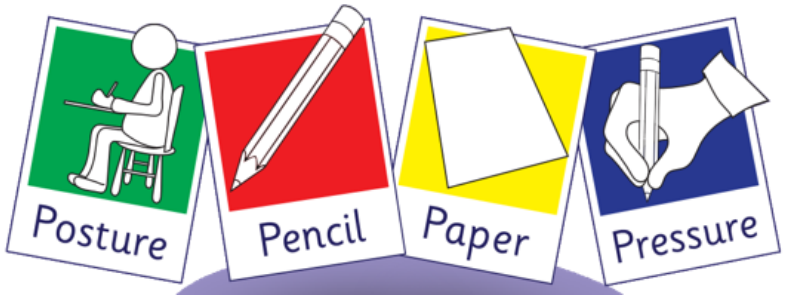
Airy Hill Primary School
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Airy Hill Primary School
Handwriting Progression in EYFS

Handwriting in EYFS forms the foundation for the writing curriculum in Key Stage 1. In Nursery, children develop the physical control and mark making skills required for writing, while in Reception children are taught correct letter formation alongside phonics so that they can apply these skills in words, captions and simple sentences.

This progression outlines how handwriting develops across the Early Years Foundation Stage. It reflects guidance from The Writing Framework (DfE) and Ofsted's Strong Foundations in the First Years of School and recognises that successful handwriting develops gradually through physical development, mark making, phonics and purposeful writing.

The 'P checks' are used to support the process of handwriting and cover **Posture**, **Pencil** grasp, **Paper** position and **Pressure** and fluency.



Posture - Children are taught the importance of sitting upright and correctly on their chair, with '6 feet' on the floor (2 children's feet, 4 chair feet), their chair tucked in and their bottom at the back of the seat.

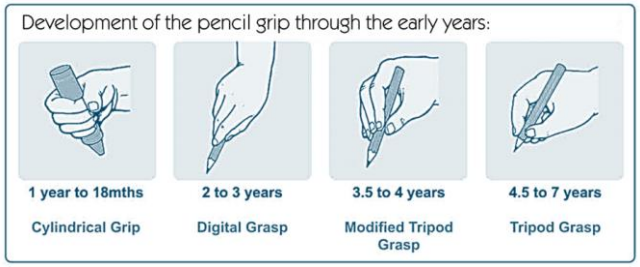
Pencil – Children are taught to pinch and flick the pencil into their hands.

Paper - Left-handed children are encouraged to tilt their paper slightly to the right to improve their view of what they are writing, and to reduce smudging. Right-handed children may find it helpful to tilt paper slightly to the left. Paper is steadied with the free hand.

Pressure – Children are encouraged to apply appropriate pressure to the pencil as they write, not too heavy and not too light.

Pencil Grip

Upon joining EYFS, pupils handwriting grip will be assessed. This will usually be one of the four grips below:



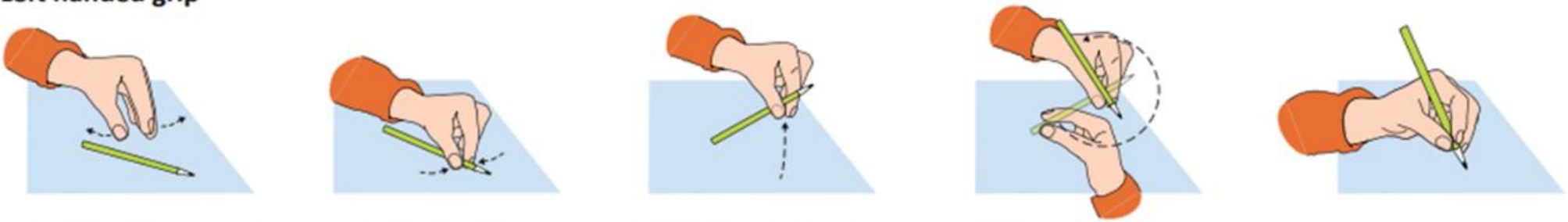
Once this has been assessed, we work towards all children achieving the tripod grasp before they leave their reception class. Initially, pupils are taught the below method for correctly picking up and holding a pencil.

Right handed grip



1. *Point away the pencil,* **2.** *Pinch it near the tip,* **3.** *Lift it off the table,* **4.** *Spin it round...* **5.** *...and grip.*

Left handed grip



1. *Point away the pencil,* **2.** *Pinch it near the tip,* **3.** *Lift it off the table,* **4.** *Spin it round...* **5.** *...and grip.*

Link to phonic knowledge and development

As children begin learning the pure sounds in EYFS (Phase 2 graphemes), reference is made to the pictures and the formation phrase from Little Wandle Letters and Sounds which acts as an aid in helping the children to write the grapheme.

Example of a Little Wandle sound card with the	 a	 astronaut	Open your mouth wide and make the **a** sound at the back of your mouth **a a a**	Around the astronaut's helmet and down into space.	mnemonic

<u>Nursery Handwriting Progression (Age 3–4)</u>

Focus

Physical readiness, mark making and fine motor development.

There is no expectation that children master letter formation in Nursery. Children are supported to develop the foundations required for writing through play-based learning, exploration and adult modelling.

Fine Motor and Physical Development Children develop:

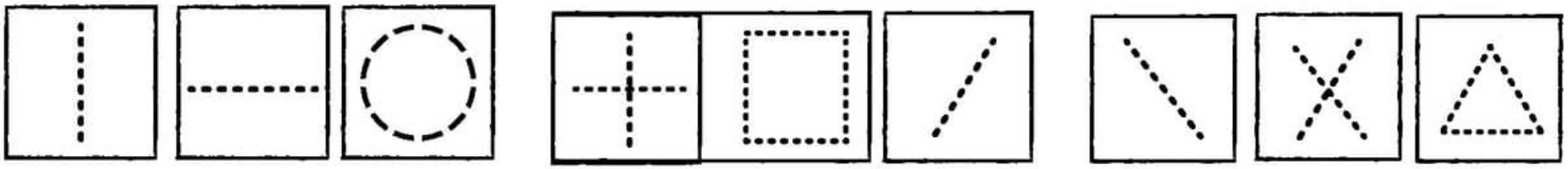
- hand strength
- coordination
- control
- whole-arm movements when drawing and colouring
- early pencil grip development
- increasing stamina for mark making

Adults support this through activities such as:

- playdough squeezing and rolling
- threading and laces
- peg boards
- construction and building
- snipping with scissors
- painting and large-scale mark making
- drawing on vertical surfaces (e.g. easels or boards)

Pre-writing shapes

These movements develop the control and directional awareness needed for later letter formation.



Pre-writing shapes with flow

Zig-zag



Wavy



Looped



Spiral



Letter Awareness

Children may begin to:

- recognise some letters, particularly those in their name
- attempt to write letters using marks or shapes
- explore writing through play

Correct letter formation is not expected at this stage, although some children may begin forming letters if developmentally ready.

Nursery Termly Progression

	Autumn Term	Spring Term	Summer Term
Focus	Gross motor control	Increasing control	Purposeful mark making
Children develop	Shoulder and arm movements Large-scale mark making Early control of tools	Improved fine motor precision Controlled mark making Early directional movement (left to right)	Copy pre-writing strokes Create simple patterns and shapes Show increased hand strength and stamina
Activities	• Painting with large brushes • Outdoor chalk drawing • Dough squeezing and rolling • Threading and large construction • Large drawing movements on easels or floors • Pen disco	• Peg boards and tweezers • Cutting and snipping activities • Drawing lines, circles and simple shapes • Following simple paths and patterns • Vertical drawing and mark making • Pen disco	• Copying lines, zig-zags and curves • Simple pattern making • Drawing recognisable shapes • Fine motor activities (pegs, threading, tweezers) • Beginning to represent meaning through marks • Pen disco

Reception Handwriting Progression (Age 4–5)

Focus

Correct letter formation linked to phonics.

Handwriting is taught through short, frequent sessions and is closely linked to Little Wandle Phonics. Children learn letter formation as new graphemes are introduced so that they can immediately apply them in both reading and writing.

Adults model correct letter formation and address incorrect formation immediately and sensitively to help children develop secure habits. Accuracy of letter formation is prioritised over speed.

Fine Motor Development

Children develop:

- a more consistent tripod grip
- improved wrist stability
- finger isolation
- improved hand–eye coordination

Adults continue to provide regular opportunities to strengthen fine motor control through play and structured activities.

Letter Formation

Children learn to form letters correctly using Little Wandle formation rhymes.

After initial introduction, lower-case letters are taught in formation families so that children practise similar movement patterns together, helping them develop motor memory and fluency.

Curly Caterpillar Letters	Ladder Letters	One-Armed Robot Letters	Zig-Zag letters
c a o d g q e s f	l t i j u y	r n m h b k p	v w x z

Capital Letters

Capital letters are introduced later in Reception once lower-case formation is secure.

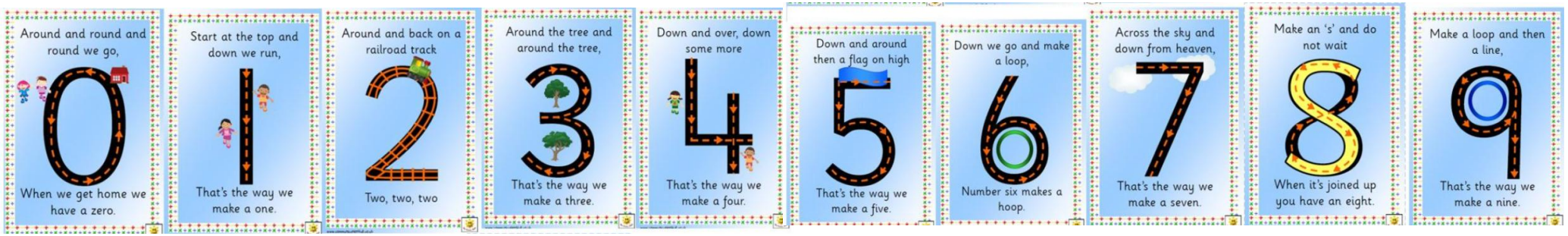
Children learn to:

- use a capital letter at the beginning of their name
- begin forming capital letters correctly.

Numbers

Number formation is introduced throughout mathematics and practised through explicit teaching, modelling and practise.

The following rhymes are used to teach number formation:



Name Writing

By the end of Reception, most children can:

- write their name independently
- begin with a capital letter
- follow with correctly formed lower-case letters.

Reception Termly Progression

	Autumn Term	Spring Term	Summer Term
Focus	Writing readiness and early letter formation	Developing accurate letter formation	Increasing fluency and consistency
Children develop	Secure pencil grip and posture Fine motor strength and control Correct formation of letters taught in phonics Understanding correct starting points and direction	Increasingly secure formation of most taught lower-case letters Beginning to write on lines with increasing control Correct orientation and size of letters Beginning to write simple words and captions	Consistent formation of most lower-case letters Improved control, stamina and fluency when writing Using capital letters for names and sentence starts Writing simple sentences with clearer spacing
Activities	• Fine motor activities (threading, tweezers, peg boards) • Large-scale and vertical writing • Letter formation during phonics • Afternoon meeting	• Practising writing words linked to phonics • Guided writing activities • Writing labels, captions and simple words • Writing on simple lines • Afternoon meeting	• Independent writing opportunities • Writing simple sentences • Copying short captions • Practising capital letters and spacing • Afternoon meeting

Writing Development Across EYFS

Children typically progress through the following stages.

Stage	What It Looks Like	Adult Support	Assessment Focus
Mark Making	Scribbles, lines and circles	Model mark making and provide a wide range of tools and materials	Child explores tools and movements

Meaningful Marks	Gives meaning to marks and drawings	Encourage children to talk about what they have drawn or written	Child understands that marks can represent meaning
Early Writing	Recognisable letters begin to appear	Model letter formation and link writing to phonics	Child attempts to write letters in their name or sounds they know
Emergent Writing	Writes words using the sounds they can hear	Encourage segmenting and talking about sounds in words	Child begins linking sounds to letters
Sentence Writing	Writes simple phrases or sentences	Model sentence structure and support oral rehearsal	Child writes a simple sentence that others can read

Overview of Writing Development Across EYFS

Skill Area	Nursery (3–4)	Reception (4–5)
Pencil Grip	Developing grip, whole-arm movements	More consistent tripod grip
Pre-Writing Strokes	Vertical lines, horizontal lines, circles	Crosses, squares, diagonal lines
Shapes	Simple open shapes	More controlled closed shapes
Letter Writing	Letter-like marks	Correct letter formation taught
Name Writing	May recognise letters in name	Writes name independently
Drawing	Simple figures	More detailed drawings

End of Reception Expectations (ELG)

By the end of Reception, children should be able to:

- write recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed
- spell words by identifying sounds in them and representing the sounds with a letter or letters words using phonics knowledge
- write simple phrases and sentences that can be read by others.