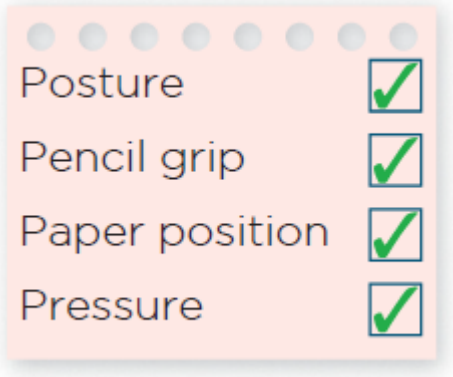
Handwriting Policy

Date of review: 09/26
Date of next review: 09/28

Version	Date	Author	Change description
V1	April 2025	LB	Included 'ready to write'
V2	September 2026	LB	Change of date

'Ready to write'

It is important to establish routines for getting ready for handwriting lessons. The routines of warming up fingers, having the correct posture and holding the pencil correctly so that children are ready to write are key. These routines are a common policy in our school. We have clear expectations that are established right from the start and reinforced so that they become embedded and automatic. The Little Wandle 'Ready to write' checklist ensures children are well prepared to start handwriting with confidence and control. The children are taught and reminded of four elements prior to starting their handwriting lesson.



Children may have poor pencil grip and letter formation, and some children may write in capitals. We understand the importance of needing to prevent these habits from becoming embedded by correcting their pencil grip and modelling correct letter formation straight away. We teach children to use the tripod grip and how to achieve this with the 'pinch, pinch, pinch, flip' routine.

Reception handwriting

At Sandwich Infant School, we use Little Wandle Handwriting for Reception as this ensures early development of fluent, legible handwriting and provides a structured approach to teaching handwriting.

The programme has been carefully designed to support the development of **legible and fluent** handwriting using an easy-to-follow approach with consistent routines and memorable mantras.

The Writing Framework 2025 highlights the importance of this approach. It states: *Pupils should be taught handwriting precisely, in a clearly sequenced progression, starting from reception, to support their gradual acquisition of skills.* Little Wandle Handwriting is taught alongside Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised phonics, and the programme progression takes account of children's growing phonic knowledge. It uses the well-loved and familiar mnemonics from the core Little Wandle programme to ensure children can make links in their learning.

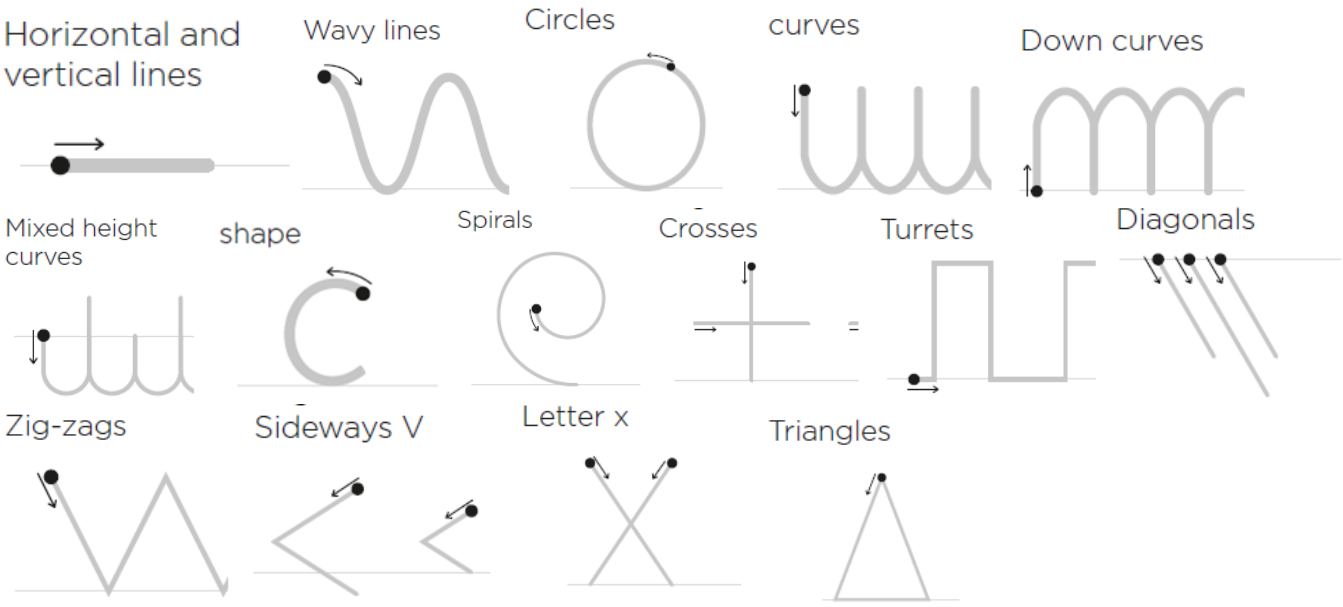
By teaching handwriting **right from the start**, it means that children do not develop incorrect habits that are hard to break. Direct teaching of handwriting will prepare the children with the skills to develop fluent, speedy writing later on. Children in Reception therefore have **three discrete handwriting sessions a week** (as a minimum). Letters are taught in 'families', in the sequences as below:

Unit 1: Practising patterns
Unit 2: Curly letter family
Unit 3: Long letter family
Unit 4: Bouncy letter family
Unit 5: Zig-zag letter family

Unit 6: Capital letters
Unit 7: Digraphs and trigraphs

Patterns

In this unit, children are taught to follow, and are expected to adhere to, the 'Ready to write' checklist. The checklist supports correct posture, pencil grip, paper position and pressure, all of which are essential for forming letters accurately and efficiently. By embedding these habits early, children are more likely to write with ease, confidence and legibility.



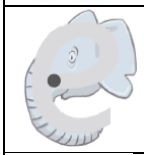
Lower-case letters

Learning the correct letter formation for lower-case letters is the key priority for handwriting in Reception.

Letters are grouped in families and taught based on similar movement patterns, making it easier for children to learn and remember how to form them. Grouping letters by strokes in this way reduces cognitive load and establishes muscle memory through repetition of similar motions. This helps children experience early success and build confidence and motivation for writing. Consistent repetition will help letter formation become automatic, freeing up cognitive resources for higher-level writing tasks.

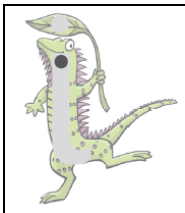
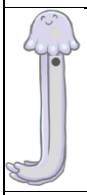
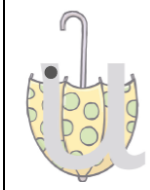
Curly letters

	Curl around the cat.
	Around the astronaut's helmet and down into space.

	Round the duck's body, up to its head and down to its feet.
	Round the goat's face and curl under its chin.
	All around the octopus.
	Round the queen's face, down her robe and a flick at the end.
	Around the elephant's eye and curl down its trunk.
	Down the snake from head to tail.
	Down the flamingo to its foot and across its wings.

Long letters

	Down the lollipop stick.

	Down the iguana and dot the leaf.
	Down the tiger and across its neck.
	Down the jellyfish and dot its head.
	Down and around the umbrella, and back to the ground.
	Down, around the yo-yo and curl round the string.

Bouncy letters

	Down, up and over the mouse's ears.
	Down, up and over the net.
	From the cloud to the ground and over the rainbow.
	Down the bear's back, up and round its tummy.

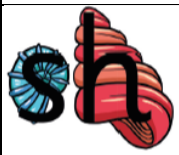
	Down the penguin's back, up and around its head.
	Down, up and over the helicopter.

Zi-zag letters

	Down to the bottom of the volcano and back up to the top.
	Down and up and down and up the waves
	From the top, across the box to the bottom. From the top again across the box to the bottom.
	Across the top of the zebra's head, zig-zag down its neck and along.
	Down the kite, up to the top corner and down to the bottom corner.

Digraphs and trigraphs

When children are able to form all individual letters in isolation, they should be moved on to forming digraphs to support their writing. The same verbal support can be applied for the letters as detailed above or encourage children to remember the following rhymes to help former the letters for each digraph.

ff	ll	ss	zz	ck	
			ng		ai
ee	igh	oa	oo	ar	or
ur	ow	oi	ear	air	er

If a child demonstrates being secure at forming all pre-cursive letters correctly then they will be introduced to cursive letters in Reception, in preparation for Year One. Our handwriting policy adopts a more fluid approach, not based upon ages. If a child is ready to adopt the cursive style then they will be taught it in Reception rather than waiting until they are in Year One. This will most likely be in the Summer term and it is unlikely all children are ready to progress on to this, so this will be taught in a small group.

Year One Handwriting

Statutory requirements

The National Curriculum states that 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 'families' (i.e. letters that are formed in similar ways) and to practise these.

Notes and guidance

Handwriting requires frequent and discrete, direct teaching to ensure that children are fluent. Becoming fluent in handwriting means that the children are able focus on other elements of their writing. Children should be able to form letters correctly and confidently. The size of the writing implement (pencil, pen) should not be too large for a young pupil's hand. Whatever is being used should allow the pupil to hold it easily and correctly so that poor habits are avoided. Left-handed pupils should receive specific teaching to meet their needs. Some children may find a writing slope beneficial and a left hander should be positioned on a table where they have sufficient space for their bent arm and to slope their book if preferable.

In Year One we teach the children **cursive un-joined** handwriting but as the year progresses if children demonstrate a confident ability to form all cursive letters correctly and with tall and short letters clearly distinguished then they will be introduced to joined up handwriting. This will be through daily, discrete handwriting sessions within the school day.

Handwriting families

Teachers follow specific handwriting families, similar to that in Reception, to maintain continuity between classes. This also promotes appropriate vocabulary to support children to learn the formations.

1. Long ladder family: l i t u j y
2. One-armed robot family: r b n m k p
3. Curly caterpillar family: c a d o s g q e f
4. Zigzag monster family: z v w x
5. Review any letters that need extra focus
6. Digraphs: ch, sh, th, ai, ee, ie, oe, ue
7. Trigraphs: air, ear, ure, ire
8. Teach vowels: i u a o e

Teachers use vocabulary to support the formation of letters when modelling such as:

“starting on the line”, “slowly leading in”, “up and down”, “around”, and “slowly lead out so the letter finishes on the line” (with exception to ‘o’, ‘r’, ‘w’ and ‘v’).

If a child is not forming letters correctly, they will be **supported in their practice** through appropriate re-modelling and clear demonstrations. It is important that mistakes are corrected and not ‘left’ as this will enforce wrong habits and understandings. A child should not move onto learn cursive handwriting until they have shown that they are fluent and capable in pre-cursive letter formations.

Similar to that of Reception, children are expected to adhere to the ‘**Ready to write’** checklist. The checklist supports correct posture, pencil grip, paper position and pressure, all of which are essential for forming letters accurately and efficiently.

Year Two Handwriting

Statutory requirements

The National Curriculum states that pupils should be taught to:

- 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, when adjacent to one another, are best left un-joined
- write capital letters and digits of the correct size, orientation and relationship to one another and to lower case letters
- use spacing between words that reflects the size of the letters.

Notes and guidance (non-statutory)

Pupils should revise and practise correct letter formation frequently. They should be taught to write with a joined style as soon as they can form letters securely with the correct orientation.

In Year Two, we teach the children **joined cursive handwriting**. As stated before we have a fluid policy where children in other year groups can be taught cursive or joined up as and when they are ready. It should also be mentioned that if it is not appropriate for a child to adopt cursive/joined up style of handwriting then they will be taught appropriately to meet their needs/development.

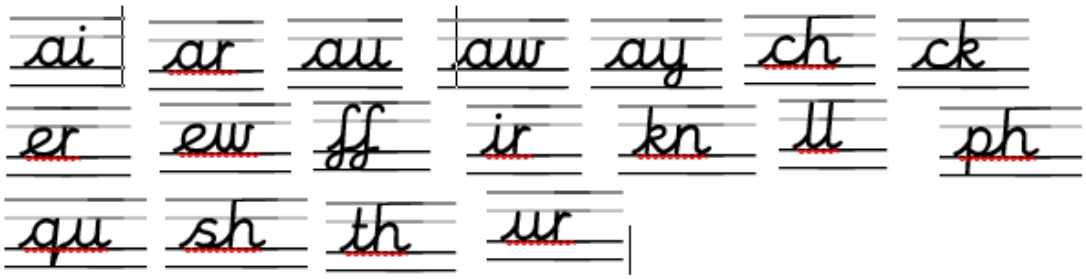
Children will be taught to join sequences of letters first to ensure that they join letters clearly and confidently. All four types of joins need to be taught for a fluid handwriting style. Teaching the join types in their groups helps a child to understand the directional push and pulls required to successfully join the different letter combinations.

The joins section of the pre-handwriting patterns has been designed to help children develop these individual joining strokes.

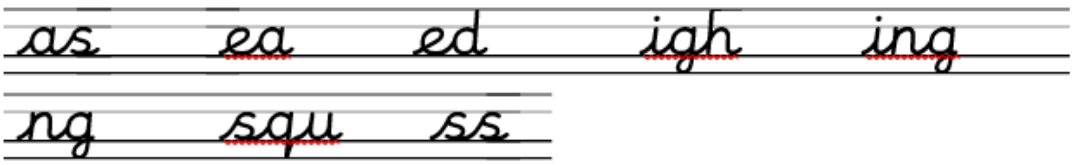
Most children will find the bottom joins the easiest to achieve, as it only requires the extension of the exit stroke they have already put on the letters. The bottom to “c” shape joins can be tricky at first but soon mastered. The joins that tend to cause most confusion and difficulty are the “e” joiners and top exit joiners so more care and attention should be given when teaching these.

Capital letters never join lower case letters.

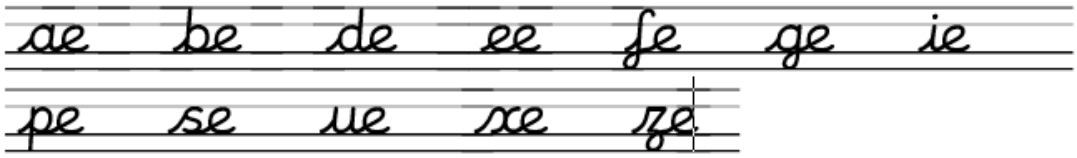
Cursive bottom letter joins



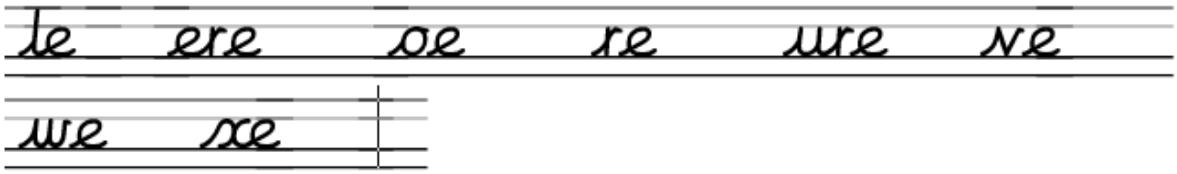
Cursive bottom “c” shaped letter joins



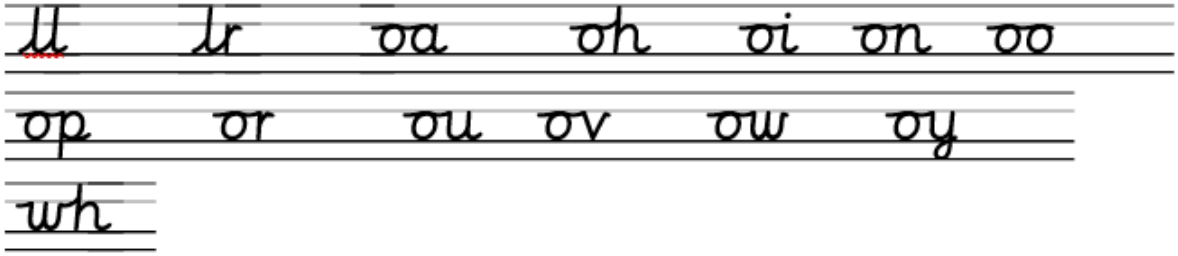
Cursive bottom “e” letter joins



Cursive top “e” letter joins



Cursive top letter joins



When these formations have been correctly and fluently applied in isolation, the children should be moved onto applying these to words. It is not until they are confident in these and able to transfer this writing into all other areas of their learning that they can move away from handwriting lessons, and onto discrete spelling lessons.

Forming capital letters

To ensure correct letter formation for associated capital letters, the following guidance should be applied. Children should be able to form and use appropriately within both handwriting and writing lessons. Further guidance on capital letters can be found within our handwriting progression grid.

Letter	Capital letter formation phrase
A	From the top, diagonally down to the left, up to the top, diagonally down to the right. Lift up and across.
B	From the top, down, back to the top. Round to the middle, round to the bottom.
C	From the top, curl around to the left to sit on the line.
D	From the top, down, back to the top. Curve right, down to the bottom.
E	From the top, down, back to the top. Across, back. Lift up and across the middle. Lift up and across the bottom line.
F	From the top, down, back to the top. Across, back. Lift up and across the middle.
G	From the top, curl around to the line, carry on up, then straight down. Lift up and across.
H	From the top and down. Space. From the top and down. Lift up and join the lines across the middle.
I	From the top to the bottom and stop.
J	From the top, all the way down, then short curl to the left.
K	From the top, down, up to the middle. Diagonally up, back and diagonally down to the line.
L	From the top, down and across the line.
M	From the top, down, back to the top. Diagonally down, diagonally up. Straight down to the line.
N	From the top, down, back to the top. Diagonally down, then straight up to the top.
O	From the top – all around the o.
P	From the top, down then back up. Curve right to halfway down.
Q	From the top – all around the o. Lift off. Short line diagonally down.
R	From the top, down, then back up. Curve right to halfway down. Diagonally down to the line.
R	From the top, down, then back up. Curve right to halfway down. Diagonally down to the line.
S	From the top, under the snake's chin, slide down and round its tail.
T	From the top, down and stop. Lift up and from the left, make a line across the top.
U	From the top, down and curve right, then straight up to the top.
V	From the top diagonally right to the bottom, then diagonally up to the top.
W	From the top diagonally right to the bottom, diagonally up to the top, diagonally down to the line, then diagonally up again.
X	From the top, diagonally right to the bottom. Space. Start at the top, then diagonally left to the bottom.
Y	From the top diagonally right to the middle. Space. From the top diagonally left to the middle. Straight down to the bottom.
Z	From the top go across, diagonally down to the left and across the bottom.

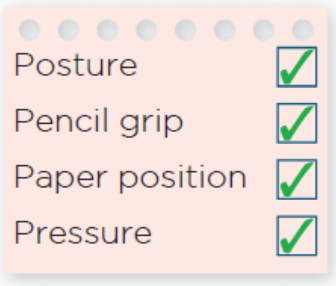
Reviewed by Leanne Bennett, October 2025
To be reviewed October 2026.

Sandwich Infant School

Handwriting Guidance for Reception Parents

Little Wandle Handwriting programme expectations for Reception
By the end of Reception, children should be able to hold their pencil with correct pencil grip, form lower-case letters beginning at the correct starting point and follow the correct direction. They should be beginning to form capital letters correctly.

1. Reinforce the 'Ready to write' checklist



Tripod Grip

Quadropod Grip

Posture –

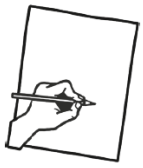
- *Feet* are flat on the floor or supported on a wide, stable raised surface.
- *Knees* form a 90 degrees angle, with about two fingers' space behind the knees to prevent pressure on the lower thighs.
- *Hips* are positioned at approximately 90 degrees, with the back fully supported by the chair.
- Seat position with the back against the chair maintaining a small gap (about the width of a fist) between the stomach and the table, so there is sufficient space to breathe comfortably.
- Table and chair height should allow the forearms to rest comfortably on the surface – without leaning forward (too low) or raising the shoulders (too high).
- Work surface must be clean, smooth and clear of clutter to promote proper hand and arm placement and allow arms to move freely to write.

Pencil grip –

The tripod grip is typically the easiest for children to learn. It can be modelled by showing how to pinch the pencil between the ball of the thumb and index finger – about a finger's width from the pencil tip – while resting the middle finger underneath for support, and the other fingers tucked into the hand. Using a small sticker to mark the correct grip position can be a helpful visual aid. The ideal location of the fingers is about 3cm from the pencil tip.

Paper position –

Paper angle helps support natural hand movement and improves handwriting posture. It is important to teach children the optimal paper position for writing. The paper
placement should not be directly in front of the child, but slightly offset as follows:

For right-handers: Position the paper slightly to the right. Tilt the paper so that the top left corner angles downward to the left.	**For left-handers**: Position the paper slightly to the left. Tilt the paper so that the top right corner angles downward to the right. 

Pressure –

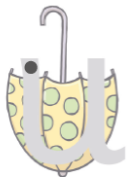
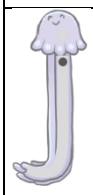
As children learn to write, the pressure they apply with a pencil often varies based on their developmental stage and the nature of the task. With practice and experience, most children naturally figure out the appropriate amount of pressure to use. Excessive pencil pressure can cause hand fatigue and slow writing, while too little pressure can make handwriting faint and hard to read.

2. Follow the guidance in letter formations, in order:

Curly letters

	Curl around the cat.		Around the astronaut's helmet and down into space.
	Round the duck's body, up to its head and down to its feet.		All around the octopus.
	Down the snake from head to tail.		Round the goat's face and curl under its chin.
	Round the queen's face, down her robe and a flick at the end.		Around the elephant's eye and curl down its trunk.
	Down the flamingo to its foot and across its wings.		

Long letters

	Down the lollipop stick.		Down the iguana and dot the leaf. *
	Down the tiger and across its neck.		Down and around the umbrella, and back to the ground.
	Down the jellyfish and dot its head. *		Down, around the yo-yo and curl round the string.

*Please note that the dot above 'i' and 'j' is placed after the letter has been completed.

Bouncy letters

	From the cloud to the ground and over the rainbow.		Down the bear's back, up and round its tummy.
	Down, up and over the net.		Down, up and over the mouse's ears.
	Down, up and over the helicopter.		Down the kite, up to the top corner and down to the bottom corner.
	Down the penguin's back, up and around its head.		

Zi-zag letters

	Across the top of the zebra's head, zig-zag down its neck and along.		Down to the bottom of the volcano and back up to the top.

	Down and up and down and up the waves		From the top, across the box to the bottom. From the top again across the box to the bottom.

If you have any questions, please speak to the class teacher. Practice sheets can be found on our school website https://www.sandwich-infant.kent.sch.uk/page?id=QS3MTUA5AUBMSLJDG6ZB.

Sandwich Infant School

Handwriting Guidance for Year One Parents

We teach our Year One children to start letters from the line, using a cursive style in order to prepare them for joining later in the year, or predominantly in Year Two.

The lettering below shows where letters should begin and end. All letters start on the line. The dot above 'i' and 'j' is placed after the letter has been completed.

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

Please support your child to use a correct pencil grip. If you have any questions, please speak to the class teacher.

Tripod Grip

Quadropod Grip

Sandwich Infant School

Handwriting Guidance for Year Two Parents

We teach Year Two children to join the handwriting letters they were taught in Year One. This can only be done once they are forming the letters correctly so please continue to encourage them to use school handwriting when writing at home. When the teacher decides that your child is ready to start joining, he or she will be invited to attend "Handwriting Club" which will take place after school. Please do not encourage your child to join letters before they are invited to the club as they are likely to adopt bad habits which are difficult to break.

All letters start on the line. The dot above i and j is placed after the letter has been completed.

Please support your child to use a correct pencil grip. If you have any questions, please speak to the class teacher.

These are the most popular pencil grips for children.

Tripod Grip

Quadropod Grip