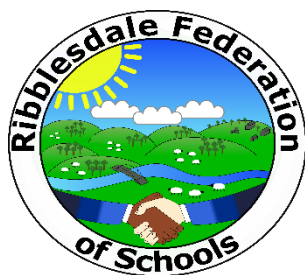


# The Ribblesdale Federation of Schools

Do Everything in Love (1 Corinthians 16:14)



## Handwriting Policy

| Document Status                              |                                                   |                                         |                     |
|----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Date of policy creation/review               | Reasons for review                                | Date of adoption by the Governing Board | Date of next review |
| June 2026                                    | Policy updated to reflect the "Writing Framework" | 22 <sup>nd</sup> June 2026              | Cycle B<br>2028/29  |
|                                              |                                                   |                                         |                     |
|                                              |                                                   |                                         |                     |
|                                              |                                                   |                                         |                     |
| Signed and dated: 22 <sup>nd</sup> June 2026 |                                                   |                                         |                     |
| Executive Headteacher                        | <i>C. Maddock</i>                                 | Chair of Governors                      | <i>John Bradley</i> |

## **The Ribblesdale Federation of Schools Handwriting Policy**

### **Rationale**

Handwriting remains an important life skill as a tool for learning, self-expression and communicating language. We recognise that children's ability to handwrite effectively for the rest of their lives depends on the firm foundations established in the Ribblesdale Federation. Handwriting is a vital part of transcription that should be automatic and unconscious. Once children have developed legible and fluent transcription, they are able to focus more freely on composition and cohesion of ideas. Fluent handwriting is a significant predictor of positive writing outcomes. (Writing Framework 2025). Automaticity is developed through explicit teaching, extensive practice and effective use of feedback and monitoring. Handwriting is a skill which must be taught and learned precisely, in a clear sequenced progression, to support the graduation of skills. (Writing Framework 2025).

### **Our aims are for all children to:**

- Learn and practise appropriate handwriting skills at each stage of development working towards comfortable handwriting which is legible, fluent and fast.
- Develop as confident 'hybrid' writers with the skills to communicate through both handwriting and technology.
- Develop their visual and physical memory through a cursive handwriting style that aids the left to right movements through each word across the page.
- Develop legibility, especially for those with motor and spatial difficulties.
- Recognise that handwriting is a form of communication and as such should be considered important in order for it to be effective.
- Take pride in their own work as well as promoting confidence and self-esteem.

### **Terminology**

- **ascender:** a letter that goes above the mid-point. Letters that go above the mid-point are: b d f h k l t and all capital letters.
- **baseline:** the line on which most letters rest. Picture a line under the letters in this sentence— that's the baseline.
- **descender:** a letter that goes below the baseline. Letters that go below the baseline are: g j p q y. The part that goes below the baseline is called the tail.

- **downstroke:** any movement downward with the writing instrument.
- **fine motor skills:** Fine motor skills are the ability to make movements using the small muscles in our hands and wrists
- **gross motor skills:** Gross motor skills are abilities that let us do tasks that involve large muscles in our torso, legs, and arms. They involve whole-body movements
- **mid-point** -midpoint, it's the height of all letters that are not ascenders and descenders. On the paper kids use for learning handwriting, there is a dotted line at the x-height. Letters that do not go above the x-height are: a c e m n o r s u v w x z
- **tripod grip:** is a grip using three fingers of the hand - the thumb, index and middle fingers. A child typically develops this grip around the age of three or four. It is a functional grasp which is essential for a number of tasks, such as holding a pencil or fastening buttons.
- **upstroke:** any movement upward with the writing instrument

### Handwriting in the Curriculum

This handwriting policy is informed by the statutory requirements and the national curriculum programmes of study.

|                           | Statutory Requirements                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Non-statutory guidance                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Year 1<br/>Age 5-6</b> | <b>Pupils should be taught to:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sit correctly at a table, holding a pencil comfortably and correctly.</li> <li>• Begin to form lower-case letters in the correct direction, starting and finishing in the right place.</li> <li>• Form capital letters.</li> <li>• Form digits 0-9.</li> <li>• Understand which letters belong to which handwriting 'families' (i.e. letters that are formed in similar ways) and to practise these.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Handwriting requires frequent and discrete, direct teaching. Pupils should be able to form letters correctly and confidently. The size of the writing implement (pencil, pen) should not be too large for a young pupil's hand.</li> <li>• Whatever is being used should allow the pupil to hold it easily and correctly so that bad habits are avoided.</li> <li>• Left-handed pupils should receive specific teaching to meet their needs.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Year 2<br/>Age 6-7</b> | <b>Pupils should be taught to:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Form lower-case letters of the correct size relative to one another.</li> <li>• 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 unjoined.</li> <li>• Write capital letters and digits of the correct size, orientation and relationship</li> </ul>                                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils should revise and practice correct letter formation frequently. They should be taught to write with a joined style as soon as they can form letters securely with the correct orientation.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

|                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                          | <p>to one another and to lower-case letters.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use spacing between words that reflects the size of the letters.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Years 3 and 4</b><br><b>Age 7-9</b>   | <p><b>Pupils should be taught to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use the diagonal and horizontal strokes that are needed to join letters and understand which letters, when adjacent to another, are best left unjoined.</li> <li>• Increase the legibility, consistency and quality of their handwriting, for example, by ensuring that the downstrokes of letters are parallel and equivalent, that lines of writing are spaced sufficiently so that the ascenders and descenders of letters do not touch.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils should be using joined handwriting throughout their independent writing.</li> <li>• Handwriting should continue to be taught with the aim of increasing the fluency with which pupils are able to write down what they want to say. This, in turn, will support their composition and spelling.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Years 5 and 6</b><br><b>Age 10-11</b> | <p><b>Pupils should be taught to write legibly, fluently and with increasing speed by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• choosing which shape of a letter to use when given choices and deciding whether or not to join specific letters</li> <li>• choosing the writing implement that is best suited for a task.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                              | <p>Pupils should continue to practise handwriting and be encouraged to increase the speed of it, so that problems with forming letters do not get in the way of their writing down what they want to say. They should be clear about what standard of handwriting is appropriate for a particular task – for example, quick notes or a final handwritten version.</p> <p>They should also be taught to use an unjoined style, for example, for labelling a diagram or data, writing an email address, or for algebra and capital letters (for example, for filling in a form).</p> |

## Implementation and Progression

### EYFS

In the Reception Classrooms, children will access a range of learning opportunities to develop essential pre-writing skills from the start of term 1. Planned motor skills activities develop their gross and fine motor coordination skills, manipulative skills and hand-eye co-ordination.

Children need to know there are different types of fonts as books, computers etc all produce a wide range of writing styles. For the purposes of learning to write grapheme-phoneme correspondences, children will be taught letter recognition, the letter shapes and correct formation in their daily phonics

session. All staff will use the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds handwriting patter phrases (**Appendix 1**) when teaching letter recognition and formation. For the purposes of handwriting, children will also practice letters outside of the phonics sessions but by following the 'Letter Families' (**Appendix 2**) alongside the Little Wandle handwriting patter. This will begin in Autumn 2 and supports the cumulative approach as recommended in the Writing Framework 2025.

When writing letters, the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds print style will be modelled at all times by adults in the setting. The children will understand that letters are written on the line but some may have ascenders and descenders. Handwriting patter phrases will be used by all staff when teaching each individual letter shape. These will also be displayed in the classrooms as a resource for children to use when writing independently or with an adult.

Children will be provided with lots of opportunity for practice. They may practise forming letters using a variety of materials, such as sand, paint and chalk before moving onto pencil and paper. At this stage, children will be encouraged to write on wide lined paper.

Differentiation according to a child's development stage is paramount in the Foundation Stage. Some children may be ready to learn how to print letters correctly earlier than others who require more general hand co-ordination activities. Where a motor skill difficulty is highlighted, the child may then access a targeted intervention.

All children will learn to sit in the correct position (**Appendix 4**) and hold a pencil correctly to allow fluid movement of the nib. They will hold a pencil using the tripod grip for writing and will be encouraged to correct any errors in their grip. Children use a range of writing implements including triangular pencils, pencil grips and tripod grip pencil crayons to encourage a correct grip, and they are monitored so that they do not hold the pencil too tightly which produces tension in the arm and shoulder.

**By the end of the Foundation Stage, most children should be able to;**

- Use a pencil, holding it correctly.
- Ensure they understand the correct positioning when writing.

- Form recognisable letters and numbers, many of which are correctly formed using Little Wandle Letters and Sounds handwriting pattern phrases for print.

## **Year 1**

Children continue to be taught the correct formation of the letters in daily handwriting sessions and in conjunction with phonics work. Children will have an alternative book for regular practice.

The children will continue to learn that all letters are part of the 'Letter Families' (see appendix) and this teaching sequence of letters will be followed to explicitly teach handwriting (see appendix). Lower case letters will be taught first, then capital letters and numbers.

Children will be expected to use this printed writing style on wide lined paper in all their writing across the curriculum. When modelling any writing, all adults will use the printed style and handwriting pattern phrases to ensure explicit modelling and consolidation. Any worksheets or resources will use a printed font. Displays will have a mixture of fonts but any hand written labels or displays will be in print.

The correct pencil grip will be reinforced, and where needed, corrective pencil grips for those needing them will be used. Children who have adopted a secure left-handed grip will have access to an Easi-grip pencil specifically designed for left-handed writers. They will be encouraged to slant their paper to the right and will sit to the left of any right-handed pupil, as recommended by the Writing Framework 2025.

Where children continue to experience motor skills difficulties, further interventions on the specific areas for development will take place.

### **By the end of Year 1 most pupils should be able to:**

- sit correctly at a table, holding a pencil comfortably and correctly
- begin to form appropriately sized lower-case letters in the correct direction, starting and finishing in the right place

- Use the Little Wandle Patter phrase to describe and support letter formation
- Form capital letters of the appropriate size
- Form digits 0-9 correctly
- Understand which letters belong to which handwriting 'families' (i.e. letters that are formed in similar ways) and to practise these.

## **Year 2 – Age 6-7**

Children in year 2 are taught handwriting lessons in alignment with the Letter-join scheme, Module 3.

In the Autumn term, children re-visit the letter join families, ensuring correct formation of letters, pencil grip and seating position to aid legible and fluent handwriting development. Handwriting will be taught daily in 15-minute sessions where the children will be introduced to the cursive style. Teachers and teaching assistants will ensure the children are forming every letter correctly with the lead-in and lead-outs in preparation for joining letters in words.

Children will practice their handwriting in a handwriting book with their stage appropriate line spacing for regular practice. Children will be expected to use the printed style with an exit stroke in all their writing and only moving onto the joined cursive style when deemed ready by the teacher.

Cursive handwriting should not be taught until pupils are able to confidently form printed letters demonstrating correct formation and relative size, taking into account capital and lower-case letters. Those children needing support should receive adult intervention

It will be expected that most children in Year 2 will be joining words with confidence and control by the end of the Summer Term.

### **By the end of Year 2 most pupils should be able 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 unjoined ☐
- 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.

### **Year 3 and 4 – Age 7-9**

Children in years 3 and 4 are taught handwriting lessons in alignment with the Letter-join scheme, Module 4.

It is expected that in Years 3 and 4 children will develop an independent style of handwriting that is fluent and legible. This will be required in all writing across the curriculum.

Handwriting will be taught daily in 15-minute sessions where the children will embed their cursive handwriting style. Children will practice their handwriting in a handwriting book with their stage appropriate line spacing for regular practice.

It will be expected that most children in Year 3 and 4 will be joining words with confidence, control and uniform proportions by the end of the Summer Term.

#### **By the end of Year 4 most pupils should be able 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 unjoined ☐
- increase the legibility, consistency and quality of their handwriting (for example, by ensuring that the downstrokes of letters are parallel and equidistant; that lines of writing are spaced sufficiently so that the ascenders and descenders of letters do not touch.)

### **Years 5 & 6**

It is expected that most children will be able to write automatically and unconsciously with legible handwriting and increasing speed. However, where required, teachers may choose to teach and correct common errors across the class and/or individuals. Children will need reminders about joins and any inconsistencies of style should be worked on. It is recognised that older children like to develop a more personal style. However, this must be consistent with the school style.

#### **By the end of Year 6 pupils should be able to:**

- Write legibly, fluently and with increasing speed by: choosing which shape of a letter to use when given choices and deciding whether or not to join specific letters.
- Choose the writing implement that is best suited to the task.



## **Left-Handed Children**

Left-handed children may experience more difficulty with handwriting than right-handed children. This is because their hand follows behind their writing, leading to smudging and naturally obscuring their writing with their writing hand.

As long as support is given, there is no reason why left-handed children should not achieve a fluent, legible style. Left-handed children should be seated to the left of any right-handed child, but not with their left to a wall or obstruction. There must be sufficient space to the left of the left-hander to enable them to place their paper in a comfortable position, slanted to the right.

Young left-handed children tend to hold their pencils close to the lead thus covering their writing with their hand. This means that although they know there are spaces between words, their writing can appear without any. Therefore, children must be taught to grip the pencil high enough to be able to see around their fingers (Writing Framework 2025).

## **SEND**

In the Ribblesdale Federation of Schools, we teach handwriting skills to all children, whatever their ability. Teachers will need to be sensitive to the needs of children with Special Educational Needs and to genuine developmental needs. Handwriting fluency rests on developing both physical and cognitive skills. For some children, handwriting practice may need to focus on the explicit teaching of physical elements (positioning the body, manoeuvring the pencil, positioning the paper and manoeuvring the pencil simultaneously, body and hand strength) as well as letter formation (Writing Framework 2025).

- It is recognised that it is essential for all children, especially those pupils with specific learning difficulties, to be closely observed when learning the correct formation of individual letters. This will ensure that posture, pencil grip and pressure, letter formation and placement are monitored and supervised to avoid the development and reinforcement of unhelpful habits.
- Children with motor skills difficulties will have opportunities for extra support. Teachers may seek advice and work with the SENDCO where this is necessary. Children may use a specific pencil grip or writing aid, such as a sloped shelf or stool under their feet. This support may also be as part of an intervention to target a specific motor skill need or further

handwriting practice in a smaller group. The SENDCO and/or outside agencies will be consulted where necessary.

### **Staff's Handwriting, Worksheets and Whiteboard Work**

When modelling writing, all adults will use the pre-cursive/cursive joined style that matches the style and stage of development of the year group. All teachers and teaching assistants are expected to model high-quality handwriting at all times. This includes marking and feedback in books in addition to modelling in class. This handwriting style should model the Letter-join no lead font used with the children in their handwriting sessions for key stage 2. In EYFS and KS1, teachers and teaching assistants should also model correct letter formation in alignment with the Little Wandle handwriting scheme.

Worksheets or resources should use the appropriate Letter-join font wherever possible. However, resources or worksheets may display an alternative font/shade to support children with additional learning needs with their writing and reading fluency.

### **Displays**

Displays will use a variation of lettering as the children do need access to a variety of fonts. However, when there are any handwritten labels or parts on a display, this must be completed following the handwriting style and development appropriate for the year group.

Classrooms to have their corresponding handwriting Little Wandle/ Letter-join posters displayed at all times for reference in the class as part of a handwriting working wall. These posters should demonstrate expected presentation of letter formation and subsequent teacher modelling.



## Appendix 1

### Little Wandle Handwriting Patters

#### Long Ladder Letters

- **l**: Down the long leg.
- **i**: Down the body, dot for the head.
- **t**: Down the tower, across the tower.
- **u**: Down and around the umbrella, stop at the top and down to the bottom and flick.
- **j**: Down the jelly baby, dot for the head.
- **y**: Down the horn, up the horn and under the yak's head.

#### One-Armed Robot Letters

- **r**: Down his back, then curl over his arm.
- **b**: Down the laces to the heel, around the toe.
- **n**: Down Nobby, over his net.
- **m**: Down Maisie, over the mountain, mountain.
- **h**: Down the horse's head to the hooves and over his back.
- **k**: Down the kite's tail, up to the top corner, and down to the bottom corner.
- **p**: Down the plait and over the pirate's face.

#### Curly Caterpillar Letters

- **c**: Curl around the cat.
- **o**: All around the octopus.
- **a**: Around the apple and down the leaf.
- **d**: Around the duck's body, then up to its head, and down to its feet.
- **g**: Around the girl's face, down her hair and give her a curl.
- **q**: Around the queen's head, down her hair and curl.
- **e**: Lift off the top and scoop out the egg.
- **s**: Slither down the snake.
- **f**: Down the flower and over the petals.

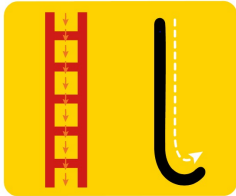
#### Zig-Zag Letters

- **v**: Down the volcano, up the volcano.
- **w**: Down the wave, up the wave, down the wave, up the wave.
- **x**: Down the arm and leg, up the other side.
- **z**: Zip across, zag down and across the zebra.

## Appendix 2

### Letter formation families

#### Long Ladder Letters



i l t u j y

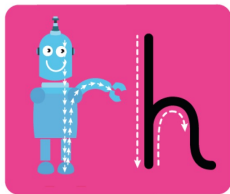
Letterjoin

#### Curly Caterpillar Letters



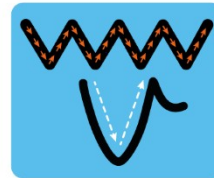
a d c o f e s g q

#### One-armed Robot Letters



b h k m n p r

#### Zig-zag Letters



v w x z

Letterjoin

## Appendix 3

### Teaching Sequence

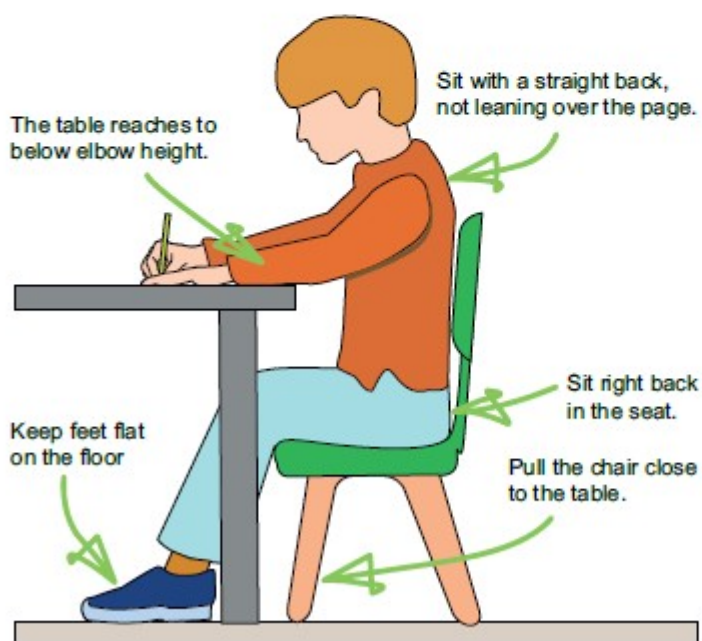
When teaching the print or cursive style throughout the school, the following sequence will be followed by all teachers. This letter order follows the letter formation families and focuses on movement-based patterns.

- ☐ **Long Ladder Letters:** l, t, i, j, u, y
- ☐ **Curly Caterpillar Letters:** c, o, a, d, g, q, s, f, e
- ☐ **One-Armed Robot Letters:** r, n, m, h, b, p
- ☐ **Zigzag Letters:** v, w, z, x, k

## Handwriting Posture and Pencil Grip

It is important that pupils sit comfortably and hold a pencil correctly for handwriting from the start. Some children may need repeated intervention to achieve this.

Letter-join's guide for sitting properly and holding a pencil correctly for handwriting is featured on page 7. This will help children be more comfortable, enabling them to write for sustained periods.



*See page 7 for comfortable sitting position.*