EYFS Handwriting

Nursery (3–4 years old)

Approach: Gross motor → Fine motor → Mark making

1. Develop Gross Motor Control First

Before expecting children to form letters, we provide opportunities for children to participate in:

- climbing, balancing and crawling
- large arm movements
- shoulder stability activities
- dancing, ribbons and scarves
- painting on easels
- chalks and water brushes outdoors

The guiding principle is:

Shoulders → Arms → Wrists → Hands → Fingers → Pencil

2. Strengthen Fine Motor Skills Daily

Children regularly engage in:

- dough disco
- threading and lacing
- tweezers and peg activities
- construction toys
- cutting and snipping
- finger rhymes and action songs
- puzzles
- construction
- arts and crafts
- small-world play

3. Encourage Mark Making Everywhere

Children write for real purposes:

- shopping lists
- maps
- tickets
- menus
- labels
- messages

Adults celebrate all meaningful marks.

Reception (4-5 years old)

Approach: Fine motor → RWI formation → Daily handwriting practice → Independent application

1. Daily fine motor development first:

- Access to resources in provision e.g. scissors and Lego
- Dough disco in Autumn term
- Fine motor tasks e.g.
- threading
- zipping
- puzzles
- construction
- arts and crafts
- small-world play

2. Explicit Letter Formation Teaching

We teach letter formation discretely, directly, urgently and consistently. Typically:

- daily 5–10 minute sessions
- modelled on large boards
- verbal formation patter
- immediate practice

For example:

“Around the apple, down the leaf.” (letter a).

"Down the laces to the heel and around the toe." (letter b).

3. Correct Pencil Grip from the Start

Staff actively teach:

- tripod grip
- comfortable posture
- paper position
- consider using triangular pencils to support grip development

4. Teach Through Read Write Inc Phonics Programme

- letter formation is taught alongside phoneme-grapheme correspondence
- children learn the sound and formation together
- strong links are formed between phonics and handwriting

5. Daily Practice Little and Often

Rather than long handwriting lessons:

- 5–10 minutes daily
- revisit previously taught letters
- immediate feedback
- high success rate

6. Children apply writing skills independently in play / provisional areas:

*This progression produces far stronger outcomes than introducing formal handwriting books too early.

Strong practice includes:

- precise modelling
- consistent language
- every adult uses the same formation phrases
- consistent letter formation across the setting
- high expectations
- immediate intervention
- incorrect formation is addressed straight away before habits become embedded
- not joining in EYFS

Children are expected to:

- sit correctly
- hold pencils correctly
- start letters in the correct place

Learning environment resources:

- vertical writing surfaces
- easels
- whiteboards
- clipboards indoors and outdoors
- fine motor stations

End of EYFS handwriting outcomes:

- correct formation
- size and orientation
- spacing

ELGs

The ELGs for Fine Motor Skills are:

- hold a pencil effectively in preparation for fluent writing – using the tripod grip in almost all cases.
- use a range of small tools, including scissors, paint brushes and cutlery.
- begin to show accuracy and care when drawing.

The ELG for handwriting is:

- write recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed.