

Progression Guidance: Handwriting through the Primary School

This is a guidance document. It complements the new National Curriculum Programmes of Study for Key Stages 1 and 2. The new POS does not dictate precisely when cursive writing should begin, or which handwriting programme a school should use. However, statements clearly give emphasis to the importance of teaching handwriting thoroughly and regularly, with high expectation of presentation.

Year group	Writing - handwriting
Year R	<p>Year R is not included in the Programme of Study for Key Stages 1 and 2. However, guidance would clearly prepare pupils for the Year 1 statements.</p> <p>Early Learning goal: 'Children show good control and coordination in large and small movements. They move confidently in a range of ways, safely negotiating space. They handle equipment and tools effectively, including pencils for writing.'</p> <p><i>Development Matters</i> gives the following guidance:</p> <p>30-50 months:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holds pencil between thumb and two fingers, no longer using the whole hand grasp • Holds pencil near point between first two fingers and thumb and uses it with good control • Can copy some letters, e.g. letters from their name <p>40-60 months:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows preference for a dominant hand • Begins to use anticlockwise movement and retrace vertical movement • Begins to form recognisable letters • Uses a pencil and holds it effectively to form recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed <p>Pupils will need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • engage in pre-writing or 'writing-readiness' activities • practise holding a writing or drawing implement correctly • practise and enjoy making marks using a variety of materials • make large marks and small marks, using gross and fine motor skills • make patterns such as wiggles, curves, straight lines, zig-zags and circles • practise drawing patterns inside bigger shapes, keeping within the lines • when appropriate, follow the statements for Year 1 below <p><i>Additional information: provide opportunities for the child to hold a range of writing implements correctly, using the tripod grip, before the muscle memory becomes fixed. Develop shoulder movements to encourage upper body strength.</i></p>
Year 1	<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 (<i>assumed to mean according to the school's policy or handwriting programme</i>) • form capital letters

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • form digits 0-9 • understand which letters belong to which handwriting 'families' (i.e. letters that are formed in similar ways) and to practise these. • Non statutory: Handwriting requires frequent and discrete, direct teaching. Pupils should be able to form letters correctly and confidently. The size of the writing implement should allow the pupil to hold it easily and correctly, to avoid forming bad habits. • Left handed pupils should receive specific teaching to meet their needs. • <i>Additional information: Handwriting families could include, for example: (curly caterpillar) c,a,d,e,g,o,q,f,s; *x when drawn cursively; (long ladder) i,j,l,t,u,y; (one armed robot) b,h,k,m,n,p,r; (zig zag) v,w,z (See Gateway to Writing - National Strategy Archived Resources - also included on Kent's Literacy Toolkit.)</i> • <i>Kent strongly recommends that handwriting should be taught as a modelled, supervised and guided activity, ensuring that pupils do not form habits which are unhelpful later. Correct letter formation and orientation is crucial.</i>
Year 2	<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. <i>(This may refer to a handwriting programme such as Nelson, rather than fully cursive script. If your school uses the latter, the only unjoined letters would be capital letters. If your school handwriting policy requires that pupils begin to join letters at an earlier stage, follow your preferred policy. Consider how well your pupils are able to successfully master what you are expecting of them at each stage, so that the writing process does not become a barrier to enjoyment and success.)</i> • 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 • Non statutory: Pupils should revise and practise correct letter formation frequently. They should be taught to write with a joined style as soon as they can form letters securely with the correct orientation. <i>(This implies that it is not appropriate to rush children to join letters until they have mastered these skills. Some schools, however, prefer to introduce cursive writing from the Reception class.)</i>

<p>Years 3 and 4</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.] • Non statutory: 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>Years 5 and 6</p>	<p>Handwriting and Presentation</p> <p>Pupils should be taught to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • write legibly, fluently and with increasing speed by: • 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. • Non statutory: 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. • 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.