



Handwriting (Transcription)

Handwriting develops as children develop increased control over their bodies and a desire to communicate through mark making.

Daily Practice

At St. Michael's, handwriting is taught discretely and in EYFS and Year 1 it is linked to our teaching of phonics (SoundStart! Phonics), so that we reinforce the movement of the letters whilst simultaneously working on sounds. However, the teaching of transcription occurs at other times as well, allowing opportunities to practise fluency, accuracy and speed without the distraction of having to compose text or think about spelling. At St. Michael's, we practice transcription daily for a duration of 5 minutes which leads to automaticity and developed fluency.



Four sets of handwriting practice lines. Each set consists of a solid top line, a dashed middle line, and a solid bottom line.


Letter Patterns to Teach

When you introduce patterns for writing to children, it is useful to focus on features which keep recurring in letter formation, for example:

- include patterns that move across the body, from left to right
- use pattern-making for different purposes.
- focus on patterns which build on the three basic letter shapes:

l, for example the long ladder c, for example the curly caterpillar r, for example the one-armed robot.

Long ladder letters  l i u t y

Curly caterpillar letters  c a d g q o e s f

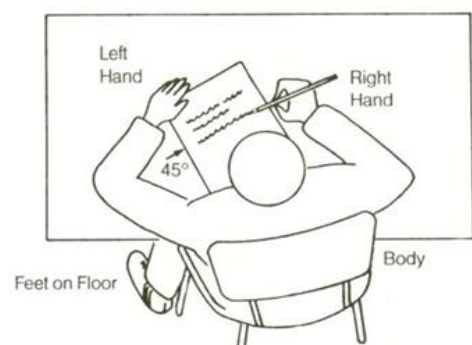
One-armed robot letters  r n m h b k p

Zig zag letters  z x v w y k

Ensuring Good Posture

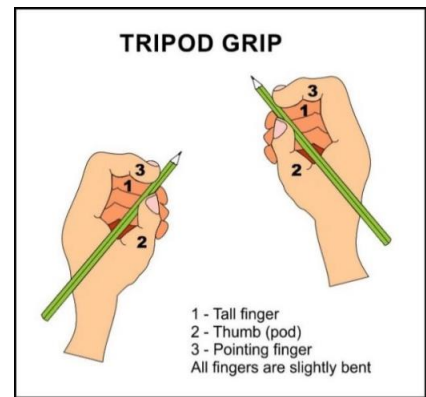
Developing a good posture is as important as developing a good pencil grip. Over the years children spend a great deal of time writing, and sitting in an awkward position can cause headaches, fatigue and pain in the shoulder, arm or hand. It can also slow down a child's writing. Children will be able to sustain writing for longer if they become used to sitting comfortably.

- Ensure that they have a good pencil grip – use commercial pencil grips only if other methods have failed.
- Check that tables are large enough for the children not to be jostling each other's arms.
- Check that the height of tables and chairs allows children to sit comfortably, with their feet flat on the floor. Their legs should be free and not come into contact with the underside of the desk top. They should be able to sit up at the table without having to lean over it or stretch to reach it.
- The lighting should be good, so that the children can see what they have written.
- Children should use their non-writing hand to steady the paper and bear some body-weight.
- The paper should be tilted slightly.
- Provide a slanting board for those who need it (a partially filled A4 file is a useful shape).



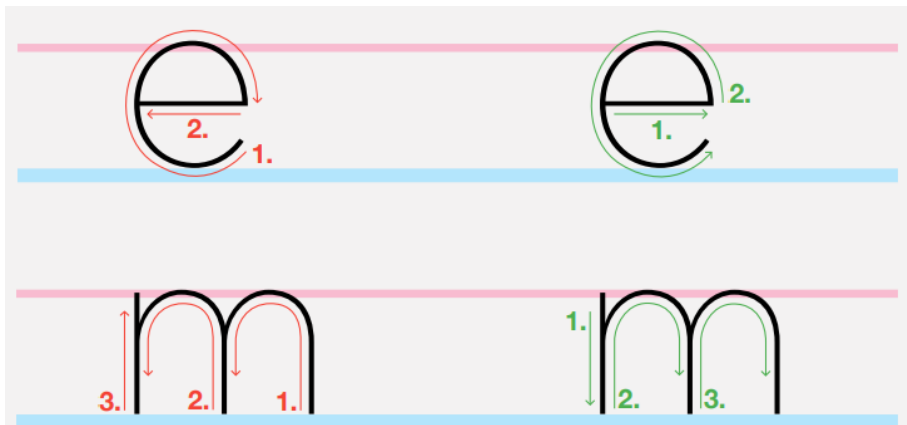
Handwriting Difficulties and Children with SEND

Handwriting is a complex activity that involves the co-ordination of motor and visual-motor skills.³⁷ Up to 30% of children may experience handwriting difficulties, so it is important to carefully monitor and plan appropriate support and intervention. Such children are likely to benefit from individualised instruction, but it is important to identify the specific issue before planning further support. It is also challenging for children to unlearn poor habits, so dealing with handwriting issues early—for example, by ensuring appropriate grip—is likely to be more effective than later intervention.



The requirement to join at 4 to 5 years places a heavy burden on children who may already be struggling to establish basic handwriting skills, especially some of the “summer born” and those with developmental coordination difficulties. Such children may want to be doing the same as their peers and will create their own joined script.

The Product and The Process



It is important to monitor both the product and process of children’s handwriting. For the letters above, the product is good in both cases, but the inefficient process of forming the letters on the left will hinder the development of a fluent handwriting style and may even cause discomfort and eventually lead to disinterest in writing altogether.

Continuous Cursive Lower Case Letter Formation

Our style of handwriting taught at St. Michael’s is a continuous cursive script,



Upper Case Letter Formation

A B C D E F G H I

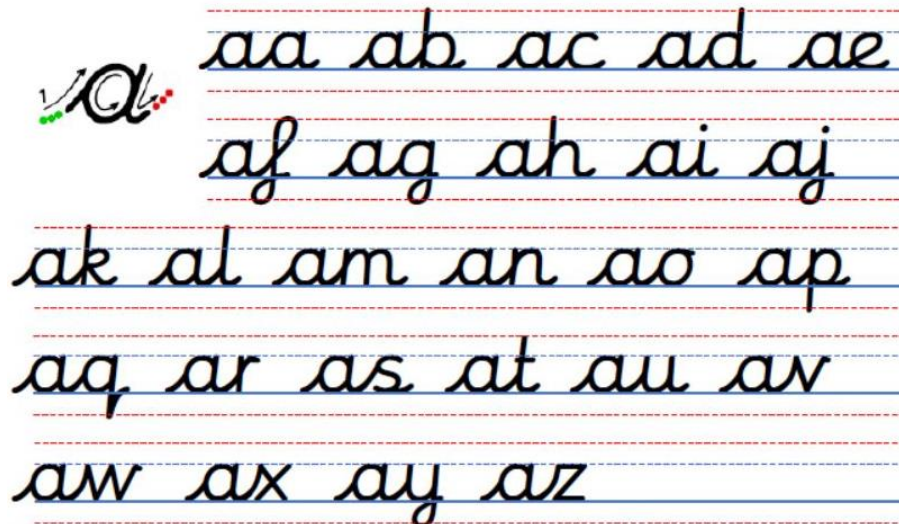
J K L M N O P Q R

S T U V W X Y Z

Beginning to Join

Once children are secure in the movements of each letter, they should begin to join as soon as possible. Words such as: at, am, it, in, up make good starting points. Some rhymes work well: pin, win, tin, bin, din, etc. Rhymes containing the vowels a and o are harder to join into from the base because the pencil has to travel up and round to the starting point of the letter, e.g. cat, dog, and should be avoided at the beginning. If you introduce each digraph as one joined unit, that reinforces phonics and handwriting, using multi-sensory channels to reinforce both. As soon as possible, you can start encouraging the use of joined up writing for practising some of the high frequency words too, to help to reinforce the fact that these words need to be remembered as wholes, e.g. the, little, was. Most letters join with diagonal lines, e.g. man. When children start joining into n and m, there is a tendency to go into the base of the letter rather than using a diagonal join to the top of the letter. Draw children's attention to the letters which join from the top: o, v, w. The actual shape of the letter e depends upon whether the preceding letter finishes at the top of the x height or the bottom. For instance, when e follows d, it will simply be a loop; when it follows f, it is more likely to have the traditional e shape. Joining all letters has been shown to inhibit fluency. Many styles do not join after letters that finish to the left (s, b, j, g, y), however this is not the case with a continuous cursive script.

Cursive Joins



Statutory requirements:

There are no requirements to teach fully cursive writing either in the EYFS or in the National Curriculum. Indeed, the National Curriculum for English places emphasis on the acquisition of letter

shape, space and size before joins are taught and delivers clear messages that some letters are best left un-joined.

For Year 2 pupils (6–7 years), the requirements include the following:

Year 2 Statutory guidance

In writing, pupils should be able to form individual letters correctly, so establishing good handwriting habits from the beginning.

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.

Year 2 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 securely form letters with the correct orientation.

And for Years 3–4 (ages 7–9)

Lower Key Stage 2 Programme of Study (Statutory requirements)

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.

The National Curriculum reflects the position that there is no evidence supporting the notion that schemes which use “lead in” strokes and fully cursive writing are in any way superior to those in which letters start at the top and join with an exit stroke. Although “lead in strokes” are taught widely in other European countries, there is an important age difference for when formal writing is introduced, i.e. at around 7 years of age, as opposed to 4–5 years in England.