

BROCKHURST & MARLSTON HOUSE SCHOOLS

Including all of the Pre-Prep Department and Early Years Foundation Stage

HANDWRITING POLICY

Brockhurst & Marlston House Schools (the School) is committed to providing the best possible care and education to its pupils, and to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people. This policy is written with that commitment in mind, and in accordance with KCSIE September 2025.

Reviewed: September 2024

Next Review: September 2026

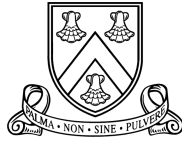
GENERAL NOTES

All staff must constantly check that pencil grip is correct.



Correct Pencil Grip

- Regular, frequent practice is essential
- Make it a whole class activity
- Ensure correct formation by observing the children during practice sessions i.e. how they are forming letters
- Encourage legibility
- Focus attention on spacing, ascenders and descenders
- Always display good examples – labels, children’s work and notices etc.
- Children are encouraged to start joining letters in their independent writing in the summer term of Reception



- Remember that early joined up handwriting facilitates faster work and helps spelling
- Try to diagnose handwriting errors as early as possible and refer children with extreme cases of deficiency in fine motor skills to the LDC

THE THREE MAIN FUNCTIONS OF HANDWRITING

1. A Tool for Clear Communication
2. A Personal Speedy Hand
3. Handwriting as an Art Form

WAYS OF ENCOURAGING THESE FUNCTIONS

1. A Tool for Clear Communication

Children should be given the opportunity, from their first days in school, to write their own ideas down. This may mean dictating their thoughts to the teacher who will write down the child's thoughts.

Copying from the teacher's model is essential with constant explanation of how each letter and/or letter group is formed.

Copying from print is no help to children in the Early Years. For teaching to be effective, children must always copy from an example of the school's style of handwriting. Children may require a copy of how to form the different letters next to them rather than copying from the board. This is particularly relevant to those with processing difficulties.

2. A Personal Speedy Hand

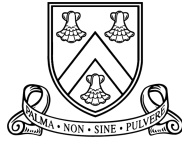
Timed self-competition, combined with mutual criticism of legibility, can help speedy note-taking. Primary children get far too little practice in reading each other's and adults' handwriting. More experience in mutual reading should help them see the need for legibility.

3. Handwriting as an Art Form

Concentration on aesthetic considerations alone can damage the teaching of handwriting. If all handwriting is seen as 'fine art', a too self-conscious and non-functional kind of 'lettering' may develop. Children and teachers need to be able to differentiate between good handwriting and its development into calligraphy and fine lettering. Only a minority of primary school children will achieve success in calligraphy. If children are seen to have this ability, it should be praised and encouraged.

WRITING INSTRUMENTS

Children in Ridge House can use crayons and pencils with pencil grips since these are easier for smaller children to control. As their manipulative skills improve, children should 'progress' to thin (standard) pencils in Form 8. Many children will still need thick triangular pencils or pencil grips until their grip is correct.



In Reception and Nursery, activities such as placing pegs in a pin board and picking up small objects such as beads or peas will indicate when a child has the manual dexterity to use a pencil.

Outside school, most children will have used felt tips, fibre tips, ballpoints and even fountain pens. In school, therefore, it is important that they have an opportunity to familiarise themselves with the variety of writing tools available today.

Triangular pencils and pencils with grips should be available in all classes to encourage those who have not yet mastered a correct grip.

THE STYLE OF HANDWRITING IN THE SCHOOL

JOINED WRITING ALPHABET

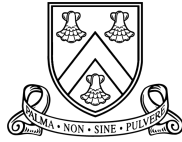
The writing style of the school is cursive and the scheme is the **Nelson Handwriting Scheme**.

NOTES FOR EYFS and KEY STAGE 1 TEACHERS

1. Each stage of handwriting needs:
 - teaching and frequent, regular practice
2. The first stage of handwriting is practising with patterns:
 - filling in scribble patterns
 - practising light and dark shades to experience pressure manipulation
 - using the arm as an elephant trunk to trace patterns in the air (magic fingers)
 - feeling patterns in the air, in sand, on the carpet, clay etc.
 - taking pencil, crayon, paintbrush for a walk
 - practising moving from the top to bottom using various media
 - completing more structured patterns
3. The second stage of handwriting is practising with letters with the teacher:
 - using the arm as an elephant trunk to trace letters in the air (magic fingers)
 - feeling letters in the air, sand, carpet, clay etc.
 - taking pencil, crayon, paintbrush for a walk
 - more structured letter patterns
4. The next stage is letter formation on paper

Teaching Notes:

All letters, except capital letters, start on the line. Capital letters are not joined up.



IMPORTANT POINTS TO REMEMBER WHEN TEACHING LETTER FORMATION, HANDWRITING AND WRITING

Furniture

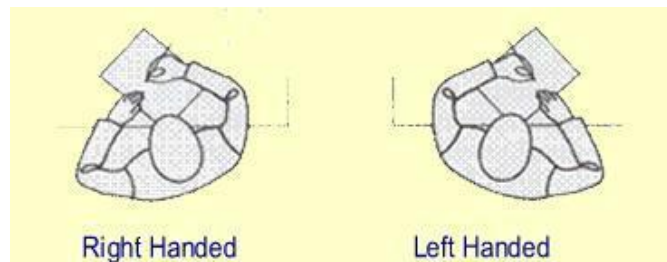
The furniture a child uses is important. The proper sized chair and the distance of the pupil from the desk are factors that affect viewing performances. Chairs should be designed for the individual so that their feet can be placed flat on the floor.

The teacher needs to ensure that children are sitting correctly i.e. a comfortable distance from the desk or table with the writing arm supported just below the elbow.

The teacher also needs to ensure that children are able to look up from their work and see the board and also make sure that shorter children are not seated behind taller classmates.

Writing position

A correct pencil grip will help a child to develop correct posture. Sitting in the correct position will permit a child's eyes to function more naturally and with less effort. Proper posture demands that the writing surface be at elbow height when sitting upright when the paper should be angled so that the edges are parallel with the forearm of the writing hand. The other hand should hold the paper and ensure that it doesn't move. These rules apply equally to both right and left handed children.



Pencil Grip

A correct pencil grip involves the child holding their pencil correctly between their thumb and first, finger approximately ½ - 1 inch from the point, with their second finger adding extra support under the pencil.





Paper

Apart from the very first stages when a child is beginning to develop their fine motor skills using items such as sand and threading, the children must be given lined paper to do their handwriting. Wide-lined paper should be used initially to guide the children, but it should not restrain their handwriting.

Formation

Correct letter formation can be encouraged by reminding the children to:

- a) write in parallel lines, irrespective of the slant and ensure that all letters sit on the line
- b) start and finish each letter in the correct place
- c) distinguish clearly between the relative size of the letters e.g. the height of the ascenders in letters d and a



Left Handers

The teacher can support the left handed writer by:

- a) ensuring he/she can sit without his/her left arm touching his/her neighbour
- b) ensuring his/her paper is to the left of the pupil and slightly slanted to the right so that his/her writing action is one of pulling not pushing the pencil across the page
- c) ensuring he/she has the correct pencil hold so that he/she can see what he/she is writing.

HELPING THE CHILD WITH POOR HANDWRITING

REASONS FOR POOR HANDWRITING

1. Lack of pre-writing skills
2. Physical difficulties
3. Learning difficulties
4. Poor letter formation
5. Emotional difficulties

| PROBLEM | POSSIBLE SOLUTION |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A left handed child has poor posture and grip | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Correct pencil hold and position paper correctly for left hander ● Use a sloping writing surface ● Make sure the child is sitting on the outside of right handed child ● Issue the child with a left handed pen |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The child grips the pencil incorrectly, affecting speed legibility and fluency of handwriting | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Give the child a choice of writing implement ● Explain what each finger does when writing ● Explain about the need for good posture, a straight wrist and the index finger steering the pencil ● Give a pencil grip if necessary |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The child grips the pencil too tightly, resulting in awkward malformed letters | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Re-teach the grip ● Encourage good posture ● Help the child to relax |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The child races to get down notes, struggles to copy accurately, or the effort to spell correctly causes a lack of flow ● Presentation becomes subordinate to the aim of getting something down | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Give the child handwriting paper ● Use the letters per minute and words per minute exercises to encourage manageable fluency ● Use the dotted fonts to re-teach the cursive style |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The child mixes upper and lower case letters | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Re-teach all letter forms correctly |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The child's handwriting is too small – this may suggest a spelling problem | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Give the child handwriting lines to write on |



| | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The child's handwriting is too large – be hiding a writing/spelling problem | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Give the child handwriting lines to write on |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ascenders and descenders follow different directions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teach the child about parallel lines Give the child squared paper to write on |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letters do not sit on the line and the child displays poor spatial awareness | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check for any possible visual difficulties and poor fine motor coordination and correct this with hand / eye exercises Refer child to LDC |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The child leaves uneven spacing between words | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus attention on the space and give pupil a visual model of the gap Give pupil extra dotted letter sheets to practice on |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The child leaves uneven spacing between letters | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus pupil's attention on a diagonal join between each letter Move away from each letter as it is formed |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The child's handwriting is very messy and letters are crossed out and superimposed on others | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make the child write in pencil and rub out with an eraser until they are more confident |

SYLLABUS

Nursery

In Nursery, children learn to make controlled pencil movements, to join two points with a curved or straight line and to follow a given sequence of movements. They also learn to trace and copy their name and complete tracing patterns.

1. Developing Fine Motor Control

Children develop their fine motor skills through:

- Painting, cutting, tracing, sand, sticking, drawing, colouring, puzzles, plasticine, play dough, sewing, threading and the use of peg boards
- Transferring small items from one pot to another, such as dried beans, peas or beads

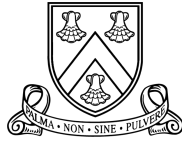
2. Handwriting Patterns

Children loosen their wrists and fingers and develop a more relaxed position for handwriting through:

- Holding the pencil correctly
- Moving from left to right when tracing and painting
- Copying over highlighted letters
- Having correct posture
- Using different implements e.g. felt tips, crayons, paint

3. Correct letter formation

Children's letter formation is perfected through:



- Practicing handwriting daily
- Learning how to write lower case letters first
- Writing numerals
- Starting to write capital letters by the end of Reception
- Learning to copy from the board (for the more able children)
- Using the arm as an elephant's trunk to trace letters in the air (magic fingers)
- Tracing letters with a dot indicating where to start a letter
- Writing 'Rainbow' letters
- Completing dot-to-dot activities
- Begin writing in handwriting books with wider spaced lines

Reception Year

In Reception, children learn to produce a comfortable pencil grip, to produce a controlled line that supports letter formation, to write upper case letters using the correct sequence of movements and to recognise lower case letters and to form lower case letters correctly in a script that will be easy to join. They use a pencil correctly and use it effectively to form recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed.

The children begin to write in lined handwriting books. To encourage good formation, children are encouraged to join up individual letters into groups. In the Summer Term, children begin to blend letter sounds and write words featuring the sound in their handwriting book.

1. Children must concentrate on:
 - Holding the pencil correctly
 - Practising writing letters in structured groups
 - Making sure handwriting is legible
 - Forming upper and lower letters correctly
 - Writing in the same style throughout a piece of writing
 - Using ascenders and descenders clearly
2. The teacher must remember to:
 - Teach handwriting in a variety of ways
 - Teach handwriting as a whole class activity
 - Practise writing in the air or on a board before proceeding to work in books
 - Introduce joining up the same letter in groups of four, in the Spring Term
 - Introduce blends and encourage joined up handwriting in the Summer Term

Form 8

In Form 8 children revise individual letter formation as well as joining up individual letters into groups. Children learn to reinforce the link between handwriting, spelling and the recognition of phonic patterns and letter strings and to practice correct letter orientation, formation and proportion. Children are able to write most letters, correctly formed and orientated, using a comfortable and efficient pencil grip. They can write with spaces between words accurately.



Children complete their handwriting practice in their handwriting books, copying from the board. Handwriting is taught in the order presented in the Collins Primary Focus Handwriting Scheme

Children must concentrate on:

1. Gripping the pencil correctly
2. Remembering all the handwriting rules taught in Reception
3. Starting to join their letters

The teacher must remember to:

1. Give children opportunities to look at good examples of children's handwriting
2. Refer to handout on Collins Handwriting scheme and Collins Primary Focus Handwriting Scheme to model how to form letters and joins correctly
3. Continue to highlight structured letter groups

Form 7

In Form 7 children continue with their handwriting practice in their lined handwriting books from the board using the Collins Primary Focus Handwriting Scheme. They practise their basic sight vocabulary, reinforce and practise using the four basic handwriting diagonal and horizontal joins and link handwriting to phonic and spelling knowledge and patterns. They are able to write legibly, using upper and lower case letters appropriately within words.

Children must concentrate on:

1. Gripping the pencil correctly
2. Practising setting out poetry

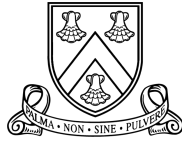
The teacher must remember to:

1. Give individual advice for persistent mistakes

Form 6 and Above

In Form 6 and above, children reinforce and practise their cursive handwriting and ensure consistency in size and proportion of letters and the spacing between letters and words.

1. Ink pens should be used for all written work in all subjects, although a pencil may still be used for Mathematics.
2. All subjects should encourage good handwriting. Certain pieces should be written out with the emphasis being on good handwriting for display purposes. However, handwriting will be becoming more individual and this needs to be respected.
3. The English department has particular responsibility for encouraging good handwriting. Children who are still not producing good handwriting must be referred to the LDC.
4. Resources from Collins Primary Focus Handwriting Scheme.
5. The teacher should give individual advice for persistent mistakes.
6. Other Form Time activities could include:



- **Dictation**
- **MMP** (Mad Minute Printing) or **MMC** (Mad Minute Cursive) for 1 to 3 minutes
MMP and MMC are handwriting challenges that involve a child racing the clock to improve on their personal best time.

The teacher first chooses what the children are to write. This can be a sentence using each letter once:

Alternatively, the children could be asked to write the alphabet as many times in the time frame.

The teacher needs to start the children off for a timed minute or three minutes. The pupil needs to write the sentence as many times as possible in the time frame. At the end of the three minutes, the pupil needs to count the number of letters they have written and record their speed in letters per minute (l/pm). Marks should be taken off if the handwriting is not legible!

- **FMTW** (Five Minute Timed Writing)
The teacher needs to ask the children to write about a topic for a timed five minute session. These topics could be, My Weekend, School Dinners, A Book Review, etc.

At the end of the five minutes, the pupil needs to count the words and calculate their words per minute (wpm). The teacher must deduct marks if the handwriting is not legible. Pupils should read each other's work and discuss the legibility of the handwriting. This activity helps children to understand the importance of writing legibly.