



The Leys Primary & Nursery School
Learning TodayLeading Tomorrow

Handwriting and Presentation Policy

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Handwriting and Presentation Policy

Aims

At The Leys, we believe that neat, well-formed handwriting and high standards of presentation help to raise academic standards. When children take pride in their work, it promotes a sense of ownership and achievement.

As a school, we teach a joined handwriting style based on a cursive approach. While we do not use entry (lead-in) strokes at the beginning of words, pupils are taught to join letters within words where appropriate. This approach promotes a legible, fluent, and developmentally appropriate handwriting style, in line with National Curriculum expectations.

To support this, we follow The Leys' Letters in EYFS and Year 1, which takes a structured, step-by-step approach. The programme:

- Teaches correct pencil grip and posture.
- Builds strong fine motor skills for writing.
- Introduces pattern-making and name writing.
- Teaches correct formation of upper and lower-case letters.
- Progresses children from writing individual letters to joined writing and complete sentences.
- Supports pupils to eventually write a full A4 page of legible handwriting in under 10 minutes.

EYFS Approach

In the Early Years, handwriting begins with developing fine motor control through planned and purposeful activities tailored to each child's needs. These activities are supported by EYFS staff and designed to build strength, coordination, and control in preparation for writing.

Examples of fine motor activities include:

- Play dough: Pinching and squeezing to strengthen fingers (e.g. making long snakes).

- Threading: Beads, pasta, or straws to develop hand-eye coordination.
- Tweezers and pipettes: Picking up small objects to refine pincer grip (e.g. how many peas can you put in a pot?).

Additional activities we use to develop control and coordination:

- Finger rhymes: Stretching and curling fingers in rhythm.
- Water play: Using spray bottles and toys to build grip strength.
- Craft: Using glue sticks, paintbrushes, and sequins for creative fine motor control.
- Cake icing: Using dispensers to squeeze icing for fun and practical hand strength.
- Physical play: Activities such as climbing and swinging to support gross motor skills needed for posture and stability in writing.

Letter Formation in Reception:

In Reception, children are taught correct letter formation as part of their daily phonics lessons, supported by rhymes and flashcards. They practise letter formation through a range of activities, including:

- Phonics lessons
- Busy fingers sessions
- Writing in books and at tables with adult support (see Appendix 1)

The focus is on developing good habits early to support a smooth transition into cursive writing in Year 1.

The Role of Parents and Carers

Parents and carers play a vital role in supporting their child's handwriting development from an early stage. It is important that they are aware of the correct strategies and models to reinforce learning at home.

Foundation Stage teachers are responsible for communicating the school's handwriting approach to parents and carers. This includes:

- Encouraging the use of a capital letter only at the start of a child's name.
- Promoting activities such as pattern drawing and joining-up games that support left-to-right directionality and early writing movements.
- Modelling and reinforcing good posture, pencil grip, and letter formation at home.

In addition, Foundation Stage staff, in partnership with the English Subject Leader, are expected to work closely with local preschool settings and early years providers. This collaboration helps to promote consistency in early handwriting practice and encourages good habits before children enter school.

Expectations

Our handwriting policy is firmly rooted in the expectations set out in the National Curriculum for England (2014).

Key Stage 1 (Years 1-2)

Year 1:

- 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' (e.g. letters that are formed in similar ways).
- Leave spaces between words.

Year 2:

- Form lower-case letters of the correct size relative to one another.
- Start using some diagonal and horizontal strokes needed to join letters.
- 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.

By the end of KS1, pupils should be able to write legibly and begin to develop joined handwriting.

Key Stage 2 (Years 3-6)

Years 3-4 (Lower KS2):

- Use the diagonal and horizontal strokes needed to join some letters.
- Understand which letters, when adjacent to one another, are best left unjoined.
- Increase the legibility, consistency and quality of their handwriting (e.g., consistent sizing and spacing).

Years 5-6 (Upper KS2):

- Write legibly, fluently and with increasing speed by:
 - Choosing which shape of a letter to use when given choices.
 - Deciding whether or not to join a specific letter.

- Choosing the writing implement that is best suited for a task (e.g., pen or pencil).

By the end of KS2, pupils should have developed a fluent, legible and, where appropriate, joined handwriting style.

How a pencil should be held correctly:



Pupils are recognised and rewarded for completing each criteria.

(Appendix 3; Handwriting and Presentations Certificates)

(Appendix 4; for further Handwriting analysis.

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Teachers should be aware that children with Dyspraxia, Autistic Spectrum Disorders, Cerebral Palsy, Down Syndrome and any other motor functioning impairment may have ongoing difficulty with handwriting due to the nature of their special need and therefore may need to be supported with alternative means of recording. Pencil grips and writing slopes are also available for children who need it.

Activities to develop and exercise 'gross motor skills' can be promoted as these will assist fine motor skills, as will plenty of pre-writing activities to loosen up the wrist and upper arm.

The Learning Environment

A dedicated writing area is established in all classrooms at Foundation Stage. Writing areas/boxes are equipped with a range of writing implements and materials. In KS1 and 2 suitable materials are available for pupils to work at their own tables. Throughout all Key stages teachers display both handwritten and word processed work to give a high profile to developing a neat, legible cursive style.

All pupils from Nursery to Year 2 are equipped with BiC thick triangular pencils and coloured pencils, to master the correct pencil grip. Pupils from Year 3 to Year 6 are also supplied with BiC mechanical pencils with an easy grip guide. Fountain pens are awarded to pupils once they have received a pencil licence. (See Appendix 3 for Steps to success for Handwriting)

EYFS and Key Stage 1

Pupils listen to Pencil Grip Song and have adult input while writing to ensure that they are holding a pencil effectively, alongside their busy finger activities to help strengthen their grip.

Key Stage 2

Pupils in KS2 listen to the Pencil Grip Song and exercise to the Jungle Workout to develop and strengthen their motor skills, muscles and pencil grip.

Left-handed pupils

All teachers are aware of the specific needs of left-handed pupils and make appropriate provision:

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

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

Assessment and recording

Teachers assess handwriting on a regular basis using the Hertfordshire assessment criteria to determine future targets for improvement. Throughout the year the SLT and English Coordinator will monitor handwriting as well as having discussions with the children about their work during class visits and will provide positive and constructive feedback accordingly.

Presentation guidance

It is essential that all children should have pride in their work and that it is set out well.

From Year 3 pupils must be encouraged to use a neat, joined style in all written work, except in Maths.

- o All work must begin with the short date in the following format:
10.9.23.
- o The date should be written on the top line with an appropriate title.
This should be underlined in Key stage 2.
- o Key Stage 1 underlined- as appropriate for ability.
- o Underlining should be completed with a ruler.
- o Children should write from the margin to the edge of the page.
- o Work should be ruled off at the start of the following lesson, leaving the teacher room to comment on the work. The teacher's comments will indicate whether a correction needs to be addressed.
- o At Key Stage 1 children will generally begin new work on a new page as appropriate for ability.

- o At Key stage 2 children will rule off after the last piece of work ready to begin new work. Work should be ruled off at the start of the following lesson, leaving the teacher room to comment on the work.
- o The teacher's comments will indicate whether a correction needs to be addressed.
- o Children will be encouraged to draw a neat line through any mistakes.
- o Criteria for presentation of work will be discussed prior to commencement of work.

- o Pictures should be coloured in pencil crayons or plastic crayons. Felt pens should not be used in exercise books.
- o When squared paper is used for Maths 1 digit is written in each box and a line is left between each sum.
- o In Maths an eraser can be used at the teacher's discretion.

Grapheme and mnemonic	Formation phrase
 S	Slide down the snake.
 a	Around the helmet, and down into space.
 t	Down the tiger, draw the stripe.
 p	Down the penguin, up and around his head.
 i	Down the body, then a dot at the top.
 n	Down the stick, back up, over the net.

 	Down the mouse, up and over the ears.
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Grapheme and mnemonic	Formation phrase
 	Round the body, up to its head and down to its feet.
 	Round the face, up to his horn: down under his chin
 	All around the octopus.
 	Curl around the cat.
 	Down the kite, up, around the top, and down to the corner.

	c Curl round the sock. k Down the sock, up and around, down to the corner.
	Around the head and down its trunk.

Grapheme and mnemonic	Formation phrase
	Down and under the umbrella, up and back down to the bottom.
	Down from the cloud, back up and over the rainbow.
	Down from the top, up and over the helicopter.
	Down the bear's back, up and round his belly.

 	Down the flamingo, then draw its wings.
 	Down the long lollipop.
 	Down the jellyfish. Dot on its head.
 	Down to the bottom, up to the top.
 	Down the wave, up the wave, down the wave, then up the wave.
 	Top of the box, across to the bottom and the same on the other side.

 	Down and round the yo-yo, then down the long string.
 	Zip across, zag down and zip across the zebra.
 	Round the queen's face, to her crown, down her robe and draw the flick.
 	Thumbs up, we're feeling good.
 	Shells on the shore.
 	Chew the cherries.

ng ng

Ring on my finger.

The Assessment Framework at the End of Key Stage 1 - Writing -

Working towards the expected standard:

- forming lower-case letters in correct direction, starting and finishing in the right place
- forming lower-case letters of the correct size relative to one another in some of the writing

At the expected standard:

- using the diagonal and horizontal strokes needed to join letters in some of their writing
- writing capital letters and digits of the correct size, orientation and relationship to one another and to lower case letters

Working at greater depth:

- using the diagonal and horizontal strokes needed to join letters in most of their writing

The Assessment Framework at the End of Key Stage 2 - Writing - Requires:

Working towards the expected standard:

- producing legible, joined handwriting

Working at Greater Depth:

- maintaining legibility, fluency and speed in handwriting through choosing whether or not to join specific letters

Handwriting Certificates - Steps to Success

EYFS to Year 2 - Emerging Stage

- I can sit on my chair correctly
- I can write on the line.
- I can write with correct spaces between my words.
- I can write my letter and numbers in the correct size.
- I can write lower-case letters with the correct direction.
- I can write lower-case letters with starting and finishing points in the right place.
- I can write capital letters.
- I can write digits 0-9.
- I am starting to join up my letters.

Key Stage 2- Developing Stage

- I can join up my letters.
- I can join my letters with starting and finishing points in the right place.
- I can join up my letters in a neat and legible way.

Pen Licence - Secure Stage

- I can produce neat and legible joined up writing.
- I can join and write speedily.

As a rule of thumb:

If by the age of five, a child is:

- o struggling to write their own name
- o having difficulty shaping their letters correctly
- o not holding the pencil correctly
- o flipping from hand to hand with their pencil (unable to decide which hand to use when writing/colouring in/making simple marks)
- o struggling to make clear, strong continuous lines/patterns

If by the age of seven:

- o their hands ache when they write a few lines
- o they are unable to join up their letters
- o can't write more than a paragraph after five minutes
- o they do not know the correct way to create the letters (entry and exit strokes) eg. The letter "a" looks like an "o" with a line shooting out of it and other strange letter formations that don't "look right"
- o they confuse letters, for example, a "d" is written the "wrong way round" and becomes a "b"
- o the sizings of their letters are not clear (some letters are much larger than other letters even though they should all be of a similar size)
- o some letters are written above the line when they should go over the line eg. Common letters that are written above the line like "y", "g", "j" and "q" and they seem to "rise" above all the other letters
- o their letters and words are not clear and it is difficult to read their handwriting
- o they do not enjoy handwriting at all and have created their own coping/deflection strategies to do anything else but their written work