

Handwriting Policy



Reviewed: January 2026 V2

Introduction

At our school, we recognise that high-quality handwriting instruction contributes significantly to pupils' confidence, motivation and pride in their work. Research from schools using Martin Harvey's "Achieving Excellence in Handwriting" programme highlights that systematic, consistent teaching brings about *rapid, visible improvement*, boosting self-esteem and influencing wider learning attitudes.

Handwriting is taught explicitly, regularly and consistently across the school. A carefully structured progression ensures that all learners, from Reception to Year 6, develop a fluent, legible, semi-cursive handwriting style. This policy outlines our approach, expectations and progression.

Core Principles of Handwriting Teaching

Consistency of Approach

At Holy Family Catholic Primary School, we have a uniform approach across all classes which aligns with Martin Harvey's emphasis on consistency in teaching style, terminology, and modelling. Teachers model handwriting correctly, using shared language such as "*TNT – tummy near table*" and "*BBC – bottom back in chair*", which are widely used in Martin Harvey-based schools.

Daily, Short Sessions

The programme recommends daily lessons of 15–20 minutes, especially at the beginning of the year, before moving to a minimum of three sessions weekly for continued progress.

Semi-Cursive Style

At Holy Family, we use a clear, simple semi-cursive style without loops or unnecessary flourishes, making it easier to learn and more consistent to teach.

High Expectations

Staff model high standards, maintain strong expectations and ensure carefully structured lessons that set children up for success. It is expected that staff use the school's handwriting style when marking children's books and writing in the classroom. We do understand the challenges of

writing on a whiteboard during a whole class writing session and at speed but expect that this is used as discussion point with children.

Motor Skills Development

Strong fine and gross motor foundations underpin handwriting success, especially in EYFS and KS1 and should be evidenced within continuous provision as well as modelled sessions.

Aims

By the end of Year 6, all children will:

- Use a legible, fluent, semi-cursive handwriting style with appropriate joins.
- Write with increasing confidence, speed and stamina.
- Maintain consistent size, orientation and formation of letters.
- Apply different handwriting styles for different purposes (notes, drafting, presentation).
- Present their work with care and pride.
- Use correct posture, pencil grip, and page positioning.

Provision will also be made for:

- Left-handed pupils
- Pupils with coordination, fine motor or specific handwriting difficulties

Teaching and Learning Progression

Early Years Foundation Stage (Reception)

Focus Areas

- Fine and gross motor development (e.g., dough activities, patterning).
- Pencil control and correct tripod grip.
- Introduction to letter names and formation only when motor readiness is established.
- Frequent opportunities for mark-making to develop confidence and enjoyment.

Learning Activities

- “Air writing”, “dough writing”, tracing and pattern movements.
- Using wide-lined Early Years handwriting books.

Key Stage 1 (Years 1–2)

Focus Areas

- Following the KS1 Martin Harvey programme systematically.
- Strengthening correct letter formation, beginning with:
 - Short letters
 - Tall letters
 - Tail letters (descenders)
- No joining is introduced until children demonstrate consistent, correct single-letter formation.

Lesson Structure

- Warm-ups using tall/short/tail lines.
- Regular, split sessions allowing children time to practise and consolidate.

Outcomes

- Establishing strong foundational habits.
- Developing confidence and accuracy.

Lower Key Stage 2 (Years 3–4)

Focus Areas

- Transition to joined handwriting, following Martin Harvey’s guidance on letter families, coat-hanger movements and join types.
- Recap of single letter formation before adding joins.

Joining Expectations

- Letters like **g, y, q, j** remain unjoined; tail letters do not have loops in line with the scheme.

Outcomes

- Increasing fluency, consistency and stamina.
- Ability to join most letters accurately and confidently.

Upper Key Stage 2 (Years 5–6)

Focus Areas

- Refinement of fluency, speed and personal style while maintaining legibility.
- Application of handwriting to extended writing tasks and note-taking.
- Understanding when joined, semi-joined or printed handwriting is most appropriate (e.g., diagrams, drafting, final presentation).

Outcomes

- A mature, efficient handwriting style suitable for secondary readiness.
- Ability to maintain neatness in all curriculum areas.

Environment and Equipment

Children will be taught to:

- Sit correctly using **BBC** (bottom back in chair) and **TNT** (tummy near table) positions.
- Hold the pencil using the tripod grip.
- Keep feet on the floor and non-writing hand on the page (“six feet, two hands”).

Teachers will ensure access to:

- High-quality writing tools (sharp pencils, appropriate pens).
- Appropriate lined books to support size and alignment.

Assessment and Monitoring

Teachers will monitor handwriting regularly by:

- Reviewing handwriting in English books and across the curriculum.
- Providing verbal and written feedback focusing on formation, joins and consistency.
- Offering additional intervention where motor or coordination support is required.
- Celebration of handwriting progress (certificates, displays) is encouraged to promote pride and motivation.

Inclusion and Additional Needs

We provide:

- Adapted pens/pencils
- Sloping boards
- Specialist interventions for fine-motor development
- Individualised programmes where needed

These support children with additional physical, motor or learning needs to access handwriting successfully.

Review Cycle

This policy will be reviewed every two years, or sooner if Martin Harvey's guidance or school practice evolves.

Parent Guide to Handwriting

(Based on Martin Harvey's Approach)**

Why Handwriting Matters

Handwriting is an essential life skill. It helps children develop:

- Confidence and pride in their work
- Concentration and perseverance
- Clear communication
- Strong foundations for spelling and writing fluency

Our school teaches handwriting regularly from Reception to Year 6, using the clear and simple semi-cursive Martin Harvey handwriting style.

Our Approach in School

Reception (EYFS)

- Focus on fine motor skills, mark-making and correct pencil grip.
- Children learn letter shapes when they are physically ready.
- Activities include air writing, dough writing, tracing and patterning.

Years 1–2 (Key Stage 1)

- Children learn correct formation of short, tall, and tail letters.
- No joined writing until single letters are formed accurately and consistently.
- Short daily sessions build confidence and good habits.

Years 3–6 (Key Stage 2)

- Children develop joined handwriting following a simple, semi-cursive style.
- Certain letters (like g, y, j, q) are not joined.
- Lessons focus on fluency, neatness, speed and presentation.
- By Year 6, children apply handwriting appropriately for long pieces, notes and final presentation.

How We Set Children Up for Success

Posture and Pencil Grip

We teach children to:

- Sit with bottom back in the chair (BBC)
- Keep their tummy near the table (TNT)
- Use tripod grip
- Keep feet flat on the floor

Writing Tools

- Sharp pencils
- Lined books suited to age and stage

How You Can Help at Home

1. Encourage Short, Frequent Practice

- 5 minutes a day is enough.
- Focus on slow and accurate, not fast and rushed.

2. Support Good Posture

- Feet flat, back straight, paper tilted slightly.
- Use the same routines children use in school.

3. Model Clear Writing

- When writing birthday cards, lists or notes, show neat, joined handwriting.

4. Strengthen Fine Motor Skills

Try fun activities such as:

- Dough/clay modelling
- Pegs and tweezers
- Threading beads
- Colouring and tracing

5. Praise Effort, Not Perfection

Children improve fastest when they feel confident.

When to Speak to Us

Please get in touch if your child:

- Struggles with pencil grip
- Is left-handed and needs support
- Has motor difficulties
- Finds handwriting frustrating or tiring

We will happily provide guidance or additional support programmes.

Together We Can Help Your Child Succeed

A small amount of consistent practice makes a big difference. By working together, we can ensure every child develops handwriting they can feel proud of—now and into secondary school.