



# SMARDEN PRIMARY SCHOOL

*'Enjoying, Learning and Achieving Together'*

## Handwriting Policy

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## Contents Page

	Page
Introduction <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Rationale</li><li>● Aims</li><li>● Benefits of a Cursive Style from Point of Entry</li><li>● The Smarden Handwriting Rules</li><li>● Handwriting and Reading</li></ul>	3-4
Pre-requisite Physical Skills for Handwriting	5
Setting up for Handwriting <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Sitting position for Handwriting</li><li>● Paper Position</li><li>● Pencil Grip</li><li>● Left-handed Children</li><li>● Materials and Tools</li><li>● Warm up</li></ul>	6-10
The Handwriting Programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Writing Patterns</li><li>● Introducing the Letters</li><li>● The Handwriting Programme Priorities</li></ul>	11-14
Children with Difficulties	15
Assessment	16
Appendix A - Read, Write, Inc. phrases for teaching letter formation	17
Appendix B - Handwriting observation sheet	18

*Handwriting is an imprint of the self on a page. – Dr. Rosemary Sassoon.*

### **Rationale**

Fluent, clear handwriting is the result of well-established movement habits. The process of writing should become an automatic skill so that the child's attention can be focused on the process of creative written expression. It is our belief that children should be introduced to cursive writing activities on school entry, thereby establishing correct formation from their first writing experiences.

Legible speed writing is a very valuable skill. Learning the skill of joining from the very beginning will ensure that the flow and speed are a natural progression.

### **Aims**

- To provide the children with a fluent, neat and legible handwriting style of which they can be proud.
- To develop the children's confidence in themselves as writers.
- For the children to derive pleasure from developing an aesthetically pleasing written style.
- To provide all children, regardless of their academic ability, with success in their handwriting.
- To use handwriting as an aid to spelling.
- To minimise typographical errors e.g. reversals.

### **Benefits of a Cursive Style**

Children develop:

- More intense skills of concentration
- Correct formation and do not have to 'unlearn' incorrect formation habits.
- Cursive writing from their very earliest writing experience and do not have to adapt their letters later on.
- More self-confidence as they see themselves writing as adults 'do'.
- More pleasure in their writing activities because of their new found confidence and success.
- Less confusion with b/d reversal

## **The Smarden Primary School Handwriting Rules**

1. Each lower case letter starts on the line with an entry stroke (from Year 1)
2. Letters which finish at the top join horizontally (from Reception)
3. Letters which finish at the bottom join diagonally (from Reception)
4. All down strokes are straight and parallel.
5. All rounded letters are closed.
6. The horizontal cross line of the letter 't' should be the same height as the lower case letters.
7. All similar letters should be the same height.
8. Each letter should be written in one flowing movement (from Year 2)
9. Each word should be written in one flowing movement.
10. Letters within a word should be evenly spaced.
11. The body of the letter sits on the line.
12. Capital letters do not join to lower case letters.

\*These techniques will be explicitly taught and modelled during all written activities.

The rules of cursive script help with:

- Less confusion for the child as every letter starts on the line with an entry stroke and leads out with an exit stroke.
- The flow of cursive writing as letters naturally flow into each other, it is impossible to write separate letters without joining.
- Spacing between words as the child develops whole word awareness.
- A child's visual memory.
- All children's writing skills regardless of academic ability.
- Developing skills of punctuation and grammar.

### **Handwriting and Reading**

In school the children are exposed to both cursive and print styles as well as commercial print. They develop an awareness for reading in print and writing in cursive side-by-side in their learning, such as prompts around rooms/school – teachers' lettering, labels on displays/teaching aids e.g. alphabet on tables and through teachers modelling of writing.

## Pre-requisite Physical Skills for Handwriting

Before children can learn how to write, there are a number of physical skills that have to be strengthened and developed. These are developed throughout the Early Years and Key Stage One through the following suggested activities.

### **Explores Sensory Play**

The child enjoys a wide range of sensory play with hands, not shying away from involvement in messy play and is able to tolerate many textures and sensations.

#### **To promote this:**

- The child should participate in a wide range of sensory play activities such as finger painting, water play, sand play, play dough, rice play, gloop, cooking, corn flour and water.
- If the child is reluctant, gently and firmly encourage small amounts of involvement until his tolerance increases.
- In extreme cases, start with a zip lock bag with finger paint or similar inside, so he experiences play without getting messy.

### **Fine finger grasp**

The child can pick up tiny objects between thumb and index finger easily, but may be faster and more accurate with dominant hand. When grasping a small object, the thumb and finger form a rounded shape.

#### **To promote this:**

Any activity which requires the child to grasp small objects will encourage the consolidation of these skills. If a student uses a raking movement, the small objects can be placed in small shallow dishes such as egg cups, or ice cube trays, so that he has to use his fingertips to pick them up. Activities include:

- Making collage pictures using pieces of wool or string
- Decorating iced biscuits with small decorations
- Posting small items into narrow necked bottles (food colouring bottles are ideal)
- Small peg boards
- Games which include small sorting activities, such as beads.

### **Controlled release**

The child can stack more than 10 small blocks using his fingertips.

#### **To promote this:**

- Posting activities such as shape sorters.
- Inset puzzles
- Stacking games
- Games such as 'Pick up sticks'

### **Proximal stability at shoulders, elbows and wrist joints**

The child can keep shoulders still and relaxed, while moving his arm and wrist to perform a range of actions.

#### **To promote this:**

Any activity which requires the child to bear weight with his arms e.g.

- The child rolls over a fit ball, supporting his weight with his arms and walking forward on his arms, as far as he can.
- Any drawing activity in the vertical plane
- Making patterns in the air with a ribbon twirler.

### **Bilateral use of hands with dominance emerging**

The child chooses one hand fairly consistently for activities such as feeding self and drawing. When drawing at a table, the child uses both hands, one to hold the pencil and one to stabilise the paper. The child will also cross the midline when needed.

#### **To promote this:**

Any activity which requires the child to use both hands e.g.

- Threading
- Cutting with scissors
- Sewing or lacing
- Screwing and unscrewing jars.

Any activity which requires the child to cross the midline, e.g

- Making a figure of 8 in the air with a ribbon twirler
- Copying body movements in 'Simon Says'-type games
- Clapping pattern games.

### **Uses wrist extension to support the hand when using a pencil**

The child's wrist is slightly extended to enable the fingers to grasp efficiently.

#### **To promote this:**

Encourage the use of vertical surfaces for pre-writing activities, e.g

- 'painting' an outside wall with a paintbrush and small bucket of water
- provide experience of experimenting with drawing materials attached to walls if easels are not available
- whiteboard markers or chalk on blackboards can be used if they can be fixed at accessible heights for students to reach.

### **Uses a storage grasp and in-hand manipulation skills**

The child is able to hold a small object in the palm with his little and ring fingers, while using the index and thumb to do something else. The child is able to move small objects from the palm of one hand to the finger tips with increasing ease.

#### **To promote this:**

- provide posting activities with small objects such as coins and tiddly winks, and small containers with slotted lids.
- The child holds the container in one hand, and posts the coins with the other hand, in increasing numbers, until he can post a handful into the jar one by one.

### **Uses a tripod grasp**

The child is able to use his grasp and maintain it while he forms some shapes.

#### **To promote this:**

- Use triangular pencils in early childhood classes.
- Encourage the student to hold a cotton ball in his palm with his little and ring fingers; this leaves only his thumb, index and middle fingers available to form a tripod grasp.

### **Fine motor skills needed for fluent handwriting**

The child is able to use the tiny muscles in the hand to produce the finger movements, which are required for highly dextrous activities. These are seen in isolated use when the fingers are spread apart and moved back together, and when the hand forms a pyramid, with fingers straight, on a flat surface.

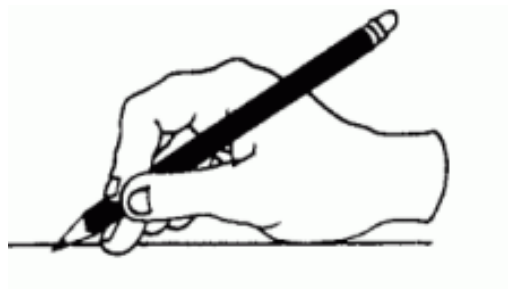
#### **To promote this:**

Finger exercises, e.g

- Making a duck's bill out of the thumb and fingers
- Making the hand into a caterpillar and crawling across the desk
- Making circles out of the thumb and each finger in turn
- Spreading fingers apart while flat on the desk and then slide them back together again.

### **Use of a dynamic tripod grasp**

The child is able to use this grasp and has adequate strength in finger and hands to use hands for prolonged periods without excessive fatigue. This takes years of handwriting practice and fine motor development to mature.



# Setting up for Writing

## Sitting Position for Handwriting


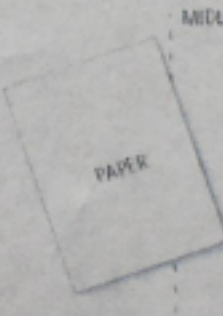
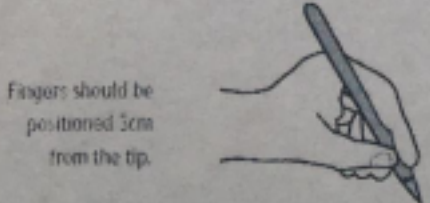

The handwriting movement is a combined finger, hand and arm movement. The arm should be supported lightly by the forearm and the little finger. This allows the writing hand to move smoothly across the page.

Avoid a fixed forearm. The wrist should be extended to allow the fingers to move efficiently. A flexed wrist, often used by left-handers, is very tiring. The fingers will flex slightly in moving to form the letter shapes. The hand will move smoothly ahead of the point of contact between instrument and paper. Writers should hold the writing instrument so that fingers are up to 3cm from the end.

Left-handers should hold the writing instrument further back from the point so that they can see what is being written.



Paper position is also important.

 <p>Left-Handed Paper Position</p>	 <p>Right-Handed Paper Position</p>
 <p>Left-Handed Pencil Position</p>	 <p>Right-Handed Pencil Position</p>



## Left-handed Children

Each left-handed child is identified and closely monitored by the class teacher to ensure success. The following guidelines are useful to help left-handed children.

Guidelines for left-handed children

Ensure that:

- The writing surface and chair are suitable for the child's own height.
- The child sits towards the left of their partner leaving plenty of space for writing on left side of his/her midline (this allowed maximum space for arm movement).
- The writing paper is to the left of the child's body midline.
- The paper is tilted up to 32 deg. in a clockwise direction.
- A writing tool which moves smoothly across the paper is used.
- The paper is supported with the right hand.
- The writing forearm is parallel with the paper edge as he child writes.
- The writing tool is held sufficiently far from its point to ensure that the child can see what he/she is writing.

## Materials and Tools

Emphasis throughout the school is placed on using good quality writing implements. In the earlier year groups, felt tip pens are used to assist with the flow of the writing. Children are encouraged to take care of the materials and tools.

Reception / Year 1	Felt tip pens (thick and fine), Triangular/Ordinary Pencils
Year 2/3	Pencils
Year 3/4	Handwriting Pens awarded, Pencils
Year 4/5/6	Handwriting Pens, Pencils

Note: When a child is using a pen with a lid (including felt tip pens), ensure the lid is either secured on top or on the table. The non-writing hand needs to be free to secure the paper.

## Warm-up

Each handwriting session should begin with a warm-up activity to prepare the hands and arms for writing.

<b>Finger Warm-Ups</b>	<b>Shoulder Warm-Ups</b>
<p><b>Put on imaginary writing gloves</b></p> <p>Pull on the 'gloves', applying firm pressure to the finger's and back and palm of each hand.</p> <p>This exercise provides tactile feedback and prepares the muscles for movement.</p> <p><b>Spider push-ups</b></p> <p>Place finger tips together and bend and straighten the fingers while pushing the finger tips against each other.</p> <p><b>Pencil Olympics</b></p> <p>Twirl the pencil like a baton, spinning it both horizontally and vertically.</p> <p><b>Inchworm</b></p> <p>Using a tripod grip, move the finger along the pencil from one end to the other. Do not use the other hand to hold or support the pencil.</p> <p><b>Piano</b></p> <p>Drum the fingers on the desk as if playing a piano. Ensure each finger-tip touches the desk.</p>	<p><b>Shoulder shrugs</b></p> <p>Shrug shoulders forwards, then backwards. <b>Crocodile snaps</b></p> <p>Start with one arm straight above the head and the other extended down one side of the body. Then snap the hands together meeting above the head, like a crocodile snapping its jaws. Repeat with reversal of arm positions.</p> <p><b>Air Traffic controller</b></p> <p>Start with the elbows bent and the hands in a fist in front of each shoulder. Then straighten the elbows, moving one arm out of the front of the body and the other arm to the side of the body. Alternate the movements.</p> <p><b>Butterflies</b></p> <p>Begin with arms extended straight in front of the body. Link the thumbs to make an 'x' and turn the palms to face out. Using the shoulders to move, make small circles with the hands, moving the hands to the left and right in unison (the fingers lie side by side and are not moving – the movement is coming from the shoulders).</p> <p><b>Chair push-ups</b></p> <p>Begin by sitting up straight in the chair with hands gripping the sides of the chair, thumbs facing forwards and fingers pressing against the underside of the chair. Using the strength in the arms, push the bottom up from the chair. The feet should come up from the floor.</p> <p><b>Desk push-ups</b></p> <p>Start with hands flat on the desk, with the tips of the thumbs and index fingers facing each other to create a triangle. Bend the elbows to bring the nose towards the triangle and then push up with the arms to straighten the elbows again.</p>

## The Handwriting Programme

The Handwriting programme begins in Reception where they are introduced to writing patterns before learning the cursive letters. These writing patterns are reinforced right through Reception and Key Stage One to support the development of legible handwriting.

### Writing Patterns (Reception)

The following writing patterns have been designed to help children:

- gain control of the implement and develop hand eye coordination and fine motor strength • learn directional sequences and movements (for example top to bottom, left to right, clockwise and anticlockwise rotation)
- develop speed and fluency.

In Reception, writing patterns are best practised on blank paper to avoid restricted movements. When practising linking patterns it is preferable to write about 3-5 shapes, then lift the writing implement. It is unrealistic to insist on long lines of continuously linked letters. Learners should be given the opportunity to relax the writing implement.

1.	<u>Circles and Spirals</u>	
2.	<u>Sun and Rays</u>	
3.	<u>Vertical</u>	
4.	<u>Horizontal/Diagonal</u>	
5.	<u>Zig Zag</u>	
6.	<u>Waves</u>	
7.	<u>Introduce lead in on a line</u>	
8.	<u>'C' waves</u>	
9.	<u>Jellies</u>	
10.	<u>Upside Down Jellies</u>	
11.	<u>Castles</u>	
12.	<u>Working on a Line (children drawing the lines)</u>	
13.	<u>Ringlets</u>	

## Introducing the Letters

The cursive letters are introduced to the children when they have become familiar with the different writing patterns; this is typically around Term 2 in Reception. The letters will be introduced in small groups based on the hand and finger movements used to form the letters. This is particularly helpful for learners with poor motor skills. All of the clockwise letters may not be introduced together but in two or more 'groups', interspersed with groups of letters that require a different basic movement.

1.	The anti-clockwise letters: <b>adgq ceos uy f</b>
2.	The 'stick' letters: <b>litj</b>
3.	The clockwise letters: <b>mnr hpb</b>
4.	The diagonal letters: <b>kvwz</b>
5.	The anti-clockwise and clockwise letters: <b>X</b>

These groupings are particularly useful for the revision of letter formation in later year groups. The similarities of movement should be pointed out, allowing children to develop a metacognitive awareness of letter formation that can support their practices of letter writing.

### Letter Formation

When children practice forming letters they develop a visual and motor memory of their important features. Looking at the letters and undertaking the movement of writing then helps learners see and feel how each letter is formed, fixing the letter in the learner's visual memory for the future identification and reproduction. The formation of letters involves starting and finishing places, direction of movement and number of strokes per letter. These are important aspects if linking, fluency and speed are to develop with ease. An oval body shape is recommended with a 2 o'clock starting position for all anti-clockwise ovals. The Read, Write, Inc. programme has a set way of teaching how to form the letters (Appendix A)

### Size

Letter shapes should be in proportion. Within letters, the heads, bodies and tails should be of equal proportions. This means letters will maintain relativity in both width and height to each other. Larger letter shapes help in the establishment and maintenance of combined finger-hand-arm movement in handwriting. Small letter shapes, less than 2mm, may be the result of a tense pen hold and will make the task of identifying incorrect letter shape formation more difficult.

## **Slope**

A slight slope to the right is the outcome of a well developed cursive technique for learners who are using a relaxed finger-hand-arm movement. Slope should be consistent for each individual. However, a variation of 5 to 15 degrees in the slope to the left or right of the vertical is acceptable between individuals.

## **Spacing**

Consistent spacing enhances the legibility and appearance of handwriting. Spacing within words, between words, between lines of writing, and the use of blank space on the page should be highlighted to learners.

## **Alignment**

The visual pattern of words becomes more consistent when hooks, links, descending letters and ascending letters are positioned accurately in relation to each other.

## **Joining (Year 2 up)**

The correct stroke sequence for each letter should be learned in order to develop a legible, consistent cursive style.

Important things to remember about linking

- There is no join from upper case letters to lower case letters.
- Small groups of letters should be practised by linking directly from the end of the letter to the beginning of the next.
- The point at which the exit links to the following letter should be no higher than the exit of 'o'.
- Do not dot the 'l' or cross the 't' until the end of the word.

## **The Handwriting Programme Priorities**

### **Reception and Key Stage One**

Through handwriting activities the children should develop and understand:

- the purpose of legible writing
- the ability to differentiate between drawing and writing
- an understanding that writing can represent thoughts, ideas, messages and speech
- the development of fine motor coordination
- a writing-hand preference
- awareness of the terms and concepts relating to written and printed material – spaces, words, letters, direction.
- Cursive letter formation
- Starting and finishing points, and direction and number of strokes
- Slope, size, shape, proportion, placement and spacing of letters
- The equal-size relationship of heads (ascenders), bodies and tails (descenders)
- Numeral formation
- Appropriate pencil grip
- Paper placement and hand, arm and sitting positions (relating to left-handers and right handers)
- A visual memory of letter shapes
- Movements that form the basis of later automatic processes in handwriting
- The ability to identify and correctly form lower-case and upper-case letters

### **Lower Key stage two**

Handwriting activities continue to be important through these years. The children need time to consolidate their own handwriting. They are continuing to:

- Understand the terms and concepts relating to written and printed material – spaces, words, letter, chunks of letters and directionality
- Identify and form correctly the 26 lower-case and upper- case letters
- Show consistent use of slope, size, spacing and letter alignment
- Develop automaticity with letter patterns that appear regularly in English
- Develop sufficient legibility a fluency to enable them to focus on the message, form and purpose of the writing
- Develop further an understanding of the purposes of legible writing

### **Upper key Stage Two**

Once children have well-developed standard form, they may be encouraged to personalise their handwriting. They may build on the basic style and adapt it to suit their writing purposes. Learners at this stage may be:

- Developing a personalised style which is legible, fluent, durable and aesthetically pleasing • Using efficient deviations from the model form, if appropriate
- Using embellishments and alternative styles for different purposes, if appropriate
- Experimenting with different writing instruments, surfaces and styles, and to note the effects of writing with speed
- Practising note-taking at speed with telephone messages, recorded interviews, broadcasts and short lectures
- Developing and/or practising speed loops.

## Children with Difficulties

Some children may experience difficulties with handwriting. Before deciding upon a course of intervention to support the child, the class teacher and Senco (if appropriate) should diagnose their difficulty. The problem may be any one or combination of the following five areas.

<p><b>Vision</b> – In order to write, you need the ability to sustain clear binocular vision at near point.</p>	
<p><b>Postural Control</b></p> <p>In order to write, you need the ability to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Hold your body up against gravity</li> <li>● Make co-ordinated trunk, shoulder, forearm and wrist movements</li> <li>● Sit in a chair</li> <li>● Make subtle adjustments to these movements</li> <li>● Plan the motor patterns you make with your whole body.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Visual skills</b></p> <p>In order to write, you need the ability to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Track visually from top to bottom, left to right, and diagonally</li> <li>● Remember the form and shape of different objects</li> <li>● Recognise similarities between shapes</li> <li>● Recognise differences between shapes</li> <li>● Pick out important information from a busy background</li> <li>● Remember sequences of visual information • Look at and focus on the different aspects of the work.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Fine Motor Skills</b></p> <p>In order to write, you need the ability to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Use one hand as a leader, and the other to support the page.</li> <li>● Hold a pencil in a tripod grasp.</li> <li>● Plan how big the letter will be, and where to start it in relation to other letters and lines on the page</li> <li>● Move fingers while keeping the wrist diagonal and hand and arm stable.</li> <li>● Manipulate objects in your hand without using the other hand to help.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Visual motor skills</b></p> <p>Visual motor skills are the ability to look at something, interpret it and respond with a motor action. This is an essential skill for learning how to form letters, copy letters and interpret what you have written.</p> <p>In order to write, you need the ability to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Copy a series of geometric shapes (including prewriting shapes and their combinations) in order to go on to write letters</li> <li>● Start drawing in the correct place for individual letters</li> <li>● Stop drawing in the correct place for individual letters</li> <li>● Change direction when drawing</li> <li>● Control the pencil to form line and shape combinations automatically</li> <li>● Starting and stopping drawing lines in the right place</li> <li>● Combining lines in the correct sequence to form a letter</li> <li>● Drawing lines in the correct size</li> <li>● Changing direction</li> </ul>

## **Assessment**

Continuous formative assessment is made during handwriting lessons by the Class Teacher and Teaching Assistants. Writing assessments take place in each year group in Term 2, 4 and 6. These will be used to monitor progress by the Literacy Subject Co-ordinator, Head Teacher, Deputy Head Teacher and teachers as part of school moderation to agree levels.

If a child is having difficulty the Handwriting Observation Sheet (Appendix B) can be used to help understand their problem.



**SET 1**

Sound	Rhyme
<b>m</b>	Down Maisie then over the two mountains. Maisie, mountain, mountain.
<b>a</b>	Round the apple, down the leaf.
<b>s</b>	Slide around the snake
<b>d</b>	Round the dinosaur's back, up his neck and down to his feet.
<b>t</b>	Down the tower, across the tower.
<b>i</b>	Down the insects body, dot for the head.
<b>n</b>	Down Nobby and over the net.
<b>p</b>	Down the plait, up and over the pirates face.
<b>g</b>	Round the girls face, down her hair and give her a curl.
<b>o</b>	All around the orange.
<b>c</b>	Curl around the caterpillar.
<b>k</b>	Down the kangaroo's body, tail and leg.
<b>u</b>	Down and under the umbrella, up to the top and down to the puddle.
<b>b</b>	Down the laces, over the toe and touch the heel.
<b>f</b>	Down the stem and draw the leaves.
<b>e</b>	Slice into the egg, go over the top, then under the egg.
<b>l</b>	Down the long leg.
<b>h</b>	Down the horse's head to the hooves and over his back.
<b>sh</b>	Slither down the snake, then down the horse's head to the hooves and over his back.

<b>r</b>	Down the robot's back, then up and curl.
<b>j</b>	Down his body, curl and dot.
<b>v</b>	Down a wing, up a wing.
<b>y</b>	Down a horn, up a horn and under the yak's head.
<b>w</b>	Down, up, down, up the worm.
<b>th</b>	Down the tower, across the tower, then down the horse's head to the hooves and over his back
<b>z</b>	Zig-zag-zig, down the zip.
<b>ch</b>	Curl around the caterpillar, then down the horse's head to the hooves and over his back.
<b>qu</b>	Round the queen's head, up to her crown, down her hair and curl.
<b>x</b>	Cross down the arm and leg and cross the other way.

Appendix B

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

# Handwriting Policy

Date Policy approved and adopted:	
Date Due for review:	