourage play on climbing frames, slides and swings in the park.
- Play with large scale building kits.
- Enjoy finger rhymes.
- Encourage your child to make things and model things (e.g. cutting, sticking, moulding, cooking, sewing and threading) using a range of materials (e.g. dough, Plasticine®, wood).
- Encourage your child to experiment with a range of tools and equipment (e.g. pens, pencils, crayons, felt tips, scissors, hole punches and tweezers).
- Share jigsaw puzzles and board games.
- Provide opportunities for painting, colouring and 'making marks' on different sizes of paper.

## Foundation Stage 2

Pattern practice and 'play' writing are an important part of handwriting development. Your child will be practising letter formation in a number of exciting ways; in sand, using paint, in the air, on the interactive whiteboard as well as on paper with a pencil. When your child is ready for letter formation, ask these questions:

- Where does the letter start?
- Is it a short letter? (a, c, e, i, m, n, o, r, s, u, v, w, x, z)
- Does it have an ascender? (b, d, f, h, k, l, t)
- Does it have a descender? (f, g, j, p, q, y)

The lower case letters are introduced in the following order in four family types:



## Year 1

Letter formation should now be becoming familiar and secure. As a reminder, correct letter formation for lower case letters is as follows:

Capital letters are formed as follows:

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

During this school year, children will begin to join some pairs of letters within a word.

They will be introduced to two main join types:

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

- Joins from the baseline, known as diagonal joins.
- Letters which can come before diagonal joins: a, c, d, e, h, i, k, l, m, n, t, u

diagonal join to short letter	diagonal join to an ascender	diagonal join to an anticlockwise letter
e.g. am, un jam, fun	e.g. at, th, ck bat, with, duck	e.g. ag, nd, if bag, bend, if

- Joins from the top of the letter or the cross bar, known as horizontal joins.
- Letters which can come before horizontal joins: o, v, w

horizontal join to a short letter	horizontal join to an ascender	horizontal join to an anticlockwise letter
e.g. on, wi pond, with	e.g. ot, oll, wh dot, doll, when	e.g. og, oc, oo frog, clock, look

Letters which are not joined from at this stage are known as break letters and include: b, f, g, j, p, q, r, s, x, y, z

## Year 2

The main aim during this year is for children to begin to develop an easy and clear handwriting style which can become fluent and automatic. This will help to prepare children for writing and spelling tasks during the school year.

Letter formation of capitals and lower case letters should now be familiar and secure.

Children have been introduced to the two basic join types:

- Joins from the baseline, known as diagonal joins, including:
- Diagonal join, no ascender: am, un, ip
- Diagonal join to an ascender: at, th, ck
- Diagonal join to an anti-clockwise letter: ag, nd, if

Joins from the crossbar, known as horizontal joins, including:

- Horizontal join, no ascender, e.g. op, wi
- Horizontal join to an ascender, e.g. ot, wh
- Horizontal join to an anticlockwise letter, e.g. oo, wa

Break letters (i.e. letters which are not joined from at this stage) include: b, f, g, j, p, q, r, s, x, y, z

New joining letters introduced during this year are:

- Join from q: e.g. quick, quiet, queen
- Joins to and from r, e.g. ran, her, hurry
- Joins to and from s: e.g. has, sent, class
- Joins from f: e.g. far, fluffy

So far, children have only tried joining one pair of letters in a word. This year they will gradually learn to join more letters in a word, using all the different joins: e.g. calculator, kitten, handwriting

To begin with, however, children will focus on joining letters that combine to make a common letter pattern (e.g. ee as in feet, oi as in foil, oa as in boat). Learning to combine letters in this way links handwriting with spelling and helps children to become more confident spellers.

### Year 3

The main aims during this year are for children to refine their handwriting and to make sure that the size and proportions of all letters, and the spaces between letters and words, are consistent and even.

Formation of capitals and lower case letters should now be familiar and secure.

Children have been introduced to the two basic join types:

Joins from the baseline, known as diagonal joins, including:

- Diagonal join to a short letter, e.g. am, un
- Diagonal joins to an ascender, e.g. at, th, ck
- Diagonal joins to an anti-clockwise letter, e.g. ag, nd, of

Joins from the cross bar, known as horizontal joins, including:

- Horizontal join to a short letter, e.g. wi, fr
- Horizontal join to an ascender, e.g. out, wg, fl
- Horizontal join to an anticlockwise letter, e.g. oo, wa, fa

Break letters (i.e. letters which are not joined from at this stage) include: g, y, j, x, z

New joining letters introduced during this year are:

- Joins from p and b to a short letter, e.g. pi, be
- Joins to an ascender e.g. ph, bb
- Joins to an anticlockwise letter, e.g. po, ba

By this stage, children should be secure at joining and able to use joined-up writing for most of their work. Opportunities will also be provided for children to practise writing at increased speed so that they can produce longer pieces of writing with greater ease.

There is continued emphasis on using the movements of handwriting to support spelling through the revision of common letter patterns.

## **Year 4**

The main aims during this year are for children to begin to slope their handwriting and to make sure that the size and proportions of all letters, and the spaces between letters and words, are consistent and even. Attention is also given to keeping ascenders and descenders parallel. Formation of capitals and lower case letters should now be familiar and secure.

Children have been introduced to the two basic join types:

Joins from the baseline, known as diagonal joins, including:

- Diagonal join to a short letter, e.g. mm, nn
- Diagonal join to an ascender, e.g. tt, ll
- Diagonal join to an anticlockwise letter, e.g. ic, ss

Joins from the cross bar, known as horizontal joins, including:

- Horizontal join to a short letter, e.g. ou, on
- Horizontal join to an ascender, e.g. ot, wh, fl
- Horizontal join to an anticlockwise letter, e.g. oo, wa, fa

Break letters (i.e letters which are not joined from at this stage) include g, j and y. Letters which are never joined to or from are x and z.

By this stage, children should be secure at joining and able to use joined up writing for most of their word. Children will be beginning to practise writing in ink.

Opportunities will also be provided for children to practise writing at increased speed so that they can produce longer pieces of writing with greater ease.

There is continued emphasis on using the movements of handwriting to support spelling through the revision of common letter patterns.

Children will be introduced to the print alphabet for purposes such as captions, headings, labels.

## Years 5 and 6

Letter formation of capitals and lower case letters should now be familiar and secure.

Children have been introduced to the two basic join types:

Joins from the baseline, known as diagonal joins, including:

- Diagonal join to a short letter, e.g. mm, nn
- Diagonal join to an ascender, e.g. th, ll
- Diagonal join to an anticlockwise letter, e.g. ic, ss

Joins from the crossbar, known as horizontal joins, including:

- Horizontal join to a short letter, e.g. ou, on
- Horizontal join to an ascender, e.g. ot, wh, fl
- Horizontal join to an anticlockwise letter, e.g. oo, wa, fa

By this stage, children should be secure at joining and able to use joined up writing for most of their work. Children will be experimenting with sloping their writing and using different joins for a more mature and comfortable style and will be writing mostly in ink.

At the end of the primary phase, handwriting will be assessed in the context of general writing. It is therefore important that in Years 5 and 6 children become confident with writing appropriately in different situations.

The Penpals handwriting materials let children develop speed and fluency in writing. They also allow them to assess and improve their own handwriting.

There are also opportunities to practise handwriting for different purposes in projects. These include:

- Note-making – quick writing.
- Fast and fluent writing – neat and legible to all readers
- Best writing – writing for presentations.

The projects allow for the use of print letters (e.g. for labelling) and capital letters (e.g. for posters). There are both fiction and non-fiction projects.