

# Handwriting Policy for Parents

January 2026

*Handwriting remains an important life skill as an effective means of self-expression and communication with others. It is, however, not a natural skill like walking or jumping... it needs to be taught. Effective teaching requires an awareness of the complexity of this process and the many factors which contribute to success.*

[National Handwriting Association](#), 2025

## Aims

- To effectively teach pre-writing and handwriting skills in order to reduce the cognitive load on pupils.
- To support children to be physically and developmentally ready to write.
- To teach handwriting regularly, explicitly, precisely and cumulatively in order to support pupils to achieve automaticity in handwriting.
- To teach a style of handwriting that supports the development of a joined script that is neat, fluent and legible.
- To teach correct letter formation, ensuring that letters are started and finished correctly, that they are of a regular shape and size and that they are spaced correctly.
- To assist children in taking pride with the presentation of their work.

## Pre-writing Skills

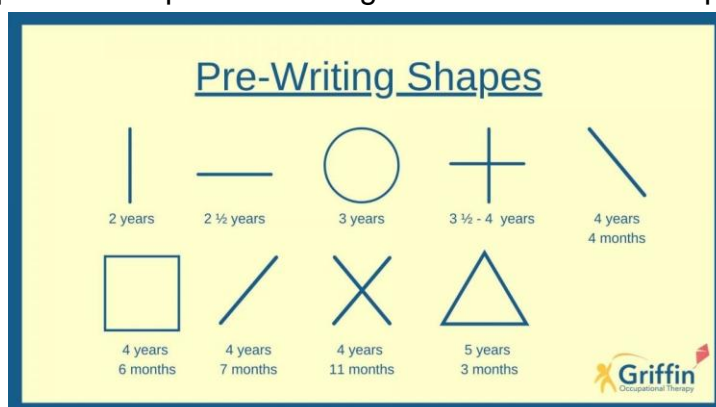
*'Handwriting is a unique 'whole body' skill, involving the simultaneous integration of many components.'* [\[The National Handwriting Association\]](#)

We use fun, short exercises before and/or after handwriting activities to support with:

- Shoulder Stability & Strength
- Crossing the Mid-line
- Wrist Strength & Flexibility
- Thumb and Finger Strength & Dexterity
- Whole Hand Strength & Dexterity

*'Developing the physical skills for handwriting requires substantial, explicit teaching and practice.'* [\[Writing Framework\]](#). Grips (Appendix 1) and pivots (Appendix 2) are assessed and monitored as key indicators of physical readiness. Tailored strategies linked to the development of both fine and gross motor skills are then put in place to support children's physical mark-making at a personalised level.

*'Children need to build a strong mental model of the movement patterns that underpin letter formation.'* [\[Writing Framework\]](#) We consider the developmental stages of writing, including pre-writing shapes and the importance of pattern making and this is reflected in planning and teaching.



## Ready to Write Routines

We use the [National Handwriting Association's](#) 'P checks' to further support learners with the process and physical demands of handwriting. These cover **P**osture, **P**encil grip, **P**aper position and **P**ressure and fluency.



## Handwriting Style

At Chestnut Lane we teach letter and number formation throughout the school from Reception to Year 2. Children are taught the correct starting points for each letter and taught to use exit/lead out strokes (flicks and looped descenders) from Reception. They begin to join their letters during Key Stage 1, as and when they are ready to. The decision to teach the handwriting in this style is based on the following principles:

- Encourages the natural flow of writing.
- Demands correct letter formation.
- Encourages the perception of whole words.
- Supports the development of correct spelling.
- Involves no re-learning, as with printing then joining later.

### The Chestnut Lane Handwriting Style

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

(See Appendix 3)

## Modelling

*'Teachers' own handwriting should provide a model of high standards, across the curriculum and not just in handwriting lessons, but particularly when pupils are learning to write.'* [\[Writing Framework\]](#)

Teachers write in the school's handwriting style (or, if using a computer, use the school's handwriting font), when they write on the board, write captions for displays and when marking children's books. This supports children's learning through consistent modelling of letter formation.

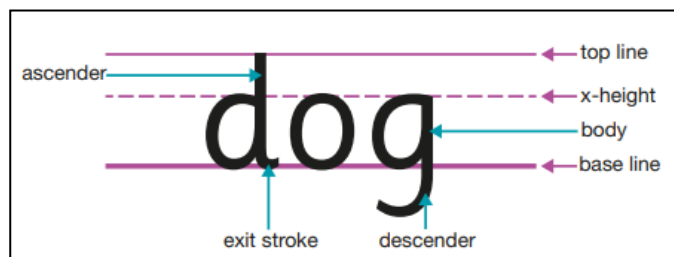
## The Language of Handwriting

Letters are referred to by the sound(s) they make (in phonics lessons) and by their letter name. Children taught child-friendly letter formation phrases (Appendix 4) and number formation rhymes (Appendix 5) alongside accompanying images to support correct formation.

To teach patterns and letter formation, we ensure that children understand positional language such as *up, down, above, below, under, top, bottom, across, around* and *between*.

We refer to lower case (small) and upper case (capital) letters. Children are taught the correct position of 'tall' letters (ascenders) and letters with 'tails' (descenders).

Later, in preparation for joining, children are taught more complex language associated with handwriting, including the terms: clockwise, anticlockwise, vertical, horizontal, diagonal, parallel, ascender, descender, consonant, vowel, joined, slanted, x-height.



## **Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)**

*In Early Years, children are supported “to develop the foundations of a fast, accurate and efficient handwriting style.” Schools must “monitor the product and progress of children’s handwriting and provide additional support as necessary” [EY Preparing for Literacy [EEF Recommendation 3](#)]*

During EYFS children are encouraged to make marks as a key skill for early writing. *“Before children begin to learn letter shapes, they need to have developed the necessary skills, stamina and motivation.”* [\[NHA 2025\]](#) .Through mark making children are taught that writing conveys meaning and are given a wide range of opportunities to develop this skill. [Creative activities](#) and enhanced provision help the children to develop finger strength and control through play. This helps them to gain confidence to make and develop emergent writing skills in a meaningful way.

Mark Making, does not refer to letter formation, but prewriting shapes and patterns. Mark Making opportunities should include using a variety of resources to encourage different movement and exploration such as: shaving foam, through tracing, use of ribbons, chalk, felt tips, pencils, crayons, pattern making in various media. Alongside Mark Making children should be taught to develop their fine motor skills and strength through specific activities and exercises as outlined in Appendix 2. The provision includes both adult-focused and child initiated opportunities.

Adults model correct letter formation and children practise this alongside their phonics programme. Correction of letter formation takes place on an individual basis and the letter formation phrases (Appendix 4) are used to support correct formation.

Children frequently practise name writing. NHA states that *“letters in a child’s own name are the ones they will use on a regular basis, so teaching these should be a first priority. Parents and carers should be shown how to write their child’s name with the correct starting points and movements”* [\[NHA 2025\]](#).

By the end of Reception pupils should be able to:

### **Physical Development ELG: Fine Motor Skills**

Children at the expected level of development will:

- hold a pencil effectively in preparation for fluent writing – using the tripod grip in almost all cases
- begin to show accuracy and care when drawing

### **Literacy ELG: Writing**

Children at the expected level of development will:

- write recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed
- spell words by identifying sounds in them and representing the sound with a letter or letters
- write simple phrases

## **Key Stage 1**

*‘Children must develop fluency in these skills [handwriting and spelling] to the point that they have become automated. If children have to concentrate to ensure their transcription is accurate, they will be less able to think about the content of their writing. A large amount of purposeful practice, supported by effective feedback, is required to develop fluency.’* [\[EEF Recommendation 7\]](#)

The children are taught in accordance with the National Curriculum:

- To use a comfortable pencil grip.
- To produce a controlled line which supports letter formation (for both lower case and capital letters).
- To write letters using the correct sequence of movements.
- To practise handwriting in conjunction with spelling and independent writing, ensuring correct letter formation and proportion.

- To ensure consistency in spacing between letters and words.
- To build up handwriting speed, fluency and legibility.
- To know when to use a clear neat hand for finished, presented work.
- To use a range of presentational skills e.g. print script for captions/subheadings/labels; capital letters for posters, title pages and headings; a range of computer-generated fonts and sizes etc.

Discrete handwriting lessons, where children are taught and have the opportunity to practise letter formation, and later joins, are incorporated into the weekly timetable from KS1. The frequency and length of handwriting lessons will vary according to the age and competence of the pupils, but children will receive live feedback in regular short lessons. In addition, children work on handwriting skills daily in a variety of activities, including early morning activities, phonics work and when writing in their books. Wide-lined exercise books, handwriting paper and standard pencils are used.

Correct handwriting is included as a writing 'non-negotiable' in KS1 (Appendix 6). Children are encouraged to apply the skills they have learned in writing activities across the curriculum and to take pride in their work and an appropriate level of care with presentation. They are taught to adapt their handwriting to the requirements of the task, and learn that, though it is important that their handwriting is legible and fluent, it does not always have to be utterly precise, 'best' handwriting e.g. when planning/drafting. Opportunities to 'publish' their written work as part of 'Writing Workshops' enables children to purposefully practise and apply their 'best' handwriting.

## Year 1

### Year 1 Objectives:

- To develop a comfortable and efficient pencil grip.
- To form lower case letters from correct starting points.
- To form capital letters.
- To form digits 0 – 9.
- To practise handwriting in conjunction with spelling, phonics and independent writing, ensuring correct orientation, formation and proportion.

Adults model correct letter formation and children practise this alongside their phonics programme. Correction of letter formation takes place on an individual basis and the letter formation phrases (Appendix 4) continue to be used to support correct formation. Children frequently practise name writing, including both their first name and surnames to support their understanding and formation of capital letters.

In handwriting lessons, children will work on the following **letter formation families** (Appendix 7):

- 'Long Ladders' - down and off in another direction:

l, j, i, t, u, y

- 'One-armed Robots' – down and retrace upwards:

b, h, k, m, n, p, r

- 'Curly Caterpillars' - anti-clockwise round:

c, a, d, e, g, o, q, f, s

- 'Zig zag' letters:

V, W, X, Z

## Capital Letters

Once lower case letters have been taught in the formation families outlined above, formation of capital letters should be taught in the following order:

- Straight line letters – letters formed with only vertical and horizontal lines:

L, F, E, H, T, I

- Curved letters – letters involving curves:

U, C, O, Q, G, S, J, D, P, B, R

- Diagonal line letters – letters that include diagonal strokes:

K, A, N, M, V, W, X, Y, Z

When learning capital letter formation, children should also be explicitly taught to link the capital letter to the lower case letter that they have previously learned. (Appendix 4)

If they are ready (at teacher's discretion) children can begin to work on the basic joins, as outlined in the **Year 2** guidance.

In Year 1 handwriting will also be used to reinforce work in phonics, practise the spelling of 'tricky words' and ensure correct formation and orientation of digits 0 -9 (Appendix 5).

## Year 2

### Year 2 Objectives:

- To consolidate handwriting skills taught in Year 1.
- To practise handwriting in conjunction with phonics, spelling and independent writing, ensuring correct orientation, formation and proportion.
- To consistently use spacing appropriate to the size of the letters.
- To begin using and practising the five handwriting joins used in the Chestnut Lane script.
- To write with confidence and use joined writing in independent writing.

Children may need to revisit the letter writing families from **Year 1** and ensure correct individual letter formation. All letters should be formed from the correct starting points, be of an appropriate and relative size, be positioned on the line and be correctly orientated before joins are taught.

Children will learn both diagonal and horizontal joins, first to letters without ascenders and then to those with. To enable children to practise similar joins, letters are arranged into 'joining groups' and there is a clear sequence of progression for five sets of joins. (Appendix 8)

Once the children are confident with the movements required, they will be encouraged to apply these skills to independent writing and use joined-up handwriting in their daily learning. Bitesize videos modelling the joins enable parents and guardians to support a consistent approach at home.

### **Special Educational Needs**

In addition to this progression, provision will be made for children with Special Educational Needs. This will include individual/small group sessions at the appropriate level, planned interventions as required, use of pencil grips and opportunities to practise using a range of media. We seek advice from NHS Occupational Therapists via advice sessions, and implement suggested approaches and activities tailored to individual needs when appropriate.

### **Left-handed Provision**

To ensure left-handed children are not disadvantaged when writing, a range of strategies will be employed. Letter formation and 'skywriting' will also be completed with the left hand to provide left-handed pupils with a model. Left-handed children will sit on the left of right-handed children to ensure that their arms do not clash, and they will be encouraged to tilt their work clockwise so they can see what they have written.

To avoid smudging, left-handed children will be encouraged to position their fingers about 1.5 cm away from the end of the writing implement, and their wrist should be straight. As writing from left to right is more difficult for left-handed children they should be supported to ensure that they do not develop poor posture, position or pen holds which will deter them from enjoying writing.

### **Diversity**

Our diverse and multi-cultural school community is one of our biggest assets. We recognise and value the written language systems our children and families use at home, including some with symbols and conventions that differ from those used in English. We acknowledge there is much to be gained from extending this interest in the structure and origin of written scripts, including English in its many forms.



## Handwriting Policy Appendix 1

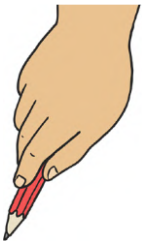
# Stages of Pencil Grip

### Fisted grasp or Palmar Supinate Grasp



- Pencil is held in the palm.
- All fingers and thumb are used.
- Movement is from the shoulder; the arm and the hand move as a unit.
- Light scribbles are produced with this pencil grip.

### Digital Pronate Grasp



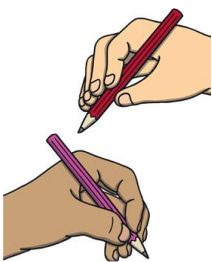
- All fingers are holding the pencil but the wrist is turned so that the palm is facing down towards the page.
- Movement comes mostly from the elbow and the shoulder is now stabilized.
- Horizontal lines, vertical lines and circular lines are able to be copied.

### Four-Finger Grasp



- Fingers are held on the pencil shaft opposite the thumb, beginning to form the arc between the thumb and index finger.
- Movement occurs from the wrist; the hand and fingers move as a whole unit.
- Zigzag lines, crossed lines and simple humans can be drawn with this grip.

### Static Tripod Grasp or Static Quadropod Grasp



- A three-finger grasp, where the thumb, index finger and middle finger work as one unit.
- Movement is usually from the wrist with this static grasp.
- Static quadropod grip has a fourth finger involved.
- Triangles, circles and squares can be copied with this grip.

### Dynamic Tripod



- Pencil is held in a stable position between the thumb, index and middle finger.
- The ring and little fingers are bent and rest comfortably on the table.
- The index finger and thumb form an open space.
- Movement comes from the fingertips.
- This is the ideal grip to move the pencil efficiently, accurately and for letter formation practice.

### Shoulder Pivot

#### What to look out for during stages of development

A child will develop a grasp that allows them to hold something tight without dropping it. It is called a **Fisted grasp or Palmar Supinate grasp** (see picture reference below). They wrap their fingers around the object and make a fist with the object held in the middle. Most children will commonly use this grasp in early stages of mark making.



A child's neck, chest and back are the most well-developed muscles of their upper body. They will have a fairly stiff wrist and a straight elbow with most of their movement coming from their shoulder.

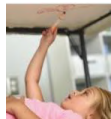
Marks children will make at this stage will likely be long and straight or large and circular. Their range of movement will be restricted to their strongest muscle group.

#### Strategies to support and extend a shoulder pivot

Use large boards at child height e.g. blackboard paint, mirrors, Perspex.



Upside down mark-making (child to lay on their back with their arm extended up above them) - attach paper to the bottom of tables.



Washing walls with soap and brushes.



Painting with mops.



Mixing mud kitchen ingredients.



Big digging in sand or soil.



Sweeping the floor with big brushes.



Using trains in paint or shaving foam.



Foam bike tracks.



## Elbow Pivot

### What to look out for during stages of development

Once a child's muscles in the back, upper arms and shoulders begin to strengthen, they begin to have more movement in their elbow. Their shoulder starts to become more inactive and their elbow will do more work.

There are two noticeable stages in the elbow pivot:

1. 'Emergent' stage where the elbow bends, allowing for more range of movement (looks like a sawing motion moving the arm forwards and backwards in straight lines).
2. 'Proficient' stage - they will begin to use the muscles in their upper and lower arm to swing their arm in and out from their body in semi-circular actions (their wrist will often stay quite stiff and they will keep a **Fisted/Palmar Supinate** grasp).



### Strategies to support and extend an elbow pivot

#### Emergent

Use large rollers or brushes up and down on outside surfaces.

Use a sweeping motion with a stiff outside brush e.g. sweeping races through leaves, create foam tracks.

Cover a table top in plain paper for children to explore with mark making during continuous provision.

Ribbon/scarf twirling.

#### Proficient

Drawing circles onto large sheets of sugar paper - could do it to some music!

Using large lolly sticks turned onto its side to 'clear' tracks for cars. E.g. rice/flour/sand/sequins /glitter.

Pulling their bodies up on a climbing wall.

Mixing ingredients in a bowl e.g. pizza dough.



## Wrist Pivot

### What to look out for during stages of development

Children's arm muscles will develop and they will gain an even smaller range of movement. Their elbow will tuck in to the side of their body and the shoulder movement is minimal.

The wrist pivot is usually the stage that children stick with for the least amount of time before their pivot changes again.

Often during this stage children will change their grip to a **Digital Pronate grasp**. This is a clear indicator that their stage of fine motor is moving forward.



### Strategies to support and extend a wrist pivot

It is really important as this stage to reduce everything in size when planning for activities, e.g. using thin strips of paper or smaller surfaces, to ensure you are encouraging their wrist movement rather than using their elbow or shoulder.

Threading  
various shapes

Sewing

Fishing games

Splatter  
painting

Using pegs to attach  
things e.g. ordering  
numbers on a washing  
line

Dabbing with  
sponges or  
brushes

Threading cotton  
reels.

Weaving paper

Finger football!



## Hand Arch Development

Hand arches are the curved surfaces of the palm of the hand. The ability to control the hand arches allows the hand to hold a variety of objects of different sizes. Proper arch development is essential for efficient pencil grasp and handwriting without discomfort.

It is important to encourage children to explore a variety of activities that promote finger isolation and arch formation from an early age. Fine motor activities that support intrinsic muscle strength are key to refining the arches of the hands and to support pencil grasp.



### Fine motor activities to support the arches of the hands

Adding beads  
onto a pipe  
cleaner

Using playdough -  
making different  
shapes, rolling,  
squishing etc.

Chalking patterns,  
letters, numbers,  
shapes outside on  
the ground

Using tweezers to  
pick up objects and  
put them in tray  
e.g. pom poms

Cotton bud dot  
painting

Hole punching  
patterns

Weaving paper

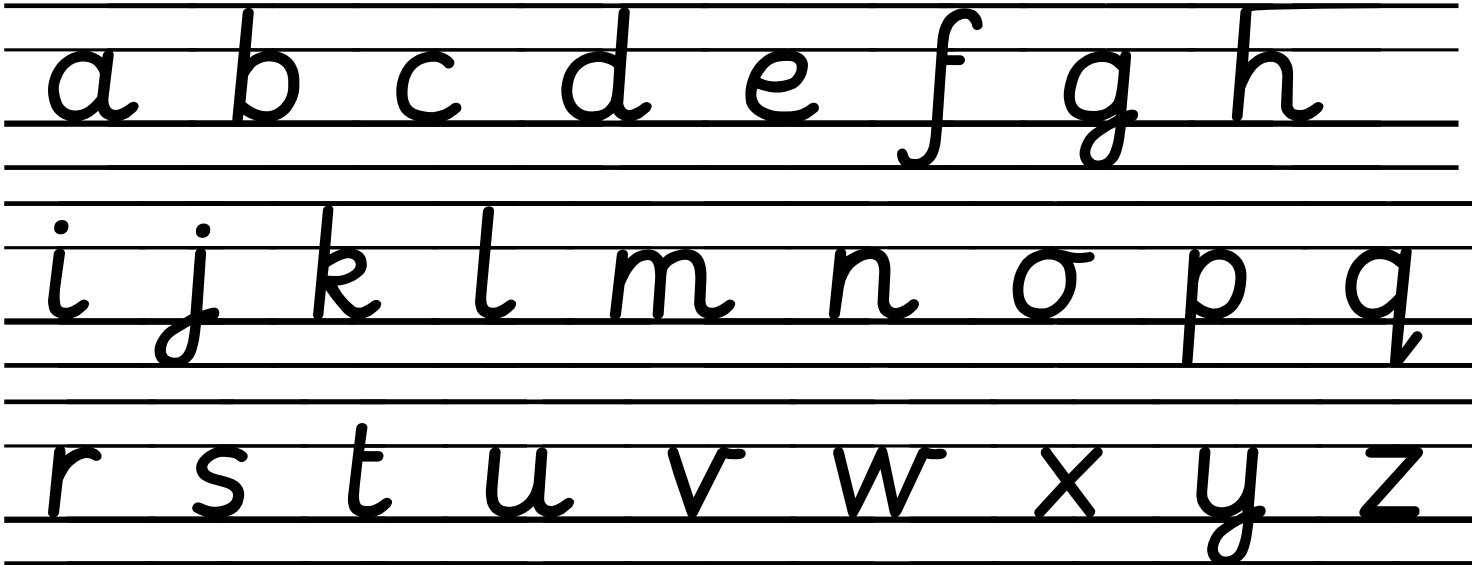
Snipping at paper  
with scissors  
(hedgehog cutting)

Squeezing bottles  
filled with water

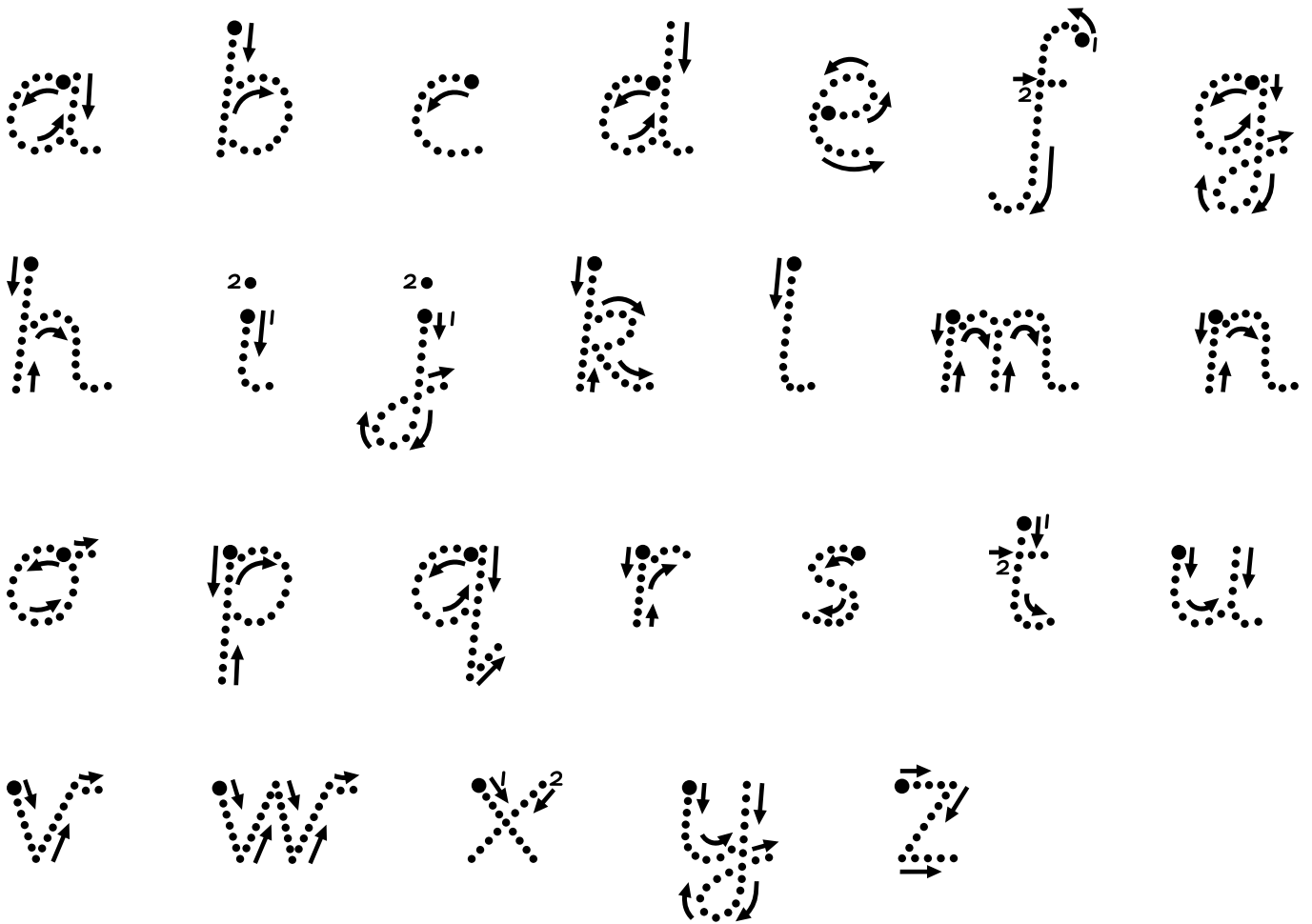


## Handwriting Policy Appendix 3

### Letter Formation

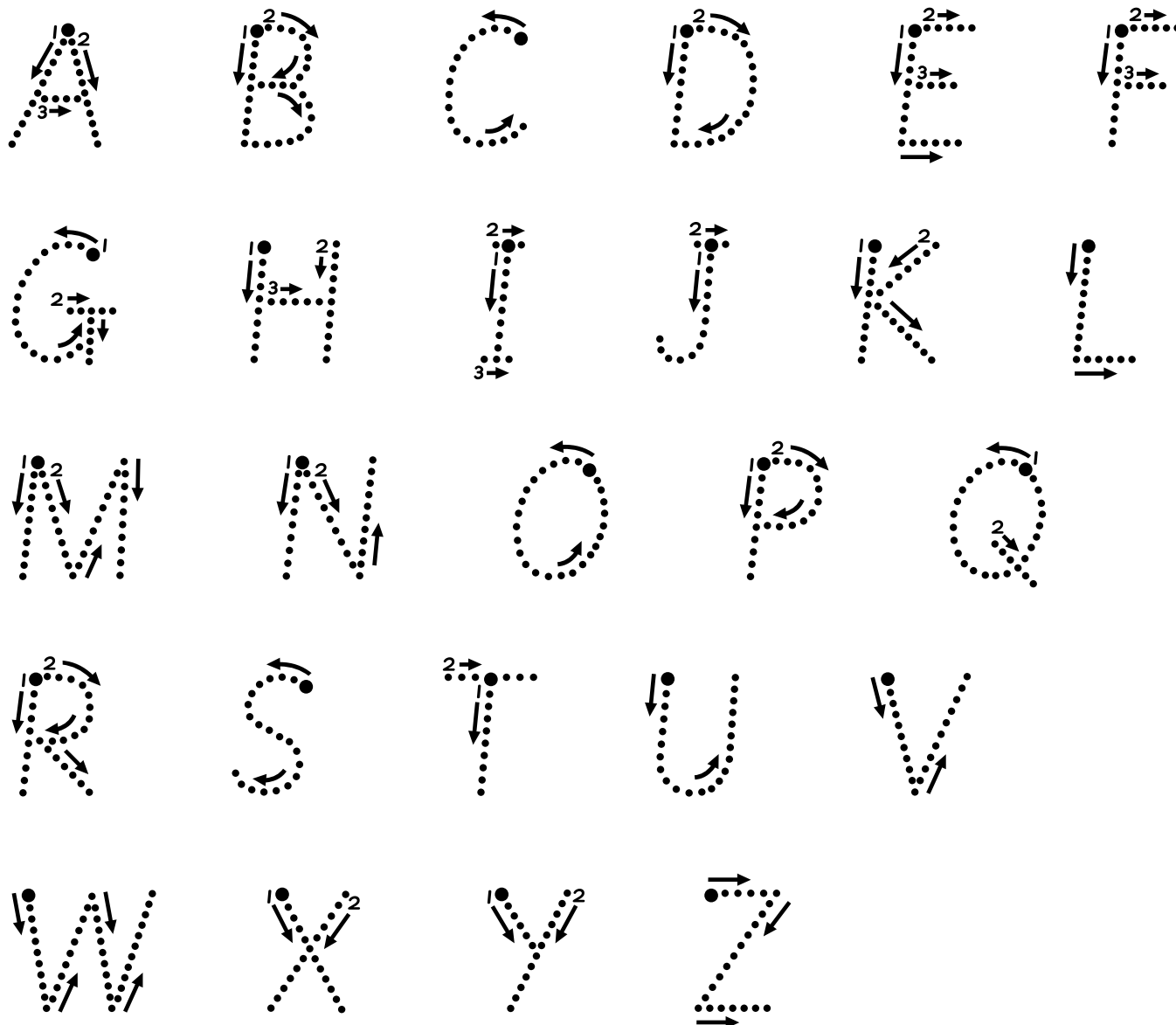


#### Lower Case Letters

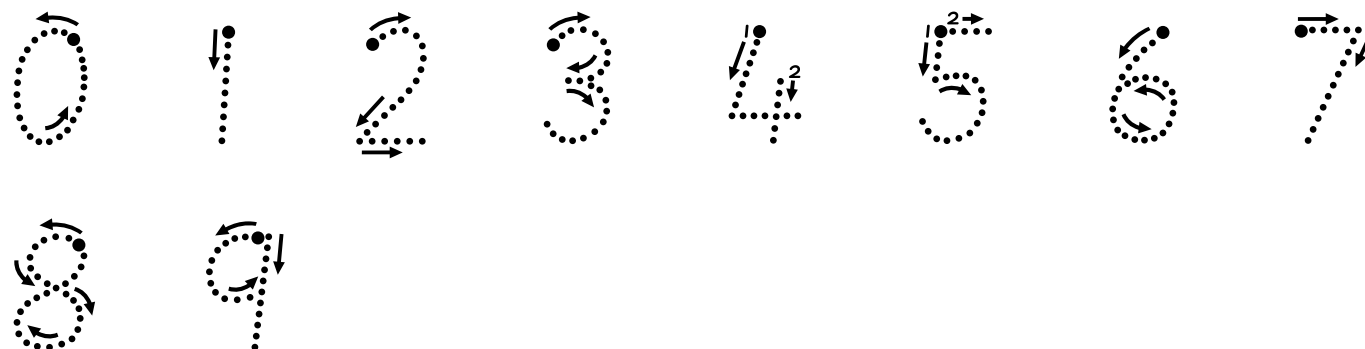


\*Left handed children may cross horizontal lines from right to left when forming letters (i.e 'f' 't')

## Capital Letters




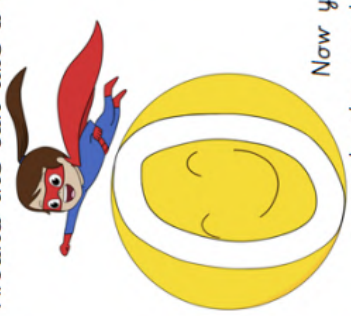

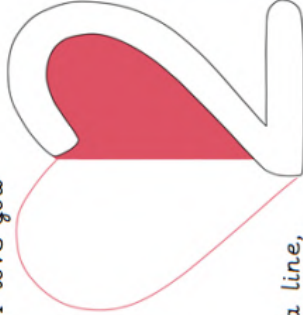
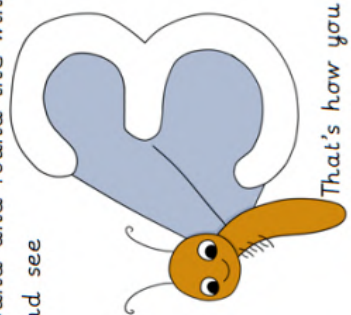
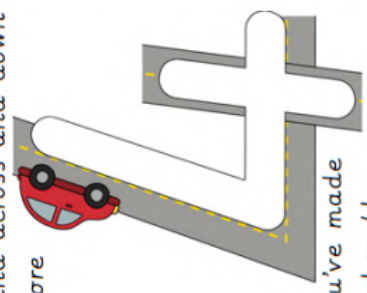
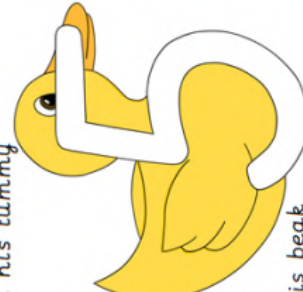
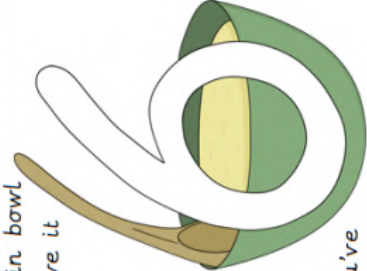
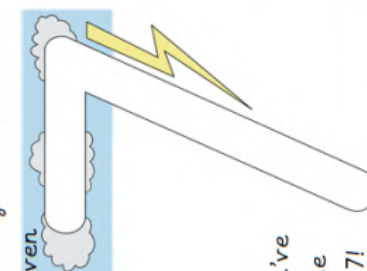


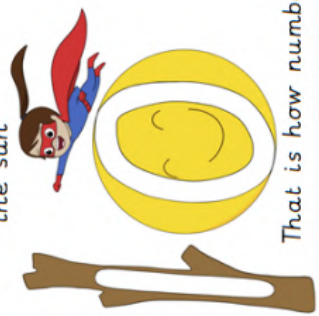
## Number Formation



# Handwriting Policy Appendix 4

 <p>Chestnut Lane School Letter Formation Rhymes</p>	<b>Aa</b>  all around the apple and back down the leaf	<b>Bb</b>  straight down bounce the ball	<b>Cc</b>  curl around the caterpillar	<b>Dd</b>  around the dogs tummy, up his ears and down his tail	<b>Ee</b>  around the elephant's face and up his trunk
	<b>Ff</b>  finish the fence and close the lock	<b>Gg</b>  round the glue pot and scoop it out	<b>Ii</b>  down the insect and his sting, dot for the head	<b>Jj</b>  jump into the jam, scoop it out, add the lid	<b>Ll</b>  down the leg and remember the foot
	<b>Mm</b>  down the mole, build a mound build a mound	<b>Nn</b>  down the goalie, over the net	<b>Oo</b>  around the orange and across the leaf	<b>Pp</b>  down the paintbrush and around the palette	<b>Ss</b>  slither down the snake
	<b>Tt</b>  down the tree to the roots and give it a branch	<b>Uu</b>  under the umbrella, add the puddle	<b>Vv</b>  the van goes down up straight on the bumpy road	<b>Ww</b>  down and up one wing then down and up the other	<b>Zz</b>  zig zag zig goes the zip

## Handwriting Policy Appendix 5

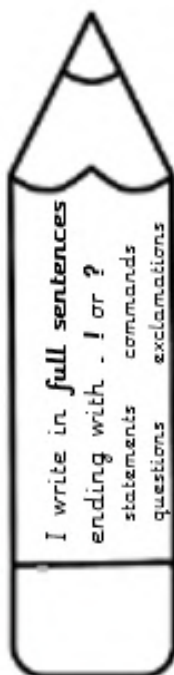
 <p>Chestnut Lane School Number Formation Rhymes</p>	<p>Around the sun like a hero</p>  <p>Now you've made the number 0!</p>	<p>Number 1 is like a stick</p>  <p>A straight line down that's very quick!</p>	<p>Half a heart says 'I love you'</p>  <p>Add a line, now I've made 2!</p>
<p>Round and round the wings and see</p>  <p>That's how you make the number 3!</p>	<p>Down and across and down once more</p>  <p>Now you've made the number 4!</p>	<p>Down duck's neck and around his tummy</p>  <p>Add his beak To make it funny!</p>	<p>Spoon in bowl and give it a mix</p>  <p>Now you've made the number 6!</p>
<p>Across the sky and down from heaven</p>  <p>Now you've made the number 7!</p>	<p>Slither down the snake but wait!</p>  <p>Go back up to make number 8!</p>	<p>Around the balloon and down the line</p>  <p>That how you make the number 9!</p>	<p>Down the stick and around the sun</p>  <p>That is how number 10 is done!</p>



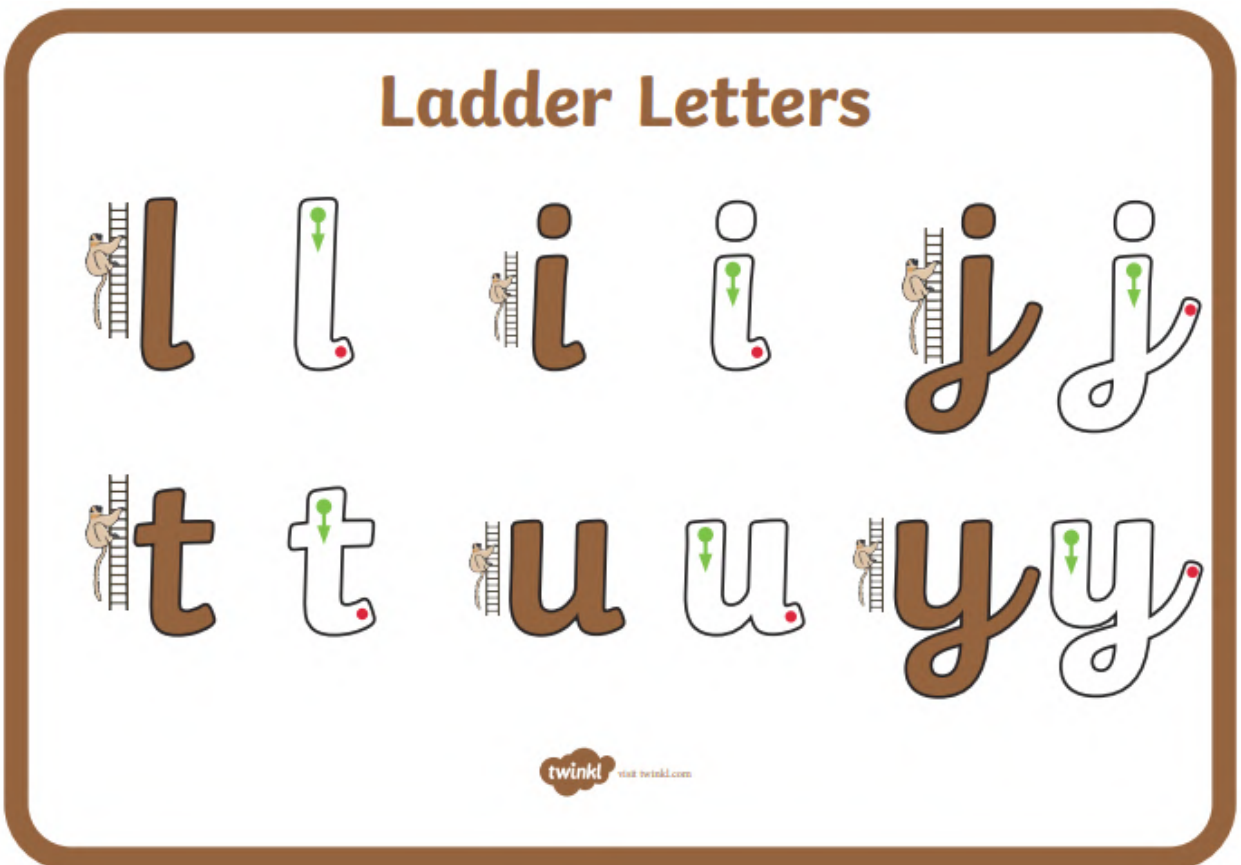
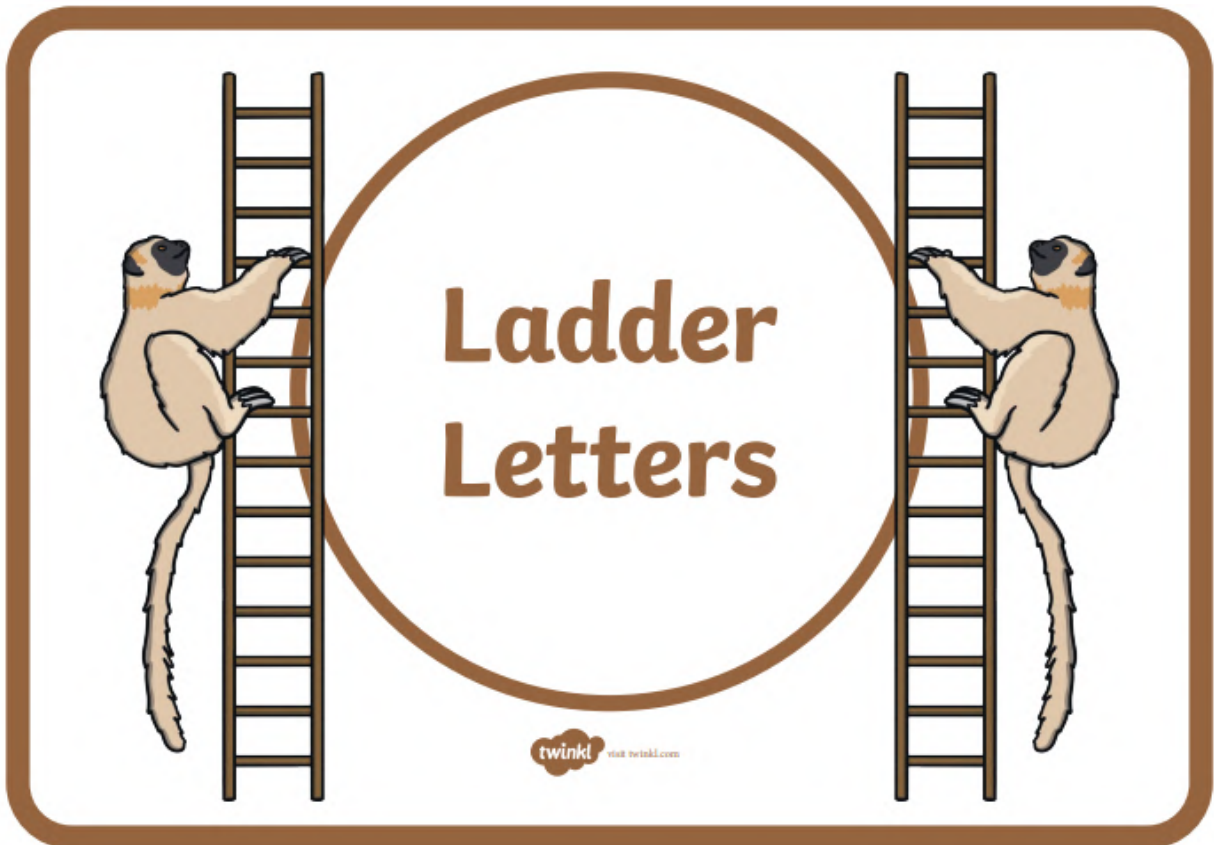
**Year 1**  
**Writing Non-Negotiables**



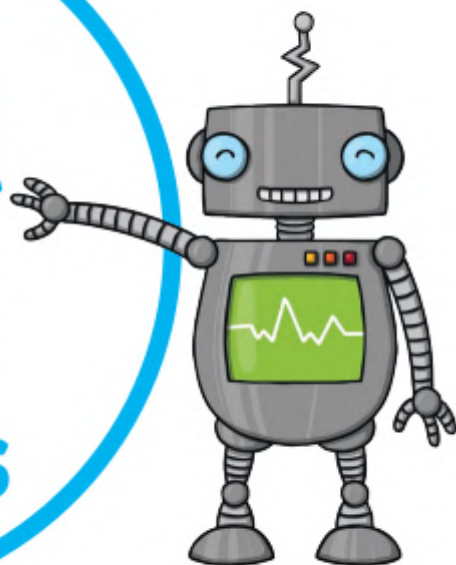
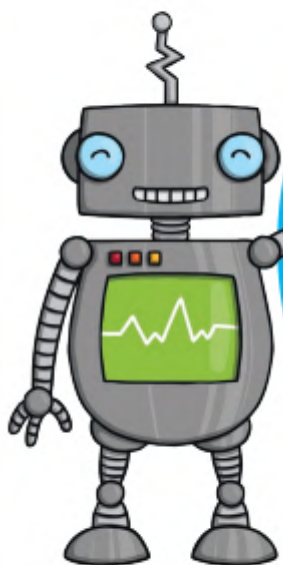
**Year 2**  
**Writing Non-Negotiables**



## Handwriting Policy Appendix 6

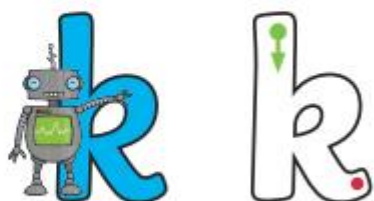
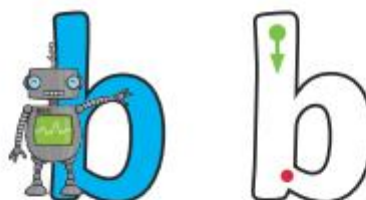


# One Armed Robot Letters



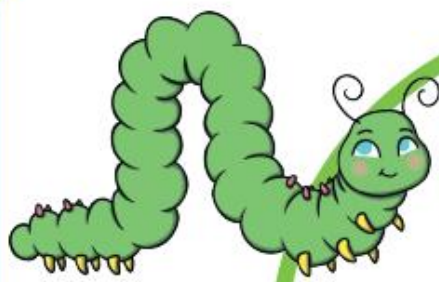
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## One Armed Robot Letters

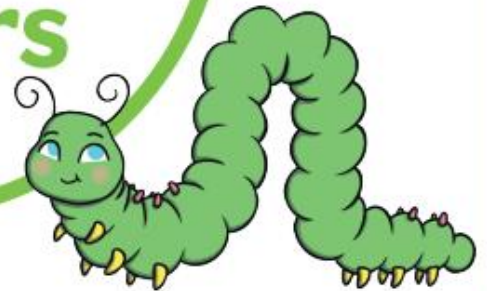


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# Curly Caterpillar Letters



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## Curly Caterpillar Letters

c

c

a

a

o

o

q

q

g

g

d

d

e

e

s

s

f

f

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# Zigzag Monster Letters



## Zigzag Monster Letters





## Handwriting Policy Appendix 8

### Joined Handwriting Progression

**Revision of Letter Formation Families:** referred to in Reception and taught in order in Year 1

<b>Long Ladder</b>	
<b>One-armed Robot</b>	
<b>Curly Caterpillar</b>	
<b>Zig Zag Monsters</b>	

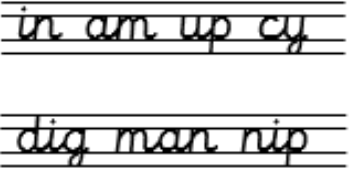
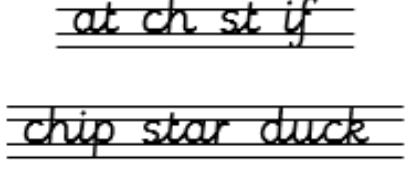
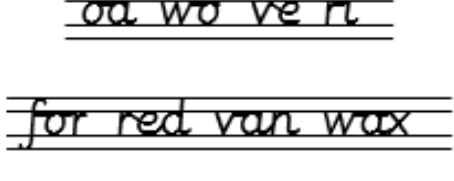
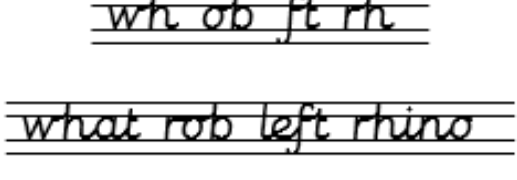
#### Joining Groups

Note: x is the only 'break' letter i.e. it does not join to the next letter. The letter before does join to x at the top of the x-height.

<b>Group 1</b>	Letters with exit flicks, plus s	
<b>Group 2</b>	Letters which start at the top of the x-height	 
<b>Group 3</b>	Letters which start at the top of the ascender	
<b>Group 4</b>	Letters which finish at the top of the x-height	
<b>Group 5</b>	Letters with looped/flicked descenders	

## Joined Handwriting Progression

### The Joins

<b>First Join</b> Group 1 to Group 2	Diagonal join from the end point of one letter to the start point of the next	Examples 
<b>Second Join</b> Group 1 to Group 3	Diagonal join meets the ascender half way up the letter and then continues to the top of the ascender	
<b>Third Join</b> Group 4 to Group 2	A horizontal join going from the x-height of one letter to the x-height of another.	
<b>Fourth Join</b> Group 4 to Group 3	Diagonal join that goes from the x-height of one letter to the top of the ascender of the next.	
<b>Fifth Join</b> Group 5 to Group 2	Diagonal join that goes from the looped/flicked descender of one letter to the start point of the next	