Upton St Leonards C E Primary School Handwriting Policy 2026

Handwriting

Date: February 2026

Review date: February 2029

Authorised by: Headteacher

Updated by: Writing Lead

Building foundations for a love of life, love of learning and love of one another

Introduction

At Upton St Leonards C of E Primary School, we strive for our children to be confident and fluent in handwriting. Handwriting is taught with a sequential and progressive approach and is non-cursive. Handwriting is a key part of transcription and should is taught explicitly and early, beginning in Reception so that children develop automatic, legible letter formation. It is considered to be one of the most natural developments of children's earliest attempts at writing. Teachers, TAs and students are expected to model the handwriting style.

Handwriting is a taught skill and it is important that teachers are seen to put a high value on teaching and sustaining good handwriting. We believe that children's self-esteem and pride in their work can be raised by good quality presentation.

Aims

We believe that it is important to teach children correct letter formation, joining and good handwriting habits, so that they can increase muscle memory; write fluently and legibly; and by the end of KS2 begin to develop a distinctive style.

Each aim is considered equally important:

- Ensure EYFS and Y1 children have opportunities to develop gross motor and fine motor skills
- To teach letter formation through 'letter families'
- To teach letter formation through explicit transcription lessons in EYFS and Y1
- To teach children to write with a flowing hand that is legible, swift and pleasant to look at.

- To enable children to develop their own style of handwriting as they progress through Upper Key Stage 2.
- To support the development of correct spelling and to aid in the elimination of letter reversals by the learning of word patterns and the correct joining of letters.
- To ensure that children of differing abilities are provided with appropriate and achievable goals.
- To assist children in taking pride with the presentation of their work.
- To appreciate handwriting as an art form.
- To display excellent examples of handwriting in every classroom and around the school.
- To adopt a common approach towards handwriting by all adults when labelling children's books in all subjects, writing in children's books, on flipcharts, on the IWB, or on displays/resources.

In order to achieve these aims, the following principles are followed:

1. Teaching and Organisation

We seek to fulfil the requirements of the National Curriculum 2014 and EYFS Curriculum. Planning is based on objectives taken from these, which ensures a progressive structure. In their short term planning, teachers outline specific objectives for groups of children and individuals in order to ensure progress. We use the Nelson Handwriting Scheme throughout school, thus ensuring there is continuity and progression across classes.

Handwriting is taught daily as a class in all year groups. Children who need extra support can be taught in targeted groups, in scoop groups or when the teacher sees fit.

It is important that in the Early Years and at Key Stage 1, children are observed closely during the lesson to ensure that letter formation is correct. During lessons, we ensure that children sit, position their paper/book and hold their pen/pencil correctly, using their other hand to hold their work firmly and slanting their page accordingly to their dominant hand. Chair height is checked to ensure it is correct and feet are flat on the floor. We refer to these as *'The 4 Ps'; Posture, Position, Pencil and Pressure'.*

All writing curriculum maps refer to the rule.

Pupils should be taught to:
Follow the 4 Ps rule:
Posture: *Sit correctly at a table, with a straight back and two feet flat on the floor.*
Position: *slant paper/ book accordingly depending on right or left-handed.*
Pencil: *Hold the pencil or pen comfortably using a tripod grip.*
Pressure*: Pressure should be moderate and not too tight.*

In addition to specific handwriting lessons, children are expected to apply their learning in their exercise books and to show care for the presentation of their work. Regular opportunities for children to produce presentation work are also planned, for example in final writing pieces or for display (outside of core lessons).

Staff model the handwriting style and use the appropriate formation and joins, demonstrating the fluency and legibility of the style. Children are expected to show respect for their workbooks, present their work with care, date work, underline where necessary and not make any marks on the covers.

It is the class teacher's responsibility to ensure that a high expectation of handwriting and presentation is commanded and that their own handwriting, and that of other support staff, leads by example.

2. Handwriting Progression

The 2014 National Curriculum says pupils should 'start using some of the diagonal and horizontal strokes needed to join letters' from Year 2. It also encourages schools to teach children 'to write with a joined style as soon as they can form letters securely with the correct orientation'.

Key Stage 1 Pupils should be taught to:

- sit correctly at a 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 digits 0-9
- understand which letters belong to which handwriting family (i.e. letters that are formed in similar ways)

Key stage 2 Pupils should be taught to:

- use the diagonal and horizontal strokes that are needed to join letters and understand which letters, when adjacent to one another, are best left un-joined.
- increase the legibility, consistency and quality of their handwriting [for example, by ensuring that the downstrokes of letters are parallel and equidistant]; that lines of writing are spaced sufficiently so that the ascenders and descenders of letters do not touch.
- write legibly, fluently and with increasing speed by:
    - choosing which shape of a letter to use when given choices and deciding whether or not to join specific letters.
    - choosing the writing implement that is best suited for a task.

As a school we have adopted a non-cursive writing style: (See appendix A)

3. Early Years Foundation Stage

During Reception, children are given a wide range of opportunities to develop an understanding that writing conveys meaning, e.g. books, storytelling, signs, labels etc.

Children experience a wide range of handwriting-related skills, e.g. letter and number formation in sand trays, through tracing, use of ribbons, with chalk, felt tips, pencils, crayons, writing over and under teacher models in various forms, word building with magnetic letters and pattern making in various media. Finger gym programme is implemented to help develop strong, flexible fingers, hands and arms. It promotes better hand-eye co-ordinations, differentiated movement and manual dexterity. For those children that are ready for handwriting practice, large pencils can be used in

conjunction with lined/unlined paper. Pencil grips for correction of pencil hold are also used where appropriate. As an introduction to the non-cursive style of handwriting, patterns are practised with wide-lined paper/handwriting lined paper and thinner pencils being introduced where appropriate. Teachers model correct letter formation and children practise this in an explicit handwriting lesson. Correction of letter formation takes place on an individual basis. Children practise name writing in non-joined style.

4. Year 1/Key Stage 1

Transcription lessons are delivered daily with a strong focus on letter formation and dictation so that the focus is on writing and the cognitive load is reduced. Children additionally work on handwriting skills daily and in a variety of activities, e.g. writing in books, multi-sensory approaches, through phonic work and writing in their handwriting books and duplicated practice worksheets. Specific handwriting/ writing books and standard-size pencils are used. Children who struggle with letter sizing, spacial awareness and organisational problems will be given paper with highlighted yellow lines to help guide their letter formation. Practise takes place on a daily basis.

5. Year 2/Key Stage 1

Children are encouraged to use many joins in their daily handwriting work. Handwriting practise takes place daily and the correction of mistakes is dealt with on an individual basis. Children are encouraged to take pride in the presentation of their work. In addition, handwriting is often practised through the teaching and learning of phonics. Where necessary, teachers can refer to prior year group practise in order to support children who struggle.

6. Key Stage 2

From Year 4, all children will be allowed to work in suitable handwriting pens (blue). Handwriting practice takes place daily in all classes and the correction of mistakes is dealt with on an individual basis. Children are encouraged to take pride in the presentation of their work.

However, during spelling assessments children can use print rather than joined in order to ensure every letter is legible. This ensures children are not penalised for handwriting during a spelling test and tests are marked fairly.

Pencils should continue to be used throughout the school for notes, drafting, all maths work, diagrams, charts and maps. Children should be encouraged to always write with a sharp pencil and to correct mistakes by crossing out using a single line or by using a purple pen for editing in writing lessons. Rubbers are not permitted in English or maths (unless for correcting drawings or diagrams), children are encouraged to learn from their mistakes and teachers are able to see self-corrected work.

In all year groups, it is the class teacher's responsibility to address incorrect formation and poor presentation even when using whiteboards. High expectations must be commanded at all times.

7. Presentation in Books

Children must ensure that all work is presented neatly. The full date and title of all work must appear at the top of the page and must be neatly underlined. Any mistakes must be neatly crossed out. Any drawings in books must be done in pencil. Rulers should always be used to draw straight lines. EYFS-Y3 to use pencil; Y4-Y6 use a blue 'Manuscript Student' handwriting pen which are ordered centrally – all children must use the same pen provided by the writing lead; it is the discretion of the writing lead and the class teacher to adapt type of pen for those children who require it i.e. ball point pens can sometimes be more effective for vulnerable learners due to the pressure of the hard nib.

8. Provision for Left-Handed Children

At least 10% of the population are left-handed. All teachers are aware of the left-handed pupils in their class and make appropriate provision:

- paper should be positioned to the left for right-handed pupils and to the right for left-handed pupils and slanted to suit the individual in either case;
- pencils should not be held too close to the point as this can interrupt pupils' line of vision;
- pupils should be positioned so that they can place their paper to their left side;
- left-handed pupils should sit to the left of a right-handed child so that they are not competing for space;
- extra practice with left-to-right exercises may well be necessary before pupils write left-to-right automatically.

Teachers are aware of the fact that it is very difficult for left-handed pupils to follow handwriting movements when a right-handed teacher models them. Teachers demonstrate to left-handers on an individual or group basis, even if the resulting writing is not neat.

9. Capital Letters

Capital letters stand alone and are not joined to the next letter. Children must practice starting sentences and writing names using a capital letter and not joining the subsequent letter. This should be modelled by the teacher during English and Phonics sessions and all other subjects.

10. Handwriting Lesson Routine

Each formal handwriting lesson should be ready for the pupil to start at 8:45am. This requires books to be on tables and interactive resources (if being used) to ready on the IWB. In year groups that are still learning letter formation or joins (e.g., Y1/Y2/Y3), an activity should be ready for pupils in order to settle quickly before teacher modelling commences. This should be a fine motor skill, pencil activity such as tracing zig-zags or loops **not** a letter formation activity as this could lead to incorrect formation. We also encourage calm music to be playing as this especially helps vulnerable learners to settle and focus and becomes routine.

In short, every handwriting lesson should display:

- **Calm music**
- **Pupil and teacher resources ready before children come into class**
- **Evidence of teacher modelling; on lined flip chart paper and/ or using the IWB Nelson resources**
- **Evidence of teacher feedback to -address incorrect formation and spellings**

- encourage and praise high expectations and outcomes

11. Displays

The relevant USL handwriting poster (see Appendix A) for each year group is clearly displayed in every classroom as an A3 poster. The poster must be visible to all pupils and duplicate posters should be used if necessary.

12. Inclusion

The vast majority of pupils are able to write legibly and fluently. However, some pupils need more support and provision will be made for this, possibly monitored through the use of a My Plan or My Plan+. Teachers of children, whose handwriting is limited by problems with fine motor skills, should liaise with the SENDCO to develop a programme designed for the individual child.

13. Assessment and Recording

Teachers continually assess handwriting to note progress against the National Curriculum requirements and by using the Nelson Handwriting Scheme resources. Teachers record and track progress to determine future targets for improvement. A handwriting assessment of pupils who arrive later than Reception Year, is made within two weeks. Teachers aim to ensure that when marking written work, comments about neatness are kept in proportion in relation to those about content and/or meaning. **All modelled corrections or formation or spelling should be written as per our handwriting scheme in green biro for the pupil to copy. A yellow felt tip pen can be used to model formation if a child needs to trace the pattern.**

14. Monitoring and Evaluation

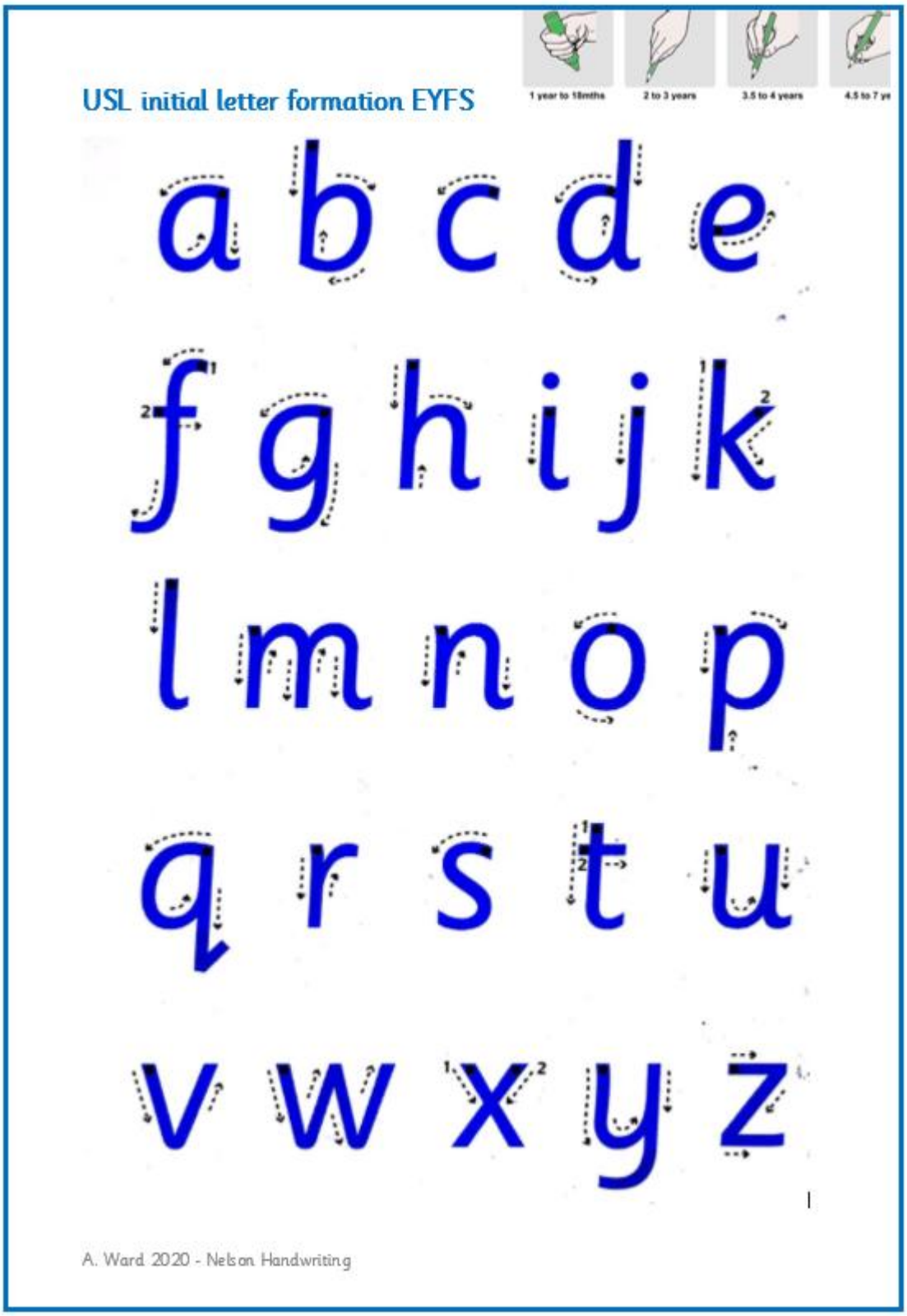
It is the role of the Writing subject leader, to monitor the teaching and learning of handwriting throughout the school, with support from the Head of School (Head of Teaching and Learning) and other members of the Senior Leadership Team. This is done through regular work sampling, analysis of assessment pieces and lesson observations. Feedback from this monitoring is used to inform staff of necessary developments in order to raise standards. Monitoring is supported by the Head Teacher.

15. Review

This policy will be reviewed in line with the school's policy review programme. The subject leader is responsible for reporting to the governors' curriculum committee about the quality of its implementation and its impact on standards. In the light of this, policy amendments may be made.

This policy was reviewed on 02.02.26 the subject lead.

Appendix A


USL initial letter formation EYFS
1 year to 18mths
2 to 3 years
3.5 to 4 years
4.5 to 7 ye
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
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USL progressive letter formation Y1-Y3

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

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USL progressive letter formation Y4-Y6

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

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USL capital letter formation

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

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