

Penpals for Handwriting

Parent Support

Nursery and Reception



Messages for Parents PENPALS for Handwriting

F1/2

At Foundation stage, your child will be focusing on developing the necessary fine and gross motor skills in readiness for handwriting. They will practise a range of patterns including dots, waves and zig zags to prepare them for letter formation.

Preparation for handwriting involves developing four key areas:

- 1. Gross motor control:**
The control and co-ordination of the big movements the body can make.
- 2. Fine motor control:**
Being able to fine-tune the movements of the arm, hand and fingers.
- 3. Visual control:**
Making sure hand and eye movements are working well together.
- 4. Spatial control:**
Helping children to be able to move themselves confidently in a space with an awareness of direction (left/right) and plane (horizontal/vertical) and eventually helping them to transfer that sense of space on to paper.

As part of developing confidence in these key areas children begin to explore patterns and basic letter shapes. We experiment with the following six basic patterns and their variations as they provide excellent preparation for more formal work on letter formation:

- Investigating dots.
- Investigating straight lines and crosses.
- Investigating circles.
- Investigating curves, loops and waves.
- Investigating joined straight lines and angled patterns.
- Investigating eights and spirals.

Here are some things you can do at home to develop these key areas:

- Play with a ball, e.g. kick, catch, throw and bounce.
- Play with hoops, frisbees and slits (the upside-down flowerpot kind).
- Encourage play on climbing frames, slides and swings in the park.
- Play with large scale building kits.
- Enjoy finger rhymes.
- Encourage your child to make things and model things (e.g. cutting, sticking, moulding, cooking, sewing and threading) using a range of materials (e.g. dough, Plasticine®, wood).
- Encourage your child to experiment with a range of tools and equipment (e.g. pens, pencils, crayons, felt tips, scissors, hole punches and tweezers).
- Share jigsaw puzzles and board games.
- Provide opportunities for painting, colouring and 'making marks' on different sizes of paper.
- Enjoy household tasks together (e.g. mixing ingredients with implements or hands, using a dustpan and brush, scooping compost into plant pots and digging in the garden).



Year One



Messages for Parents PENPALS for Handwriting

1

During this year, correct letter formation should become an automatic habit. Don't encourage your child to write too small or too quickly. Trying to enforce small handwriting too soon can lead to a very cramped style, which is then difficult to make fluent. At the very end of this year, children will begin to join some pairs of letters within a word.

As a reminder, correct letter formation for lower-case letters is as follows. The arrows show the direction of your child's pencil:

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

Capital letters are formed as follows:

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N
P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

Letter families

Your child will still be thinking about the four letter families (similar letter shapes grouped together to help children form letters consistently).

Long-legged giraffe *litujy ll LITUJY*

One-armed robot *r b n h m k p RBNHMKP*

Curly caterpillar *c a d o s g q e f ffss CADOSGQEF*

Zig-zag monster *z v w x zz ZVWX*

Letter combinations *ck qu ai igh oo ee oa ow ch wh*

Joins

These four joins are introduced at the end of the year, so if your child is keen to start joining, then these are a good place to start.

Diagonal join to ascender *ch* Diagonal join, no ascender *ai*

Horizontal join to ascender *wh* Horizontal join, no ascender *ow*



Year Two



Messages for Parents PENPALS for Handwriting

2

During this school year, your child will learn all of the basic handwriting joins. However, if your child isn't confident forming all their letters yet, they should concentrate on this before they worry about joining. Your child will gradually be introduced to more pairs of letters that are joined in the same way. At first, they are only asked to copy joins that they have seen before, but gradually they are encouraged to explore and experiment joining more and more letters with the joins they know. This should be encouraged if they begin to naturally explore - there's no point in holding them back. For example, the movement for the join *wh* (i.e. horizontal join to ascender) is exactly the same as for joining *sh*, *st*, *ot*, *ob* and so on - so your child may naturally begin to discover this.

Once a join has been introduced between pairs of letters (e.g. *wh*), your child will always be expected to copy the model showing those joined letter pairs whenever they write those letters. In this way, they will gradually be introduced to the idea of joining more than one pair of letters within a word.

In the final term of Year 2, your child will be introduced to other pairs of letters that are joined using the same joining strokes, if they have not already begun to identify and use them.

In this year your child may well sit a test or check. In England the SATS test for Y2 occurs in the Summer Term and handwriting is part of the English test. Although the formal English papers don't include a writing test, children's writing will be assessed by their teacher. Pupils will be asked to write a short piece and their teacher will look at their handwriting as part of this. They need to show legible writing including:

- Forming lower-case letters correctly, using some of the diagonal and horizontal strokes needed to join letters.
- Writing capital letters of the correct size and relationship to lower-case letters.
- Spacing their words correctly.
- To be awarded 'working towards' or 'working at expected' standards, pupils do not need to demonstrate joined up handwriting.
- To be awarded 'working at greater depth' at the end of key stage 1, pupils must demonstrate joined up handwriting, using the diagonal and horizontal strokes needed to join letters in most of their writing.

Join	Letters in this box	To letters in this box	Joins taught
Diagonal join to ascender	a c e i l t	h k l t	ch, th, ck, al, el, at, il, ill, ok, ot, ob, ol
Diagonal join, no ascender	a c d e i k l n t u	e i n r y	ai, ay, ir, er, ie, ue, ee, le, ar, ur, in, ui, ey, aw, an, ip
		a c d g s (anticlockwise letters)	ea, ig, dg, ng, ed, cc, eg, ic, ad, ug, dd, ag, as, es, os, ns, ds, is, ls, ts, ks
Horizontal join, no ascender	o v w	e i n p r u v w y	ow, ou, oe, ve, or, oi, oy, om, op, ov
		a c d g o s (anticlockwise letters)	oo, oa, wa, wo, oc, og, od, va, vo
Horizontal join, to ascender	o w	h	wh, oh

Break letters

These letters do not join: *g j x y z*

We do not join from these letters yet: *b f p q s r*