



Birches First School

Believe, Grow, Succeed

...to be the best 'me' I can be.



Handwriting Policy and Guidelines 2021/22

Aims

To know the importance of clear and neat presentation in order to communicate meaning effectively.

To write legibly in both joined and printed styles with increasing fluency by;

Having the correct pencil grip

Knowing that all letters start from the top, except d and e which start in the middle

Forming all letters correctly

Knowing the size and orientation of letters.

Teaching Time

There are daily mark making/Basic Skills activities in EYFS and a minimum of 3 x 10 minute lessons a week in KS1 and KS2. Some pupils who find handwriting difficult need further intervention.

Progression

The approach used at Birches First School teaches children to embed correct letter formation of printed letters from an early age in order to begin developing a cursive writing style by the end of Year 2. This cursive style is practised and embedded during KS2. Our chosen font in Early Years and Year 1 is **KS1 Twinkl Font** (Twinkl School Font) from Year 2 to Year 4 **Twinkl Cursive Unlooped**. (Twinkl Handwriting Font) is used to model a cursive style.

Letter formation is modelled using the Nelson Handwriting Scheme which is accessed from the Oxford Owl account.

Correct formation is taught and supported using the Little Wandle letter formation rhymes. (See end.)

Children progress through the following stages as they develop their handwriting skills;

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

Capitals

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

Numbers

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

The four joins

1. to letters without ascenders
2. to letters with ascenders
3. horizontal joins
4. horizontal joins to letters with ascenders.

The break letters (letters that aren't joined from) are: b g j p q x y z s (See appendix 3, for examples of the break letters)

NB Children must be taught individual letters first so that they see them as individual units before learning to join.

Paper

As motor skills increase then the size of writing should decrease. Children should start writing in plain books. As their handwriting improves into lined exercise books.

Reception – initially plain books with single pencil line drawn on / printed on moving to wide lined books throughout the year.

Year 1: Children move onto wide lined exercise books (12mm).

We do not use 'Handwriting books', preferring children to develop correct formation on the paper they will use in other lessons.

Year 2: The majority of children should be ready to start the year on narrow lined books (8mm). Some will need to continue on wide lined books until ready and for a small minority continue with the plain books. Children should use unlined paper from time to time so that they can practise to apply skills and consider issues of presentation and aesthetics.

Teaching Sequence / Elements

- Hand and finger strength / warm up
- Tracing
- Patterns
- Over teacher's writing (highlighter)
- Under teacher's writing (directly under words – write in large letters, leave large spaces between words)
- Independence - For the order of teaching letters and joins see Appendix 2 Techniques for teaching letter formation
- Model good handwriting all the time
- Demonstrate
- Talk through the process
- Encourage children to verbalise the process
- Children form letters in the air
- Finger trace over tactile letters

- Write over highlighter pen
- Write in sand with finger or stick
- Write with chalk on chalkboard 4
- Finger trace the outline of letters on the back of the person in front of you.
- And many, many more

Getting Ready to Write

Seating and posture

- Chair and table to 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
- Encourage children to sit up straight and not slouch
- The height of the chairs should be such that the thighs are horizontal and feet flat on the floor.
- Tables should be free of clutter
- Rooms should be well lit
- Left handed pupils should sit on the left of their partners. See Appendix 1 for warm up exercises.

Children should be taught to check their posture and position before writing.

Pencil Grip

Children should write with a pencil (or a pen when appropriate) with a rounded nib. Pencils should be reasonably sharp. A tripod grip is the most efficient way of holding a pencil.

For Right Handers

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

For Left Handers

Hold the pencil lightly between the thumb and forefinger, resting on the first knuckle of the middle finger; hold about 3 cm 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 degrees. Use the right hand to steady the paper. NB It is very important that a right handed child is not seated on the left hand side of a left handed child as their elbows will collide.

Assessment

The English leader will monitor children's presentation in books regularly and the following should be considered;

- Is the writing generally legible?
- Are the letters correctly shaped and proportioned?
- Are the joins made correctly?
- Are the spaces between the letters, words and lines appropriate?
- Is the writing properly aligned?

- Are the standards achieved by the majority of pupils in line with the programme of study within National Curriculum and Development Matters?

Individual Assessment

Children should be observed as they write in their handwriting lessons; the following is useful to consider:

- Is the posture correct?
- Does the child hold the pencil correctly?
- Does the child use the correct movement when forming and/or joining letters?
- Are any of the letters reversed or inverted?
- Does the child write fluently and rhythmically?
- Is the writing easily legible?
- Is the pupil's handwriting development in line with the level descriptors from the National Curriculum and Development Matters?

Links to Spelling

Linking handwriting with spelling is one of the most powerful ways of developing the visual memory. Handwriting should be practised using letters, blends, strings or digraphs so that patterns are internalised. Remember to use **Look-Say-Cover-Write-Check**

The child; Looks at the word carefully, Says the word, Covers the word so it can't be seen, Writes the whole word from memory and Checks the word is written correctly. If not REPEAT.

Monitoring and Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed a minimum of every two years and monitored during each year.

Appendix

Order of Teaching:

Reception

1	Developing fine motor control; using correct pencil grip	11	Individual letter formation; trace and write the letter n	21	Individual letter formation; trace and write the letter e	31	Individual letter formation; trace and write the letter w	41	Place a dot over the letter i; trace and write the digraph ai	51	Trace and write the capital letters C and G; trace and write words
2	Developing fine motor control; hand-eye co-ordination	12	Individual letter formation; trace and write the letter m	22	Individual letter formation; trace and write the letter u	32	Individual letter formation; trace and write the letter x	42	Form ascenders and descenders; trace and write the trigraph igh	52	Trace and write the capital letters S and U; trace and write words
3	Left to right directional flow; producing a controlled line	13	Individual letter formation; trace and write the letter d	23	Individual letter formation; trace and write the letter r	33	Individual letter formation; trace and write the letter y	43	Form letters the correct size; trace and write the digraph ar	53	Trace and write the capital letters E and F; trace and write words
4	Trace, copy and complete patterns; pre-letter formation practice	14	Trace, copy and complete patterns; practise patterns for forming l, n, m and d	24	Individual letter formation; trace and write the letter h	34	Individual letter formation; trace and write the letter z	44	Form letters correctly; trace and write the digraph oa	54	Trace and write the capital letters T and L; trace and write words
5	Individual letter formation; trace and write the letter s	15	Individual letter formation; trace and write the letter g	25	Individual letter formation; trace and write the letter b	35	Individual letter formation; trace and write the letter q	45	Form letters correctly; trace and write the digraph oi	55	
6	Individual letter formation; trace and write the letter a	16	Individual letter formation; trace and write the letter o	26	Individual letter formation; trace and write the letter f	36	Individual letter formations of 'anti-clockwise' round letter family	46	Form letters correctly Trace and write the digraph ow	56	Individual numeral formation; trace and write the numerals 0, 1, 2, 3, 4
7	Individual letter formation; trace and write the letter t	17	Individual letter formation; trace and write the letter c	27	Individual letter formation; trace and write the letter l	37	Individual letter formations of 'down and retrace up' letter family	47	Form letters the correct size; trace and write the trigraph air	57	
8	Individual letter formation; trace and write the letter p	18	Individual letter formation; trace and write the letter k	28	Double letter formation; trace and write the double consonants ll and ss	38	Forming letters correctly to form words; writing labels clearly	48	Trace and write the capital letters A and Z; trace and write words	58	Individual numeral/ number word formation; trace the numerals/ number words 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
9	Trace patterns; practise patterns for forming s, a, t, p	19	Practise individual patterns for g, o, c and k; revise individual letter formations	29	Individual letter formation; trace and write the letter j	39	Form ascenders accurately; trace and write the digraph ch	49	Trace and write the capital letters V and W; trace and write words	59	
10	Individual letter formation; trace and write the letter i	20	Individual letter formation; trace and write the letters ck	30	Individual letter formation; trace and write the letter v	40	Form letters at the correct height; trace and write the digraph th	50	Trace and write the capital letters B and D; trace and write words	60	Individual word formation; trace and write the numbers and words

Year 1

1	Introducing letter families: Set 1 c, o, a, d, g, f, s, q, e	11	Practising capital letters B, D, C, G, O, Q, S, P, R, U, J	25	Practising the fourth join to Set 1 letters of, ff
2	Practising letter families: Set 1 co, ad, gs, qe	12	Practising numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10	26	Practising the fourth join to Set 2 letters wl, vl, rl
3	Introducing letter families: Set 2 i, l, t, j, u, y	13	Introducing break letters age, ape, aze	27	Practising break letters b, p, z, j, g, q, y
4	Practising letter families: Set 2 it, tl, uy, jy	14	Practising consistent size and height of small letters un, um, ur	28	Revising the four handwriting joins ai, al, ow, ol
5	Introducing letter families: Set 3 b, h, k, m, n, p, r	15	Diagonal join to Set 1 letters ed, eg, ac		
6	Practising letter families: Set 3 nk, rp, nm, bh	16	Diagonal join to Set 1 and 2 letters id, iu, ig, iy		
7	Introducing letter families: Set 4 v, w, x, z	17	Diagonal join to Set 3 letters ac, an, am, ap		
8	Practising letter families: Set 4 vw, xv, xz, zz	18	Diagonal join to Set 4 letters aw, ew, ex, ux		
9	Practising capital letters E, F, H, I, T, L	19	Diagonal join to the top of Set 1 letters if, ef, ief		
10	Practising capital letters A, K, M, N, V, W, X, Y, Z	20	Diagonal join to the top of Set 2 letters il, al, ail		
		21	Diagonal join to the top of Set 3 letters ck, ch, tch		
		22	To form and join from the letter w wa, wo, fo, fa		
		23	Practising the horizontal join oon, oom		
		24	Horizontal join to Set 3 letters oc, ore, orn		

Year 2

1	Practising joining to the top <i>ai, ay, ey</i>	9	Practising joining to the letter r <i>er, ir, ur</i>	15	Practising printing <i>whole alphabet</i>	22	Reviewing the four handwriting joins <i>kn, mb, wr, wh</i>
2	Practising the join from the letter e <i>ee, ea, ey</i>	10	Practising the horizontal join <i>ou, out, ow</i>	16	Practising joining to/from the letter c <i>ice, ace, cel</i>	23	Practising joining from the letter w <i>war, wan, wap</i>
3	Practising joining from the letter i <i>ie, ide, igh</i>	11	Practising small letters: same height and size <i>or, aw, au</i>	17	Practising writing the letter g <i>age, dge, nge, gen</i>	24	Practising correct height and size of letters <i>ily, ely, kly</i>
4	Practising the horizontal join <i>oa, ow, oe</i>	12	Practising joining to the letter r <i>ar, air, are</i>	18	Practising the diagonal join <i>le, el, al, il</i>	25	Punctuation <i>I'm, I'll, he's, she's</i>
5	Practising the size and height of letters <i>oo, ue, ew</i>	13	Practising joining to ascenders <i>al, all, alk</i>	19	Practising the two ways of joining the letter s <i>sh, as, es</i>	26	Practising joining to/from the letter i <i>cian, sion, tion</i>
6	Practising joining from the letter o <i>oi, ou, oy</i>	14	Practising joining from the letter o <i>ot, on, oe</i>	20	Practising joining to the letter y <i>ky, hy, ly</i>	27	Practising joining to/from the letter s <i>less, ness</i>
7	Practising capital letters <i>whole alphabet</i>			21	Practising joining to the letter g <i>ting, ring, king</i>	28	Practising joining from the letter e <i>er, ier, est, iest</i>
8	Practising joining to the letter a <i>ea, ear, ead</i>						

Year 3

1	Forming descenders accurately <i>sp, spr, pri, pru</i>	10	Practising writing with a slant	20	Practising joining from the letter a <i>ap, ar, an</i>
2	Forming ascenders accurately <i>al, all, at</i>	11	Practising forming capital letters <i>whole alphabet</i>	21	Practising with punctuation <i>! ? - " ' ,</i>
3	Practising the diagonal join to a small letter <i>ci, cir, cer, cen</i>	12	Practising writing the letter t at the correct height <i>ti, tio, cti, ati</i>	22	Practising diagonal joins to the letter y <i>ly, ky, ny</i>
4	Practising the diagonal join to a tall letter <i>mb, imb, umb, amb</i>	13	Practising spacing letters consistently <i>ew, ev, ex</i>	23	Practising joining to and from the letter r <i>ure, sure, ture</i>
5	Practising joining to and from the letter l <i>ale, dle, ele, tle</i>	14	Practising forming double letters correctly <i>ii, ll, tt, rr, nn, mm, cc, oo, dd, ss, ff, ee</i>	24	Practising joining from the letter w <i>who, wha, whe, whi</i>
6	Practising joining to the letter y <i>ly, lly, iky, iny</i>	15	Practising joining to the letter e <i>he, we, re</i>	25	Practising forming numerals correctly <i>1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9</i>
7	Practising forming the letter s correctly <i>es, ies, ses, eys</i>	16	Practising joining to the letter k <i>ick, uck, ack</i>	26	Practising writing silent letters <i>wra, wri, kni</i>
8	Practising joining from the letter i <i>ie, in, il, ill</i>	17	Practising the second join <i>ch, che, cho, cha, chi</i>	27	Practising joining from the letter f <i>fte, fir, fin</i>
9	Practising spacing between letters <i>ed, ned, hed, ked</i>	18	Practising joining from the letter e <i>ey, ei, eigh</i>	28	Practising writing decorated capital letters <i>whole alphabet</i>
		19	Practising the horizontal join <i>ous, mous, ious</i>		

Year 4

1	Practising joining to and from the letter e <i>eat, eac, ead</i>	9	Practising speedwriting <i>speedily, quickly, swiftly, briskly</i>	Unit	Pupil Book Focus	22	Practising consistency in forming and joining letters <i>ear, are, rew, new</i>
2	Practising joining to and from the letter s <i>ask, asp, ast</i>	10	Practising the size and height of letters <i>ous, ious, eous</i>	15	Practising using a diagonal joining line <i>ship, ment, ness, less</i>	23	Practising printing to make captions <i>whole alphabet</i>
3	Practising writing letters at the correct size and height <i>ried, ries, rief</i>	11	Practising spacing within words <i>constellation, station, relaxation, education, habitation, nation</i>	16	Practising speedwriting <i>department, ten o'clock, accident and emergency, as soon as possible</i>	24	Practising joining to and from the letter v <i>live, tive, sive, five</i>
4	Practising writing double letters <i>tt, ll, rr, ee</i>	12	Practising joining to and from the letter w <i>owf, owb, owm, owd</i>	17	Practising joining from the letter i <i>lig, rig, tig, mig</i>	25	Practising break letters <i>bl, pl, gl</i>
5	Practising consistency in spacing <i>sce, sca, sci</i>	13	Practising joining from the letter m <i>circumnavigate, circumstance, circumvent, circumference</i>	18	Practise the diagonal join to ascenders <i>al, all, alt, afl</i>	26	Practising drafting and editing
6	Practising using a diagonal join <i>un, unn, inn, imm</i>	14	Practising joining to the letter a from the letter w <i>wan, was, wav, wax</i>	19	Practising joining to and from the letter f <i>ff, lfs, lfe, ife</i>	27	Practising speedwriting <i>1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten</i>
7	Practising the horizontal join <i>rep, rem, rea, reo</i>			20	Practising joining to and from the letter e <i>rec, red, ved, ves</i>	28	Practising printing to make a poster <i>Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday</i>
8	More practice joining to the letter y <i>ly, ily, ity, ify</i>			21	Practising punctuation <i>. ' ! ?</i>		

Guidance regarding appropriate approaches to handwriting

1. **Cursive handwriting is, put simply, joined-up writing.** 'There are two different types: fully (or continuous) cursive, where every letter in a word is joined, so you don't lift the pen off the paper until the end of the word, and part cursive where most letters are joined, but not all (for example, letters following a "b"),' says Angela Webb, chair of the [National Handwriting Association](#).
2. Some schools teach fully cursive handwriting right from the start. 'This is not beneficial as continuous cursive letter shapes are much more complicated and arduous to form and KS1 children are unlikely to have developed the necessary visual-motor integration skills, sufficient pencil control and the ability to change direction several times within one letter shape,' says occupational therapist and [handwriting tutor Michelle Van Rooyen](#). 'Best practice is rather to start with simplest form of print letter shapes (within [letter families](#)), then to teach children how to join up these letters using diagonal or horizontal joining lines, using patterning activities in preparation.'
3. Other schools teach children to print letters first (i.e. write them separately, without joins) and then move onto cursive. 'There's some research to show that teaching children to print helps them understand the concept of individual letters better,' says Angela.
4. When learning cursive handwriting, **children are not taught letters in alphabetical order, but in groups according to their formation:** for example, 'a', 'c', 'e' and 'o' are taught together because they're all based on an anticlockwise circle. 'We typically focus on just one or two joins a week to ensure that children are forming their letters correctly,' says Year 1 teacher Louise Wells.
5. 'If your child is taught to print first, each letter might be written with a lead-in (or entry) and lead-out (exit) stroke or flick, which paves the way for learning to join them later,' says Angela.
6. The [National Curriculum](#) says that children should learn to form all their lower case and capital letters plus digits 0 to 9 by the end of Year 1. They then need to start joining their letters in Year 2. In Year 3, they need to concentrate on increasing the legibility, consistency and quality of their joined handwriting. Throughout Key Stage 2, children need to keep up the quality of their handwriting, and concentrate on increasing their speed.
7. **Cursive handwriting has a number of advantages.** 'It's often assumed that it's faster than printing, but actually, the research is inconclusive,' says Angela. 'However, it generally has a nicer style, and does seem to help children speed up their writing. Children who write quickly generally get more words on the paper and produce better quality content. Cursive writing also helps with spelling as you develop a muscle memory of the movements of each word.'

8. **Good posture is important** for cursive writing. 'I encourage children to sit with their feet flat on the floor, their back straight (no heads on the table) and relaxed shoulders,' says Louise.
9. 'If you're helping your child learn cursive handwriting, rather than starting with paper and pen, use a blackboard and chalk,' suggests Michelle. 'The rough, resistive surface sends stronger sensory feedback to the brain, and helps the movements become automatic.'
10. What's the best writing implement for cursive? 'Although children usually write in pencil at school, I like them to practise cursive handwriting with felt tips and gel pens, which have a nice, fluid delivery of ink,' says Angela.
11. 'If your child is using a pencil, the softer B pencils are generally easier to write with as they move more fluently across the page,' Michelle explains. 'Triangular barrels are best because we hold pencils with a tripod grip, and large-barrelled pencils reduce strain on the fingers.'
12. Lined paper can help your child achieve uniformity in his handwriting, but plain paper is also good for practising cursive. 'Lines can be quite constraining, so let him practise on unlined paper so he masters the free flow of movement needed for cursive,' says Angela.
13. Don't stick to practising on paper. 'I get children to practise specific joins in other mediums, such as tracing them in the air, in sand with a stick or on another person's back with their finger,' Louise suggests. You could also try chalks on the patio or shaving foam on a tray.
14. **Keep an eye on your child's pen grip.** 'It's important that the pad of the thumb connects with the pencil; if the side or tip of the thumb touches, it closes up the hand and restricts the flow of movement,' says Angela. 'Try chopping a pencil down to 3cm long; it's impossible to hold it incorrectly!'
15. Your child may find cursive writing easier if his paper is at an angle. 'You can turn the page up to 45 degrees in either direction,' Angela advises.
16. Boys tend to be slower than girls at mastering cursive writing. 'Left-handers may also have more trouble as they push the pencil across the paper, rather than pulling it,' says Michelle. A writing slope can be beneficial for left-handed children as it helps them see their writing.
17. One common problem that children face when learning cursive occurs when they've learned individual letters with entry and exit flicks. 'Often, they don't realise that these flicks should join seamlessly, and you get a little blip between the letters where they connect,' Angela explains.
18. Practising patterns of joined up letters (such as a string of connected 'c's) helps children master cursive. 'The more your child practises patterning, the sooner he'll establish the neuro-motor pathways that make them automatic,' Angela says. (Look through all TheSchoolRun's patterning worksheets in our [Handwriting Learning Journey](#).)
19. '[Handwriting worksheets](#) showing letter formation, with dots at the starting point and arrows showing the direction of movement, can be very helpful,' says Michelle. You can also encourage your child to do other non-writing activities to improve his fine motor control, such as colouring and dot-to-dot puzzles.
20. To help your child at home, ask how cursive is being taught at school: for example, do they refer to entry and exit strokes, flicks or tails? 'It's important to use consistent language so you can give your child useful verbal cues,' says Michelle. If possible ask the teacher for a sample alphabet. Handwriting styles vary hugely from school to school, but it's important to be consistent and ask children to write 'f's, 'r's, 'k's and other letters that tend to vary in style the same way at home and in the classroom.
21. Finally, **keep handwriting practice separate from homework.** 'Nagging your child about his writing will only stifle his content,' Michelle explains. 'Make writing fun and positive, give praise where it's due, and don't hover over him – he needs time to fully experience each task.'