

Saint Patrick's Catholic Voluntary Academy



Handwriting Policy

September 2025

Overview:

At St Patrick's, we believe that handwriting is a vital skill that allows children to communicate more effectively in the written form. Handwriting skills should be taught regularly and systematically. Pre-cursive and cursive handwriting teach pupils to join letters and words as a series of flowing movements and patterns; they support pupils to write with ease, speed and legibility.

Aims:

- To encourage children to develop a sense of pride in their work, enabling them to present work neatly for an audience.
- To teach print initially in EYFS, then pre-cursive script, following letter shapes with 'leads in and out', and finally cursive script.
- To write legibly with increasing fluency and speed by:
 - having a correct pencil grip;
 - knowing the size and orientation of letters;
 - forming all letters correctly; knowing that all cursive letters start from the line.
- To develop the ability to produce letters without thinking in an automatic style response.

Organisation:

Throughout EYFS, KS1 and KS2, children have regular handwriting practice. Handwriting is timetabled for between 30-60 minutes per week, in short sessions, dependent on pupil age. Teachers model good handwriting and demonstrate how to form letters in the correct style and the correct size. They talk through the process and encourage children to verbalise the process as well. Children who find handwriting difficult are targeted for regular intervention.

Teaching sequence

See Appendix 1 for further details on correct seating and grip.

See Appendix 2 for further details on correct letter and number formation.

EYFS handwriting:

Pupils should:

- develop hand and finger strength, e.g. by manipulating dough, completing puzzles or threading blocks onto a rope;
- work on a large scale, e.g. using brushes on walls before moving on to using chunky crayons or pencils;
- develop fine motor skills to grasp, hold and strengthen fingers and thumbs, e.g. by using pick-up tools;
- develop core strength and 'muscle isolation', e.g. by reaching across the body to put on socks and shoes, climbing, throwing and catching;
- move through stages in their mark making;
- develop an ability to use straight lines and curves to form symbols;
- learn correct pencil grip;
- form letters and numbers correctly.

During the autumn term, pupils in FS2 initially focus on mark making and developing fine motor skills, manipulative skills and hand-eye coordination through a range of activities, such as 'Dough Disco', 'Scribbles' and 'Ribbons', before being introduced to letter formation through a series of letter families.

Teachers model neat printing, often explaining verbally how they are forming letters. Children learn how to form lower case letters in the correct direction, starting and finishing in the correct place, including position on the line. Children also learn how to form the letter shapes as they learn the letter sounds in phonic work. In phonics lessons, pupils are taught to print the letters without

lead-in strokes, following the Little Wandle print font. They are encouraged to use capital letters for their names and introduced to other capital letters in the spring term.

By the end of the year, pupils will have practised all the letters of the alphabet and digits 0 to 9. Most pupils will be able to form the majority of these letters correctly. Some pupils will require further consolidation in Year 1. As pupils learn correct pencil grip, they are offered a variety of tools such as large triangular pencils and pencil grips before they progress onto smaller pencils by the summer term.

Throughout the year, pupils are offered multi-sensory experiences to develop the most frequently used hand movements.

Activities include:

- creating patterns using a variety of tools, e.g. felt-tips, charcoal, paint;
- using playground chinks or water from squeeze bottles to create patterns on the ground;
- using a variety of surfaces on horizontal and vertical surfaces;
- stimulating touch by using different materials;
- using trays containing sand, salt, shaving foam to practise patterns;
- encouraging motor sensory by tracing in the air or on other children's backs or in the palms of their hands.

Techniques for teaching letter formation:

- Model good handwriting at all times.
- Demonstrate how to form letters in the correct style and correct size.
- Talk through the process using the Little Wandle mantras.
- Encourage the children to verbalise the process using the Little Wandle mantras.
- Children form letters in the air.
- Children finger trace over tactile letters.
- Children write over highlighter pen.
- Children write in sand with their finger or a stick.
- Children write on chalkboards and whiteboards.

Year 1 handwriting:

Pupils should be taught to:

- sit correctly at a table, holding a pencil comfortably and correctly;
- form lower-case letters in the correct direction, starting and finishing in the right place;
- form lower-case letters with clear ascenders and descenders;
- form capital letters that are the same size as lower-case letters with ascenders;
- form digits 0-9 that are the same size as lower-case letters with ascenders;
- understand which letters belong to which handwriting 'families' (i.e. letters that are formed in similar ways) and to practise these.

In Year 1, pupils start to develop a legible style, building on what they learnt in EYFS. At the beginning of the year, the pupils recap how to form lower case letters without the flicks (print). They also revise number formation and consolidate formation of capital letters. They are taught handwriting skills regularly in discrete lessons.

Once pupils are secure with their letter formation, they learn how to add flicks to their letters (pre-cursive handwriting style). They are taught that all lower-case letters begin on the line and have a lead out (referred to as a 'flick'). Letters are practised in the same family groups set out in Appendix 2, alongside their phonic work. Pupils need to develop a comfortable and efficient pencil grip and know how to sit with the correct posture at a table. They are exposed to the pre-cursive handwriting font from the beginning of the year to support their transition to using this font in the spring and summer terms. Initially pupils use print in their writing, but are then encouraged to use pre-cursive handwriting by the summer term.

Teachers should ensure that children have an understanding from the outset that letters can be written differently to what they were originally exposed to, showing children the pre-cursive font and explaining that these letters make the same sounds as their printed counterparts. All phonic work should continue to be read in print, particularly when teaching new sounds in line with the Little Wandle phonics programme.

Year 2 handwriting:

Pupils should be taught to:

- 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.

In Year 2, pupils continue to be taught handwriting skills regularly in discrete handwriting lessons, in handwriting books. Handwriting is also reinforced in all written work. Teachers specifically model using joins during English lessons and other written work, once the joins have been taught in handwriting lessons.

By the end of KS1, the majority of pupils are able to write legibly, using upper and lower-case letters appropriately and correct spacing between words using a cursive style. They are forming some basic joins within all of their written work.

Year 3 and 4 handwriting:

Pupils should be taught to:

- consolidate their cursive handwriting style.

In Lower KS2, pupils have regular handwriting lessons that focus on learning to join correctly, with a particular focus on the more complex joins listed in Appendix 2. They continue to practise cursive handwriting to aid presentation, legibility and the finer points of the joins. This is demonstrated in their handwriting books and is linked to spellings. By the end of Year 4, all pupils should be able to use cursive handwriting at all times unless other specific forms are required, e.g. printing on a map, fast script for notes. They should have developed a clear and fluent style.

Once the joins have been revised, the children are encouraged to use a fine-tipped pen for handwriting lessons in their handwriting books. They continue to use a sharp pencil for all other writing.

Year 5 and 6 handwriting:

Children should be taught to:

- increase the legibility, consistency and quality of their handwriting, whether they are writing with a pencil or a pen;
- write with their own style of joined up handwriting, that is consistent and legible to all readers;
- maintain legibility when writing at speed.

In Upper KS2, children are encouraged to develop their own style, whilst still maintaining legibility. They are taught to maintain this legibility when writing at speed. Children will need reminders about joins and any inconsistencies of style should be worked on. Discrete lessons are taught as and when required to ensure children are joining accurately.

Children are encouraged to use a pen in all their work, except maths, to prepare them for KS3.

Links to spelling

Linking handwriting with spelling is one of the most powerful ways of developing the visual memory. Handwriting will be practised using letters, digraphs and high frequency words so that patterns are internalised.

Remember to use **Look – Say – Cover – Write – Check**.

Assessment

Class teachers will continually monitor pupil progress in comparison with the age appropriate order of teaching. Examples of HA, MA and LA handwriting from each year group will be reviewed and discussed at whole school writing moderation.

Inclusion

St Patrick's Catholic Voluntary Academy is committed to promoting the principles and practices of equality and inclusion. A whole school approach is used to ensure all children receive equality of opportunity - not only so that every child is included and not disadvantaged, but also so that each child may learn from the earliest age to value diversity in others and grow up making a positive contribution to society.

It is our expectation that children are taught challenging age-related content and that the majority of the children will achieve age-related expectations at the end of each year and key stage.

Teachers will differentiate the handwriting curriculum to ensure that all children are able to progress, succeed and close gaps in their handwriting skills.

Appendix 1: correct seating and grip

- Children must sit up straight, with both feet firmly on the floor.
- Chair and table should be at a comfortable height.
- The table should support the forearm so that it rests lightly on the surface and is parallel to the floor.
- The height of the chair should be such that the thighs are horizontal and feet flat on the floor.
- Rooms should be well lit.
- A tripod grip is the most efficient way of holding a pencil.
- Different styles of pencil grips and slope boards are available for those who would benefit from them.

For right handers

- Hold lightly between the thumb and forefinger about 3cm away from the point.
- The paper should be placed to the right tilted slightly to the left.
- Use the left hand to steady the paper.

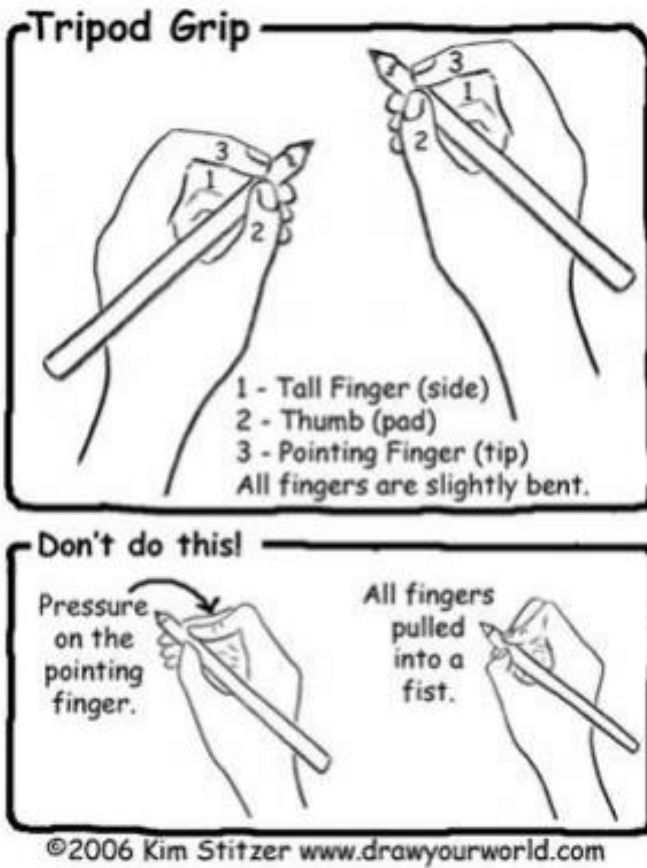
For left handers

- Hold lightly between thumb and forefinger resting on the first knuckle of the middle finger.
- Hold about 3cm from the tip.
- The hand should be kept below the writing line.
- The paper should be tilted slightly to the right at about 20 - 30°.
- Use the right hand to steady the paper.

We recognise that left-handers may have difficulty with handwriting, because the movements required have been developed by right-handers.

All teachers are aware of the specific needs of left-handers and make appropriate provision:













- Left-handed children should sit to the left of a right-handed child.
- They should sit so that their writing hand is away from a wall or other obstruction.
- Pencils should not be held too close to the point as this can interrupt pupils' line of vision.

























Appendix 2: correct letter and number formation
Mantras from the Little Wandle SSP scheme

Phase 2 grapheme information sheet

Autumn 1

Grapheme and mnemonic	Picture card	Pronunciation phrase	Formation phrase
s s 		Show your teeth and let the s hiss out ssssss	Under the snake's chin, slide down and round its tail.
a a 		Open your mouth wide and make the a sound at the back of your mouth aaa	Around the astronaut's helmet and down into space.
t t 		Open your lips, put the tip of your tongue behind your teeth and press ttt	From the tiger's nose to its tail, then follow the stripe across the tiger.
p p 		Bring your lips together, push them open and say ppp	Down the penguin's back, up and around its head.
i i 		Pull your lips back and make the i sound at the back of your mouth iii	Down the iguana's body, then draw a dot (on the leaf) at the top.
n n 		Open your lips a bit, put your tongue behind your teeth and make the nnnnn sound nnnnn	Down the stick, up and over the net.
m m 		Put your lips together and make the mmmmmm sound mmmmmm	Down, up and over the mouse's ear, then add a flick on the nose.

Grapheme and mnemonic	Picture card	Pronunciation phrase	Formation phrase
d d 		Put your tongue to the top and front of your mouth and make a quick d sound ddd	Round the duck's body, up to its head and down to its feet.
g g 		Give me a big smile that shows your teeth, press the middle of your tongue to the top and back of your mouth, push your tongue down and forward to make the g sound ggg	Round the goat's face, up to its ear, down and curl under his chin.
o o 		Make your mouth into round shape and say ooo	All around the octopus.
c c 		Open your mouth into a little smile, make your tongue flat and move it up towards the top of your mouth to say c c c	Curl around the cat.
k k 		Open your mouth into a little smile, make your tongue flat and move it up towards the top of your mouth to say k k k	Down the kite, up and across, back and down to the corner.
ck ck 		Open your mouth into a little smile, make your tongue flat and move it up towards the top of your mouth to say c c c	1 Curl round the heel of the sock. 2 Down the sock, up and across, back and down, and to the corner. Catchphrase: Rock that sock!
e e 		Open your mouth wide and say eee	Around the elephant's eye and down its trunk.

Grapheme and mnemonic	Picture card	Pronunciation phrase	Formation phrase
u u 		Open your mouth wide and say uuu	Down and around the umbrella, stop at the top and down to the bottom and flick
r r 		Show me your teeth to make a rrrrr sound rrrrr	From the cloud to the ground, up the arch and over the rainbow.
h h 		Open your mouth and breathe out sharply hhh	Down, up and over the helicopter
b b 		Put your lips together and say b as you open them bbb	Down bear's back, up and round his big tummy.
f f 		Open your lips a little, put your teeth on your bottom lip and push the air out to make the sound fff	Down the flamingo's neck, all the way to its feet, then across its wings.
l l 		Open your mouth a little, put your tongue up to the top of your mouth, behind your teeth, and press llll	All the way down the lollipop.

Letter formation: Capital letters

Use this document to ensure correct letter formation when you are teaching children to form capital letters.

Letter	Capital letter formation phrase
A	From the top, diagonally down to the left, up to the top, diagonally down to the right. Lift up and across.
B	From the top, down, back to the top. Round to the middle, round to the bottom.
C	From the top, curl around to the left to sit on the line.
D	From the top, down, back to the top. Curve right, down to the bottom.
E	From the top, down, back to the top. Across, back. Lift up and across the middle. Lift up and across the bottom line.
F	From the top, down, back to the top. Across, back. Lift up and across the middle.
G	From the top, curl around to the line, carry on up, then straight down. Lift up and across.
H	From the top and down. Space. From the top and down. Lift up and join the lines across the middle.
I	From the top to the bottom and stop.
J	From the top, all the way down, then short curl to the left.
K	From the top, down, up to the middle. Diagonally up, back and diagonally down to the line.
L	From the top, down and across the line.
M	From the top, down, back to the top. Diagonally down, diagonally up. Straight down to the line.
N	From the top, down, back to the top. Diagonally down, then straight up to the top.
O	From the top – all around the o.
P	From the top, down then back up. Curve right to halfway down.
Q	From the top – all around the o. Lift off. Short line diagonally down.
R	From the top, down, then back up. Curve right to halfway down. Diagonally down to the line.
S	From the top, under the snake's chin, slide down and round its tail.
T	From the top, down and stop. Lift up and from the left, make a line across the top.
U	From the top, down and curve right, then straight up to the top.
V	From the top diagonally right to the bottom, then diagonally up to the top.
W	From the top diagonally right to the bottom, diagonally up to the top, diagonally down to the line, then diagonally up again.
X	From the top, diagonally right to the bottom. Space. Start at the top, then diagonally left to the bottom.
Y	From the top diagonally right to the middle. Space. From the top diagonally left to the middle. Straight down to the bottom.
Z	From the top go across, diagonally down to the left and across the bottom.

Number Formation 0 to 10 with Rhymes



Around to my left to find my hero, back to the top, I've made a zero.



A downward stroke, my that's fun. Now I've made the number one.



Half a heart says "I love you." Add a line. Now I've made the number two.



Around the tree, around the tree, now I've made the number three.



Down and across and down once more, now I've made the number four.



Draw the hat, the back and the belly. It's a five. Watch out, it might come alive!



Bend down low to pick up sticks. Now I've made the number six.



Across the sky and down from heaven. Now I've made the number seven.



Make an "S" and close the gate. Now you've made the number eight.



Make an oval and a line. Now I've made the number nine.



A downward stroke, that's my one. Add a zero, that's my number ten done!