

CALT – ADVICE SHEETS

Handwriting

We use handwriting every day of our lives from making lists to writing greetings cards. Even in this world of technology, it is still needed as not every subject can be accessed on an electronic device. Some children have greater difficulties in acquiring the fluent, automatic handwriting they will need as they move on to secondary school. There are key areas to consider:

Posture

Does your child sit correctly when writing? Are they slumped over, craning their neck to see what they are writing?

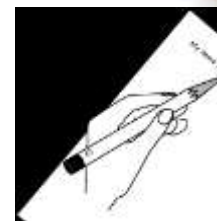
Consider the following things:

- Are they holding the pencil/pen too close to the tip so they can't see what they are writing? If so, move it higher onto the palm, or with a pen put a rubber band around it and the fingers must sit above that.
- Are they on the right height table and chair? Use of a box under the feet or a cushion to elevate them on a chair. Ideally, all joints: elbow, knee, hips, ankles etc. should be a right angles.
- Would they suit a sloping surface? Use of an A4 level arch file with some contents can create a slope for some pupils to write on.

Pencil hold

Do they hold the pencil correctly? The most effective pencil grasps are the ones pictured, which allow the fingers to move without using the wrist, or whole arm. If not, then first work on the 'pincer grip' by using finger and thumb to do activities like:

- Pick up small objects
- Opening pegs and pegging them on a line
- Using tweezers to pick up small objects



If they are good at the pincer grip then they may benefit from short-term use of a pencil grip/ shaped pen. Once your child has established the right grasp then the grip will no longer be needed. Different grips suit different children so if possible, try them out to see which is best.



Dolphin grip



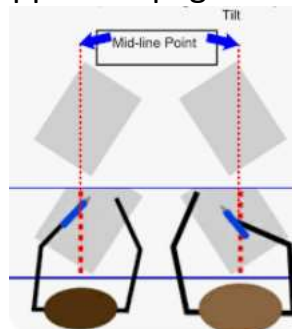
Cross guard ultra



Stablio pen

Position of paper

Is the paper slightly angled to their body. Some children angle the paper too far, others not enough. Ideally, they should be positioned as below. The non-dominant hand should also support the page to stop it moving around.



Pencil control

The following activities are fun ways to develop the fine motor skills necessary for handwriting

- Drawing between boundaries (e.g. pathways, mazes, roads)
- Tracing (thick to narrow)
- Rainbow writing (writing over the top of a shape in lots of different colours)
- Handwriting patterns horizontal, vertical, diagonal
- Mazes
- Dot to dot

Letter formation

Letter formation is part of the development of fluent handwriting and forms the foundation for joining letters in the later school years. It needs to become automatic so the child can concentrate on the content of their writing rather

than how to write the letters. Lots of practice is the best way to help letter formation become automatic.

All letters have a starting point and a direction. It is easier to work on them in families e.g.

- Sticks– i,l,t,f,x,z
- Curvy– v,u,w,y,j
- Clockwise– b,h,p,k,n,m,r
- Anti-clockwise– a,d,q,g,o,c,e,s

Here are some activities that could be tried when first learning to form letters correctly:

- Big to small- write the letter big then reduce its size down
- Paint it on a wall with water and a paintbrush
- Draw it in the sand
- Draw it in shaving foam

Gaining fluency

As children develop their handwriting they will gain fluency and it will become more automatic. To support this you can:

- Work on patterns (e.g. pictured)
- Join a few letters at a time (no more than 6 repetitions)



Remember

Your school will have a handwriting policy so it is helpful to find out how they form their letters in your child's particular school.

Some children take longer to learn to write than others but practise will help all.

If you have concerns talk to your child's teacher who will be able to advise you.