



Handwriting Policy

(Updated: November 2020)

At Ashleigh, our aim is to prepare children for life beyond primary school by ensuring they can write legibly, fluently and at a reasonable speed. For an experienced writer, the hand movements required for writing are firmly established in movement memory. For this reason, we provide children with regular opportunities to practise handwriting movements correctly so these movements become automatic.

There is an expectation that handwriting, following the school's agreed letter formations, will be regularly modelled by all classroom staff. Alongside this, the majority of writing in the classroom (displays, presentations, worksheets) will feature the school's agreed font (See Appendix 1).

To ensure consistency throughout the school, we use Nelson Handwriting resources to support the teaching of handwriting.

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

In this stage, our focus is on movement and motor skill development. Opportunities for children to develop these skills through their play are planned every day in Nursery and Reception. 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. By the end of EYFS, the expectation is that *'every child uses a pencil and holds it effectively to form recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed.'* In order to achieve this curriculum objective at Ashleigh, 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 environment provides a range of writing opportunities both indoors and outdoors, where children can practise and apply pre-writing skills.
- ✓ Children are taught the letters in their name when they are developmentally ready.
- ✓ In Reception, correct letter formation is taught alongside phonics. We use 'Sparkle Marks' which is the handwriting element of our phonics scheme 'Story Time Phonics.' (See Appendix 3)
- ✓ Children use thick triangular pencils to enable them to learn how to hold a pencil correctly.
- ✓ 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 will support 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).

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. Letter formation is the focus, along with writing neatly on the line and practising spelling. In addition to this, each child has a discrete handwriting lesson each week, where they learn how to form all of the letters in our agreed school handwriting families (See Appendix 5). These handwriting families are displayed in each KS1 classroom. The teacher models the letter formation to the whole class and the children then have the opportunity to practise this new skill in a small group. 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. Some children will be ready to begin learning handwriting joins by the summer term of Year 1.

When children begin Year 2, the expectation is that they can form all letters correctly. They therefore move onto learning the handwriting joins. All Year 2 children have a discrete handwriting session each week, plus additional opportunities to practise their joining skills through 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
- ✓ Earn a handwriting certificate for each letter family (Year 1) and each handwriting join (Year 2) that they can correctly form

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 downstrokes 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.

Throughout KS2, children have regular handwriting sessions in addition to regular, informal opportunities to develop their joined handwriting. As a school, we recognise the benefits of linking spelling and handwriting as both skills can be improved through muscle memory.

All children in KS2 have a handwriting book to practise handwriting discretely but handwriting following the agreed style will be present in all books across the curriculum. We appreciate that 'best handwriting' is not always appropriate, for example, when children are drafting work or making notes, however, handwriting needs to be legible at all times. 'Best handwriting' can be saved for when there is a clear purpose for aesthetically pleasing work as this requires children to slow the pace of their writing, but children are always encouraged to maintain high standards of presentation.

Children write in pencil until the class teacher assesses that their writing has met the agreed Pen Licence criteria (see Appendix 6). Once the Pen Licence is gained, children will be expected to complete the majority of their work in pen, except for Mathematics and for creating diagrams and drawing. Classroom adults monitor Pen Licences and if children stop meeting the criteria, a strike is added to their licence with a target of how to get back on track. If children continue to produce high quality handwriting, they can gain a silver and then gold star on their licence.

In KS2, children will:

- ✓ Use thin pencils until they have achieved their Pen Licence
- ✓ 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 confidence can easily be destroyed. 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

In EYFS and KS1, additional gross or fine motor activities can be 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.

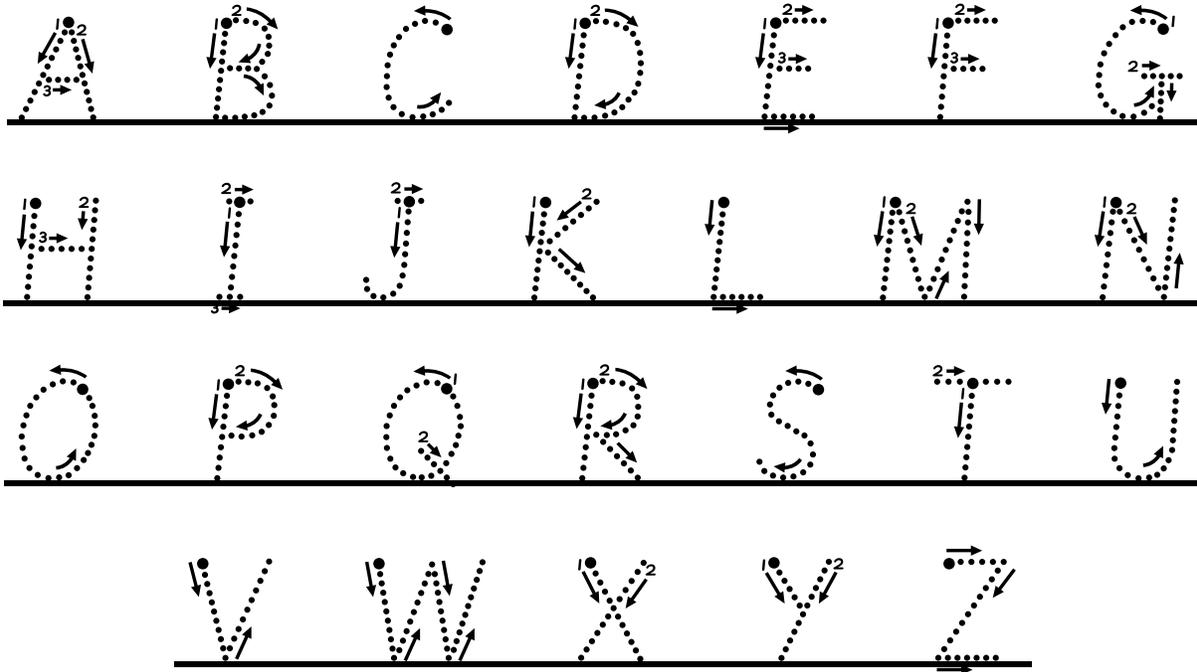
Where a pupil's handwriting is not at the expected standard for their age in KS2, it is expected that the 'HULK Handwriting' intervention will be in place (See Appendix 7). The child sits with an adult and looks at a piece of their writing. They then use the tick list to identify where their strengths are, and where their areas for improvement are. One specific target is written on their presentation passport and that is their focus for the week. The next week, the target is reviewed and if a child has made progress, a new target is decided from the areas for improvement. This approach breaks down handwriting improvement into small manageable steps which gives the child confidence each time they achieve a target.

In addition to 'Hulk Handwriting' we have the Nelson Handwriting resources available for each year group, which teachers can refer back to (See Appendix 8). These resources can be used in school or sent home with a child for additional practise.

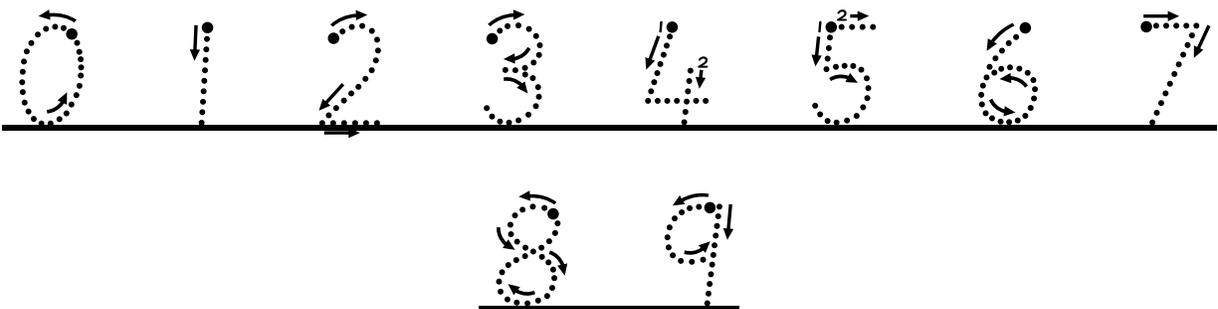
We also seek advice from www.teachhandwriting.co.uk and www.nha-handwriting.org.uk when children are experiencing specific handwriting difficulties as they have the most up to date guidance based on best practice.

Appendix 1: Font Used at Ashleigh

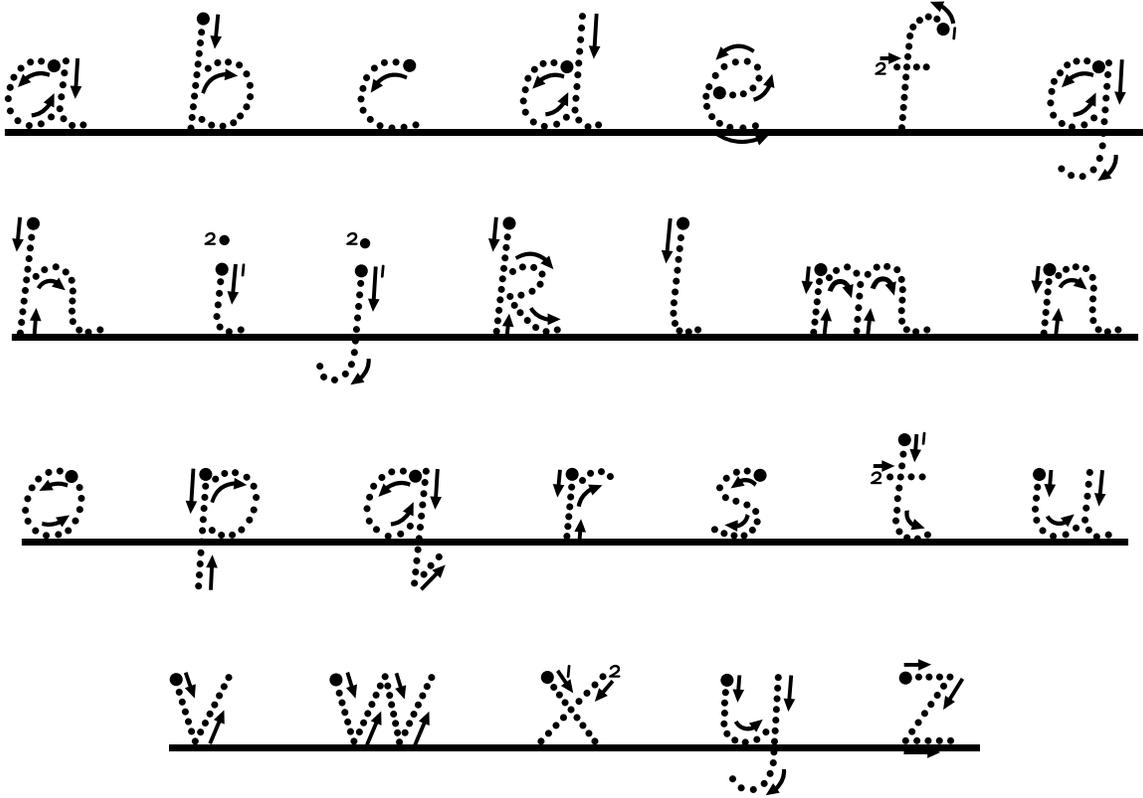
Capital Letters:



Numerals:



Lower Case Letters:



The Nelson Handwriting 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 2: Pre-Handwriting Checklist

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

Teach Handwriting		Assessment Record Sheet		YES	NO
Name: _____		Date: _____			
Posture Base		YES	NO		
<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		YES	NO		
<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		YES	NO		
<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					
Sensory Perception Base		YES	NO		
<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		YES	NO		
<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?

Appendix 3: 'Sparkle Marks' handwriting script used in Reception



Sparkle Mark Sayings

s – “Take Jake the Snake around the lakes.”

a – “Follow the fly all the way around, up, down and flick him away.”

t – “Tap dance down and flick, then slide across.”

p – “Walk Pirate Pete down the plank, back up and around the deck.”

i – “Slide Incy Wincy down the drain and flick him onto the dot.”

n – “Spray the hose down then up over the fire and flick.”

m – “M, m, munch, munch.”

d – “Dig around the diamond, up to the sky, down the ditch and flick.”

g – “Go around his grumpy face then under his tummy.”

o – “Draw all around the octopus.”

c – “Draw around the caterpillar’s mouth.”

k – “Go down the bottle, loop around the lid and flick out the ketchup.”

e – “Go across the mouth and around the shell.”

u – “Go under the underpants, pull them up, down and flick them in the air.”

r – “Go down to his tooth then over the roof.”

h – “Hop down the rabbit hole then jump over the rock and flick.”

b – “Go down to his booties then bounce around his ball.”

f – “Follow the fog out through the forest then across to the fairy.”

l – “Watch the lazy ladybird crawl down the leaf and flick away.”

j – “Slide down the jelly, around the plate and pop a cherry on the top.”

v – “Race the car down the track and up to the finish line.”

w – “Follow the smell, Whiffy Wilson wouldn’t wash.”

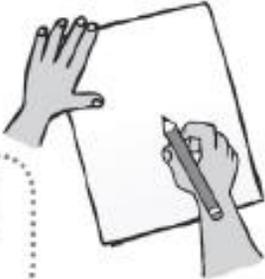
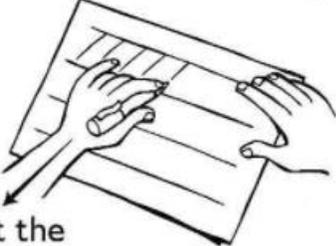
x – “Cross the box with a magic spell, corner to corner.”

y – “Tickle under Yeti’s chin and then slide down his arm.”

z – “Follow the monster’s snore z z z.”

q – “Walk around the queen, stand straight, bow down, then flick.”

Appendix 4: Posture, Pencil Grip and Paper Tilt

Right-Handed	Left-Handed
<p data-bbox="261 260 542 449">Are you sitting comfortably with both feet on the floor?</p>  <p data-bbox="537 751 760 947">Are you holding your pencil correctly?</p>  <p data-bbox="261 1157 509 1314">Is your paper at the correct angle?</p> 	<p data-bbox="889 289 997 390">?</p> <p data-bbox="889 401 1089 621">Are you sitting comfortably with both feet on the floor?</p>  <p data-bbox="1192 663 1299 764">?</p> <p data-bbox="1192 772 1349 947">Are you holding your pen correctly?</p>  <p data-bbox="889 1010 997 1110">?</p> <p data-bbox="889 1119 1110 1251">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

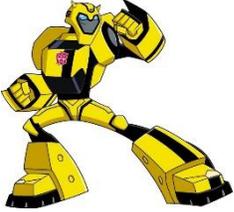


This is traditionally considered the most appropriate handwriting pencil grip for both left and right-handed writers. Holding the pencil between the thumb and index finger with pencil supported on the middle finger. The ring and little fingers are gently curled inwards. This gives an open wide web space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

Left-Handed



Appendix 5: Ashleigh Letter Families

	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Secret C Letters</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>(These letters all start with Secret C then transform; they appear in 2 families)</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">c o a d g q</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Boing Letters</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>(These letters all include a bounce and appear in 2 families)</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">b h k r n m p</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Short Owl Letters</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>(These letters have no ascenders or descenders)</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">c o a e r n m u i v w</p> <p style="text-align: center;">x z s</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Tall Giraffe Letters</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>(These letters all have ascenders)</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">b d h k f l t</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Cheeky Monkey Tail Letters</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>(These letters all have descenders)</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">g q p j y</p>

Appendix 6: Pen Licence Checklist

	I think...	My teacher thinks...
My descenders are neat. (Check tails on y, g, j, p and q)		
My ascenders are neat. (Check the uprights on b, d, h, k, l and t)		
My curves are smooth. (Check b, c, d, e, g, p and q)		
My letters sit on the line.		
My letters are a consistent size.		
Spaces between words are consistent.		
I am beginning to join my handwriting.		
My writing starts at the margin.		
All work has a date and title/WALT underlined with a ruler.		
I use one line to cross out mistakes.		

	Strike 1	Strike 2	Strike 3
What's going wrong?			

Silver Criteria	I think...	My teacher thinks...
I am joining my handwriting consistently.		
My letters lean in the same direction.		
Punctuation is the correct size.		
I write at a good pace.		
There is a clear difference between capital letters and lower case.		

Gold Criteria	I think...	My teacher thinks...
Presentation in all books is of an impeccable standard		

Appendix 8: Nelson Handwriting Resources by Year Group

	Age	Ashleigh Approach	Nelson Resources to Support
Reception	4 - 5 years	Follow Sparkle Marks alongside Phonics	Workbooks 1-4
Year 1	5 - 6 years	Teach the 'Ashleigh Letter Families' before starting joins.	Workbooks 5-6 Developing Skills Red
Year 2	6 – 7 years	Pick up from Year 1 joins using Nelson joined handwriting resources	Developing Skills Red Developing Skills Yellow
Year 3	7 - 8 years	Reinforce handwriting through spelling plus discrete handwriting session each week	Developing Skills Book 1
Year 4	8 – 9 years	Reinforce handwriting through spelling plus discrete handwriting session each week	Developing Skills Book 2
Year 5	9 – 10 years	Reinforce handwriting through spelling plus discrete handwriting session each week as required	Developing Skills Book 3
Year 6	10 – 11 years	Reinforce handwriting through spelling plus discrete handwriting session each week as required	Developing Skills Book 4