The Path to Handwriting Success

Building strong foundations, developing skills and inspiring confident writers from the earliest marks to fluent writing.

Ashbrook Infants in the Early Years



1 PHYSICAL FOUNDATIONS

Strong bodies support strong writing.

Key focus

- Gross motor skills
- Core strength
- Balance & coordination
- Crossing the midline
- Posture and control



2 FINE MOTOR DEVELOPMENT

Small movements create big progress.

Key focus

- Hand and finger strength
- Dexterity and control
- Manipulation skills
- Tool and object use
- Sensory exploration



3 MARK MAKING

Every mark has meaning.

Key focus

- Early scribbles and lines
- Shapes and patterns
- Representing ideas and experiences
- Developing confidence



4 PATTERN MAKING

Patterns build the pre-writing bridge.

Key focus

- Repeating patterns
- Lines, curves and circles
- Directionality
- Rhythm and flow
- Early writing movements



5 LETTER FORMATION

Correct formation builds confidence and clarity.

Key focus

- Sound–grapheme link
- Consistent formation
- Clear starting points
- Correct pencil grip
- Posture and positioning



6 WORD WRITING

Putting letters together with purpose.

Key focus

- Spacing between letters
- Sitting on the line
- Writing simple words
- Building automaticity
- Applying phonics



7 FLUENT TRANSCRIPTION

Fluent writing frees the mind to create.

Key focus

- Speed and fluency
- Consistency and size
- Legibility and presentation
- Writing with stamina
- Focus on composition



OUR APPROACH

A sequential, research-informed approach where every stage builds on the last. Through high-quality teaching, rich experiences and daily practice, we empower every child to become a confident, fluent writer.



Nurture every child



Celebrate progress



Inspire a love for writing

The Path to Handwriting Success

1 PHYSICAL FOUNDATIONS – Building strong bodies and developing essential skills for handwriting success

WHY THIS MATTERS

Before children can form letters, they need to develop the physical foundations that enable them to sit comfortably, control a writing tool and write with confidence and fluency.

We are developing:

- Core strength
- Balance & coordination
- Crossing the midline
- Hand & finger strength
- Visual–motor integration
- Focus & endurance

1. GROSS MOTOR DEVELOPMENT
Building big body skills

INDOOR CONTINUOUS PROVISION
- Action songs & movement games
- Cosmic Yoga
- Dough Disco
- Ribbon dancing
- Beanbag throwing
- Obstacle pathways
- Animal walks

RESOURCES
- Beanbags
- Balance cushions
- Scarves
- Ribbons
- Yoga cards

OUTDOOR CONTINUOUS PROVISION
- Climbing equipment
- Large-scale chalking
- Crates & planks
- Trikes & scooters
- Tyre courses
- Wheelbarrows
- Tugging & pulling equipment

DRAWING CLUB LINKS
- Draw giant story maps
- Create roads & pathways
- Draw characters on walls & fences
- Use water painting to recreate story settings




2. FINE MOTOR DEVELOPMENT
Building small movements

INDOOR CONTINUOUS PROVISION
- Playdough & Dough Disco
- Threading & lacing
- Peg boards & peg patterns
- Tweezers & small objects
- Pipetters & droppers
- Nuts, bolts & construction toys

RESOURCES
- Playdough tools
- Tweezers
- Pom-poms
- Beads
- Lacing cards
- Pegs

OUTDOOR CONTINUOUS PROVISION
- Water walls & pouring
- Spray bottles
- Large peg activities
- Mud kitchen stirring
- Gardening & scooping
- Weaving & natural resources

DRAWING CLUB LINKS
- Character creation & detail
- Adding symbols & codes
- Fine-line mark making




3. CROSSING THE MIDLINE
Moving across the body

INDOOR ACTIVITIES
- Ribbon tracing
- Figure-of-eight patterns
- Rolling balls across the body
- Painting on vertical surfaces
- Reaching & stretching games

OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES
- Giant chalk figure eights
- Water painting on large surfaces
- Obstacle courses
- Throwing & catching
- Crawling & climbing

Crossing the midline helps children coordinate both sides of their body together, which is essential for smooth writing.



4. DEVELOPING HAND STRENGTH
Strength for control

INDOOR ACTIVITIES
- Dough Disco & playdough
- Squeezing stress balls
- Using hole punches
- Scissor activities
- Clothespin games
- Tearing & scrunching paper

OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES
- Digging & scooping
- Carrying logs & natural objects
- Pulling ropes
- Wheelbarrows & lifting
- Water squeezing & spraying

Stronger hands help children hold and control pencils, crayons and scissors with ease.




5. MARK MAKING FOR MEANING
From marks to messages

Children need rich opportunities to experiment, represent ideas, tell stories and communicate meaning.

CONTINUOUS PROVISION OPPORTUNITIES

Writing Area	Open-ended resources, various papers, clipboards, notebooks, envelopes
Small World	Maps, labels, signs, messages
Construction	Design plans, labels, instructions
Role Play	Lists, tickets, menus, messages

DRAWING CLUB CONNECTIONS

- **Tell Me** – Children orally rehearse ideas.
- **Draw It** – Children create increasingly detailed representations.
- **Code It** – Children add symbols, marks and early writing.
- **Innovate It** – Children adapt and create their own ideas.




SUPPORTING CHILDREN WHO ARE STRUGGLING

AVOIDS MARK MAKING

Try:
- Vertical surfaces
- Easels
- Water painting
- Finger painting
- Large-scale chalking

Often the issue is physical confidence, not motivation.

WEAK HAND STRENGTH

Increase:
- Playdough
- Tweezers
- Pegs
- Pipettes
- Spray bottles

Build strength before increasing handwriting practice.

SWITCHES HANDS FREQUENTLY

Increase:
- Crossing-midline activities
- Large-scale movement activities
- Two-handed play

Hand dominance develops at different rates – be patient and supportive.

TIRES QUICKLY

Review:
- Seating
- Posture
- Core strength
- Table height
- Pencil size

Physical comfort impacts writing endurance.

WHAT LEADERS SHOULD SEE

When walking Nursery and Reception, leaders should see children climbing, digging, building, drawing, manipulating, creating, storytelling and making marks.

All of these experiences are essential building blocks for handwriting fluency and confidence.

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2 FINE MOTOR DEVELOPMENT – Building small movements for big progress

WHY THIS MATTERS

Strong hands and finger control help children hold pens and pencils with confidence, form letters accurately and write for longer. Fine motor skills are the building blocks for handwriting fluency.

We are developing:

- Hand strength
- Finger strength
- Dexterity
- Finger isolation
- Hand–eye coordination
- Control and precision

INDOOR CONTINUOUS PROVISION
Suggested Activities

- Playdough & Dough Disco
- Threading & lacing
- Peg boards & patterns
- Tweezers & small objects
- Beads & jewellery making
- Pipettes & droppers
- Nuts, bolts & construction toys
- Scissor activities
- Hole punching
- Sticker & stamp activities
- Sorting & matching games
- Drawing Club fine-line detail work

RESOURCES

- Playdough tools
- Tweezers
- Pom-poms
- Beads
- Pegs
- Lacing cards
- Pipettes
- Nuts & bolts
- Sticker sheets
- Scissors




OUTDOOR CONTINUOUS PROVISION
Suggested Activities

- Water play & pouring
- Spray bottle activities
- Mud kitchen tools
- Gardening & planting
- Weaving with natural materials
- Pegging washing on the line
- Chalk drawing small details
- Collecting & sorting natural objects
- Using tools: trowels, scoops, brushes

RESOURCES

- Spray bottles
- Brushes
- Trowels
- Pegs
- Bowls & jugs
- Natural materials
- Magnifying glasses
- Scoops & spoons
- Watering cans




DRAWING CLUB CONNECTIONS
Fine motor development in context

TELL ME
Children talk about their ideas, building language and confidence.

DRAW IT
Children practise control and precision as they draw details, lines and shapes.

CODE IT
Children begin adding symbols, letters and early marks to represent meaning.

INNOVATE IT
Children adapt, add more detail and create their own stories and ideas.



IDEAS FOR CONTINUOUS PROVISION SET-UPS

Make fine motor opportunities visible, inviting and purposeful.

- Creative Area
- Small World
- Construction Area
- Writing Area
- Maths Area
- Role Play Area
- Sensory Area
- Investigation Area
- Reading Nook

Key principles:

- Easy access
- Open-ended resources
- Regular rotation
- Model, then empower
- Celebrate effort and progress

SUPPORTING CHILDREN WHO ARE STRUGGLING

If a child finds fine motor tasks challenging, try:

If weak finger strength
Increase: playdough, dough disco, squeezing, tweezers, peg activities and carrying tasks.

If poor control
Try: larger tools first, vertical surfaces, short bursts of activity, and lots of practice through play.

If avoidant
Offer: engaging themes, preferred interests, collaborative tasks and sensory-rich experiences.

If frustrated easily
Provide: achievable challenges, praise effort, choice of tools and gradual difficulty.

WHAT LEADERS SHOULD SEE

Rich environments where children are regularly given opportunities to strengthen their hands, refine their control and build the confidence needed for handwriting fluency.

Look for:

- Children engaged in a range of fine motor activities
- Resources are accessible, well organised and purposeful
- Adults model and extend hand skills in play
- Children show increasing control and dexterity
- Fine motor opportunities are woven through the day naturally

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3 CROSSING THE MIDLINE – Moving across the body with control and coordination

WHY THIS MATTERS

Crossing the midline helps children use both sides of their body together. It supports brain development, coordination, balance and the ability to move a pencil smoothly across the page.

We are developing:

- Bilateral coordination
- Body awareness
- Brain connections
- Hand dominance and control
- Focus and concentration
- Ready for writing

INDOOR CONTINUOUS PROVISION
Suggested Activities

- Figure-of-eight tracks with cars or trains
- Ribbon and scarf dancing
- Large paper drawing across the body
- Obstacle courses that require crossing
- Reaching games (e.g. Simon Says)
- Balloon batting and catching
- Throwing to a target across the body
- Shapes and patterns with arms
- Copying patterns in the air
- Yoga poses (e.g. cross crawl, star, windmills)

RESOURCES

- Ribbons & scarves
- Large paper & chalk
- Balls & beanbags
- Trains & tracks
- Floor markers
- Yoga cards





OUTDOOR CONTINUOUS PROVISION
Suggested Activities

- Giant chalk figure-of-eight tracks
- Water painting large crosses and circles
- Obstacle courses with climbing, crawling and balancing
- Throwing and catching across the body
- Skipping and hopping games
- Wheeled toys that require turning and steering
- Garden activities: reaching, digging, watering across the body

RESOURCES

- Chalk & chalkboards
- Water brushes & buckets
- Balls, hoops & beanbags
- Balance beams
- Tunnels
- Trikes & scooters





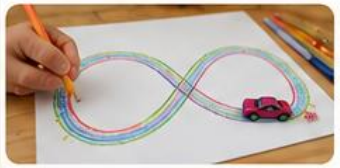
DRAWING CLUB CONNECTIONS
Making marks that move

TELL ME
Children talk about actions that move across, around and through.

DRAW IT
Encourage children to draw large movements and cross the page freely.

CODE IT
Invite children to add symbols that travel across the page.

INNOVATE IT
Children create their own movement stories and patterns.



IDEAS FOR CONTINUOUS PROVISION SET-UPS

Build opportunities into all areas of learning.

- Creative Area
- Small World Area
- Construction Area
- Writing Area
- Maths Area
- Role Play Area
- Sensory Area
- Investigation Area
- Outdoor Area

Key principles:

- Provide regular, natural opportunities
- Make it fun, active and engaging
- Model movements
- Celebrate effort and progress

SUPPORTING CHILDREN WHO ARE STRUGGLING

If a child finds crossing the midline challenging, try:

If movement is limited
Build core strength first – crawling, climbing, balancing and large movements.

If they switch hands often
Model crossing the body with activities such as figure eights, reaching and ball play.

If coordination is difficult
Break activities into simpler steps and repeat regularly with praise.

If attention is short
Use short, engaging activities throughout the day. Build gradually.

If sensory needs are present
Offer choices (e.g. different textures, movement types) and calm transitions.

WHAT LEADERS SHOULD SEE

A rich environment where children move freely, cross their midline with confidence and are developing the coordination needed for handwriting fluency.

Look for:

- Children confidently using both sides of their body
- Opportunities for movement across all areas
- Improved coordination and body control in play
- Adults modelling and encouraging movement
- Celebration of effort and growing confidence

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4 DEVELOPING HAND STRENGTH – Building the muscles we need for control and confidence

WHY THIS MATTERS

Strong hand muscles help children grip tools, control their movements and write for longer without fatigue. Hand strength develops gradually through everyday play and purposeful activities.

We are developing: Hand strength · Grip strength · Finger strength · Endurance · Control · Focus · Independence

INDOOR CONTINUOUS PROVISION
Suggested Activities

- Playdough & Dough Disco
- Squeezing stress balls
- Using hole punches
- Peg boards & peg patterns
- Threading & lacing
- Tweezers & small object play
- Nuts, bolts & construction toys
- Scissor activities
- Sticker & stamp activities
- Clothespin squeezing
- Drawing & colouring
- Tearing & scrunching paper
- Rolling, pinching & shaping
- Using droppers & pipettes

RESOURCES

- Playdough tools
- Tweezers
- Pegs & clothes pegs
- Pom-poms
- Hole punches
- Scissors
- Pipettes
- Manipulatives





OUTDOOR CONTINUOUS PROVISION
Suggested Activities

- Digging & scooping in sand and soil
- Carrying & collecting natural objects
- Water play: pouring, squirting, squeezing
- Spray bottles & watering plants
- Wringing sponges & cloths
- Building with loose parts
- Pulling ropes & using wheelbarrows
- Using tools: trowels, rakes, hammers
- Climbing & hanging (strengthens arms and shoulders)

RESOURCES

- Buckets & spades
- Watering cans
- Spray bottles
- Sponges & cloths
- Ropes
- Wheelbarrows
- Gardening tools
- Natural materials





DRAWING CLUB CONNECTIONS
Building strength through creativity

TELL ME
Encourage children to talk about their ideas and the marks they want to make.

DRAW IT
Support children to use different tools and media to build control and confidence.

CODE IT
Add early writing and symbols, strengthening the hand as they use smaller, more precise marks.

INNOVATE IT
Children refine their ideas, add detail and experiment with new ways to represent meaning.



IDEAS FOR CONTINUOUS PROVISION SET-UPS

Make hand strengthening opportunities visible, inviting and purposeful.

Playdough Station	Tweezers Tray	Peg Area
Pipettes & Droppers	Scissor Shelf	Hole Punch Area
Water Play Station	Construction Zone	Creative Table

Key principles:

- Provide daily, short bursts of practice
- Make it meaningful and purposeful
- Offer choices and natural challenges
- Celebrate effort and progress

SUPPORTING CHILDREN WHO ARE STRUGGLING

If a child has weak hand strength, try:

Start with gross motor
Climbing, carrying, pushing, pulling and digging build the foundations.

Use larger tools first
Chunky crayons, large paintbrushes, tongs and easy-grip scissors.

Increase playdough time
Roll, pinch, squeeze, squash and stamp regularly.

Build gradually
Begin with short, fun activities and increase time as strength improves.

Encourage both hands
Two-handed activities help build coordination and strength together.

WHAT LEADERS SHOULD SEE

A rich environment where children regularly engage in activities that build hand strength through playful, meaningful experiences across indoor and outdoor provision.

Look for:

- Children using a range of tools and materials with purpose
- Improved strength and control in daily activities
- Increased stamina and reduced tiredness
- Independence and confidence in using writing tools
- Progress towards handwriting readiness

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5 MARK MAKING FOR MEANING – From marks to messages

WHY THIS MATTERS

Mark making is the beginning of writing. When children make marks that have meaning to them, they are developing communication, imagination and early writing skills. We value every mark!

We are developing:

- Ideas & imagination
- Communication
- Early writing skills
- Purpose & meaning
- Observation & attention
- Confidence
- Independence

INDOOR CONTINUOUS PROVISION
Suggested Opportunities

- Writing area with open-ended resources
- Small world play – create signs, labels, stories
- Role play – menus, lists, tickets, messages
- Construction area – plans, labels, instructions
- Book area – draw stories, make book covers
- Creative area – cards, posters, drawings
- Message centre – post notes, invitations

RESOURCES

- Paper of all sizes
- Envelopes
- Clipboards
- Notepads
- Sticky notes
- Card & paper
- Mark making tools
- Stamps & stickers
- Whiteboards
- Labels & tags
- Books & magazines
- Recycled materials



OUTDOOR CONTINUOUS PROVISION
Suggested Opportunities

- Chalk drawing on pathways, walls & fences
- Water painting on sheds, boards & fences
- Natural materials to make patterns & symbols
- Mud kitchen – menus, recipes, signs
- Large scale drawing with sticks in sand/soil
- Create maps, trails & treasure hunts
- Label plants, log discoveries

RESOURCES

- Chalks & chalkboards
- Water & paintbrushes
- Sticks & natural items
- Sand & soil
- Clipboards
- Weterproof paper
- Buckets
- Crates
- Cones
- Magnifying glasses
- Guttering & tubes







DRAWING CLUB CONNECTIONS
Using drawing to build meaning

TELL ME
Children talk about their ideas, experiences and stories.

DRAW IT
Children draw their ideas, adding detail and improving their representations.

CODE IT
Children add marks, letters and symbols to communicate meaning.

INNOVATE IT
Children adapt, extend and create their own stories and ideas.

Drawing Club provides a powerful context for purposeful mark making and early writing.



IDEAS FOR CONTINUOUS PROVISION SET-UPS

Ensure mark making opportunities are everywhere!

- Writing Area
- Small World
- Construction Area
- Role Play Area
- Book Corner
- Creative Area
- Message Centre
- Outdoor Area
- Investigation Area

Key principles:

- Provide choice and variety
- Make it accessible and inviting
- Model and value mark making
- Respond to children's ideas
- Celebrate all marks and attempts

SUPPORTING CHILDREN WHO ARE STRUGGLING

If a child is not yet making meaningful marks, try:

GO BIG
Offer large-scale opportunities (large paper, outdoor chalk, water painting).

SENSORY FIRST
Use messy play, textures and materials to build confidence before using pens or pencils.

MODEL & IMITATE
Sit alongside, model mark making and encourage copying and experimenting.

FOLLOW INTERESTS
Link mark making to what they love – vehicles, animals, people, stories.

KEEP IT SHORT
Offer short, fun experiences regularly rather than long adult-directed tasks.

WHAT LEADERS SHOULD SEE

A rich environment where children are motivated to make marks for a purpose. Marks are valued, talked about and celebrated as the first steps in writing.

Look for:

- Children making marks independently throughout provision
- Children explaining their marks and what they mean
- Use of a range of resources and surfaces
- Adults responding positively and extending ideas
- Progression from scribbles to symbols to letters
- Children showing pride in their marks and messages

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6 LETTER FORMATION – Learning to form letters with control and accuracy

WHY THIS MATTERS

Correct letter formation helps children write with confidence and consistency. Learning how to form letters accurately from the start supports speed, fluency and pride in their writing.

We are developing:

- Motor control
- Correct formation
- Letter recognition
- Visual memory
- Accuracy & consistency
- Confidence
- Independence

INDOOR CONTINUOUS PROVISION

Suggested Opportunities

- Alphabet frieze and sound mats
- Writing area with modelled letter cards
- Sand/water trays for letter practice
- Playdough and dough mats
- Magnetic letters and whiteboards
- Letter formation posters and rhymes
- Clipboards, notebooks and pencils

RESOURCES

- Letter cards
- Sand trays
- Whiteboards
- Playdough
- Magnetic letters
- Pencil grips
- Liquid chalk pens
- Formation rhyme cards
- Chalks & crayons



OUTDOOR CONTINUOUS PROVISION

Suggested Opportunities

- Chalk writing on walls, fences and floors
- Water painting letters on paving
- Writing in sand, mud and shaving foam
- Large brushes and paint for big letters
- Natural materials to form letters
- Letter hunts around the environment

RESOURCES

- Chalk & chalkboard
- Water & paintbrushes
- Trays & tuff spots
- Natural loose parts
- Large mark making tools
- Foam letters
- Sticks, stones, pinecones
- Watering cans
- Sponges





DRAWING CLUB CONNECTIONS

Linking phonics, drawing and letters

TELL ME
Children listen to and talk about the sound and the story character.

DRAW IT
Children draw the character or object, thinking about key details and initial sounds.

CODE IT
Children add sounds using letters they know or are learning.

INNOVATE IT
Children create their own ideas, using letters to write labels, captions or sentences.

Drawing Club provides meaningful, purposeful opportunities to apply and consolidate letter formation.



IDEAS FOR CONTINUOUS PROVISION SET-UPS

Create engaging letter formation opportunities across all areas.

- Writing Area
- Sensory Area
- Construction Area
- Role Play Area
- Book Corner
- Creative Area
- Outdoors
- Investigation Area
- Message Centre

Key principles:

- Teach letters in a systematic phonics order
- Model correct formation every time
- Use consistent language and rhymes
- Short, focused practice is most effective
- Praise effort and celebrate progress

SUPPORTING CHILDREN WHO ARE STRUGGLING

If a child is finding letter formation challenging, try:

GO LARGE FIRST
Use big movements, large tools and vertical surfaces to build confidence.

USE MULTI-SENSORY APPROACHES
Try sand, chalk, playdough, tracing in the air and water painting.

BREAK IT DOWN
Teach the letter in small steps and focus on one at a time.

USE SUPPORTS
Provide starting dots, arrows, rhymes and visual cues.

PRAISE PROGRESS
Celebrate attempts and improvements, not perfection.

WHAT LEADERS SHOULD SEE

A rich environment where children are taught letter formation explicitly and have many opportunities to practise and apply their learning with pride.

Look for:

- Children forming letters correctly most of the time
- Children able to talk about how to form letters
- Children using letters in their play and independent writing
- Engagement in daily handwriting practice and activities
- Pride in their writing and growing independence

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7 FLUENT HANDWRITING – Bringing it all together for independence and stamina

WHY THIS MATTERS

Fluent handwriting is the goal: children can write with speed, accuracy and ease so they can focus on their ideas, not just forming letters.

We are developing: Speed · Accuracy · Ease · Stamina · Self-monitoring · Independence · Pride

INDOOR CONTINUOUS PROVISION
Suggested Opportunities

- Writing in a range of contexts daily
- Message centre – letters, notes, invitations
- Story writing using story maps
- Making lists, labels and captions
- Journals and learning logs
- Role play – menus, receipts, tickets
- Construction – plans and instructions
- Book making and comic strips

RESOURCES

- Pencils & pens
- Paper of all types
- Clipboards
- Notebooks & books
- Highlighters
- Word mats
- Writing frames
- Alphabet strips
- Visual prompts
- Self-check tools



OUTDOOR CONTINUOUS PROVISION
Suggested Opportunities

- Chalk writing and drawing on large surfaces
- Water writing with brushes and sponges
- Mud kitchen – menus and signs
- Natural mark making – sticks, stones, leaves
- Garden journals and observation notes
- Den building – plans and labels
- Outdoor role play – shop signs, price lists
- Post letters in outdoor 'post box'

RESOURCES

- Chalks & chalkboards
- Water & paint brushes
- Clipboards & paper
- Natural materials
- Outdoor writing boards
- Large paper rolls
- Baskets & trays
- Weatherproof pens
- Post box
- Signs & labels







DRAWING CLUB CONNECTIONS
From drawing to fluent writing

TELL ME
Children rehearse ideas, develop vocabulary and structure.

DRAW IT
Children draw with increasing detail and purpose.

CODE IT
Children add labels, letters, symbols and phonetic spelling.

INNOVATE IT
Children create their own stories and writing for real purposes.

Drawing Club builds the confidence, purpose and stamina needed for fluent handwriting.



IDEAS FOR CONTINUOUS PROVISION SET-UPS

Embed handwriting across every area of learning.

Writing Area	Small World Area	Construction Area
Role Play Area	Book Corner	Creative Area
Investigation Area	Outdoor Area	Message Centre

Key principles:

- Provide authentic, meaningful contexts
- Encourage daily, purposeful writing
- Build stamina gradually
- Model and celebrate effort
- Promote independence and self-checking

SUPPORTING CHILDREN WHO ARE STRUGGLING

If a child is not yet writing fluently, try:

BUILD STAMINA GRADUALLY
Short, regular bursts of writing with purpose and praise.

CHECK POSTURE & POSITION
Ensure children are comfortable and supported to sit correctly.

REVISIT FOUNDATIONS
Return to earlier pillars to strengthen areas of need.

MODEL FLUENCY
Adult writes alongside children to show pace, flow and pride.

REDUCE LOAD
Use word banks, sentence starters or visual supports when needed.

CELEBRATE PROGRESS
Focus on improvement and effort, not perfection.

WHAT LEADERS SHOULD SEE

A rich environment where children write every day for real reasons. Children are confident, engaged and proud of their writing. Handwriting is becoming fluent, automatic and a tool for communication.

Look for:

- Children writing independently for sustained periods
- Purposeful writing across all areas of provision
- Developing stamina, persistence and self-editing
- Pride in presentation and improving fluency
- Children using writing to express ideas, solve problems and communicate

The Path to Handwriting Success

F1 NURSERY: BUILDING THE FOUNDATIONS FOR HANDWRITING SUCCESS

In F1, our focus is not on handwriting. Our focus is on building the physical, cognitive and communication foundations that make handwriting possible and enjoyable when children are ready.

1 PHYSICAL FOUNDATIONS

★ High Priority

Children should experience:

- Climbing
- Balancing
- Crawling
- Running
- Lifting
- Pulling
- Carrying

What leaders should see:
Active bodies everywhere.



2 FINE MOTOR DEVELOPMENT

★ High Priority

Children should:

- Thread
- Build
- Squeeze
- Pinch
- Twist
- Pour
- Manipulate

What leaders should see:
Children strengthening their fingers through play.



3 CROSSING THE MIDLINE

★ High Priority

Children should:

- Reach across their bodies
- **Paint on vertical surfaces**
- Draw large shapes
- Complete obstacle courses

What leaders should see:
Children moving confidently across both sides of their body.



4 HAND STRENGTH

★ High Priority

Children should:

- Use playdough daily
- Dig
- Carry
- Push
- Pull
- Use tweezers and pegs

What leaders should see:
Purposeful strengthening opportunities throughout provision.



5 MARK MAKING FOR MEANING

★ Highest Priority

Children should:

- Draw
- Scribble
- Represent ideas
- Tell stories
- Give meaning to marks

What leaders should see:
Children talking about their marks and creations.



6 LETTER FORMATION

★ Emerging Only

ABC

Some children may:

- Notice environmental print
- Become interested in letters
- Explore letter-like shapes

Not expected:

- ✗ Formal handwriting sessions
- ✗ Correct letter formation
- ✗ Repeated letter practice



7 FLUENT HANDWRITING

★ Not Yet

Children are not expected to:

- Write words
- Form letters consistently
- Produce fluent handwriting

Instead we are developing:

- ✓ Curiosity
- ✓ Confidence
- ✓ Communication
- ✓ Physical readiness



★ THE F1 GOLDEN MESSAGE ★

We are preparing children to become writers.

We do this through:

MOVEMENT · PLAY · TALK · EXPLORATION · MARK MAKING

NOT through formal handwriting instruction.

WHAT WE EXPECT BY THE END OF F1

Most children will:

- Move confidently and safely
- Show increasing hand strength and control
- Enjoy drawing and mark making
- Give meaning to marks
- Talk about their creations
- Begin to show interest in print
- Be physically ready to access Reception handwriting instruction

The Path to Handwriting Success

F2: BUILDING CONFIDENCE, SKILLS AND READINESS FOR HANDWRITING

In F2, we build on strong foundations so children develop the skills, knowledge and confidence they need to begin handwriting with control and accuracy in Year 1.

1 PHYSICAL FOUNDATIONS

★ High Priority

Children should experience:

- Climbing, balancing
- Running, jumping, hopping
- Crawling, rolling
- Lifting, pulling, carrying
- Riding bikes and scooters
- Large construction play
- Yoga and stretching

What leaders should see:
Active, confident children who enjoy moving.



2 FINE MOTOR DEVELOPMENT

★ High Priority

Children should:

- Thread, weave, peg
- Cut with scissors
- Use tweezers and tongs
- Build with small parts
- Playdough activities
- Fasten zips, buttons
- Pour, scoop, transfer

What leaders should see:
Children showing increasing control and coordination in their fingers.



3 CROSSING THE MIDLINE

★ High Priority

Children should:

- Reach across their bodies
- Draw large shapes
- Paint on vertical and horizontal surfaces
- Use large-scale construction
- Complete obstacle courses

What leaders should see:
Children moving confidently across both sides of their body in play and tasks.



4 HAND STRENGTH

★ High Priority

Children should:

- Use playdough daily
- Dig, push, pull
- Squeeze and roll
- Carry and transport
- Use tools
- Clip, peg, pinch
- Use a tripod grip during mark making

What leaders should see:
Children developing strong, resilient hands for control and stamina.



5 MARK MAKING FOR MEANING

★ High Priority

Children should:

- Draw and scribble with purpose
- Represent ideas
- Write initial sounds
- Tell stories through their marks
- Label and sign their work

What leaders should see:
Children talking confidently about their marks and what they mean.



6 LETTER FORMATION

★ Emerging

Children should:

- Recognise letters in their name
- Form some letters correctly
- Explore letter families
- Name letters and their sounds

What leaders should see:
Children forming letters with increasing control but not yet consistently.



7 FLUENT HANDWRITING

★ Emerging

Children should:

- Form letters with control
- Write simple words
- Use finger spaces
- Write their name independently

What leaders should see:
Children beginning to write with confidence and pride.



★ THE F2 GOLDEN MESSAGE ★

We are today's scribblers, tomorrow's writers.

We do this through:

MOVEMENT · PLAY · TALK · EXPLORATION · MARK MAKING

Not perfection. Not pressure. Just progress.

WHAT WE EXPECT BY THE END OF F2

Most children will:

- Move confidently and safely
- Show good hand strength and coordination
- Enjoy drawing and mark making
- Give meaning to their marks
- Talk about their ideas and creations
- Recognise and form many letters correctly
- Be ready to begin fluent handwriting in Year 1

The Path to Handwriting Success

YEAR 1: DEVELOPING ACCURACY, CONSISTENCY AND PREPARING FOR FLUENT WRITING

In Year 1, we consolidate handwriting skills, build stamina and independence, and introduce the foundations needed for joined handwriting in Year 2 and beyond.

1 PHYSICAL FOUNDATIONS

★ High Priority

Children should:

- Show good posture and body control
- Move with co-ordination, balance and control
- Use a comfortable and stable sitting position
- Develop core strength for writing stamina

What leaders should see:
Children who are active, co-ordinated and ready to learn.



2 FINE MOTOR DEVELOPMENT

★ High Priority

Children should:

- Use a range of tools with control
- Strengthen finger and hand muscles
- Manipulate small objects with accuracy
- Use a tripod grip comfortably

What leaders should see:
Children showing control, precision and growing confidence in their hands.



3 CROSSING THE MIDLINE

★ High Priority

Children should:

- Work comfortably across both sides of their body
- Reach across the page with control
- Write on vertical and horizontal surfaces
- Complete activities that require crossing midline

What leaders should see:
Children who move confidently and fluently across the midline.



4 HAND STRENGTH

★ High Priority

Children should:

- Use playdough and resistance activities regularly
- Use a range of tools and equipment
- Build endurance for longer writing tasks
- Develop grip strength and control

What leaders should see:
Children developing strength, control and stamina for increasingly longer tasks.



5 MARK MAKING FOR MEANING

★ High Priority

Children should:

- Write with purpose and for a range of audiences
- Form letters accurately with consistent size
- Use appropriate spacing between words
- Use writing to record ideas, experiences and learning

What leaders should see:
Children who take pride in their writing and understand its purpose and audience.



6 LETTER FORMATION

★ High Priority

ABC

Children should:

- Form lower and upper case letters correctly
- Start and finish letters in the right place
- Use consistent size and orientation
- Sit letters on the line and use descenders where appropriate

What leaders should see:
Accurate, consistent letter formation across all curriculum writing.



7 FLUENT HANDWRITING

★ High Priority

Children should:

- Write with increasing fluency and stamina
- Maintain legibility at greater speed
- Use consistent sizing, spacing and alignment
- Develop readiness for joins in Year 2:
  - Leave small spaces
  - Avoid lifting pen
  - Understand which letters can join

What leaders should see:
Children who write fluently, legibly and are ready for joined handwriting.



★ THE YEAR 1 GOLDEN MESSAGE ★

Confident today, fluent tomorrow.

We build:

CONFIDENCE · ACCURACY · STAMINA · INDEPENDENCE · PRIDE

Practice with purpose. Progress with pride.

WHAT WE EXPECT BY THE END OF YEAR 1

Most children will:

- Sit correctly and write comfortably for longer
- Form all letters accurately and consistently
- Use appropriate spacing between words
- Write with increasing speed, fluency and stamina
- Take pride in presentation and handwriting
- Be ready to learn and use joins in Year 2
- Write for a range of purposes and audiences

The Path to Handwriting Success

ADAPTATIONS: SUPPORTING EVERY WRITER TO SUCCEED

Every child can improve with the right support, tools and time.

When children are finding handwriting difficult, small changes can make a big difference.
Use these adaptations to remove barriers, build confidence and support progress.

1. THE ENVIRONMENT

- Ensure good posture: feet flat on the floor, knees at 90°, bottom to back of chair.
- Reduce distractions and clutter.
- Provide good lighting.
- Allow extra space around the child.
- Use a sloped surface or writing wedge if helpful.



2. SEATING POSITION

Right-handed writers

Sit slightly to the left of the midline of the table, paper angled slightly to the left.



Left-handed writers

Sit slightly to the right of the midline of the table, paper angled slightly to the right to avoid arm clashes and smudging.



3. WRITING TOOLS

The right tool can improve comfort, control and confidence.

Pencils



- Triangular pencils
- Chunky pencils
- Shortened pencils
- Grip pencils
- Weighted pencils

Pens



- Easy-grip pens
- Rollerball pens
- Ballpoint pens
- Gel pens

Other tools



- Whiteboard pens
- Twistables
- Pencil crayons
- Wax crayons
- Chalks

4. PAPER & POSITIONING

- Ensure paper is positioned to the best angle for the child.
- Use lined paper with clear, consistent lines.
- Try thicker lines or raised lines.
- Use coloured or highlighted lines.
- Provide smaller paper for less overwhelm.
- Use overlays to reduce visual clutter.



5. SENSORY & FINE MOTOR SUPPORT

Strengthening hands and improving sensory processing can have a huge impact.

- Daily fine motor activities (threading, tweezers, playdough, peg boards, building).
- Heavy work activities (climbing, pushing, pulling, carrying).
- Hand exercises: finger stretches, putty, squeezing, rolling.
- Use fidget tools if needed (sensory cushion, wobble cushion, fiddle bands).



6. VISUAL SUPPORTS

- Use letter formation rhymes and gestures.
- Provide formation charts and desk strips.
- Use visual cues and reminders.
- Highlight starting points and key features.
- Model alongside the child.

Letter Formation Chart

c a d g

l i t u

7. BREAK IT DOWN

- Break letters into their component parts.
- Teach one letter or group at a time.
- Practise in isolation, then in words, then in sentences.
- Use multi-sensory approaches (see it, say it, air-write it, trace it, write it).

Example: Letter 'a'

1. Start
2. Around
3. Up
4. Down
5. Flick



8. ADAPT THE TASK

- Reduce the amount of writing expected.
- Provide sentence starters.
- Use word banks or phoneme mats.
- Allow oral rehearsal before writing.
- Accept alternative ways to record (drawing, labels, scribing, typing).

Support strategies

- **Sentence starters**
  e.g. I went to...
- **Word bank**

went	to	the

- **Phoneme mat**

c	a	t
•	•	•

9. CHECK, REFLECT, REVIEW

- Observe: What is the child struggling with?
- Remove barriers: Is it grip, motor skills, vision, processing, confidence or something else?
- Try small changes and monitor impact.
- Celebrate small wins and build confidence.
- Work in partnership with parents and other professionals.

10. ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Left-handed writers

- Provide space on the right.
- Ensure paper is angled.
- Teach letters to push, not hook.

Children with SEND

- Tailor support to individual needs.
- Use OT advice and individual programmes where appropriate.
- Be patient, consistent and encouraging.

Vision support

- Check vision if difficulties persist.
- Use larger print resources.
- Ensure high contrast.

Emotional support

- Build confidence through praise and encouragement.
- Avoid comparisons.
- Make handwriting a positive experience.

REMEMBER

- Adaptations are not about making it easier, they are about removing barriers so children can show what they can do.
- Every small change can unlock progress.
- With the right support, every child can become a confident writer.

Small changes, big impact. Every child, every day.

When in doubt: observe, adapt, personalise and celebrate progress. We are all working towards the same goal: confident, fluent and joyful writers!

The Path to Handwriting Success

WriteWell Letter Formation and Mark-Making Progression

THE PROGRESSION

A journey from movement to meaning.

1. PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT
Building the body
Gross motor skills, strength and coordination.

2. FINE MOTOR DEVELOPMENT
Building the hand
Strength, control and dexterity.

3. MARK MAKING
Building meaning
Exploring marks and communicating ideas.

4. PATTERN MAKING
Building movement
Developing control, direction and rhythm.

5. LETTER FORMATION
abc
Building accuracy
Forming letters correctly and consistently.

6. WORD WRITING
cat
Building fluency
Applying letter skills to write words and labels.

7. FLUENT HANDWRITING
Building automaticity
Writing with speed, stamina and confidence.

STAGE 1: MARK-MAKING PATTERNS – THE FOUNDATIONS

Practice these patterns in big spaces first (air, whiteboards, large paper, outdoors) before moving to smaller spaces and books.

1 Vertical Lines	2 Horizontal Lines	3 Crosss	4 Diagonals	5 Zig Zags	6 Waves	7 Loops	8 Circles & Spirals
• Top to bottom • Large scale • Build control	• Left to right • Across the body • Build control	• Vertical and horizontal • Crossing the midline	• Both directions • Visual tracking • Change direction	• Change of direction • Pencil control	• Smooth movement • Rhythm and flow	• Continuous movement • Prepares for letters	• Curved movement • Foundation for many letters

Teaching Principle: Start big, go slow, build control and confidence.

STAGE 2: WRITEWELL LETTER FORMATION – TEACH IN FAMILIES

Teach letters in movement families rather than alphabatical order.
Children remember movement, not letter names!

1 CURLY CATERPILLAR LETTERS	c o a d g q e s f	Start at 2 o'clock, around and back. Anti-clockwise curves.
2 LONG LADDER LETTERS	l i t j y u	Start at the top. Down and up movements.
3 ONE-ARM ROBOT LETTERS	r n m h b p k	Down, up and over. Hump formations.
4 ZIG-ZAG MONSTER LETTERS	v w x z	Diagonal movements. Change direction.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

- Start each letter at the pink dot.
- Follow the arrow direction.
- Use consistent language:
  - start
  - down
  - around
  - up
  - across
- Reinforce every time.

KEY

- ● = Start here
- → = Direction of movement

STAGE 3: TEACHING SEQUENCE – THE JOURNEY

NURSERY (F1)



Focus on:
- ✓ Gross motor development
- ✓ Fine motor development
- ✓ Mark making
- ✓ Pattern making
- ✓ Meaningful marks

Not yet:
- ✗ Formal handwriting
- ✗ Repetitive letter formation

RECEPTION (F2)



Focus on:
- ✓ Secure pencil grip
- ✓ Letter family introduction
- ✓ Correct starting points
- ✓ Formation linked to phonics
- ✓ Daily practice

Children should be able to:
- Recognise letters
- Form most letters correctly
- Begin writing words

YEAR 1



Focus on:
- ✓ Consistent letter formation
- ✓ Correct size and orientation
- ✓ Fluency and stamina
- ✓ Independence
- ✓ Spacing
- ✓ Preparation for joins

Children should be able to:
- Write simple sentences with confidence.

PREPARING FOR JOINS IN YEAR 2

In Year 1 we do not teach joins.
Instead, we develop the foundations:

- ★ Consistent starting points
- ★ Letters sitting on the line
- ★ Correct exit strokes
- ★ Good spacing between letters
- ★ Smooth pencil movement
- ★ No letter reversals
- ★ Consistent size

These foundations make joining successful in Year 2.

LEFT-HANDED WRITERS

Support by:
- ✓ Sitting on the left of a right-handed partner
- ✓ Paper tilted right
- ✓ Pencil held slightly higher up
- ✓ Clear view of writing
- ✓ Relaxed wrist
- ✓ Encourage pushing, not hooking

Avoid:
- ✗ Hooked wrist
- ✗ Excessive smudging
- ✗ Awkward seating

WRITEWELL REMINDERS

- ✓ Start at the dot
- ✓ Follow the direction
- ✓ Use consistent language
- ✓ Model slowly
- ✓ Practise little and often
- ✓ Prioritise accuracy before speed
- ✓ Celebrate progress

Small steps lead to big success!

THE SOUTH WILFORD MESSAGE

Handwriting is not a separate subject. It is the culmination of physical development, fine motor control, communication, mark making and purposeful practice.

→ Our aim is simple:

Confident today. Fluent tomorrows.