



Handwriting Policy (Updated: April 2023)



At Ashleigh, we understand that handwriting remains a vital skill that is foundational to all writing development. At Ashleigh, pupils practise their handwriting for confidence, rhythm and speed – not just for neatness. There is a strong focus on correct letter formation and regular opportunities to practise so that hand movements are firmly established in long-term memory.

Handwriting is modelled by staff in all areas of the curriculum and regular, targeted feedback is given to prevent errors from becoming ingrained. Alongside this, the majority of writing in the classroom (displays, presentations, worksheets) will feature the school's agreed font (See Appendix 1). (Comic sans may be used as a font for children with dyslexia).

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

The EYFS statutory framework does not use the term *handwriting*, yet there are references throughout:

ELG: Fine Motor Skills

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Hold a pencil effectively in preparation for fluent writing- using the tripod grip in almost all cases;
- Use a range of small tools, including scissors, paint brushes and cutlery;
- Begin to show accuracy and care when drawing.

ELG: Writing

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Write recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed;

In this stage, our focus is on movement and gross and fine motor skill development. Opportunities for children to develop these skills through their play are planned every day in Nursery and Reception. We ensure that:

- ✓ Children have access to a range of mark making tools including chubby crayons, big chalk, paint brushes and thick triangular pencils.
- ✓ The enabling environment provides a range of writing opportunities both indoors and outdoors, where children can practise and apply pre-writing skills.

The Education Endowment Foundation's report, 'Preparing for Literacy' recommends developing children's motivation and capability to write. It suggests that we focus on three connected elements of handwriting instruction:

- Practise – extensive practise is needed to master the skill.
- Motivation – for extensive practise, children need to feel motivated to write.
- Product and process (the finished product (a letter) can look correct but be formed using a flawed process. This flawed process hinders fluent transcription).

The National Handwriting Association suggests that print letters are easier to learn as fewer strokes place less pressure on working memory. We use Read Write Inc. to teach correct letter formation alongside phonics (See Appendix 3).

- ✓ Children use thick triangular pencils to enable them to learn how to hold a pencil correctly.
- ✓ Children are taught the letters in their name when they are developmentally ready.
- ✓ Irregular letter forms starting in the correct place, with movement in the correct direction are encouraged over uniformly regular letters achieved through incorrect movements. This supports children develop their fluency as they progress through our school.
- ✓ Close attention is paid to pencil grip, correct posture and the positioning of the paper to help children develop good handwriting habits for the future (See Appendix 4).

For children who find these skills difficult, we use a pre-handwriting checklist (See Appendix 2) to identify which specific skills a child needs to develop in order to make progress.

Key Stage One (KS1)

The National Curriculum expectations for handwriting at KS1 are:

Year 1

- Sit correctly at the 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 the digits 0 to 9.
- Understand which letters belong to which handwriting 'family' (a group of letters that are formed in the same way).

Year 2

- 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 are best left unjoined.
- Write capital letters and digits of the correct size, orientation and relationship to one another.
- Use spacing between words that is appropriate for the size of the letters.

All children in Year 1 start their day by practising their handwriting on mini whiteboards or in their handwriting books. Correct letter formation is the main focus however it may also be taught as a way to practise spellings. A new handwriting focus, following the 1A Nelson scheme, is taught at the start of each week during a whole class input. Once a handwriting 'family' has been taught, any incorrect formation of letters within that family found in a child's work are identified, and the child is given the opportunity to correct these mistakes using a purple pen, in line with the school marking policy. In Year 1, children learn to form the letters in each handwriting family (See Appendix 5), numerals and capital letters before they move onto learning the handwriting joins (See Appendix 6).

When children begin Year 2, the expectation is that they can form all letters correctly. Nelson 1B will be taught so that children learn the handwriting joins. All Year 2 children have a discrete handwriting session each week, plus additional daily opportunities to

practise their joining skills through English starters, morning work, independent writing and spelling activities. By the end of Year 2, all handwriting joins will have been taught and the expectation is that all children will be attempting to join their handwriting across the curriculum. This joined handwriting should increase the speed, rhythm and ease of their writing without reducing the legibility.

In KS1, children will:

- ✓ Use thin pencils and be provided with a pencil grip if their grip is not yet developed (See Appendix 4)
- ✓ Use wide lined paper in exercise books in Year 1 and move onto narrow lines in Year 2
- ✓ Use their dominant hand to hold their writing tool and the other hand to steady the paper – leaning on the non-writing hand is discouraged
- ✓ Be encouraged to keep their writing hand below the line on their page so they can see what they are writing and maintain a comfortable pencil grip
- ✓ Have regular opportunities to watch classroom adults model correct letter formation
- ✓ Learn letter formation in a multi-sensory way. E.g. draw letters in the air, trace tactile letters, make letters with string on a felt board, use whiteboards and pegboards, trace letters on a partner's back

Key Stage Two (KS2)

The National Curriculum expectations for handwriting at KS2 are:

Year 3 and Year 4

- Continue to develop their joined-up handwriting
- Increase the legibility, consistency and quality of their handwriting – for example, ensuring that down strokes of letters are straight and parallel, not sloping.

Year 5 and Year 6

- Write with increasing legibility, fluency and speed.
- Choose which shape of a letter to use, and decide whether or not to join specific letters.
- Choose the writing implement that is best suited for a task.

As a school, we recognise that handwriting automaticity can prove a unique predictor of the length and quality of sentence composition for young people (The Writing Gap, Alex Quigley). Regular opportunities to practise handwriting continues in KS2 as well as specific handwriting feedback to support letter formation and joins. We understand the benefits of linking spelling and handwriting as both skills can be improved through muscle memory. Dictated sentences may also be used to practise handwriting.

Children in LKS2 have a handwriting book to practise handwriting discretely and high expectations for handwriting are evident in all books across the curriculum. We appreciate that 'neat handwriting' is not always appropriate, for example, when children are drafting work or making notes, however, handwriting needs to be legible at all times.

Children start KS2 writing in pencil but as they end Year 3, they will begin to write in pen. In Year 4, 5 and 6 children will complete the majority of their work in pen.

In KS2, children will:

- ✓ Use thin pencils in Year 3 and will begin to use pen in the summer term
- ✓ Use pens for the majority of writing in Year 4, 5 and 6
- ✓ Use exercise books with narrow lines and a margin
- ✓ Use their dominant hand to hold their writing tool and the other hand to steady the paper – leaning on the non-writing hand is discouraged
- ✓ Be encouraged to keep their writing hand below the line on their page so they can see what they are writing and maintain a comfortable pencil grip
- ✓ Have regular opportunities to watch classroom adults model correct letter formation and joins
- ✓ Be expected to correct any mistakes in letter formation and joins, in line with the school marking policy
- ✓ Be encouraged to develop their own variations on the school font as they reach upper KS2 to give their writing character, provided the writing is legible

Support for Left-Handed Children

This begins in the early years with quality first teaching and lots of modelling from classroom adults. When supporting a left-handed child, adults model correct pencil grip and formation using their left hand. Many left-handed children develop a hooked pencil hold, which can result in a tired grip and affect the quality of their writing. We recognise that it is very difficult to alter the way a child holds a pencil once this habit is learnt and the child's confidence can easily be damaged. To support children who have developed this habit, we encourage children to angle their paper 20 – 30 degrees to the left (the same as right-handed children) to relieve the pressure in their wrist. If a dynamic tripod grip has been established (See Appendix 4), left-handed children are encouraged to tilt their paper 20 – 30 degrees to the right and keep their hand below the writing line to enable the child to see what they are writing. As left handers tend to cross f and t from right to left, it is easier for many left handers to leave the f unjoined.

In addition to the above, left-handed children are encouraged to:

- Hold pens and pencils far enough away from the point so they can see what they are writing
- Not over sharpen their pencil to enable it to run smoothly across the page as they need to push the pencil, rather than pull like their right-handed peers
- Use their right hand to steady the paper above the writing line
- Sit on the left of their partners so their movements are not restricted

Intervention

We understand that targeted, early intervention can make a noticeable difference for most children. It is important children are assessed on what aspect of handwriting they are struggling with. It could be any of the following:

- **Legibility:** are all the words legible?
- **Neatness:** is the handwriting neat or poorly controlled?
- **Comfort:** is the student strained or in discomfort when writing?
- **Pressure:** is too much or too little pressure being applied, or is it variable?
- **Speed:** is the student writing too slowly, or when writing quickly, becoming inaccurate?
- **Motivation:** is the student reluctant to write, or do they tend to give up easily?

In EYFS and KS1, additional gross or fine motor activities are used to form intervention, as underdeveloped skills in these areas are likely to be the cause of handwriting difficulties (See Appendix 2). Children may also have additional handwriting sessions, or work in a smaller group or 1:1 with an adult to help transfer letter formation into muscle memory.

Where a pupil's handwriting is not at the expected standard for their age, 'Speed Up' or 'Hulk Handwriting' may be used as an intervention (See Appendix 7). In addition, we also have the Nelson Handwriting resources available for each year group, which teachers can refer back to (See Appendix 9). These resources can be used in school or sent home with a child for additional practise.

We also seek advice from www.teachhandwriting.co.uk and www.nha-handwriting.org.uk when children are experiencing specific handwriting difficulties as they have the most up to date guidance based on best practice.

Appendix 1: Font Used at Ashleigh

Capital Letters:

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

NOTE: Nelson handwriting font does not add the horizontal lines to G or I or J. Children can choose whether they add these strokes. It is also important to note that comic sans may be used as a font for children with dyslexia.

Numerals:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Lower Case Letters:

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

NOTE: Nelson handwriting font forms 'f' with a tail. Children have the option to form this letter in their preferred style.

Appendix 2: Pre-Handwriting Checklist

<https://www.teachhandwriting.co.uk/the-four-essential-strengths.html#sensory>

Teach Handwriting		Assessment Record Sheet		Sensory Perception Base	
Name:	Date:	YES	NO	YES	NO
Posture Base					
<u>Curl-ups (Core Strength)</u>					
Can they do this quite easily?					
<u>Stairs (Balance & Co-ordination)</u>					
Manage Independently?					
Are they using alternating feet (ages 5 and up)?					
<u>Tightrope Walking (Balance & Stability)</u>					
Can they walk the line and maintain their stability?					
Can they Pigeon Step along the line and maintain balance (age 5 & up)?					
Bilateral Co-ordination Base					
<u>Hands & Knees (Mid-line)</u>					
Can they touch the right hand on to the left knee?					
Can they touch the left hand on to the right knee?					
<u>Simon Says (Understanding of Left & Right & Body Awareness)</u>					
Can they identify their left from right?					
Can they accurately point to the body parts mentioned in the game?					
<u>Ball Skills (Co-ordination)</u>					
Can they stop/catch a rolling ball?					
Can they fairly accurately roll the ball back?					
Can they catch an under arm thrown ball?					
Can they throw the ball back fairly accurately (preferably using an under arm throw)?					
All Base Areas					
<u>Crazy Scissors</u>					
Can they cut different thicknesses of paper?					
Can they cut fairly accurately around a shape or picture?					
© www.teachhandwriting.co.uk					

Name:	Date:	YES	NO
Sensory Perception Base			
<u>Guess the Object (Tactile Perception)</u>			
Can they identify the object using both hands?			
Can they identify the object using the right hand only?			
Can they identify the object using the left hand only?			
Can they identify an object when there are several items in the bag using both hands?			
Can they identify an object when there are several items in the bag using just one hand (try both left and right hand)?			
<u>Tactile Play (Tactile Defensive)</u>			
Are they happy to touch wet, cold, smooth or slimy textures?			
Are they happy to touch and mould resistant modelling type materials?			
Are they happy to touch gritty or rough textures?			
<u>How Much Pressure (Tactile Perception)</u>			
Can they make shallow indentations with the fingers from the right hand?			
Can they make shallow indentations with the fingers from the left hand?			
Can they make deep indentations with the fingers from the right hand?			
Can they make deep indentations with the fingers from the left hand?			
Hand & Finger Muscle Base			
<u>How Many Can You Hold? (In-Hand Manipulation)</u>			
Can they hold one or more items in the palm of their right hand while picking up another piece with this hand?			
Can they hold one or more items in the palm of their left hand while picking up another piece with this hand?			
<u>Shake the Dice (Arch of Hands & Grip Release)</u>			
Can they cup their hands?			
Do they release the dice easily?			
<u>Finger Tap Dancing (Individual Finger Movement)</u>			
Can they touch each finger to their thumb on the right hand?			
Can they touch each finger to their thumb on the left hand?			
Can they change speed, order and pressure of the taps?			

Curl-ups (Core Strength)

Ask the child to lie on their back with their knees bent and feet flat on the floor.

Get them to hold a bean bag or small fluffy toy between the knees to keep them together. Then to place their hands on their thighs.

Ask them to try to curl up so that their head and shoulders lift up from the floor and that their hands slide further up their legs towards their knees.

Make it clear they are only to lift as far as is comfortable and not to lift their feet off the floor.

- Can they do this quite easily?

Tightrope Walking (Balance and Stability)

Lay a piece of rope 5 - 10 metres in length or chalk a line on a path.

Ask the child to walk along the line slowly.

If the child is under the age of 5, just walking is appropriate, if you have an older child and they can walk the line quite well, maintaining their balance, ask them to walk heel-to-toe (Pigeon Steps).

- Can they walk the rope and maintain their balance?

Stairs (Balance and Coordination)

Ask the child to walk up and down the stairs.

- Can they manage independently?
- Are they using alternating feet?

Hands and Knees (Mid-line)

Ask the child to stand in front of you and to place their right hand on their left knee. Then ask them to place their left hand on their right knee. If necessary show them how to do this and then get them to try it on their own.

To vary the game you can ask them to raise the left knee as high as possible as the right hand comes across the body to touch the knee. Or get them to do this, but touching their toes not knees.

- Can they do both sides easily?
- Do they struggle with one side?

Simon Says (Left / Right Body Awareness)

Play a game of Simon says focusing on encouraging the child to think about using the left and then right side of the body.

Get them to put their left hand in the air, and then down and then do the same with the right hand.

See if the child can touch their left knee with their left hand and then the same on their right side.

- Can they do this easily?
- Can they accurately point to the body parts mentioned in the game?

Ball Skills (Coordination)

Use a medium sized soft ball.

Start by rolling the ball to the child.

- Can they stop / catch the ball?
- Can they roll the ball back to you fairly accurately?

If they have difficulty at this stage do not move to the throwing stage.

Throw the ball gently using an underarm throw.

- Can they catch the ball?
- Can they throw the ball back to you fairly accurately, preferably using an underarm throw?

Guess the Object (Tactile Perception)

Secretly place a familiar object into a bag or box that the child cannot see into.

Ask them to feel the object in the bag with both hands and tell you what they think it is. Try this a couple of times with different objects the child is familiar with. You go first to show how the game is played if they seem reluctant to try.

- Can they identify the object?
- Do the same activity again but this time ask the child to use one hand at a time to feel the object.
- Can they identify the object using the left and right hand?

To make the game more difficult put several objects into the bag. Ask them to find a specific item or just to identify all the objects.

- Did they find the second game more difficult?

Tactile Play (Tactile Defensive)

Ask the child to touch and move their hands through finger paints, sand, dirt or corn flour mixed with water. Ask the child to draw patterns or retrieve items from materials. Try using more resistant materials such as plasticine, play dough, clay or play putty.

- Are they happy to play or touch the wet, cold, smooth, slimy textures?
- Are they happy to play or touch the larger more gritty, rough textures?
- Are they happy to touch and mould resistant modelling type materials?

How Much Pressure (Tactile Perception - Pressure)

Place a large ball of modelling material such as play dough onto a flat surface and ask the child to use one finger at a time to push down into the dough gently.

- Can they make shallow indentations with the fingers from both hands?

Reshape the dough and ask them to press as hard as they can with each finger.

- Can they make deep indentations with the fingers from both hands?

How Many Can You Hold? (In-hand Manipulation)

Use small objects such as pieces of lego, small marbles, beads or dried peas or pasta, so that a child can hold several in their hand at a time.

See how many they can pick up and hold in the same hand in one go without dropping them. Do this with each hand in turn.

- Can they hold one or two items in the palm of their right hand while picking up another piece with this hand?
- Can they hold one or two items in the palm of their left hand while picking up another piece with this hand?

Finger Tap Dancing (Individual Finger Movements)

With their hands out in front of them ask the child to try to tap each finger in turn against their thumb, one hand at a time. To make this more fun try to change the speed, order and pressure so that it seems as if the fingers are tap dancing.

- Can they touch each finger to thumb on their right hand?
- Can they touch each finger to thumb on their left hand?
- Can they change speed, order and pressure?

Shake the Dice (Arches of Hands & Grip Release)

The aim is to see if a child can shake the dice cupped inside two hands and release it. You may need to show them this first.

Watch carefully to see if they release the dice quickly from the shaking movement or do they stop shaking and seem over hesitant in releasing the dice.

- Can they cup their hands?
- Do they release the dice easily?

Crazy Scissors (Hand Strength)

Use appropriately sized and handedness scissors if possible and scrap pieces of paper for this activity.

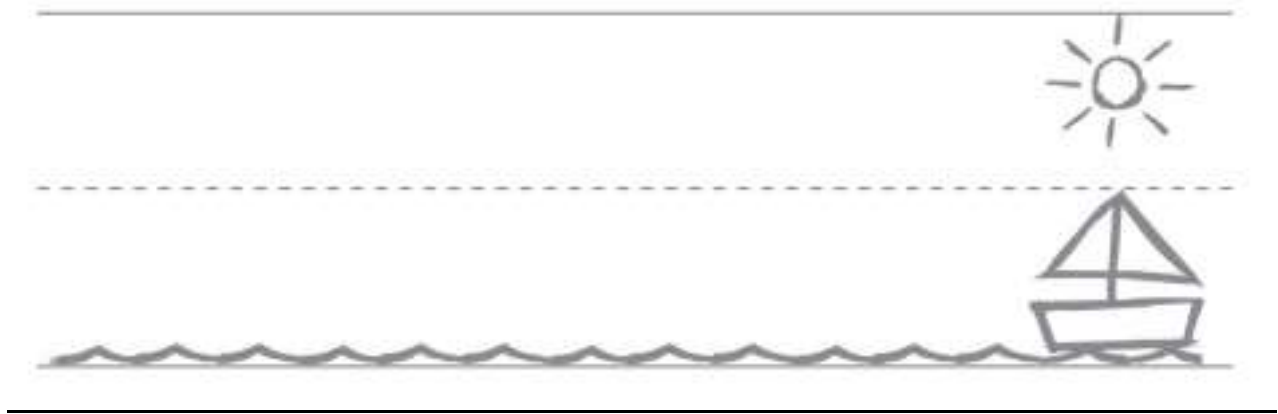
Start with thin paper types such as newspaper and gradually move to thicker paper such as scrap pages from a magazine.



Ask the child to just cut into the paper or around a simple shape drawn on the paper or a simple picture already on the paper.

- Can they cut thin and thick paper?
- Can they cut fairly accurately around shape or picture?

	<p style="text-align: center;">Appendix 3: Read Write Inc. Handwriting Mnemonics Introduced in Reception</p>
m	Maisie, mountain, mountain
a	round the apple, down the leaf
s	slither down the snake
d	round his bottom, up his tall neck and down to his feet
t	down the tower, across the tower
i	down the body, dot for the head
n	down Nobby, over his net
p	down the plait and over the pirate's face
g	round her face, down her hair and give her a curl
o	all around the orange
c	curl around the caterpillar
k	down the kangaroo's body, tail and leg
u	down and under, up to the top and draw the puddle
b	down the laces to the heel, round the toe
f	down the stem and draw the leaves
e	lift off the top and scoop out the egg
l	down the long leg
h	down the head to the hooves and over his back
r	down his back and then curl over his arm
j	down his body, curl and dot
v	down a wing, up a wing
y	down a horn, up a horn and under his head
w	down, up, down, up
z	zig-zag-zig
q	round her head, up past her earrings and down her hair
x	down the arm and leg and repeat the other side




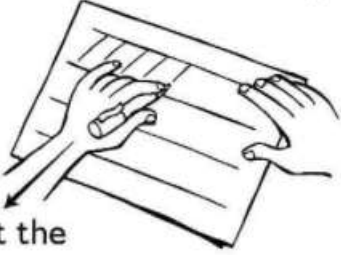
Read Write Inc. Teaching Approach Used in Reception



Boat Letters		<u>a c e i m n o r s u v w x z</u>
Water Letters		<u>g i p q y</u>
Sun Letters		<u>b d f h k l t</u>

As the sounds are taught in phonics, teachers model how to write each letter using the above approach. This teaches children where to place letters in relation to one another. This approach is used alongside the Read Write Inc. mnemonics.

Appendix 4: Posture, Pencil Grip and Paper Tilt

Right-Handed	Left-Handed
<p data-bbox="263 260 539 445">Are you sitting comfortably with both feet on the floor?</p>  <p data-bbox="548 760 760 945">Are you holding your pencil correctly?</p>  <p data-bbox="263 1159 506 1310">Is your paper at the correct angle?</p> 	<p data-bbox="889 289 997 386">?</p> <p data-bbox="889 403 1091 625">Are you sitting comfortably with both feet on the floor?</p>  <p data-bbox="1192 667 1299 764">?</p> <p data-bbox="1192 772 1351 945">Are you holding your pen correctly?</p>  <p data-bbox="889 1012 997 1108">?</p> <p data-bbox="889 1117 1110 1247">Is your paper at the correct angle?</p> 

<https://teachhandwriting.co.uk/pencil-grip-development-ks1.html>

Stage 5 - Mature / Dynamic tripod grip

Right-Handed



This is traditionally considered the most appropriate handwriting pencil grip for both left and right-handed writers. Holding the pencil between the thumb and index finger with pencil supported on the middle finger. The ring and little fingers are gently curled inwards. This gives an open wide web space which means the movement comes from the fingers.

Left-Handed



Appendix 5: The Nelson Handwriting Families

In Year 1, Nelson Handwriting groups the letters into sets based on handwriting families. These are letters that are formed in similar ways

Family Set 1: Anti-clockwise round.

c a o d g q s f e

Family Set 2: Down and off in another direction

i l t u j y

Family Set 3: Down and retrace back up again

r n m h k b p

Family Set 4: Zig-zag letters

v w x z

Appendix 6: The Nelson Handwriting Joins

Joining Letter Sets

Letter Set 1: Twelve letters with exit flicks, plus s

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

Letter Set 2: Nineteen letters which start at the top of the x-height

a c d e g i j m n o p q r s u v w x y

Letter Set 3: Six letters which start at the top of the ascender

b f h k l t

Letter Set 4: Five letters which finish at the top of the x-height

f o r v w

Break Letters: These letters do not join to the next letter

b g j p q x y z

The Nelson Handwriting Sets of Joins

First Set of Joins: (Diagonal join to letters without ascenders)

Letter Set 1 to Set 2

Examples: in am ai ar un

Second Set of joins: (Diagonal join to letters with ascenders)

Letter Set 1 to Set 3

Examples: ab ch ul it

Third Set of Joins: (Horizontal join to letters without ascenders)

Letter Set 4 to Set 2

Examples: oa wo ou vi wi

Fourth Set of Joins: (Horizontal join to letters with ascenders)

Letter Set 4 to Set 3

Examples: wh ob ol ot

The Joined Handwriting Style

The quick brown fox jumps
over the lazy dog.

Appendix 9: Nelson Handwriting Resources by Year Group

	Age	Ashleigh Approach	Resources to Support
Reception	4 - 5 years	Follow Read Write Inc. handwriting mnemonics and teaching approach in phonics and handwriting sessions.	Read Write Inc. lesson plans
Year 1	5 - 6 years	Daily handwriting session following Nelson scheme and apply through spelling practise	Nelson Workbooks Nelson Developing Skills Red Online Resources
Year 2	6 – 7 years	Daily handwriting session following Nelson scheme and apply through spelling practise	Nelson Developing Skills Red Developing Skills Yellow Online Resources
Year 3	7 - 8 years	Daily handwriting session following Nelson scheme and apply through spelling practise	Nelson Developing Skills Book 1 Online Resources
Year 4	8 – 9 years	Daily handwriting session following Nelson scheme and apply through spelling practise	Nelson Developing Skills Book 2 Online Resources
Year 5	9 – 10 years	Daily handwriting session following Nelson scheme and apply through spelling practise	Nelson Developing Skills Book 3 Online Resources
Year 6	10 – 11 years	Daily handwriting session following Nelson scheme and apply through spelling practise	Nelson Developing Skills Book 4 Online Resources