St Breock Handwriting Policy

The Morrells Handwriting Scheme

This handwriting policy aims to ensure that all pupils develop a handwriting style that is flexible, fluent, and legible. The ultimate goal is for children to write with confidence and creativity, supported by handwriting that is executed with ease, speed, and clarity. Developing automaticity in writing is essential to enable children to focus on content rather than letter formation.

Policy aims

This handwriting policy is designed to establish a consistent and structured approach to handwriting instruction across the whole school. By implementing a unified strategy, we aim to ensure that all pupils receive high-quality, progressive teaching that supports the development of fluent, legible, and confident handwriting.

A key objective is to raise standards in handwriting and presentation across all subjects and year groups. High-quality handwriting not only enhances written communication but also contributes to pupils' overall confidence and pride in their work.

This policy outlines the Morrells Handwriting approach, aligned with the Department for Education's Writing Framework (2025). It provides staff with a clear and practical understanding of the expectations and methods required to support children effectively in developing handwriting skills.

The Writing Framework is not about increasing formality or reducing play; it is about supporting children to become fluent, confident writers through developmentally appropriate teaching.

Why handwriting matters

Fluent handwriting is key to being a successful writer. If handwriting is slow or difficult, it can:

- make it harder to get ideas down on paper
- reduce motivation to write
- lead others to judge the writing unfairly

The primary objective for teachers is to support pupils in developing automaticity in handwriting, enabling them to write without consciously thinking about each individual letter. This automatic skill frees cognitive resources, allowing children to concentrate more fully on the content and meaning of their writing.

1. Writing readiness

A child is considered ready to begin writing when they demonstrate sufficient control and coordination of their movements. This developmental milestone typically occurs between the ages of 4½ and 7.

At this stage, children often begin to naturally pick up a pencil and engage in drawing, tracing, or forming basic letters and numbers. While early attempts may be unrefined, these mark the beginning of handwriting development, which continues to evolve throughout the early years of schooling.

2. The role of play

Handwriting starts with play, not pencils. Prewriting activities are critical to fluent and speedy handwriting later in life.

Play supports language development, sequencing and spatial awareness. These skills underpin sentence construction and layout of text on the page.

Play is important regardless of age or ability as it encourages writing to emerge through meaningful, hands-on experiences such as role play, storytelling, drawing, mark making, and outdoor exploration.

The new Writing Framework does not prohibit play-based learning. On the contrary, it acknowledges play as a vital component in the early development of writing skills. Effective implementation relies on teaching that is intentional, well-supported, and responsive to children's needs within playful and engaging environments.

Adults are encouraged to model writing authentically and contextually for example, writing a shopping list within a role-play area rather than delivering rigid, isolated instruction.

Crucially, assessment is conducted through observation of children engaging in natural, play based activities, rather than through contrived tasks designed solely to demonstrate ability. This approach ensures that writing development is both meaningful and developmentally appropriate.

It is important to note, writing might emerge through:

- drawing and adding labels to pictures
- acting out stories and then attempting to write parts of them
- making signs, lists, or notes during imaginative play
- encouraging mark making in outdoor or sensory play

In EYFS and Reception, play is used to build readiness for handwriting. Play can be observed to assess readiness for formal handwriting instruction. Play activities that develop fine and gross motor skills include: squeezing, rolling, smashing, spraying, pouring, pulling, pushing, tearing, stirring, pinching, cracking, picking, threading, throwing, catching and building.

Some fun play ideas that boost early handwriting development are:

- finger painting
- sand/water play
- messy play with foam/shaving cream
- peeling stickers to place on paper

• using tongs and spoons to pick up objects

• colouring and drawing to improve control

• cutting with safety scissors to enhance hand strength and coordination

• clipping pegs onto objects

• chalkboard drawing

• cotton bud painting

• tracing shapes to learn the movements required for handwriting

• building with blocks to develop spatial awareness

• ball games to develop visual tracking and hand-eye coordination

3. Early support in the foundation stage

Handwriting instruction should begin with play during the first term in Reception and include:

• Motor skills and control

Core strength helps with sitting up straight. Shoulder strength helps with control for forming letters.

• Memory and awareness

Good working memory supports remembering sounds and letter shapes. Letter-sound knowledge gives meaning to letters. Visual perception and spatial awareness help with letter placement.

• Body awareness and movement

Skills which cross the midline and use both sides of the body. Tracking with both eyes (binocular vision) are vital.

• Multisensory learning

Climbing activities, kicking a ball, or balancing on a ladder help build body control in a fun way.

4. Informal Writing Practice

Give pupils opportunities to:

• draw and copy shapes

• form early letter shapes

The new framework highlights that children's writing develops alongside their speaking and listening skills.

Useful activities are:

• magnetic shapes - to practise putting parts together

• sandpaper or magnetic letters - to feel the letter shape

• small chalkboards - let children erase letters with a wet finger

• painting easels - teach children to organise space using the corners as visual markers and build a strong shoulder girdle

• sticking coloured squares onto strips of paper - help children to practise spacing, size, and start/finish points for letters

• storytelling - speaking out ideas and acting out writing through role-play are all seen as valuable early steps before children begin formal writing

5. Consistency across the school

Handwriting routines should be consistent across all year groups to promote a shared approach and high expectations. Staff are encouraged to model clear, legible handwriting throughout the school day, helping pupils see and adopt good habits. Regular handwriting practice supports the development of muscle memory and fluency. Where pupils find handwriting challenging, gentle and targeted support should be provided in collaboration with the SENCO to ensure every child has the opportunity to succeed.

6. Handwriting in phonics lessons

Handwriting instruction follows a developmental sequence based on motor complexity, beginning with simpler shapes and progressing to more challenging ones. This approach supports physical readiness and ensures pupils build confidence and control gradually.

Unlike phonics, which introduces letters based on sound patterns for early reading, handwriting is taught in a movement-based order to prioritise correct formation and fluency. Handwriting letter families are grouped by movement patterns to support motor development and consistent letter formation.

In contrast, phonics letter groups are organised by sound-letter correspondence to maximise early reading and word-building.

The framework clarifies that these sequences differ because they serve distinct educational purposes, handwriting focuses on physical technique, while phonics prioritises decoding skills. Mixing the two can lead to poor habits and inconsistent letter formation.

Handwriting deserves its own time and space, not just incidental practice during phonics. It is important that handwriting is not embedded within phonics or other subjects, as this can dilute its effectiveness. By isolating handwriting instruction, pupils are better able to concentrate on developing correct formation, grip, and posture without experiencing cognitive overload.

7. Teacher modelling and observations

Teachers should:

• model legible handwriting clearly and consistently in all subjects

• observe and supervise pupils during handwriting lessons

• spot errors early to prevent bad habits before they embed

• provide immediate feedback and correct errors during writing lessons

• check posture and correct regularly (feet flat on the ground, bottom back in chair)

• check for visual issues including poor binocular vision

• check for poor midline crossing and poor bi-lateral coordination

• check for retained primitive reflexes that affect handwriting

• correct a poor pencil grip gently and consistently

• use handwriting aids such as pencil grips to encourage the tripod grip is maintained

8. Provide the right tools:

• desk at the correct height for the pupil

• sharpened pencils and handwriting aids including pencil grips

• quality handwriting pens from Stabilo, Pelikan and Edding

• wide-lined shaded paper to assist with letter size (later transition to narrower lines)

• preferably paper, not whiteboards as it gives better control

9. The six stages of writing progression

1. Foundation stage – readiness for writing

Children begin developing the gross and fine motor skills necessary for handwriting, including achieving a correct pencil grip and sitting posture. At this stage, they learn the correct size and direction of letters through early mark-making and guided practice of forming letters correctly.

2. Key Stage 1 – developing letter formation

Pupils continue to refine their letter formation, spacing and size. By the end of Year 2, more able pupils may begin learning and applying horizontal and vertical joins, laying the groundwork for joined handwriting.

3. Lower Key Stage 2 – introducing joins

Letter formation is further embedded, and pupils begin learning to join letters. This stage focuses on building fluency and consistency in the early stages of joined writing.

4. Middle Key Stage 2 – securing joins

Pupils consolidate their understanding of joins, working towards confident and automatic use of joined handwriting across subjects.

5. Upper Key Stage 2 – developing fluency and presentation

Children practise joined handwriting with a focus on speed, fluency, and presentation. They apply these skills consistently across all written work.

6. Upper Key Stage 2 – embedding legibility and style

Pupils refine their handwriting style, ensuring legibility, fluency, and appropriate presentation. Joined handwriting becomes a natural and efficient tool for written communication.

10. Dedicated handwriting lessons

Handwriting should be taught through dedicated, focused sessions that prioritise technique. The emphasis should be on developing legibility, fluency, and writing speed, rather than neatness.

Once ready, pupils benefit from structured, supervised handwriting lessons that build fluency and correct technique.

• handwriting should be taught explicitly and daily

• handwriting should be taught in short, focused sessions of around 10 – 15 minutes

Handwriting lessons should be in small, clear steps and target:

• letter formation

• letter orientation, spacing and size

• grip, sitting position and posture

• fluency, speed and control

• joining instruction once letter formation is mastered and fluent at speed Teachers will be vigilant to ensure that bad habits do not become ingrained and that the specific needs of left-handed pupils and those with Special Educational Needs are met.

Children need to be made aware of:

• where the letter starts and finishes

• where the individual letter stands with regard to the baseline

• the correct size and height of ascenders and descenders

• spacing and finger space between words

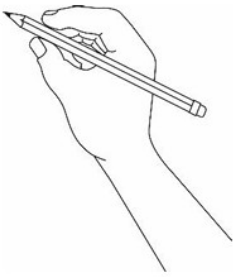
• consistent writing size

• capital letters and their appropriate use

11. Correct technique

Teaching the correct handwriting technique is essential for long-term fluency and legibility. Hand-eye coordination, grip strength, postural control are prerequisites for correct pencil grip, letter formation, and writing stamina.

All pupils should be taught to:



• use the tripod grip

• to maintain a good posture

• position their paper correctly to support effective writing

Tripod Grip:

• pinch the pencil between thumb and index finger, rest it on the middle finger • use stickers to show where fingers should go

12. Left-handed writing technique

Additionally, tailored support should be provided for left-handed pupils to ensure comfort and accuracy in their handwriting development.

Teachers are advised to adapt the classroom environment to support left-handed pupils. Left-handed pupils require specific guidance to avoid poor pencil grip, mirror writing and discomfort.

Left-handed pupils should be taught to:

• hold the pencil correctly between the thumb and forefinger, resting it on the middle finger.

• ensure the pencil grip is firm but relaxed

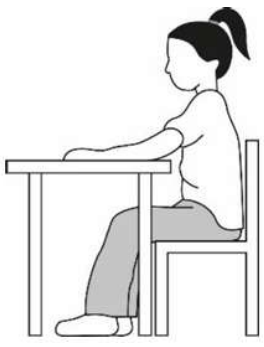
• hold the pencil 2 to 3 centimetres from the tip to see what they are writing more clearly and avoid smudging their work

• tilt the paper appropriately to the right and align the left edge with the child's left arm to maintain a natural wrist position, improve visibility and prevent a hooked grip

• move their whole arm across the page rather than twisting the wrist or fingers, which can cause discomfort and poor letter formation • position their hand underneath the line

• maintain good posture to reduce strain and improve control

Left-handed pupils require:



• their paper tilted to the right

• softer pencils and lighter grip

• space to avoid bumping arms

• a seat on the left of a right-handed peer

13. Sitting position

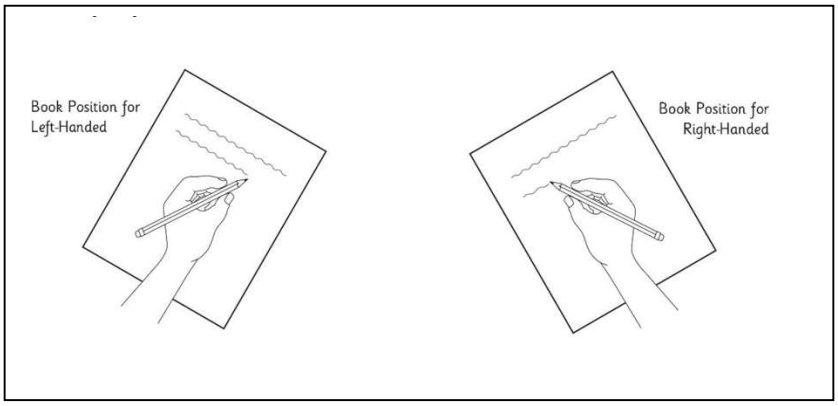
• back should be fully supported by the chair, with a slight forward tilt to encourage an upright posture

• hips, knees, and ankles should be positioned at right angles to promote stability and comfort

• feet must rest flat on the ground or be supported by a footrest if needed

• both arms should rest comfortably on the table and the non-writing hand should be used to stabilise the paper

14. Paper position



15. Letter formation

Writing in the correct letter families reduces cognitive load, allowing pupils to focus on mastering one movement type at a time before progressing. This method builds confidence, prevents poor habits, and lays the foundation for automaticity in writing.

Letter families are grouped according to their starting point and movement pattern, which helps children build muscle memory and fluency. Teaching letters in logical, movement based families supports accurate formation and reinforces spatial awareness, including relative letter sizes.

Pupils should be taught to write each family of upper and lowercase letters accurately on the line, focusing on consistent formation and relative size. Once confident with individual letters, they should progress to writing simple words that contain letters from other families.

This structured approach reinforces movement patterns, supports muscle memory, and helps pupils build fluency through repetition and familiarity.

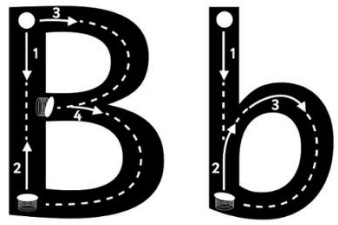
The handwriting families are:

c o a g q d
i l t k j
v w u y f
r n m h p b
e s x z

The Morrells resources use visual cues to assist the writer with letter direction:

• dots for starting points

• arrows for direction with a "bounce" symbol to show return strokes



16. Font style

Morrells recommends using the Sassoon font which is an easy reading font for printing and uses a simple modern joining style.

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh
Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo Pp Qq
Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

17. Teaching letter formation in stages

Handwriting instruction in Reception should align with children's developmental stages, ensuring they are physically and cognitively ready to begin forming letters. The UK curriculum sets expectations for children to write recognisable letters and simple words by the end of the year, prioritising clear, printed writing.

To support diverse learning needs and keep children engaged, multisensory and play-based approaches are strongly encouraged.

Children are expected to:

• sit correctly at a table

• hold a pencil effectively using a tripod grip

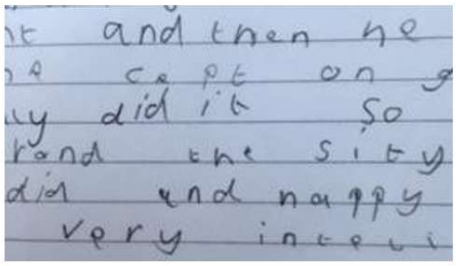
• form lowercase and uppercase letters in the correct direction, starting and finishing in the correct place

• form digits correctly (0–9)

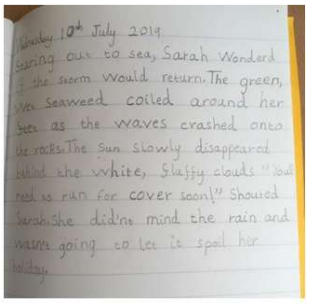
• write their name correctly using a capital letter and correct letter formation

• be aware that writing goes from left to right starting at the margin and from top to bottom

Example of poor letter formation



Example of good letter formation



18. The role of repetition

Repetition plays a critical role in establishing the neural pathways and muscle memory required for fluent handwriting. Through consistent and structured practice, handwriting movements become automatic, allowing pupils to focus less on the mechanics of letter formation and more on higher-level writing tasks such as spelling, grammar, and creative composition. This automaticity is essential for developing confident, efficient writers.

We aim for pupils to develop a clear, fluent style and by the end of Year 6, pupils should be able to adapt their handwriting for different purposes, such as:

• legible handwriting for finished, presented work

• a faster script for note making

• an ability to print for labelling diagrams, or for algebra

• capital letters for filling in a form

19. Cursive handwriting

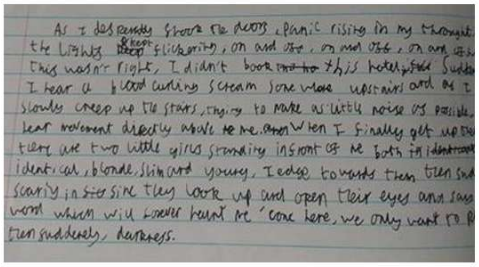
The word cursive originates from the Latin term cursivus, meaning "running" or "flowing," reflecting the continuous, fluid motion of joined handwriting.

The word cursive is conspicuously absent from both the national curriculum and the statutory end-of-key-stage assessment frameworks. Neither document mandates fully joined handwriting, indicating that the implementation of cursive writing is not a formal requirement within the official educational standards. The Writing Framework clearly advises that cursive/joined handwriting should not be introduced until children can consistently and correctly form unjoined (printed) letters.

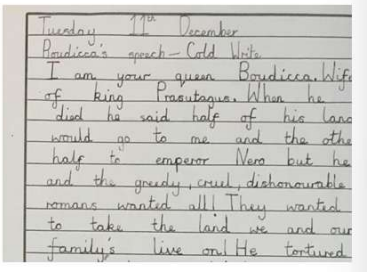
It highlights the importance of focusing on printed letter formation taught through developmentally appropriate letter families.

The framework cautions against introducing cursive too early, as complex letter shapes and joining strokes can hinder progress, particularly for younger children and those with coordination difficulties. Instead, it promotes a sequenced, cumulative approach that builds fluency and confidence before moving on to more advanced styles later in primary school.

Example of poor joining technique



Example of good joining technique



20. Progression to joining

- print handwriting should be mastered before introducing joined up writing
- fluency is built through repetition, modelling, and correction
- focus on fluency, speed, and consistency
- joining is taught systematically, not casually
- build speed and legibility systematically

21. Pen licences

All children should be given the opportunity to begin using pens at the same time to promote inclusion and equal access to handwriting development.

Delaying pen use, particularly for pupils with handwriting difficulties or additional needs can hinder progress and negatively impact self-esteem. Morells recommends that all pupils begin using a pen in handwriting lessons from Year 3, with regular pen use established across all writing tasks by Year 5 and year 6.

22. Monitoring and review

- assess handwriting regularly
- take action for pupils not progressing
- leadership teams review termly progress
- annual policy review to reflect best practice

23. Extra support for pupils who struggle with handwriting

Pupils who require extra support should receive targeted interventions. Adaptations and resources to strengthen fine and gross motor skills may include:

• hand strengthening: stress balls, Thera putty, playdough

• shoulder stability: wheelbarrow walks, wall push-ups

• finger dexterity: tweezers, pegs, beads, tongs • scissor skills: cutting lines and shapes

• trace large shapes and patterns

• use chalkboards or sand trays

• dot-to-dots and mazes to improve control

• integrate retained primitive reflexes

Additional equipment

• handwriting aids including pencil grips and posters for guidance

• sloped writing boards

• wide-lined, textured, coloured or raised-line paper

• visual aids and reminders • lap cushions for posture support

• movement breaks

Slow progress might stem from physical discomfort or low stamina. Dictation or assistive tech may help reduce the burden while they practise handwriting.

24. Policy review

This policy should be reviewed annually to reflect updates in national guidance and best practice.