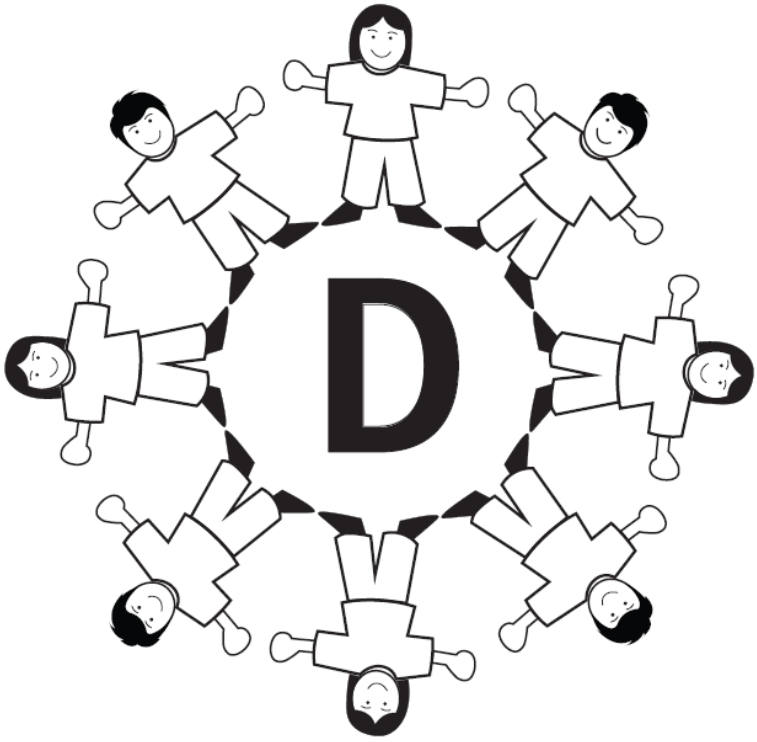
Dalestorth Primary and Nursery School



Handwriting Policy
September 2026

Why Do We Teach Handwriting?

Teaching handwriting explicitly, systematically and progressively in line with the DfE Writing Framework, enables learners to acquire the automaticity in transcription necessary for effective written communication.

Teaching Handwriting from the beginning of Reception facilitates the successful development of handwriting and physical skills. This frees up pupils' working memory, allowing them to focus on the composition of their ideas.

Dalestorth Primary and Nursery School strives for all pupils to achieve a legible, consistent and fluent handwriting style, enabling them to express their knowledge and understanding confidently across the entire curriculum. This includes establishing consistent 'ready to write' routines and providing appropriate resources to support every learner's development.

Letter formations are introduced through direct, explicit instruction that uses letter formation mnemonics and letter family characters. As the school follows the Little Wandle phonics programme, learners use the corresponding Little Wandle letter formation mnemonics to ensure consistency between phonics and handwriting teaching. Videos can be used to demonstrate correct letter formation.

Our Aims

- To establish a whole-school, systematic and progressive approach to teaching handwriting.
- To ensure learners develop the physical skills needed to achieve a comfortable, efficient and correct pencil grip.
- To ensure learners can form letters correctly and consistently, leading to clear legibility.
- To progress from discrete letter formation to a fluent, joined and automatic handwriting style.
- To enable learners to write at an appropriate speed for their age, freeing up their cognitive load for composition.
- To foster pride in the presentation of written work across all subjects.

What Is Handwriting?

Handwriting is a fundamental method of communication where learners control a writing instrument, typically a pen or pencil, to form letters, words and sentences. Being able to write clearly and legibly is a crucial skill that forms the foundation not only for a learner's education but also their journey through life.

Following a systematic and progressive handwriting approach from the beginning of Reception ensures the physical act of forming letters becomes increasingly automatic, a vital step in freeing up a learner's cognitive resources so they can focus on the composition of their ideas rather than the mechanics of writing.

Key aspects of handwriting include:



Formation: How individual letters and characters are shaped.



Legibility: How clear and readable the writing is to others.



Consistency: The uniformity of letter size and spacing.



Fluency: The smoothness and ease with which one writes, often related to speed.



Style: This can vary from printed letters to joined handwriting. Within print and joined styles, each learner develops a unique personal hand.

While modern technology offers many alternatives for written communication, handwriting remains an important skill for cognitive development, note-taking and various daily tasks.

How We Deliver Our Handwriting Teaching

Our school uses the Twinkl Handwriting Scheme. The scheme has been developed by experts in handwriting, inclusion and English teaching and learning. It draws on key subject principles and enables us to deliver explicit handwriting instruction, using a range of teaching strategies to embed writing fluency skills.

Each lesson follows a 5-part teaching pattern:



Learners get ready to write by completing a gross and/or fine motor warm-up activity.



Letter formations are introduced through direct, explicit instruction that uses letter formation mnemonics and letter family characters. As the school follows the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised phonics programme, learners are taught and supported to use the Little Wandle letter formation mnemonics to ensure consistency between phonics and handwriting teaching. Videos can be used to demonstrate correct letter formation.



Each Lesson Presentation offers opportunities to model formations, strokes and joins. Learners are then encouraged to join in and practise these.



Learners apply their newly taught knowledge and understanding to complete a variety of independent writing tasks.



Each learner is closely observed and given high-quality feedback, with side-by-side modelling where appropriate.

Additional Handwriting Practice

To provide regular opportunities to consolidate and embed handwriting skills, handwriting practice will also be incorporated into morning work. This practice is additional to and reinforces the explicit handwriting teaching delivered through the Twinkl Handwriting Scheme.

Teachers will identify letters, joins or words linked to recent handwriting teaching or to areas requiring further practice. These will usually be modelled by the teacher in learners' handwriting books for them to practise independently during morning work. Where appropriate, words containing the joins currently being taught will be selected so that learners can develop fluency, consistency and automaticity through regular repetition.

In Year 6, additional morning handwriting practice will be targeted rather than whole-class. It will be provided for identified learners who are not yet consistently joining their handwriting, or who require further practice to develop a fluent and legible joined style.

Handwriting Lines and Writing Books

To support learners in applying the handwriting skills they have been taught, English books use handwriting lines. These provide a consistent visual guide to support accurate letter size, positioning, ascenders and descenders, and enable learners to develop a fluent and consistent joined handwriting style within their everyday writing.

As learners become increasingly secure and fluent in their handwriting, they are expected to apply these skills with greater independence. In Year 6, learners progress from handwriting lines to standard lined paper, supporting the transition towards writing confidently and consistently without additional visual guides.

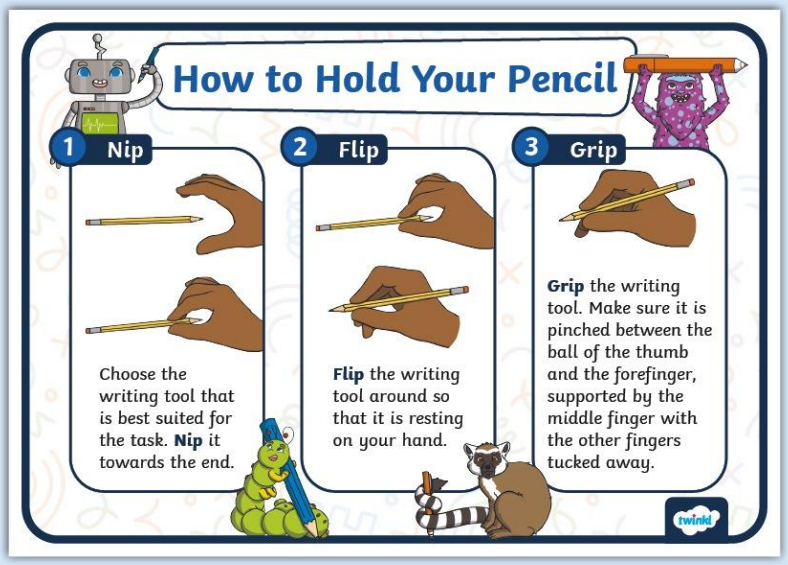
Alongside their English books, learners complete pieces of independent writing in their Writing Portfolios using standard lined paper. This provides opportunities for learners to demonstrate their handwriting independently, without the additional support provided by handwriting lines and enables teachers to assess handwriting as part of the school's assessment of writing.

Writing Portfolios therefore provide evidence of how successfully learners transfer the formation, joining, legibility, consistency and fluency developed through handwriting teaching into independent writing.

Physical Skills

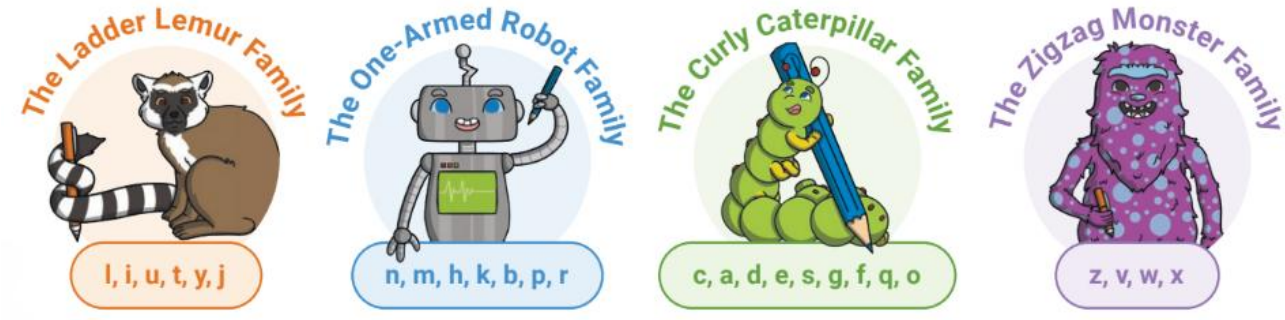
Dalestorth Primary and Nursery School understands the importance of physical skills in the successful handwriting journey.

Physical skills for writing, including both gross and fine motor skills, will be taught explicitly within handwriting sessions. Each Twinkl Handwriting Scheme session will incorporate engaging warm-up exercises, video demonstrations and clear infographics to help learners develop strong foundations in their physical skills.



Letter Families

Letters are taught in a sequence according to the directional stroke required to form them. Each letter family is represented by a memorable character, which guides learners on their writing journey.

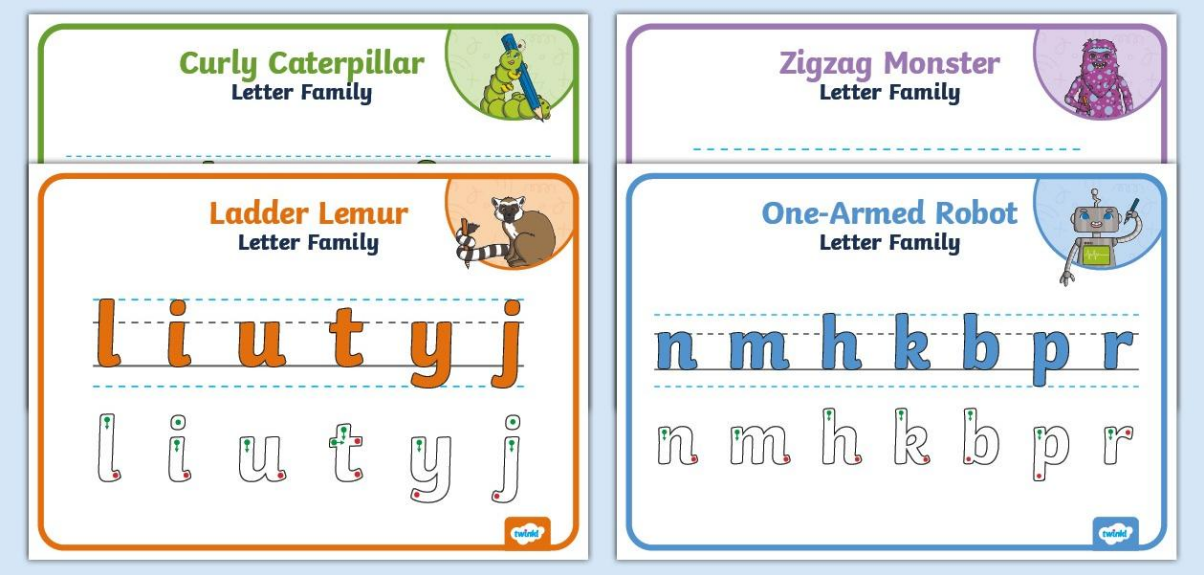


Embedding Letter Formation and Building Fluency

To establish strong foundations in print letter formations, learners are taught to use the Little Wandle letter formation mnemonics to form letters correctly and confidently. This ensures a consistent approach between the teaching of early reading, phonics and handwriting, helping learners to recall correct letter formation and develop automaticity.

As learners progress through the Twinkl Handwriting Scheme, they are taught to use horizontal and diagonal joining strokes to join letters within words. They continue to develop this skill, increasing fluency, consistency and speed in their writing.

Building on this, learners will deepen their mastery of handwriting by applying their handwriting skills across a range of contexts and purposes. They will take ownership of their written presentation and be encouraged to reflect on their handwriting as part of their independent learning.



Progression

Using the Twinkl Handwriting Scheme, learners take a step-by-step journey from developing fine motor skills and mastering letter formation to joining letters with horizontal and diagonal strokes and writing fluently and legibly with speed, accuracy and confidence.

Early Handwriting

Within Early Handwriting, learners develop pre-writing skills, letter formation and the physical foundations needed for writing. Learners are encouraged to develop curiosity and

purpose in making marks, exploring pre-writing shapes and forming letters through storytelling, songs, rhymes, play-based activities and purposeful writing.

Learners will:

- build a sense of curiosity, motivation and purpose around making marks and pre-writing strokes;
- develop gross motor skills and the foundational fine motor skills needed for writing;
- develop an awareness of directional vocabulary and use it to communicate about strokes, shapes and letters;
- manipulate a range of small tools and writing implements;
- be introduced to each letter family character and formation strokes through song verses;
- Nip, Flip and Grip a pencil to begin to develop a comfortable and successful pencil grip;
- use a range of writing implements to create horizontal, vertical, diagonal and circular strokes;
- identify each letter family and the letters that belong to each family;
- form letters using green and red dots and the Little Wandle letter formation mnemonics, providing a consistent approach to phonics and handwriting from the beginning of Reception.

Step 1: Getting Ready to Write

In Step 1, learners develop the foundational physical skills needed for writing and learn how to form letters correctly using mnemonics.

They will learn:

- to develop fine motor skills, ready for writing through warm-ups;
- to Nip, Grip, and Flip a pencil to hold it correctly;
- to prepare for writing by sitting correctly and recognising when they are ready to write;
- to identify each letter family and understand how letters are formed in similar ways;
- to form lower-case letters, upper-case letters and digits 0–9 correctly
- to use letter formation mnemonics to form letters correctly;
- to use green arrows and red dots to start and finish letter formations in the correct place.

Step 2: Mastering Letter Formation and Spacing

In Step 2, learners focus on the correct pencil grip and letter sizing, ensuring accurate placement and spacing of words.

They will learn:

- to hold a pencil correctly and comfortably and place letters correctly on the line;
- to form lower-case letters, upper-case letters and digits 0–9 with the correct size and position;
- to ensure lower-case letters are sized correctly in relation to each other and to upper-case letters;
- to add spaces between words that match the size of the letters;
- to recall each letter family and understand how letters are formed in similar ways.

Step 3: Introduction to Joined Handwriting

In Step 3, learners are introduced to joined handwriting as a way to build writing fluency. They will develop an understanding of how to use diagonal and horizontal strokes to join letters.

They will learn:

- to recognise letters that can be joined using lead-out strokes and how this can help them to write with increasing speed;
- to write letters and words in a clear and legible way, maintaining accurate letter formation as joining is introduced;
- to use diagonal strokes and horizontal strokes to join letters;
- to identify which letters should be joined together and which should be left unjoined;
- to think about the size and orientation of letters when writing.

Step 4: Developing Clarity and Consistency in Joined Writing

In Step 4, learners build on their joined handwriting skills by focusing on clarity, consistency and quality through confident use of joining strokes.

They will learn:

- to write letters and words clearly and legibly, maintaining accurate letter formation as joining becomes more consistent;
- to use diagonal and horizontal strokes confidently to join letters in independent writing;
- to improve the clarity of their handwriting by ensuring the downstrokes of letters are parallel and evenly spaced;
- to space lines successfully so that ascending and descending letters do not touch;
- to suggest ways to improve their handwriting by recalling prior knowledge of letter formation, letter families and accurate ways to join.

Step 5: Applying Handwriting Skills in Context

In Step 5, learners begin to apply their knowledge of letter formation and joined handwriting in a variety of writing contexts.

They will learn:

- to write legibly and fluently with increasing speed;
- to confidently identify which letters should be joined and unjoined;
- to choose suitable writing implements for handwriting tasks;
- to develop a clear understanding of which handwriting standard is appropriate for a particular task. For example, using quick notes or a final handwritten version;
- to use their handwriting skills across the curriculum and maintain consistent handwriting in longer written tasks.

Step 6: Mastering Handwriting for Confident Communication

In Step 6, learners deepen their mastery of handwriting and become confident written communicators. They will apply their knowledge, developed across the scheme, to write for a variety of purposes.

They will learn:

- to write legibly, fluently and at an increased speed across a variety of genres and contexts;
- to develop the stamina to maintain handwriting quality over longer texts, using consistent joining strokes;
- to take ownership over their handwriting by selecting and recommending appropriate writing styles and presentation methods for different formats;
- to improve note-taking skills;

Inclusion and Intervention

When Will We Make Adaptations to Handwriting Teaching and Learning?

Dalestorth Primary and Nursery School recognises that every learner is unique and develops handwriting skills at different rates.

To ensure learners successfully access the handwriting scheme and learning, we will make adaptations if learners:

- are meeting the learning demands but handwriting is the barrier;
- are exceeding the learning demands and require a challenge;
- are experiencing pain, fatigue or frustration during writing;
- write slowly, which limits how much they can produce;
- show inconsistent letter formation despite consistent teaching and practice;
- struggle with posture, paper positioning or grip that doesn't improve with reminders

What Adaptations to Handwriting Teaching and Learning Look Like

Dalestorth Primary and Nursery School ensures learners access Twinkl Handwriting Scheme steps at the correct learning level and ability, enabling them to build knowledge, skill and understanding to master handwriting.

Support

Using the Twinkl Handwriting Scheme, we will follow a structured approach, ensuring learners receive the guidance and scaffolding needed to develop handwriting fluency and confidence.

This could be achieved through:

- the use of teaching tips;
- wide lined activity sheets within Step 1;
- modelling and co-writing;
- activities that further develop physical strength and fine motor skills;
- large scale practice;
- securing comprehensions of positional and directional language;
- explicit, clear teaching instructions;
- supportive lesson structures;
- consolidation activities;
- skills development activities;
- early handwriting activity adaptations.

How We Support Left-Handed Learners

Using the Twinkl Handwriting Scheme, Dalestorth Primary and Nursery School provides left-handed alternative resources. This allows left-handed learners to access materials in a way that suits their natural writing orientation and supports comfort, accuracy and fluency, ensuring each learner is given the same opportunities for success."

How We Assess Handwriting

We use regular assessments to help understand a learner's skills and knowledge, identify areas for improvement and adapt teaching to support success.

Using the Twinkl Handwriting Scheme, we provide learners with immediate, individualised feedback in handwriting sessions.

Teachers assess handwriting through daily observation, written work across the curriculum and regular review of Writing Portfolios.

Appendix A

Little Wandle formation mnemonics

Ss Under the snake's chin, slide down and round its tail.	Aa Around the astronaut's helmet and down into space.	Tt From the tiger's nose to its tail, then follow the stripe across the tiger.	Pp Down the penguin's back, up and around its head.	Ii Down the iguana's body, then draw a dot (on the leaf) at the top.	Nn Down the stick, up and over the net.	Mm Down, up and over the mouse's ears, then add a flick on the nose.
Dd Round the duck's body, up to its head and down to its feet.	Gg Round the goat's face, up to his ear, down and curl under his chin.	Oo All around the octopus	Cc Curl around the cat.	Kk Down the kite, up and round, down to the corner.	Ee Around the elephant's eye and down its trunk.	Uu Down and around the umbrella, stop at the top and down to the bottom and flick.
Rr From the cloud to the ground, up the arch and over the rainbow.	Hh Down, up and over the helicopter.	Bb Down bear's back, up and round his big tummy.	Ff Down the flamingo's neck, all the way to its foot, then across its wings.	Ll All the way down the lollipop.	Jj All the way down the jellyfish. Dot on its head.	Vv Down to the bottom of the volcano and back up to the top.
Ww From the top of the wave to the bottom, up the wave, down the wave, then up again.	Xx Start at the top, then across to the bottom of the box. Start at the top, then across to the bottom of the box.	Yy Down and round the yo-yo, then follow the string round.	Zz Zip across, zag down and across the zebra.	Qq Round the queen's face, up to her crown, down her robe with a flick at the end. Quick, it's the queen!		

Appendix B

Twinkl letter formation

