



**Our Lady Queen of Peace RC Primary
School**

Handwriting Policy

OLQP Handwriting Policy

Aims

At Our Lady Queen of Peace, we use the Nelson Handwriting scheme from Year 1-6 in line with the statutory curricula for handwriting.

Our aim is to prepare children for life beyond primary school by ensuring they can write legibly, fluently and at a reasonable speed. For an experienced writer, the hand movements required for writing will be firmly established in movement memory. For this reason, we provide children with regular opportunities to practise handwriting movements correctly so these movements become automatic.

There is an expectation that handwriting, following the Nelson Handwriting scheme, will be regularly modelled by all classroom staff in all subjects. Alongside this, most writing in the classroom (displays, presentations, worksheets) will feature the school's Sassoon Primary Infant font (See Appendix 1). To aid consistent letter formation in KS1, children use exercise books with guided tramlines (See Appendix 2) reducing from 18mm in key stage 1 to 12mm in key stage 2 and standard 8mm lines in Upper Key Stage 2. All children in key stage 2 use a Staedtler ink handwriting pen for writing.

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

In this stage, our focus is on movement and motor skill development. Children are supported to develop their gross motor and fine motor skills through a range of play and mark-making activities. As children begin to develop control and coordination, their marks begin to take shape and include patterns. Children are encouraged to participate in fine motor activities daily to develop correct pencil grip. Nursery children access Funky fingers activities as part of the continuous provision and will take part in small group dough disco activities. Opportunities for children to develop these skills through their play are planned every day in Nursery and Reception to develop essential pre-writing skills in line with the Early Learning Goals of the Foundation Stage.

Writing skills are encouraged through physical play, mark making and eventually using phonic knowledge to write words. Fine motor skills are developed further to support correct pencil grip. Reception children use Nelson Handwriting workbooks in small groups to practice motor skills before moving on to early letter formation.

By the end of EYFS, the expectation is that 'every child uses a pencil and holds it effectively to form recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed.' To achieve this curriculum objective at Our Lady Queen of Peace, we ensure that:

- ✓ Children have access to a range of mark making tools including chubby crayons, big chalk, paint brushes and thick triangular pencils.
- ✓ The environment provides a range of writing opportunities, where children can practise and apply pre-writing skills.
- ✓ Children use thick triangular pencils to enable them to learn how to hold a pencil correctly.
- ✓ Children are taught the letters in their name when they are developmentally ready.
- ✓ Irregular letter forms starting in the correct place, with movement in the correct direction are encouraged over uniformly regular letters achieved through incorrect movements. This supports children develop their fluency as they progress through our school.
- ✓ Close attention is paid to pencil grip, correct posture and the positioning of the paper to help children develop good handwriting habits for the future

✓ In Reception, children start the year by practising handwriting patterns. Correct letter formation is taught alongside phonics. We use Essential Letters and Sounds and have adopted their handwriting mnemonics and teaching approach.

Pre-Writing

The National Handwriting Association offered practical guidance on how to facilitate comfortable, fluent, legible handwriting: *The Good Practice for Handwriting: "Prepare for P Checks and S Factors for Success"*. The 'P checks' are used to support the process of handwriting and cover Posture, Pencil grasp, Paper position and Pressure and fluency (see Appendix 3). These are displayed in all classrooms for Teacher and children's reference. This is monitored within lessons to ensure children are ready to write.

Teaching and Learning

As handwriting is a movement skill, demonstration by a competent adult is essential. All adults are expected to model the correct handwriting style in accordance with this policy and to use the same language of letter formation to ensure consistency throughout the school.

Nelson Handwriting groups the letters into sets based on **handwriting families**. These are letters that are formed in similar ways.

- Set 1: c a o d g q s f e
- Set 2: i l t u j y
- Set 3: r n m h k b p
- Set 4: v w x z

The **joining groups** divide the letters according to how they will join to other letters:

- Group 1: a c d e h i k l m n s t u (13 letters with exit flicks plus s).
- Group 2: a c d e g i j m n o p q r s u v w x y (19 letters which start at the top of the x-height).
- Group 3: b f h k l t (6 letters which start at the top of the ascender).
- Group 4: f o r v w (5 letters which finish at the top of the x-height).
- Break letters are the 8 letters after which no join is made. Joins are not made to or from the letter z: b g j p q x y z. **Capital letters and numerals are never joined.**

Group 1

a c d e h i k l m n s t u

Thirteen letters with exit flicks plus s.

Group 2

a c d e g i j m n o p q r s u v w x y

Nineteen letters which start at the top of the x-height.

Group 3

b f h k l t

Six letters which start at the top of the ascender.

Group 4

f o r v w

Five letters which finish at the top of the x-height.

The break letters

b g j p q x y z

Eight letters after which no join is made. Joins are not made to or from the letter z.

Four different types of joins are taught:

- The first join: Group 1 to 2 (diagonal joins to letters without ascenders)
- The second join: Group 1 to 3 (diagonal joins to letters with ascenders)
- The third join: Group 4 to 2 (horizontal joins to letters without ascenders)
- The fourth join: Group 4 to 3 (horizontal joins to letters with ascenders)

The joins

	Group	→	Group	
The first join	1	→	2	in am
The second join	1	→	3	ab ch
The third join	4	→	2	oa wo
The fourth join	4	→	3	wh ob
The break letters				bigger

The joined style

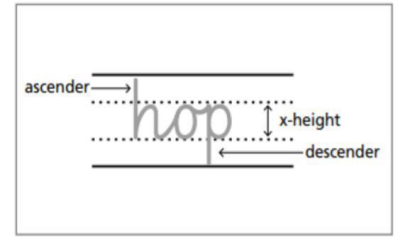
The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

Letter size

Book	x-height of letter (mm)
Starter Workbook A	10
Starter Workbooks B & C	8
Book 1A and 1B	6
Book 2	5
Book 3	4

Vocabulary

There are some technical terms which are extremely useful in discussion about handwriting. Teachers should ensure that children have a clear understanding of their meaning (at an age appropriate level) and refer to them throughout handwriting lessons. These terms include: **clockwise**, **anticlockwise**, **vertical**, **horizontal**, **diagonal**, **parallel**, **ascender**, **descender**, **consonant**, **vowel**, **joined**, **slanted**, **x-height**.



Agreed Language

Positional language

An essential part of teaching patterning and letter formation is to ensure that young children really understand positional language when working with pencil and paper.

Terms include: up, down, above, below, under, top, bottom, across, around and between.

Capital or Upper-case letters/Small or Lower-case letters

Staff will need to decide which terminology they will use with their pupils. Some community languages use just one case, so this feature may need to be explained to both children and parents.

The base line

This is the continuous line upon which the main bodies of letters rest.

Ascenders or Tall letters / Descenders or Tail letters

These are the correct terms for the parts of letters that extend above or below the letter body. For younger children it is sometimes easier to describe these as Tall and Tail.

x-height or short letters

These are letters without ascenders or descenders, such as m, e, and o.

Younger children might prefer to use 'short' letters.

Letter bodies

The parts of letters which are neither ascenders nor descenders e.g. the rounded parts of b, d and a and the "arches" of m and n.

Entry or Lead-in stroke

Letters in a continuous cursive style will begin on the baseline with an entry stroke / lead-in stroke.

Exit stroke or flick

Letters that finish on the baseline often have a final flick in the forwards direction. This provides the potential to join when the child is ready for this step.

Key Stage 1

The National Curriculum expectations for handwriting at KS1 are:

Year 1

- Sit correctly at the table, holding a pencil comfortably and correctly.
- Begin to form lower case letters in the correct direction, starting and finishing in the right place.
- Form capital letters.
- Form the digits 0 to 9.
- Understand which letters belong to which handwriting 'family' (a group of letters that are formed in the same way).

Year 2

- 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 are best left unjoined.
- Write capital letters and digits of the correct size, orientation and relationship to one another.
- Use spacing between words that is appropriate for the size of the letters.

Year 1

Children continue to learn how to sit correctly at a table and hold a pencil comfortably and correctly. They form lower case letters in the correct direction, starting and finishing in the right place. Pupils form capital letters and digits 0-9 and are taught which letters belong to which handwriting 'families' (i.e. letters that are formed in similar ways).

In Year One the children take part in discrete, weekly handwriting sessions lasting 30 minutes. These sessions are structured in the following way:

- Each teaching session begins with reminders about physical preparation, getting ready to write, seating and posture, and encouragement to sit up straight (see Appendix 4).
- A 5 minute 'Warm Up' follows, developing hand and finger strength using specific exercises, games and resources selected from Nelson Handwriting Scheme (these include smartboard resources and videos).
- Teachers then model the weekly handwriting focus as outlined in Long-Term Planning.
- There may be opportunities for tracing (over teachers writing, worksheets from the scheme or laminated cards etc) and following and creating patterns where appropriate.
- Pupils then have time (15-20 minutes) of independent practise in a calm environment. Pupils apply their skills and practise the weekly formation focus using the corresponding 'Unit Focus Resource sheet'.
- When ready, pupils can attempt a further challenge using the 'Unit Focus Extension Resource Sheet'.

Pupils use a Handwriting Book with handwriting guidelines and written examples and models written by teaching staff. Teachers also keep additional handwriting folders containing any completed Handwriting Resource sheets.

End of Year 1 Expectation:

- I can use a capital letter for the pronoun 'I'.
- I can sometimes use capital letters to start my sentences.
- I can start and finish most of my letters in the correct place.
- I can use finger spaces.

Year 2

In Year 2 children begin to use joined handwriting. Children are taught to form lower case letters of the correct size relative to one another and ensure that capital letters and digits are the correct size relative to lower case letters. Children re-cap their learning of lower-case and capital letters and practise forming them with consistency. Children are also given the opportunity to continue to practise using print letters and are reminded that some letters are best left unjoined when next to other letters. They also learn to use spacing between words which reflects the size of the letters.

In Year Two the children take part in discrete, weekly Handwriting sessions lasting 30 minutes following the same outline as Year One with more advanced content.

Pupils use a Handwriting Book with handwriting guidelines and written examples and models written by teaching staff. Teachers also keep additional handwriting folders containing any completed Handwriting Resource sheets.

End of Year 2 Expectation:

- I can often use capital letters (and full stops) correctly.
- All my letters and numbers are the correct size compared to each other.
- I can leave correctly sized finger spaces between my words.

Key Stage 2

The National Curriculum expectations for handwriting at KS2 are:

Year 3 and Year 4

- Continue to develop their joined-up handwriting
- Increase the legibility, consistency and quality of their handwriting – for example, ensuring that down strokes of letters are straight and parallel, not sloping.

Year 5 and Year 6

- Write with increasing legibility, fluency and speed.
- Choose which shape of a letter to use, and decide whether or not to join specific letters.
- Choose the writing implement that is best suited for a task.

Year 3 and 4

Children continue to practise and develop their handwriting skills. The idea of writing with a slant is introduced for the first time. Nelson Handwriting provides practice in joining using diagonal and horizontal strokes as well as the 'break letters' that are best left unjoined. There is an emphasis on spacing letters consistently and on keeping ascenders and descenders in proportion.

End of Year 3 Expectation:

- I can form and join my letters mostly correctly.

End of Year 4 Expectation:

- I can use fluent joined handwriting of a correct size.

Year 5 and 6

Nelson Handwriting continues to provide structured practice for the skills that have been developed so far. Children continue to practise the joins and the break letters, looking at consistency of sizing and spacing. Nelson Handwriting empowers children to develop their own style of handwriting from a secure base, choosing their writing implement and style as appropriate to the occasion.

End of Year 5 Expectation:

- I can maintain legibility in joined handwriting when writing at length.

End of Year 6 Expectation:

I can maintain legibility in joined handwriting when writing at speed.

In KS2, children will:

- ✓ Use an ink pen to encourage correct grip
- ✓ In Year 3 and 4, use handwriting exercise books in English with 8mm guidelines.

- ✓ In Year 5 and 6, use exercise books with narrow lines and a margin
- ✓ Use their dominant hand to hold their writing tool and the other hand to steady the paper – leaning on the non-writing hand is discouraged
- ✓ Be encouraged to keep their writing hand below the line on their page so they can see what they are writing and maintain a comfortable pencil grip
- ✓ Have regular opportunities to watch classroom adults model correct letter formation and joins
- ✓ Be encouraged to develop their own variations on the school font as they reach upper KS2 to give their writing character, provided the writing is legible

Support for Left-Handed Children

This begins in the early years with quality first teaching and lots of modelling from classroom adults. When supporting a left-handed child, adults model correct pencil grip and formation using their left hand. Many left-handed children develop a hooked pencil hold, which can result in a tired grip and affect the quality of their writing. We recognise that it is very difficult to alter the way a child holds a pencil once this habit is learnt and the child's confidence can easily be damaged. To support children who have developed this habit, we encourage children to angle their paper 20 – 30 degrees to the left (the same as right-handed children) to relieve the pressure in their wrist. If a dynamic tripod grip has been established (See Appendix 5), left-handed children are encouraged to tilt their paper 20 – 30 degrees to the right and keep their hand below the writing line to enable the child to see what they are writing.

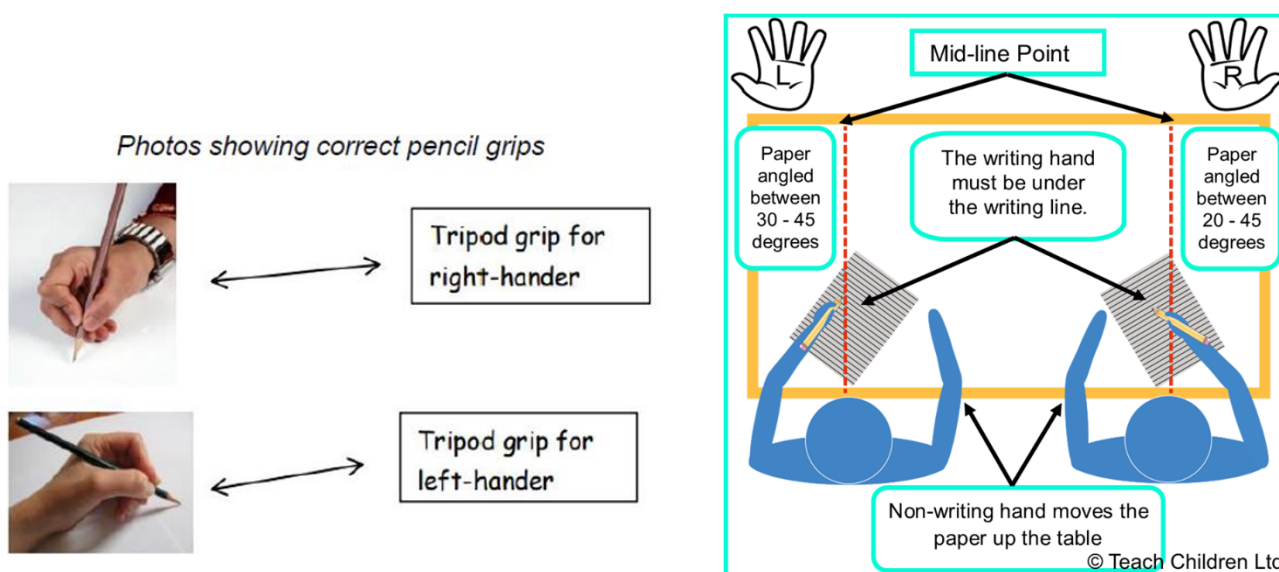
As left handers tend to cross f and t from right to left, it is easier for many left handers to leave the f unjoined.

In addition to the above, left-handed children are encouraged to:

- Hold pens and pencils far enough away from the point so they can see what they are writing
- Not over sharpen their pencil to enable it to run smoothly across the page as they need to push the pencil, rather than pull like their right-handed peers
- Use their right hand to steady the paper above the writing line
- Sit on the left of their partners so their movements are not restricted

Teachers are aware of left-handers in the classroom as they do have different needs and seat them appropriately to ensure their elbows do not collide.

The left-handed, like the right-handed child, needs to be shown as early as possible how to hold a writing implement correctly. Nelson video resourcing is used to support left handed learners in gripping their pencil.



Provision for EAL children

When supporting children transitioning from a different script or handwriting style, teachers should be aware of several potential challenges:

Directionality differences: Some scripts are written from right to left (e.g., Arabic, Hebrew), while others are left to right (e.g., English, Latin scripts). Adjusting to a new writing direction can be confusing for pupils.

Character complexity: Scripts like Chinese or Japanese involve intricate characters, whereas Latin scripts have simpler letter forms. Pupils may need time to adapt to the different levels of complexity.

Baseline orientation: In scripts like Arabic and Persian, certain letters have parts that descend below the baseline, contributing to the script's distinctive flowing appearance. Understanding these variations is crucial for teachers.

Strategies that staff consider:

- Recognise the specific script or handwriting style the pupil is accustomed to. This awareness helps in identifying potential challenges they may face when adapting to a new writing system.
- Explicit instruction: Provide clear and direct teaching of the new handwriting style. Demonstrate proper letter formation, spacing, and alignment to establish a solid foundation.
- Gradual transition: Ease the pupil into the new handwriting style by starting with larger writing spaces and gradually moving to standard sizes. This approach allows for a comfortable adjustment period.
- Consistent practice and feedback: Encourage regular practice and provide constructive feedback. Positive reinforcement helps build confidence and reinforces correct techniques.
- Cultural sensitivity: Acknowledge and respect the pupil's original writing system. Incorporating elements from their native script can create a more inclusive learning environment.

SEND

The process of handwriting relies on the integration of component factors – motor skills, perceptual, cognitive and linguistic processing. Consequently, pupils with a known disability in any of these areas may need support to develop effective handwriting. The severity of the conditions will obviously have an impact, as will any co-occurrence with other conditions. It is appreciated that some children, for a variety of reasons, have problems with legible, correctly formed and orientated handwriting. Children needing additional support are given short bursts of handwriting practice, with a Teaching Assistant, or Class Teacher, as often as possible. Sometimes handwriting targets may form part of a 'One Page Profile' or a child's individualised support plan. Children with Special Educational needs, where necessary, will be provided with adaptations such as pencil grips, enlarged practise paper or a laptop. Children will also be encouraged to develop their handwriting skills through tangible and multisensory activities such as drawing letters in the air, drawing letters in sand etc.

Links to spelling

Linking handwriting with spelling is one of the most powerful ways of developing the visual memory. Handwriting is practised using letters, blends, strings or digraphs so that patterns are internalised. Alongside the Nelson Handwriting scheme to ensure consistency, ELS Spelling is taught three times weekly, integrating handwriting teaching within these sessions.

Feedback

Early identification and correction of errors prevents many later problems with handwriting. Assessment is an integral part of the teaching sequence of every new step within the handwriting curriculum.

Any feedback and marking of handwriting reflects an awareness of the complexity of the task and individual needs of the pupil. Wherever possible, targeted feedback is provided as promptly as possible within the lesson. Written feedback on handwriting is explained, modelled and practised face-to-face with the child. Any written comments are focused on structured learning steps and avoiding descriptors that do not provide the modelling which evidence-led practice recommends. Exercise books evidence the timely, consistent, active correction of any errors.

Monitoring

The English Lead will monitor standards of handwriting across the school through book scrutiny, learning walks and provide support and training as appropriate. Whilst monitoring the standards of handwriting across the school is predominately the responsibility of the English leader, all subject coordinators are encouraged to play a role in promoting good handwriting when monitoring work from across the curriculum.

Community involvement

Knowledge sharing and relationship building are at the core of good practice in any school community and of particular importance in learning a complex skill like handwriting.

Involving parents and carers at every stage in learning ensures that key messages are implemented at both home and school. Successful practice in handwriting is based on consistency and continuity across the whole school community. At Our Lady Queen of Peace, we involve parents in the process of handwriting by:

- Feedback during Parent evenings will include an element of handwriting progress across the curriculum subjects
- Children in KS1 who have struggled with forming letter families will receive 1:1 intervention during whole class teaching
- Handwriting books will be sent home with targeted formations to practice
- For SEN children, a handwriting element, if appropriate, will be included on their support plans

Nelson Handwriting Resources by Year Group

	Age	OLQP Approach	Resources
Nursery	3 – 4 years	Follow ELS handwriting mnemonics and teaching approach in phonics and handwriting sessions.	ELS lesson plans
Reception	4 - 5 years	Small group weekly handwriting session following Nelson scheme and apply through ELS essential spelling practise	Blue Pupil Started Workbook A, B and C Blue Starter Textbook
Year 1	5 – 6 years	2 x 30 minute Weekly handwriting session following Nelson scheme and apply through ELS essential spelling practise	Red Workbooks 1A and 1B Pupil book 1 ELS Online Resources
Year 2	6 – 7 years	2 x 30 minute Weekly handwriting session following Nelson scheme and apply through ELS essential spelling practise	Yellow Workbook 2A and 2B Pupil Book 2 ELS Online Resources Nelson Handwriting Online resources
Year 3	7 - 8 years	2 x 30 minute Weekly handwriting session following Nelson scheme and apply through ELS essential spelling practise	Skills Book 3 ELS Online Resources Nelson Handwriting Online resources
Year 4	8 – 9 years	2 x 30 minute Weekly handwriting session following Nelson scheme and apply through ELS essential spelling practise	Skills Book 4 ELS Online Resources Nelson Handwriting Online resources
Year 5	9 – 10 years	2 x 30 minute Weekly handwriting session following Nelson scheme and apply through ELS essential spelling practise	Skills Book 5 ELS Online Resources Nelson Handwriting Online resources

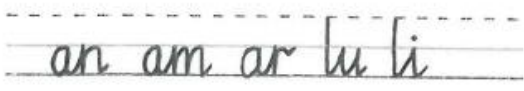
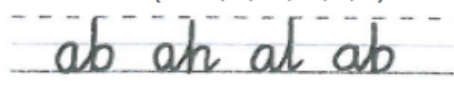
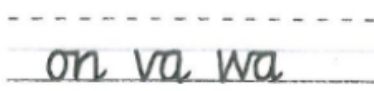

Year 6	10 – 11 years	2 x 30 minute Weekly handwriting session following Nelson scheme and apply through ELS essential spelling practise	Skills Book 6 ELS Online Resources Nelson Handwriting Online resources
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Appendices

Appendix 1

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

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

Join 1	<p>Diagonal upwards join from letters than finish with upstrokes to letters without ascenders e.g. a to n / l to i</p> 
Join 2	<p>Diagonal upwards join from letters than finish with upstrokes to letters with ascenders (to b, f, h, k, l, t)</p> 
Join 3	<p>Horizontal join across the top of letters to letters without ascenders (o v and w).</p> 
Join 4	<p>Horizontal join to letters with ascenders (to l, h, t etc.)</p> 
Break Letters	<p>Joins are not make from these letters. Appropriate joins are made to these letters: b g j p q x y</p>
Mean Letter	<p>The only mean letter is z. Children should not join to or from this letter.</p>

Appendix 2



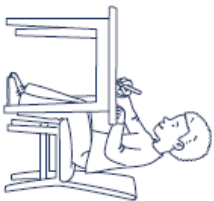
Appendix 3

Use the **P checks** to make sure your body is in a comfortable position for writing.



Before you start, check your **posture, pencil grip** and **paper position**. As you write, check that you are applying the right amount of **pressure** through your pencil.

Posture



Sit back in your chair, face forwards and place both feet flat on the floor.

Pencil grip



Hold your pencil between your thumb and index finger while it rests on your middle finger. Don't hold the pencil too tightly!



Paper position



- Place your paper slightly to your right.
- Tilt the top left-hand corner downwards.
- Use your non-writing hand to hold it still.

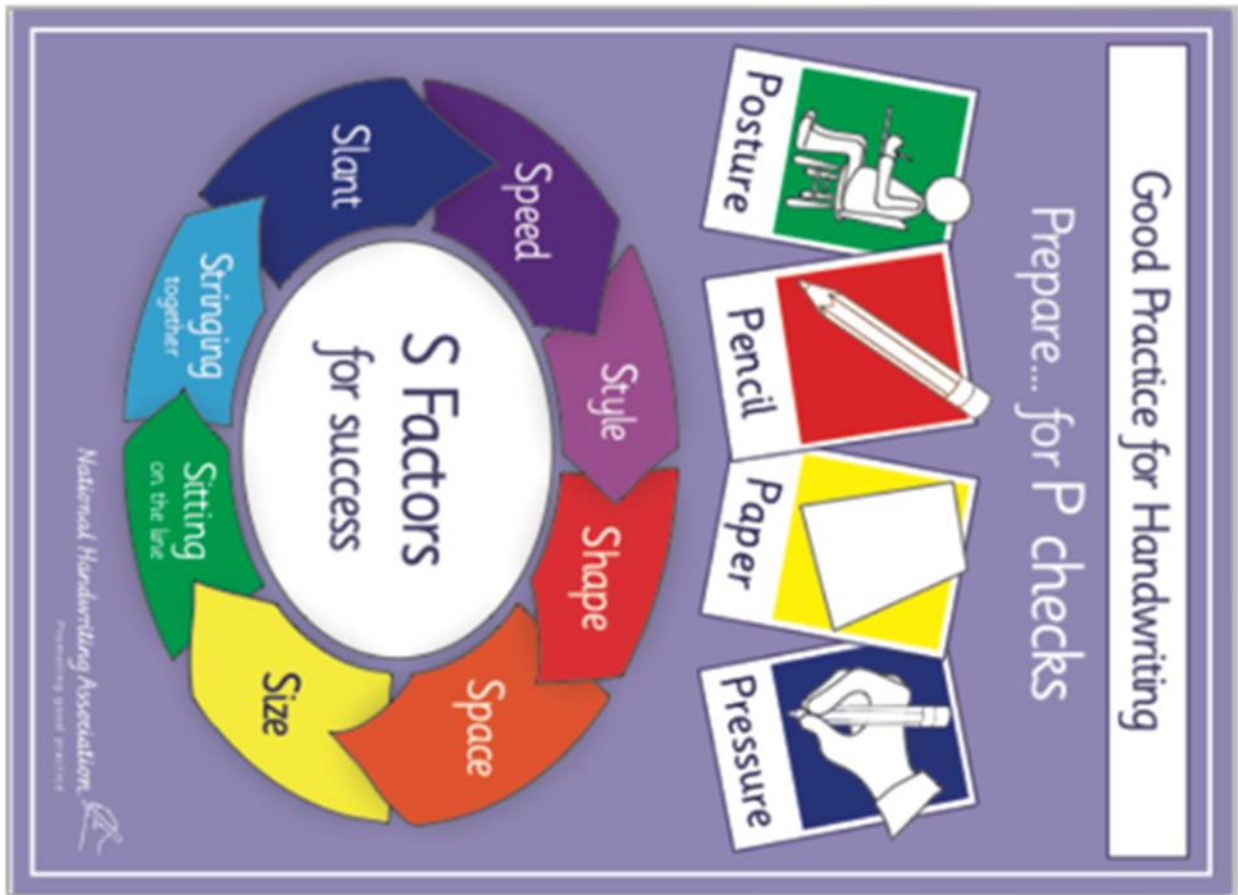
- Place your paper slightly to your left.
- Tilt the top right-hand corner downwards.
- Use your non-writing hand to hold it still.



Pressure

Make sure you don't press the pencil too hard or too lightly when writing.

Appendix 4



Appendix 5

TYPICAL PENCIL GRASP DEVELOPMENT FOR HANDWRITING

