

At Kilburn Grange School, we teach pupils a cursive handwriting style. It is a joined-up writing where each letter is formed without taking the pencil off the paper – and consequently, each word is formed in one, flowing movement.

Often, when first learning to write, we ‘print’ our letters and then move on to ‘joined up’ writing at a later stage. Research suggests that learning two styles of handwriting can add an extra layer of difficulty and cause confusion. It is, therefore, much more helpful if a young pupil can learn to use a single system of handwriting right from the start.

In Reception, pupils learn how to form the letters correctly and are taught to join them up when they are ready. The precursive handwriting style we use has flicks and loops to allow for children to be able to learn joining up as soon as they are ready without having to relearn how to form the letters.

Handwriting Facts

- ✓ Handwriting is one of the most demanding movement skills which a child is expected to master.
- ✓ The principal aim is that handwriting becomes an automatic process, which frees pupils to focus on the content of the writing.
- ✓ A flexible, fluent and legible handwriting style empowers children to write with confidence and creativity.
- ✓ Handwriting is not the same as writing. Handwriting is about putting words down on paper, while writing is the ‘thinking’ of the actual words.

Handwriting Development

- ✓ For young children, learning to control a pencil, pen or even paintbrush is hard. To do it, they first need to develop their hand-eye coordination, and build up the muscles and control in the hands. Children need more than just the control of their hands – they also need to be able to coordinate their arms and shoulders.
- ✓ Controlling these larger movements is what comes first when children are very young. These larger movements are usually made by children quite naturally as they play outdoors, by throwing balls or using their arms to help them climb up a slide. When they run, jump, climb, dance, twist and twirl, young children are actually building the muscles they need for good handwriting later on.
- ✓ Children can also develop the hand skills needed to hold and control a pencil as they make everyday movements around the house. Folding clothes, using pegs to hang up clothes, wiping up spills and learning to dry up cups all strengthen their hands and build hand-eye coordination. Look out for other everyday opportunities such as putting on coats, pouring out drinks and cooking, as these also help children’s hands to develop. Be sure to take the time to show children how to manage buttons and zips as they put on clothes.
- ✓ As well as everyday skills, children may also enjoy playing games that need hand skills, such as simple board games, using jigsaws, building bricks, threading chunky beads onto laces, hammering or using play dough.
- ✓ Consolidate vocabulary of movement by talking about movements such as, *going round and round, making curves, springing up and sliding down, making long, slow movements or quick, jumpy movements.*

Supporting Your Child’s Handwriting



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Some Other Considerations

- ✓ **Pencil grip** – Children who are developing strange pencil grips do so because they are desperately looking for a way to control their movements. The grip used by young children will usually improve as their hand movements become more controlled, so long as they are not put under pressure to gain control by doing a lot of tracing or being expected to produce small writing. It is quite hard to change pencil grip in older children and, so it is important to encourage children to hold a pencil or writing tool near point, between first two fingers and thumb (called a tripod grip).
- ✓ **Back to front letters** – Children have to rely on their memory to write letters until they become good readers. This means that nearly all children will reverse their letters early on, or miss letters out of words. Be sensitive around this when correcting children. For instance, you might gently correct them as they learn to form the specific letters in their name and then progress to other letters or numbers.
- ✓ **Left-handed children** – Children are born being either right-handed or left-handed and this normally shows by about three years. Left-handed children find it easier if they are writing on a slope. If a child has not developed a hand preference by three years, look out for regular activities around the home where one hand is used to stabilise the child and the other is doing something active, such as drying a plate or chopping a peeled banana.
- ✓ **Tips for Young Writers**
 - Motivate your child by providing a variety of tools such as felt-tips, chalk and paint as handwriting requires a lot of practice.
 - Once children are able to form letters correctly, you can begin to introduce the two basic joins,



Letter Groups

- ✓ When children are taught handwriting, letters are taught in groups. Some letters are formed in similar ways and once children are able to form one of the letters in the group, they are taught to apply the movements to write the other letters.
- ✓ Children practise handwriting patterns to help them with the flow, rhythm and movements required to form the different letter groups.
- ✓ To form the letters, start at the dot and follow the arrows.

Cursive Letter Groups	
Rockin' Round Letters	<p>A a A a</p> <p>C c C c</p> <p>D d D d</p> <p>E e E e</p> <p>G g G g</p> <p>O o O o</p> <p>Q q Q q</p> <p>S s S s</p> <p>F f F f</p>
Zig Zag Letters	<p>V v V v</p> <p>W w W w</p> <p>X x X x</p> <p>Z z Z z</p>

Cursive Letter Groups

Sliders Letters	<p>I i I i</p> <p>J j J j</p> <p>L l L l</p> <p>T t T t</p> <p>U u U u</p> <p>Y y Y y</p>
Slide 'n' Bounce Letters	<p>B b B b</p> <p>H h H h</p> <p>K k K k</p> <p>M m M m</p> <p>N n N n</p> <p>P p P p</p> <p>R r R r</p>

Two Basic Joins and Break Letters

- ✓ Diagonal joins to letters are called arm joins, e.g. *ai, us, ab, it.*
- ✓ Horizontal joins to letters are called washing line joins, e.g. *ou, vi, ol, wh.*
- ✓ Break letters (letters that don't join up) e.g. *all CAPITAL letters, f, q, r, x, z*
- ✓ When children are taught to join using the arm and washing line join, they are also taught how these joins are joined up to the different groups of letters, e.g. *ad, ae, af, av, ai, ab, od, oe, of, ov, oi, ob.*