



# **Handwriting Policy**

**Vision Academy Learning Trust**

**Date: September 2022**

## Document Control

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May 2022	R Thompson	Handwriting Policy Written	C Briston	VALT Primary teachers	July 2023



# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Why do we promote handwriting as a school?

Here at The Links Primary School, we are very proud of our pupils' handwriting and we take particular care in developing a cursive/joined-up handwriting style. We use *Letter-Join* as the basis of our handwriting policy, a scheme which covers all the requirements of the 2014 National Curriculum.

Handwriting is a basic skill that influences the quality of work throughout the curriculum. At the end of Key Stage 2, all pupils should have the ability to produce fluent, legible and speedy joined-up handwriting, and they should understand the different forms of handwriting used for different purposes. Ultimately, our pupils should value the process of writing by hand as a skill that will serve them well in their studies and lives beyond The Links Primary School.

- Studies show that that handwriting improves memory and facilitates better retention of learning.
- Handwriting can help us to slow down and fully engage with our thoughts.
- Handwritten pieces, notes and communications are far more personal and intimate than typed alternatives.
- The process of physically interacting with each letter when producing them by hand helps to imprint letters and letter sounds for easier recall when reading.
- Being able to write effortlessly enables the mind to focus more fully on a topic.
- Many authors report that drafting and edited by hand engages creative faculties far more than on a computer document.

## 1.2 Statutory Requirement

The National Curriculum makes it clear that there are two dimensions to writing:

1. Transcription (spelling and handwriting)
2. Composition (articulating ideas and structuring them in speech and writing)

Handwriting is therefore promoted as a functional tool in the writing process that allows children to record ideas fluently and effectively.

*“The pupil can maintain legibility in joined handwriting when writing at speed.”*

*- End-of-KS2 Teacher Assessment Framework: Criteria for children working at the expected standard by the end of primary school.*

The National Curriculum places high importance on handwriting and outlines statutory outcomes for handwriting for each year. It does not, however, specify how it should be taught. As a school, we have chosen to follow the *Letter-Join* scheme as a consistent, progressive and effective approach across all year groups.

# 2. Aims

We aim for our pupils to develop a neat, legible and speedy handwriting style using continuous cursive letters that leads to the formation of letters and words automatically in independent writing.

By the end of Year 6, pupils will understand the importance of neat presentation and the need for different letterforms (cursive, printed or capital letters) to help communicate meaning clearly.

## 3. Method

### 3.1 Overview

Formal handwriting instruction will be carried out regularly and systematically to ensure that key stage targets are met. This instruction follows the *Letter-Join* scheme from Nursery up to Year 6. Children will work through its seven modules, beginning with pattern formations to develop motor skills and ending with the ability to write fluently and rapidly in a cursive style. Throughout these lessons, children are encouraged to engage in gross and fine motor 'warm up' tasks to prepare them for the activities and develop key strengths and muscle groups.

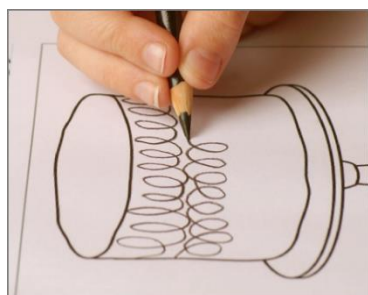
Teachers should be teaching no less than 60 minutes of handwriting lessons weekly, broken into sessions (x2 30 mins) and must be mindful that they must cover the full module within the academic year. Handwriting sessions should be evident in all timetables and all adults within a year group should be utilised in these sessions to support children.

As a school, we also recognise that handwriting is a cross-curricular skill. As such, children will be expected to implement their handwriting learning during all lessons and in all subjects. Teachers will have a high expectation with regard to this implementation.

#### 3.1a EYFS (Nursery and Reception)

For our youngest pupils, teaching will focus on the following areas:

- Introducing movements to enhance gross motor skills such as air-writing, pattern making and dancing (**Nursery & Reception**)
- Exercises to develop fine motor skills such as making marks (**Nursery & Reception**)
- Letter learning to familiarise children with letter shapes, formation and vocabulary (**Reception only**)



In Nursery, children will be encouraged to sit in the correct position and hold a pencil correctly to allow fluid movement of the nib. They will improve their fine and gross motor skills by enjoying drawing precursive patterns in a variety of writing materials such as modelling clay, air writing, sand trays, felt pens, crayons, pencils, IWB, iPads/tablets. As they develop gross and fine motor skills, children will focus on forming circles, spirals, lines, diagonals, jellies and zig-zags. They will also be taught to understand the language needed to describe pencil movements in preparation for letter formation. When following the EYFS programme of study, Nursery teachers

will stop before introducing letter formations.

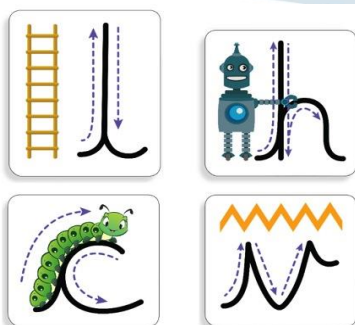
In Reception, children will be taught how to hold a pencil in an effective manner for writing and be encouraged to correct any errors in grip or stature. Children will learn that letters are written on a base line. Letter formations must be taught in print and should not be precursive or start with lead-in strokes.



### 3.1b Key Stage One (Year 1 & 2)

Teaching will continue to develop formational skills:

- Gross and fine motor skills exercises.
- Cursive handwriting reinforcement, learning and practice.
- Numerals, capitals and printed letters: where and when to use, learning and practice.



In Year 1, children will be introduced to the four letter families. These are letters that have been grouped for common formational features. For example, the 'curly caterpillar letters' include 'a', 'd', 'c', 'o', 's', 'g' and 'q' as they all start with the upward curl. Once all letter families have been taught, the transition from precursive to cursive should begin (i.e. children taught to join their letters). Children already joining before this point should be encouraged and supported. They should only be instructed to maintain a precursive style if the teacher has a specific concern with their formations, and believes that precursive instruction will support the child in overcoming these.

From here, KS1 children will be taught to write legibly using upper and lower case letters (lower case with correct joins). They will ensure that letters sit on the base line and are consistent in size with ascenders and descenders that are the correct length and formation. Children will leave the correct space between words, and they will form and use capital letters where appropriate. They will work to improve the speed of writing and begin to write automatically so promoting creativity in independent writing.

Children in these year groups will also learn to form numerals that are consistent in size and sit on the base line, and begin to form printed letters and understand when they are to be used (e.g. for filling out forms).

### 3.1c Key Stage Two (Years 3 to 6)

Teaching of more advanced handwriting techniques:

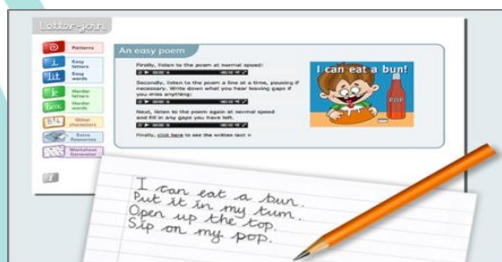
- Cursive handwriting re-enforcement.
- Form-filling/labelling using printed and capital letters.
- Dictation exercises to teach the need for quick notes and speedy handwriting writing.

Children in these year groups are ultimately working towards the end-of-primary goal: to be able to write with quality, speed and stamina.

1. **Quality:** Ensure letters are consistently sized with equal word spacing and that ascenders and descenders are parallel and do not touch words on the lines above and below.
2. **Speed:** Improve speed of handwriting to allow creative writing to take precedence over the task of handwriting and be able to take 'quick notes' at a faster pace.
3. **Stamina:** Have the strength and mobility to be able to write for longer periods of time without fatigue.

Children in KS2 are also expected to have a full knowledge and ability of the different forms of handwriting for different purposes:

- Neat, joined, cursive letters for writing passages and large amounts of text, lists and letters.
- Printed or capital letters for posters, notices, headings, labelling, and form filling.
- Speedy handwriting for note-taking and dictation where neatness is not as important and shortcuts, such as '+' instead of 'and', can be used.

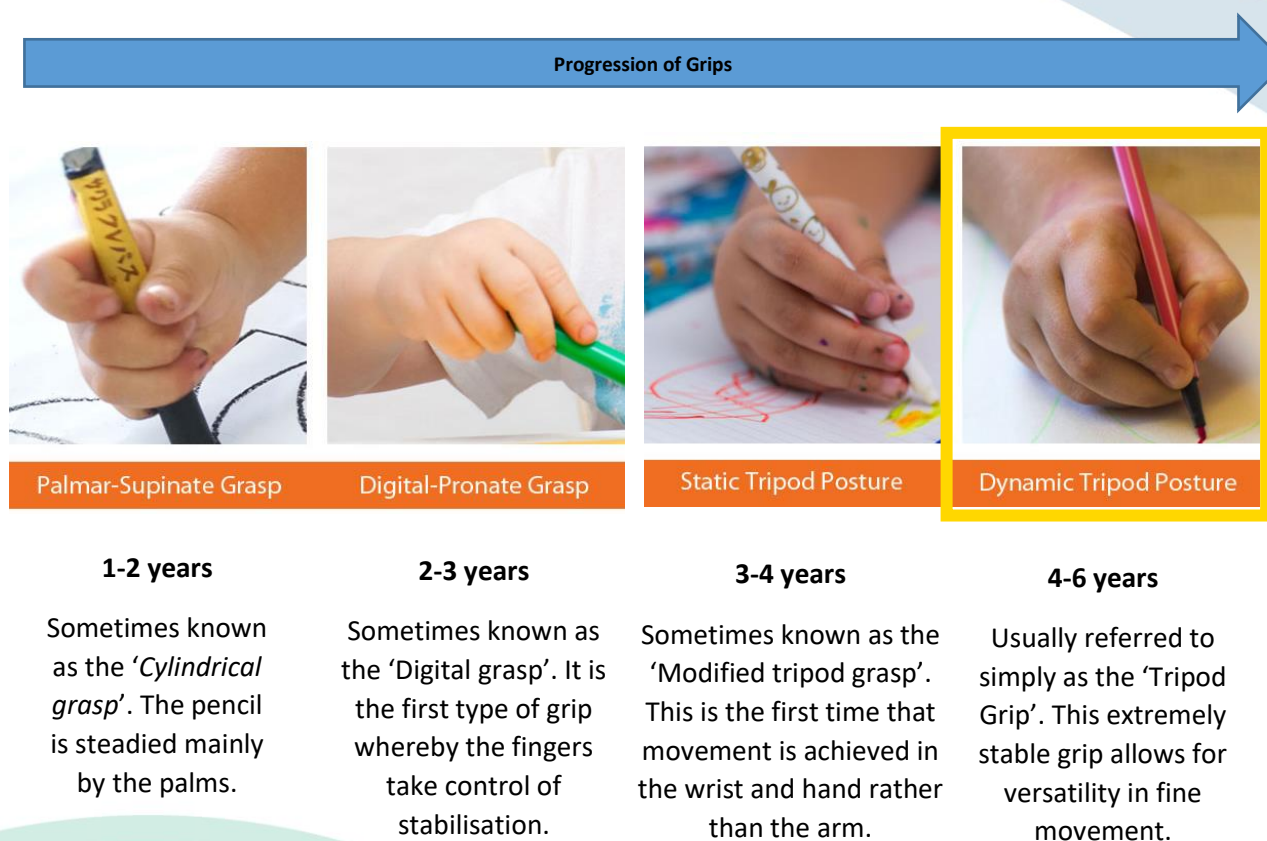


### 3.2 Writing Positions and Postures

Research and the *Letter-Join* scheme advocates the adoption of a correct, comfortable seating posture and pencil grip for handwriting.

#### 3.2a Tripod Grip

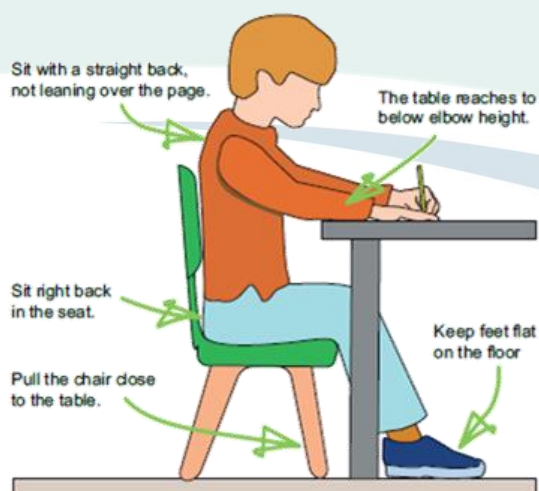
In terms of pencil grip, children should be encouraged to use the tripod grip which allows the pen/pencil to be held securely whilst allowing controlled movements of the nib. The Tripod Grip will not be the first grip that a child learns, but it is the most effective in achieving the finest movements required in handwriting. The tripod grip gives children the best opportunity to write with speed and stamina, ultimately allowing them to switch their focus in writing from transcription to composition. It is important that children move through the stages of grip as their muscle groups, hand strength and motor skills develop. During this time, children should be encouraged to creatively engage in any activity that encourages them to use their hands for strength, movement and mark making.



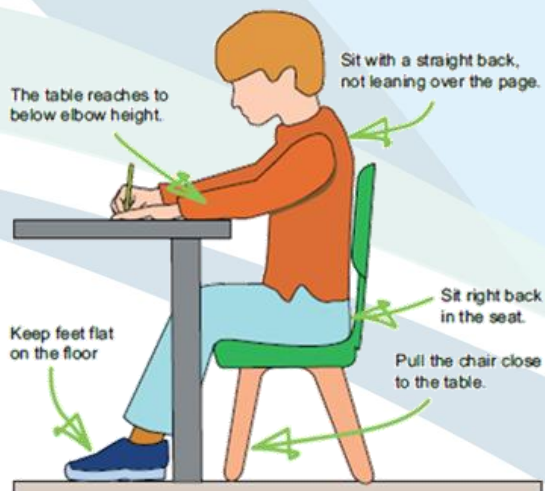
#### 3.2b Right-handed and Left-handed Writers

We strongly encourage children to write with whichever hand feels natural and comfortable to them, and we adapt our handwriting instruction accordingly. Remember that a child being a 'left-handed' or 'right-handed' writer does not necessarily mean that a child will be dominant in that hand for all activities. Many left-handed writers predominantly use their right hands for throwing, opening bottles etc.

## Left-handed Children



## Right-handed Children



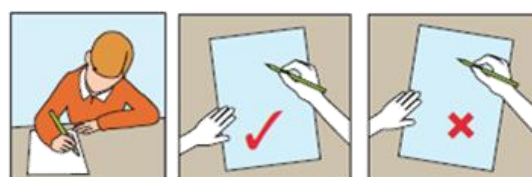
## Left-handed Children

### How to hold and position the paper.

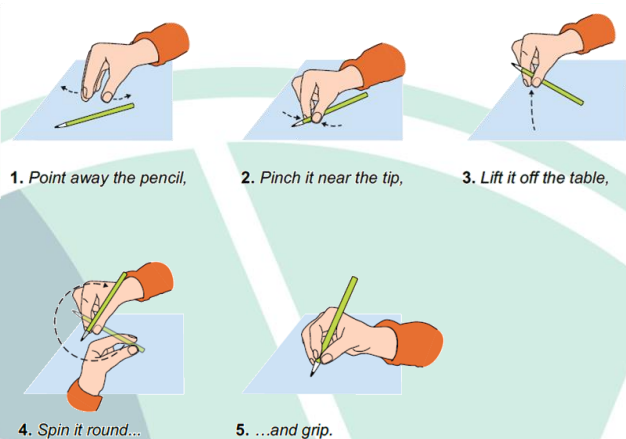


## Right-handed Children

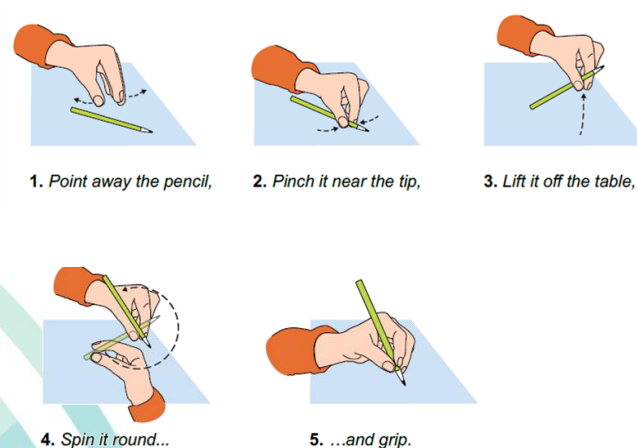
### How to hold and position the paper.



### How to achieve the tripod grip.



### How to achieve the tripod grip.





### 3.3 Inclusion

Children whose handwriting is limited by problems with fine motor skills and children with special educational needs will be given one-to-one tuition to help achieve their optimum handwriting level. Teachers should liaise with the SENDCO to organise additional intervention if this is needed. The *Letter-Join* modules also provide guidance on how to differentiate lessons for varying abilities, and at upper key stage two (i.e. Y4-6) *Letter-Join* provides an additional 'Handwriting Recovery Programme' for children who require additional support. This may be run concurrently for a subgroup within the year during formal handwriting sessions using additional support staff.

Some children may require access to a previous year's handwriting module to close gaps and master specific formations. In this instance, children should be monitored closely and reviewed at the end of the term. The aim is to get the child back to their age-appropriate handwriting module as soon as possible.

Those children who are not forming letters appropriately because of issues in fine motor skills should access the *Teodorescu* intervention at a book level appropriate to their current working level. This programme builds key muscle groups to facilitate access to the *Letter-Join* modules.

### 3.4 Pens and Pencils

Children are encouraged to start handwriting using a soft pencil. By key stage one, all children should be writing using a HB grade pencil (exemptions admitted for specific circumstances). This will allow children to develop an understanding of the pressure required when writing using the grade of pencil that is standard beyond school.

When fine motor skills have been established, a handwriting pen can be used. Children will be expected to meet a set of criteria to transition from a pencil to a pen (appendix A).



### 3.5 Exercise Books

In EYFS, large-lined books are used as children experiment with patterns, strokes and early letter formations. In Reception, these large-lined books are used to support children as they first begin to learn to write on lines.

In Year 1 to 6, exercise books are lined specifically for handwriting. The area between the grey lines should be occupied **fully** by the body of the letter, while the red lines above and below indicate points for ascending and descending portions:

- Year 1  
21mm handwriting spaces are used as children learn to standardise letter heights.
- Year 2 to 6  
16mm handwriting spaces are used which promotes letter formations corresponding to the requirement of a standard 8mm ruled lined page.

### 3.5 School-wide Formations

Across the school, we will adopt a standardised approach to forming letters to achieve the best impact for our pupils. When writing for the children (e.g. on whiteboards, in book marking etc.) adults within the school will also adopt this style of writing.

#### 3.5a Print

In EYFS, our children will focus on gross and fine motor skills and pattern formations in nursery. Letter formation is introduced in Reception where children will learn to print, as supported by research in muscle development of children from that age group. Letter formations will be introduced in tandem with grapheme coverage in phonics teaching.



### 3.5b Precursive

As they enter key-stage one, children are taught to form the letters separately, whilst still maintaining 'lead in' and 'lead out' strokes in preparation for joining. This is known as 'precursive handwriting'. In terms of the Letter-Join programme, this is known as the 'Letter Join Air' font and can be downloaded for installation onto the school system.

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

### 3.5c Cursive

Progressing beyond this, children will then begin to join to form cursive, joined-up handwriting. In terms of the Letter-Join programme, this is known as 'Letter Join Plus' font. Children will usually make the transition to cursive style in Year 1, after learning the 4 letter families.

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

Please be especially aware of the following formations. These are letters which may be represented differently elsewhere. For the purpose of consistency, we will be teaching the following formations:

f k s w x z

### 3.6 Planning

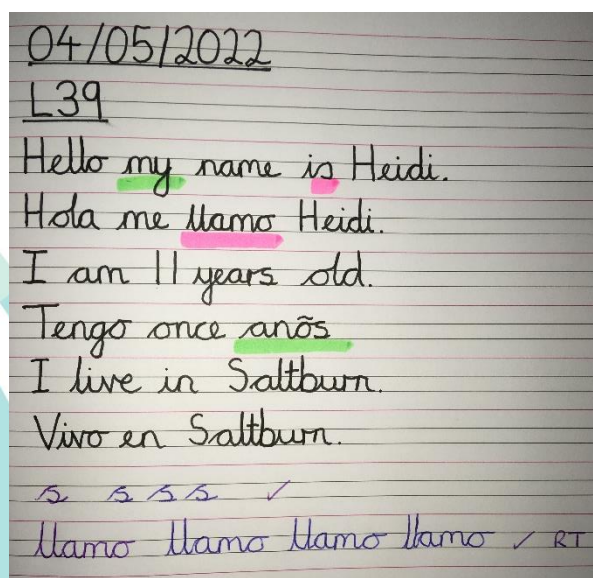
Teachers follow the trust programme of study which indicates which lessons from the scheme should be taught each week. Full planning and resources for these lessons are available on each year group's respective module document. Each year group module is sequential, so it is important for teachers to follow the programme of study closely to ensure that the full scheme is taught across the year. Teachers should include a copy of the module in their planning files. Teachers need only include the lesson number and learning objective on weekly planning documents. The learning objective is selected best-fit from those outlined in the programme of study.

### 3.7 Presentation, Marking and Feedback

Children to begin each lesson with a short date to practise number formations. The lesson number should also be included, but it is not necessary to write out the learning objective.

Marking for handwriting is completed live within the lessons wherever possible.

1. Each lesson, the teacher indicates two successful formations, joins or words by providing two green highlights on the work of each child. When highlighting the work, teachers should highlight beneath the word to avoid smudging. Formations or joins that are the focus of the lesson should be prioritised where possible.
2. Each lesson, the teacher indicates two areas for development by providing pink highlights. Single letters, joins or full words may be identified using the pink highlight. The teacher should then model the highlighted letters, joins or words, and the child should carefully reproduce this themselves in blue beside the modelling. The teacher initials the response work in acknowledgement.



A small amount of time should be allocated at the start of each lesson to ensure that responses are completed from the previous lesson (if they have not been completed live in the lesson itself).

### 3.8 Home Learning

All children across the school are able to access Letter-Join's online resources from home using a desktop, laptop or tablet. Children and parents should be encouraged to do this, and activities from this resource may be used by classroom **teachers** for homework.

**Tablet log-in**

Username: wk0336

Swipecode:

**Desktop log-in**

Username: wk0336

Password: home

## 4. Roles and Responsibilities

### 4.1 SLT: Head of school

With the support of the wider **senior leadership team**, the **head of school** will ensure policy compliance of all stakeholders (staff and pupils), and will have final oversight over teaching and learning within the school.

### 4.2 English Lead

The **English Lead** will work with teachers to ensure that the Letter-Join scheme is being implemented appropriately in all year groups, and that work is of an appropriate quality. The **English Lead** will also perform checks to ensure that handwriting skills taught in formal instruction are being implemented more broadly in written work as part of QA processes. They will provide/organise support where needed. They are responsible for conducting an informal, half-termly checks to ensure that all classes within their phase are following the Letter-Join scheme and all classes have at least 1 hour/week explicitly timetabled for formal handwriting instruction.

The **English Lead** is responsible for

- Ensuring that all **teachers** are adequately trained in delivering the Letter-Join scheme.
- Ensuring that all colleagues are aware of the expectations of this policy.
- Evaluating the effectiveness of both the scheme and this policy at the predetermined review points.
- Liaising with the **teachers** and the school's **finance officer** to ensure that school-wide resources are ordered when needed.

### 4.3 Sendco

The **SENDCO** will liaise with **teachers** to ensure that reasonable adjustments are made where necessary to ensure that pupils with additional needs are able to access handwriting instruction, and are supported in applying handwriting skills in wider writing.

### 4.4 Teachers

All classroom **teachers** are responsible for the following:

- Timetabling at least 1 hour of handwriting instruction per week, broken down into smaller sessions (e.g. x2 30 min. or x3 20 min). In EYFS, this will include one instructional session per week with follow-up activities / enrichments in areas.
- Following the Letter-Join module for their year group using resources outlined in the planning.
- Ensuring that all work in handwriting books begins with an underlined date and lesson number following the DUMTUMS presentational expectations.
- Ensuring that the entire module is completed across the academic year.
- Encouraging children to access Letter-Join activities from home (i.e. distributing log-in details, celebrating efforts, incorporating into homework).
- Employing high expectations with regard to the implementation of handwriting skills in wider writing.
- Applying the Letter-Join formational style when writing for children (e.g. feedback in books, writing on the board, issuing spellings etc.).
- Displaying all appropriate formations and joins within the classroom environment.
- Liaising with the finance officer to order appropriate, class-specific resources, and with the English lead regarding school-wide handwriting resources (e.g. exercise books, pens etc.).
- Liaising with the **SENDCO** to provide additional support for identified children.
- Assessing handwriting as part of writing (e.g. using the teacher assessment framework)
- Keeping parents/guardians informed of progress with regard to handwriting (e.g. parent consultations, phone calls, reports etc.).
- Directing **TAs** to support children where needed within lesson / in interventions.
- Awarding 'pen licenses' to children who have met the criteria (KS2).



#### 4.7 Teaching assistants (TAs)

All TAs are responsible for

- Ensuring that all children in the year group have an appropriate handwriting exercise book. Each book should be prepared with the following:
  - Name label on the front of the book
  - 'Comfortable sitting position' sheet (YN to Y6)
  - 'Tripod Pencil Grip' sheet (YN to Y6)
  - 'Gross motor skills' sheet (YN to Y2)
  - 'Fine motor skills' sheet (Y1 to Y6)
  - Year group-specific 'Pre-Module Assessment' sheet (YN to Y6)
  - Pen Licence Criteria Sheet (Y3 to Y6) – on the inside, back cardboard cover

All of these resources can be found on the trust's central Teams folder for English.

- Delivering handwriting interventions or the LetterJoin Handwriting Recovery Programme where directed by the **teacher** or **SENDCO**.
- Supporting children within handwriting lessons, and prompting children to apply handwriting skills in wider writing.
- Applying the Letter-Join formational style when writing for children (e.g. feedback in books, writing on the board, issuing spellings etc.).
- Maintaining the classroom environment.

## Appendix A: Staffing

As of September 2022, those staff with specific responsibilities as pertains to this policy are listed below.

### Chair of Governors

### Senior Leadership Team (SLT)

- **Headteacher**
- **Assistant Headteacher for Curriculum**
- **Assistant Headteacher for Inclusion (DSL & SENDCO)**

### Phase Leaders

- **EYFS (Nursery & Reception)**
- **KS1 (Y1 & Y2)**
- **LKS2 (Y3 & Y4)**
- **UKS2 (Y5 & Y6)**

**English Coordinator**

**Office Manager (Finance)**



## Appendix B: Pen Licence Criteria



### The Links Primary School Pen Licence Criteria

If you feel that you have achieved any of 12 handwriting criteria, date it in the self-assessment box and ask your teacher if they agree. Once you have achieved all 12, you will be awarded your pen licence!

Letter Formation	Self-assessment: date achieved	Teacher initials to confirm
1. All of my letters are formed correctly.		
2. All of my letters which should be closed are closed.		
3. All of my capital letters ascend and do not join.		
4. Of the letters I am meant to join, I am able to join these consistently, using both diagonal and horizontal joins.		
Size and Orientation	Self-assessment: date achieved	Teacher initials to confirm
5. All of my letters are on the baseline.		
6. All of the lowercase short letters are the same size.		
7. All ascenders are in proportion to the rest of my writing.		
8. All descenders are in proportion to the rest of my writing.		
9. All of my capital letters are a consistent size.		
Spacing and Presentation	Self-assessment: date achieved	Teacher initials to confirm
10. The spaces between my letters are consistent.		
11. The spaces between my words are consistent.		
12. My handwriting is consistent in ALL of my books and is easy for others to read.		
<div> <div>I have achieved all of the above.</div> <div> <div>Pen Licence awarded</div> <div>Date: <input type="text"/></div> </div> </div> <div> <div>I am not doing all of the above, but my teacher feels that I have developed my own clear, neat, joined up handwriting style.</div> <div> <div>Pen Licence awarded</div> <div>Date: <input type="text"/></div> </div> </div>		
<div> <div>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</div> <div> <div>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</div> </div> </div>		