MURDISHAW WEST PRIMARY & NURSERY SCHOOL

HANDWRITING POLICY

SEPTEMBER 2026

Policy Title	HANDWRITING
School/HBC	School
Written by	J PHILLIPS
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Signed by Chair of Governors	D Cox
Date	
Review Date	SEPTEMBER 2027

At Murdishaw West, our aim is that pupils will be supported to develop a handwriting style which is clear, joined and fluid. Inevitably some will be neater than others, but each child can acquire a consistent and fluent style.

Although there are many opportunities to practise handwriting across the curriculum, we will also provide regular lessons for teaching and revising these skills. The frequency and length of these lessons will vary according to the age and competence of the children.

Handwriting is taught so it is in line with Essential Letters and Sounds rhymes.

Once children are developmentally ready to join their handwriting, we use the Debbie Hepplewhite patter and resources.

Good handwriting is an essential skill in the quest to spell and write fluently, confidently and competently.

For children to achieve better than expected standard in the writing assessments at the end of Year 6, their handwriting must be joined.

Aims

For Teachers

1. To know the correct style, letter formations and joins in handwriting to ensure consistency across the school
2. To understand the progression in handwriting so that pupils are taught in every lesson and pupils' handwriting develops and improves
3. To ensure high expectations in handwriting lessons and that pupils are expected to apply the same standards in other independent writing

For Pupils

1. To know the importance of clear and neat presentation in order to communicate meaning effectively
2. To write legibly in both joined and printed styles with increasing fluency and speed by;
    - Having a correct pencil grip
    - Knowing that all letters and digits start from the top, except d and e which start in the middle
    - Forming all letters and digits correctly
    - Knowing the size and orientation of letters of digits

Left-handed children

At least ten per cent of the population is left-handed – a slightly higher proportion of these are males. There is no need for left-handed children to be disadvantaged when writing, if a few simple strategies are employed:

- Model letter formation, skywriting, etc. specifically for left-handed children, with your left hand
- Make sure that left-handed children sit on the left of right-handed children, otherwise their writing arms will clash.
- Put a mark at the left side of the page to indicate where writing begins, as some left-handed children mirror-write from the right.
- Left-handed children usually need to have the paper slightly to the left of the centre of their body and should be encouraged to tilt their work clockwise so they can see what they have written.
- Experiment with seat height – some left-handed children may need a higher seat to view their work clearly and to prevent the elbow locking into their side as they work across the paper.
- To avoid smudging their work: — left-handed children should be encouraged to position their fingers about 2.5cm away from the end of their writing implement — the pencil should sit in the 'V' between thumb and forefinger, sitting parallel to the thumb — the wrist should be straight.

Writing from left to right is more difficult for left-handed children. They should, therefore, be given more attention in the classroom to ensure that they do not learn bad habits of position, posture and pen hold which will hinder the development of a fast, fluent and legible hand.

Teaching time

- In EYFS, handwriting and mark-making are supported through daily practice and provision, underpinned by physical development, because children need strong fine motor control, hand strength and coordination before they can confidently hold a pencil and form letters.
- Years 1 and 6, daily letter formation practise.

Handwriting in the Foundation Stage

Good handwriting relies on secure motor control, posture and hand-eye coordination. Children should learn handwriting through movement, with the actual writing of letters and numbers as the ultimate aim. Children will:

- Engage in activities requiring hand-eye coordination
- Use one-handed tools and equipment
- Draw lines and circles using gross motor movement
- Manipulate objects with increasing control
- Develop gross motor strength through climbing, balancing, crawling, jumping and other movement activities
- Build core strength, shoulder stability and posture to support writing
- Develop fine motor strength through threading, cutting, dough work, squeezing and construction activities
- Begin to use anticlockwise movement and retrace vertical lines
- Begin to form recognisable letters and numbers
- Use a pencil and hold it effectively to form recognisable letters and numbers, most of which are correctly formed

Before being developmentally ready to learn to write letters, children are exposed to a range of Fine-Motor skill activities ad key movements.

The key movements underpinning letter formation should be introduced through large- scale movements, from the shoulder.

In the earliest stages children should make the movements symmetrically using both arms. Once the movement is firmly established in kinaesthetic memory, it can be reduced in scale using activities such as sky writing, using sticks in sand etc. and then reduced further in art activities using felt tip pens, crayons and chubby pencils.

We teach pencil grip explicitly through simple, memorable strategies such as Snappy Crocodile, Pinch it, Flip it, Tip it, which help children to hold a pencil correctly and comfortably. These approaches support children to develop the pincer grip, strengthen fine motor control and position the pencil effectively for writing. Teachers model the correct grip, give regular reminders and provide opportunities for children to practise through handwriting, drawing and mark-making activities. This early teaching helps children to build good habits from the start, supporting legibility, fluency and confidence in writing.

Following this, children are encouraged to practise and accurately execute the pre-handwriting shapes. The pre-handwriting shapes form the basis for all letter formation and regular practice of these, even when children have already begun to learn to write letters, is beneficial.

Teachers should model letter and number formation using the correct letter patter (See Appendix 1)

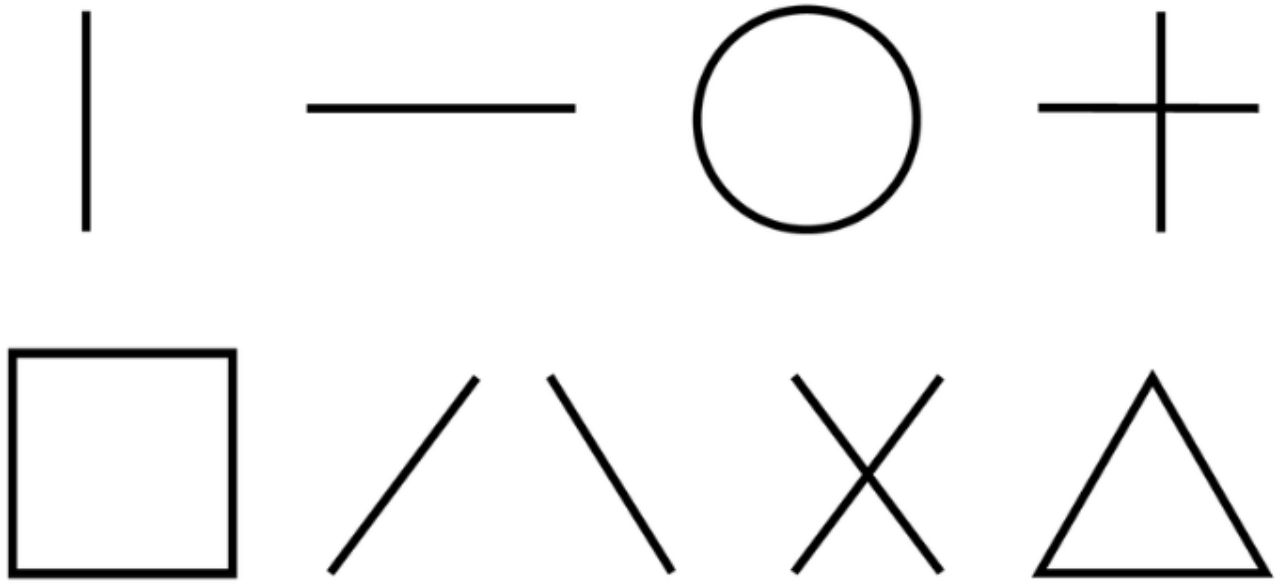
Nursery

- Gross motor activities to develop strength and coordination
- Fine motor activities to support hand control
- Mark-making and purposeful drawing
- Pre-writing shapes and patterns
- Beginning to use tools and hold them with increasing control
- Early name recognition and attempts at writing their name

Reception

- Pre-writing shapes
- Individual letter and number formation
- Word formation based on letter groups – linked to letter and sounds, beginning to show joins in diagraphs

Pre-Writing Shapes (in developmental order)



The National Curriculum English Programmes of Study provide guidance on teaching handwriting:
Year 1 pupils should be taught to:

- 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
- Make links with phonics and spelling

Year 2 pupils should be taught to:

- 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 not joined
- 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

Year 3-4 pupils should be taught to:

- Use the diagonal and horizontal strokes that are needed to join letters and understand which letters, when adjacent to one another, are best left not joined
- Increase the legibility, consistency and quality of their handwriting, e.g. by ensuring that the down strokes of letters are parallel and equidistant; that lines of writing are spaced sufficiently so that the ascenders and descenders of letters do not touch.

Year 5-6 pupils should be taught to:

- Write legibly, fluently, with increasing speed and personal style by:
- Choosing which shape of a letter to use when given choices and deciding, as part of their personal style, whether or not to join specific letters
- Choosing the writing implement that is best suited for a task (e.g. quick notes, letters)

Model used

Murdishaw West Primary & Nursery School uses the ELS and Debbie Hepplewhite letter formations and joins with the following letter formations:

Lower case letters

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

Capitals

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

Cursive Script

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

Numbers

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

The joins

There are **two main joins**:

- a "***diagonal join to half height*** " (approximately the mid-point of the gap between reasonably spaced writing lines in an ordinary exercise book);
- a "***washing line join***".

With letter **e**, the ***diagonal join*** has to ***sweep round*** to form the **_e_** (**egg**) and the ***washing line join*** has to ***dip down*** to form the **_e_** (**are**).

When a letter that ends with a ***washing line join*** (**o**,**r**,**v**,**w**,**x**) is followed by a letter in the ***c group*** (**c**,**a**,**d**,**s**,**g**,**o**,**q**) a ***hook over*** is **added** to the ***washing line join*** to **reach the starting point** of the next letter(**oak**, **rag**, **van**, **want**, **exam**).

Books

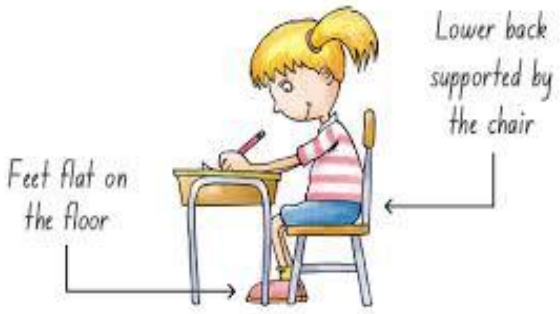
If appropriate for the individual child, English books have lines in them with consistent size from Year 2 – 6. Year F and 1 have bigger spaces between the lines. Additional handwriting books are also used to practise letter and number formation.

Pencils and Pens

Pupils will use HB pencils initially and move onto pens. Children at Key Stage 1 use sharp pencils with grips if they require them. From year five, children are able to use a pen, if their writing is neat and consistent and are able to write in pen in all their books with the exception of Maths. By Year 6, all children should be writing in pen.

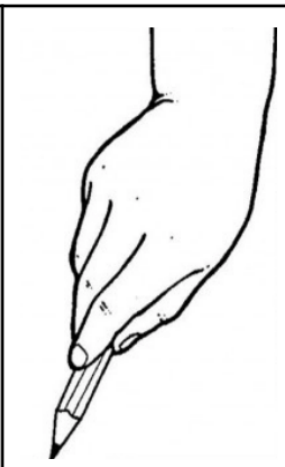
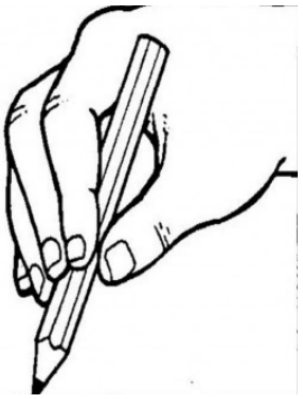
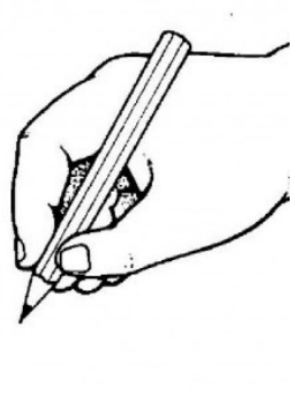
Getting ready to write Seating and posture

- Chair and table should be at a comfortable height
- The table should support the forearm so that it rests lightly on the surface and is parallel to the floor
- Encourage children to sit up straight and not slouch
- The height of the chair should be such that the thighs are horizontal and feet flat on the floor
- Tables should be free of clutter
- Rooms should be well lit
- Left handed pupils should sit on the left of their partners



Pencil grip

- A tripod grip is the most efficient way of holding a pencil. This will develop:

Typical Pencil Grasp Development			
			
Palmer grip	**Digital pronate grasp**	**Static tripod grip**	**Triangulation grip**

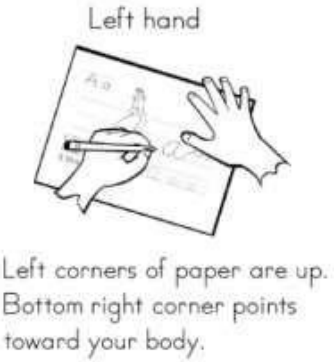
For right handers



- Hold lightly between the thumb and forefinger about 3cm away from the point
- The paper should be placed to the right tilted slightly to the left
- Use the left hand to steady the paper

For left handers

- Hold lightly between thumb and forefinger resting on the first knuckle of the middle finger
- Hold about 2.5cm from the tip but some children may need to grip a little further away from the tip so that the writing is not obscured by the thumb knuckle.
- The hand should be kept below the writing line although some pupils will find a 'hook' more comfortable
- The paper should be tilted slightly to the right at about 20 - 30° and pushed about 5cm away from the body to prevent 'hooking' of the hand which is caused by the left elbow 'locking' into the side of the body.
- Use the right hand to steady the paper
- As a left hander has to push the pencil across the paper, more force can be achieved if the child sits on a slightly higher chair or has a supportive cushion to give extra height.
- Left handers should ideally have light coming over their left shoulders
- Left handed children can be taught to cross t's and possibly f's from right to left (pulling instead of pushing)



NB It is very important that a right handed child is NOT seated on the left hand side of a left handed child as their elbows will collide! A left handed child should ideally sit at the left hand end of a table.

Assessment

Children must be assessed on entry into Year Three to see if they are using the correct letter formation for individual letters first. If they are not starting in the correct place they will not be able to join letters accurately. Pupils who need to learn correct letter formation for some letters must be taught this before they begin to join.

Teachers will assess pupils at the start of the year and decide where teaching should begin in the Progression Ladder. The year group starting points are a guide and teachers will need to use their professional judgement. However, be aware of the expectations at the end of the year.

The SLT will monitor children's writing and presentation in books regularly (as part of the monitoring cycle).
The following should be considered:
Is the writing generally legible?

- Are the letters correctly shaped and proportioned?
- Are the joins made correctly?
- Are the spaces between the letters, words and lines appropriate?
- Is the size of the writing appropriate?
- Is the writing properly aligned?
- Are the writing standards achieved by the majority of pupils in line with the National Curriculum?

Individual assessment

Children should be observed as they write during handwriting lessons – the teacher must circulate, monitor and intervene. Teachers also need to monitor and mark whole pieces of writing.
The following should be considered:

- Is the posture correct?
- Does the child hold the pencil correctly?
- Does the child use the correct movement when forming and or joining letters?
- Are any letters reversed or inverted?
- Does the child write fluently and rhythmically?
- Is the writing easily legible?
- Is the pupil's handwriting development in line with the National Curriculum?

Teacher modelling

It is essential that teachers model neat and cursive writing in shared writing on the whiteboard, interactive whiteboard and in pupils' books. Teachers' writing must be consistent with the school's model.

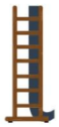
Application

Pupils should be encouraged to apply the hand-writing they are taught in all independent writing. Teachers must have high expectations of all pupils and expect to see examples of what they have been taught in all books.
If pupils are learning joined hand-writing, they should be expected to use this in their written work. Pupils should only attempt joins if they have been taught them.
Teachers must monitor this and use praise and next steps marking to bring this to pupils' attention where appropriate.
Handwriting and letter formation is assessed through application and added to Insight Tracking.

APPENDIX 1

Letter Patter

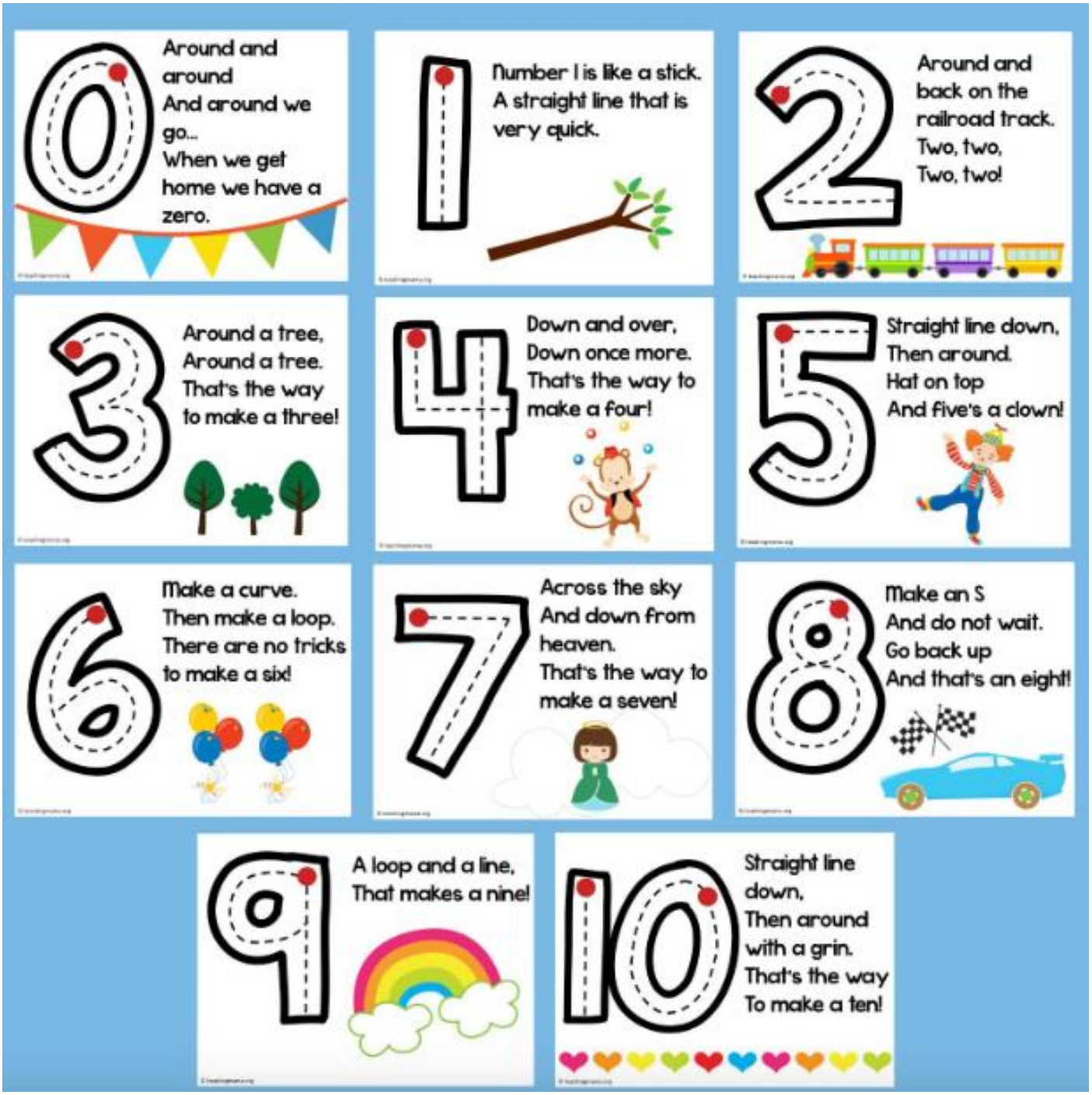
Letters	Patter
Curly Caterpillar Letters	
	Curl around the camel's back
	Around the head, down the body
	Over his back and around the tail, up his neck and down to his feet
	Swerve around the snake

	Start at his ear, around the face and down the beard
	Around the ostrich's body
	Around the feather and down the pen
	Over the ear, down to the tail and across the jaw
	Around the head and down the trunk
Long Ladder Letters	
	Down the long ladder
	Down her body and cross her shoulders
	Down her body, spot her idea
	Swoop down the tentacles and dot the head
	Under the umbrella and down to the tip
	Under the hull and down to the anchor
One Armed Robot Letters	
	From his head to his feet, up and over his back
	Down the person and around the wheel

	Down the body, around the arm, down the leg
	Down her body, up over the arm
	Down the bird and over the nest
	Meerkat, mound, mound
	Down his body, around his face
Zig Zag Letters	
	Down the tongue, up the tongue
	Hop to the top, land and hop, land and hop
	Criss-cross the kiss
	Zig and zag

APPENDIX 2

Number Patter



APPENDIX 3

Joined Letter Patter

Letters	Patter

	Start on the line, diagonal join, curl around the camel's back.
	Start on the line, diagonal join, around the head and down the body.
	Start on the line, diagonal join, over his back and around the tail, up his neck and down to his feet.
	Start on the line, diagonal join, swerve around the snake.
	Start on the line, diagonal join, around the face, down the beard, round and flick
	Start on the line, diagonal join, around the ostrich's body and flick.
	Start on the line, diagonal join, around the feather and down the pen. Back up flick. Start on the line, diagonal join, under the umbrella, down to the tip and flick.
	Start on the line, diagonal join, over the ear, down to the tail, round and flick.
	Start on the line, diagonal join, up and down the ladder
	Start on the line, diagonal join, up her body and down and flick. Cross her shoulders.

	Start on the line, diagonal join, up to his head, down to his feet up and over his back and flick.
	Start on the line, diagonal join, up and down the person, around the wheel and flick.
	Start on the line, diagonal join, up and down the body, around the arm, down the leg and flick.
	Start on the line, diagonal join, down her body, up over the arm.
	Start on the line, diagonal join, down the bird and over the nest and flick.
	Start on the line, diagonal join, meercat, mound, mound and flick.

	Start on the line, diagonal join, down his body, around his face and flick.
	Start on the line, diagonal join, down her body and flick. Then spot the idea.
	Start on the line, diagonal join, swoop down the tentacles, round and flick.
	Start on the line, diagonal join, under the umbrella, down to the tip and flick.
	Start on the line, diagonal join, under the hull, down the anchor, round and flick.
	Start on the line, diagonal join, down the tongue, up the tongue and flick.
	Start on the line, diagonal join, hop to the top, land and hop, land and hop and flick.
	Start on the line, diagonal join, criss-cross the kiss.
	Start on the line, diagonal join, zig and zag and flick
	Start on the line, diagonal join, sweep round the head and down the trunk.

Lesson	Letter groups	Practice
1	c	Start with the diagonal join in a box. Children should start on the line then draw a diagonal line to the top right corner. Practice this a few times and revisit over the start of the next few lessons. c, a, d, s, g, o, qu, f
2	c	cod, as, dad, sad, dog, odd, quad

3	c	cog, add, dogs, sags, gas, food, squad, scoff
4	ascenders	f, l, t, h, b, k, to, hat
5	ascenders	f, l, t, h, b, k, lad, tag, back, sack
6	low bridge	r, n, m, p, pan, man, pack, mat, nap, stamp, car, star
7	low bridge	r, n, m, p, fan, map, packs, mats, snap, lamp, bar, scar
8	dot and bowl	i, j, u, ink, imp, jar, jug, yap, yak, my, fly
9	dot and bowl	i, j, u, sip, tips, ajar, jump, stay, play, pudding
10	zigzag & odd ones out	v, w, x, z, e, egg, have, very, zoo, taxi, wax
11	zigzag & odd ones out	v, w, x, z, e, jazz, winter, heavy, craze, what, value
12	washing line joins	Start with the curved line in a box. Practice this a few times and revisit over the start of the next few lessons.  v, w, x, o, r, wave, avoid, sixty, wrong, right, write
13	washing line joins	v, w, x, o, r, voice, work, oxen, toxic, extra, exactly
14	Copy this famous phrase	The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.
15	Days of the week	Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday Saturday, Sunday
16	Capital letters revision	A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, L, M, N, O, P, Q, R, S, T, U, V, W, X, Y, Z
17	Months of the year	January, February, March, April, May, June, July, August, September, October, November, December
18	Numbers up to twenty	one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, nineteen, twenty
19	c	c, a, d, s, g, o, qu, f
20	c	cod, add, odd, sad, gas, fog, quad, squad
21	ascender	of, off, log, load, all, doll, tall, to, too, hat, has, bat, blot, sack, clock

22	low bridge	rag, for, not, knot, man, most, post, plant, farm, market, long, hang, form, storm, lamp, chop
23	dot and bowl	if, his, jet, just, up, under, yes, my, point, spoil, join, jar, glue, queue, key, they
24	zigzag and odd ones out	very, every, we, were, fix, text, zip, zoo, exit, exist, have, love, when, what, tax, boxes, buzz, nozzle
25	Common words	the, they lots to do I go into no, go, so I know that me, he, she we, be her, him them
26	Common words	I was You were He was We were They were I went When When Who all of us
27	Common words	said, again against have, give like, love some, come there, where what, why when, who What happened?
28	Contractions	It is It's do not don't cannot can't will not won't I am I'm I will I'll You are You're They are They're We are We're
29	Common words	my, why cry, cried try, tried dry, dried fly, flies The bird flew little baby old lady babies, ladies
30	Common words	we are our house over there their things your four

		of course our hour but put Mr Mrs Miss
31	Common words	day away I see the sea. I saw a dragon. came game same name make made look looked call called ask asked
32	Common words	could would should shouldn't people friends family families school building water bottle excellent
33	More useful words	You are angry. I try my best. I am crying. You cried. Gran says, 'No'. Why me? Who is it? What do you want? I want the key.
34	More useful words	I have one. Do you care? Come here! Where is it? There it is. I have some. I like it here. Where are you? He is over there!
35	More useful words	little large small tall new clothes I knew that. very every everyone any many anyone
36	More useful words	take mistake find mind wild child children king queen prince princess magic giant circle centre
37	More useful words	one once two twice three thrice

		through though although thought thoroughly throughout
38	More useful words	because therefore likely different suddenly further other brother mother father window yellow
39	More useful words	great greatly break steak breakfast instead of first third Which one? inside out who whose goes does shoes
40	More useful words	another around about bear bare staring really pleased narrator door poor Once upon a time