

Handwriting Progression at Hurst Hill

Rationale and Context: Why Handwriting Progression Matters

The Department for Education's Writing Framework (non-statutory guidance) makes clear that transcription skills, including handwriting, are foundational to successful writing. The framework explains that when handwriting is not secure or automatic, pupils' working memory is overloaded, limiting their ability to focus on higher-level aspects of writing such as composition, vocabulary choice and sentence structure.

The Writing Framework highlights that fluent handwriting reduces cognitive load, allowing pupils to concentrate on what they want to say rather than how to form letters. It also makes clear that automaticity in transcription, including handwriting and spelling, is essential if pupils are to write effectively and at length. Where handwriting is weak or insecure, it can act as a barrier to progress, particularly for pupils with SEND or for those who have not yet secured early motor control and accurate letter formation.

As a result, the DfE is clear that handwriting should be taught explicitly rather than assumed, practised regularly until it becomes fluent and automatic, and developed progressively. This progression moves from secure posture, grip and letter formation in the early stages to increasing speed, consistency and adaptability as pupils move through the school.

This progression document therefore goes beyond listing statutory requirements. It makes expected progression explicit year on year, supports consistency of practice and expectation across schools, and enables teachers and leaders to identify pupils who have not yet secured the transcription skills needed to succeed in writing.

The inclusion of trust-defined progression expectations reflects the Writing Framework's emphasis on ensuring that pupils are not held back in composition because transcription skills are insecure. These expectations exemplify how the statutory National Curriculum outcomes can be realised in practice and provide a shared understanding across the trust of what effective handwriting looks like at each stage.

How this progression aligns with Kinetic Letters

Kinetic Letters is a whole-school handwriting programme designed to build handwriting through motor memory, body movement and consistent letter formation. It aligns closely with the National Curriculum emphasis on correct formation, fluency and increasing automaticity, and provides a practical route for meeting the statutory requirements set out in this progression document. This trust-wide progression document sets out what pupils must achieve by each stage. Kinetic Letters provides the structured teaching approach through which those outcomes are realised.

Strong foundations in handwriting (EYFS and Key Stage 1)

Strong foundations in handwriting are established in the early years and Key Stage 1 so that pupils are ready to meet the increasing demands of writing as they move through the curriculum. The DfE Writing Framework makes clear that transcription skills must be secured early; where handwriting is insecure, pupils' working memory is overloaded and progress in composition is hindered.

In EYFS and Key Stage 1, this progression prioritises the explicit teaching of posture, pencil grip, paper position and accurate letter formation. These are treated as essential building blocks for writing, not assumptions. Time is given to repetition and practice so that handwriting becomes fluent and increasingly automatic, enabling pupils to focus on what they want to write rather than how to form letters.

Through a structured approach, including the use of Kinetic Letters, pupils develop the physical control, motor memory and confidence needed to sustain writing. This ensures that early writing experiences are successful and that insecure habits do not become embedded.

Establishing strong foundations in handwriting at this stage supports inclusion and equity. Pupils with SEND, those with weaker fine motor control and pupils who require additional practice are supported through consistent, explicit teaching, ensuring that handwriting does not become a barrier to accessing the wider writing curriculum.

Handwriting Progression

Statutory Framework: EYFS Physical Development (Writing)	Statutory Requirements: Year 1 Writing: Transcription (Handwriting)	Statutory Requirements: Year 2 Writing: Transcription (Handwriting)	Statutory Requirements: Year 3 Writing: Transcription (Handwriting)	Statutory Requirements: Year 4 Writing: Transcription (Handwriting)	Statutory Requirements: Year 5 Writing: Transcription (Handwriting)	Statutory Requirements: Year 6 Writing: Transcription (Handwriting)
<p>Children should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use a range of small tools, including scissors, paint brushes and cutlery. Begin to show accuracy and care when drawing. Hold a pencil effectively in preparation for fluent writing – using the tripod grip in almost all cases. 	<p>Pupils should be taught to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sit correctly at a 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 digits 0–9. Understand which letters belong to which handwriting ‘families’ (i.e. letters that are formed in similar ways) and to practise these. 	<p>Pupils should be taught to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Form lower-case letters of the correct size relative to one another. Start using some of the diagonal and horizontal strokes needed to join letters and understand which letters, when adjacent to one another, are best left unjoined. Write capital letters and digits of the correct size, orientation and relationship to one another and to lower-case letters. Use spacing between words that reflects the size of the letters. 	<p>Pupils should be taught to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use the diagonal and horizontal strokes that are needed to join letters and understand which letters, when adjacent to one another, are best left unjoined. Increase the legibility, consistency and quality of their handwriting. 	<p>Pupils should be taught to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use the diagonal and horizontal strokes that are needed to join letters and understand which letters, when adjacent to one another, are best left unjoined. Increase the legibility, consistency and quality of their handwriting. 	<p>Pupils should be taught to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Write legibly, fluently and with increasing speed by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Choosing which shape of a letter to use when given choices and deciding whether or not to join specific letters. Choosing the writing implement that is best suited for a task. 	<p>Pupils should be taught to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Write legibly, fluently and with increasing speed by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Choosing which shape of a letter to use when given choices and deciding whether or not to join specific letters. Choosing the writing implement that is best suited for a task.
<p>Handwriting Focus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gross motor development to support fine motor control Developing pencil grip and control Mark-making progressing to recognisable letter-like shapes Writing from left to right 	<p>Progression Expectations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure pencil grip and posture Correct orientation and formation of lower-case letters Awareness of consistent size and orientation 	<p>Progression Expectations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved consistency in size and spacing Introduction to joins where appropriate Increased fluency and legibility 	<p>Progression Expectations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure use of joined handwriting Consistent letter size and spacing Writing that is legible and increasingly fluent 	<p>Progression Expectations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustained joined handwriting across subjects Improved speed while maintaining legibility Clear distinction between ascenders and descenders 	<p>Progression Expectations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personal, consistent handwriting style Increased writing speed for extended tasks Appropriate choice of handwriting style for purpose 	<p>Progression Expectations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fluent, legible handwriting sustained over long pieces of writing Adapt handwriting style for audience and purpose Readiness for secondary school expectations
<p>EYFS and Kinetic Letters</p> <p>In EYFS, Kinetic Letters places strong emphasis on developing the physical foundations for handwriting before formal letter formation. This aligns with the EYFS requirement for children to hold a pencil effectively and begin to show accuracy and care when drawing.</p>	<p>Year 1 and Kinetic Letters</p> <p>The Year 1 statutory focus on correct letter formation, posture and grip is central to the Kinetic Letters approach. Letters are taught using consistent movement patterns, with pupils learning where each letter starts, how it moves, and where it finishes.</p>	<p>Year 2 and Kinetic Letters</p> <p>In Year 2, the National Curriculum introduces relative sizing, spacing and the early stages of joining. Kinetic Letters supports this through its emphasis on consistent letter size and smooth transitions between letters.</p>	<p>Years 3 and 4 and Kinetic Letters</p> <p>In lower Key Stage 2, the National Curriculum focuses on joined handwriting, legibility and consistency. Kinetic Letters continues to support this through repetition, refinement and increasing automaticity.</p>		<p>Years 5 and 6 and Kinetic Letters</p> <p>In upper Key Stage 2, the National Curriculum expects pupils to write legibly, fluently and with increasing speed, and to make choices about letter forms and writing implements. Kinetic Letters supports this by enabling pupils to internalise movement patterns so handwriting becomes automatic.</p>	
<p>In practice, this looks like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Daily gross motor and fine motor activities to strengthen shoulder, arm and hand control Explicit teaching of posture, pencil grip and paper position Large-scale movements and patterns that develop directionality and control Gradual transition from mark-making to letter-like shapes using consistent movement patterns. <p>This directly supports readiness for the Year 1 National Curriculum expectations.</p>	<p>In practice, this looks like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explicit teaching of lower-case letter formation using Kinetic Letters movement language Frequent short practice sessions to reinforce correct direction and orientation Teaching capital letters and digits alongside lower-case letters, with clear modelling Grouping letters by movement patterns rather than alphabet order, supporting the National Curriculum reference to handwriting families. <p>This ensures pupils meet the requirement to form letters correctly and confidently.</p>	<p>In practice, this looks like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued reinforcement of correct formation to ensure consistency Explicit teaching of spacing between words Introduction to joins where appropriate, with clear guidance on which letters are best joined and which are not Increased expectation of fluency while maintaining accuracy <p>This supports pupils in moving from accurate formation towards more fluent handwriting.</p>	<p>In practice, this looks like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure use of joined handwriting across subjects Continued attention to letter size, spacing, ascenders and descenders Gradual increase in writing speed without loss of legibility Intervention using Kinetic Letters strategies for pupils who have not yet secured fluent transcription <p>This ensures handwriting does not become a barrier to writing development.</p>		<p>In practice, this looks like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustained fluent handwriting in longer pieces of writing Pupils making informed choices about joining and presentation Increased writing speed appropriate for task and purpose Continued use of Kinetic Letters approaches for targeted support where needed <p>This prepares pupils for the expectations of secondary school.</p>	