



Westbury Infant School

Handwriting Curriculum and Progression

Reception to Year 2 2026 to 2027

At Westbury Infant School, handwriting is taught as a foundational transcription skill. Our aim is for every child to form letters accurately, legibly and increasingly automatically so that handwriting supports, rather than competes with, composition. We follow the Ruth Miskin Read Write Inc. Handwriting sequence and use the same formation language across phonics, handwriting and wider writing.

Intent	Implementation	Impact
Every child develops an efficient, legible and increasingly fluent handwriting style. From Reception, pupils build physical readiness, an effective pencil grip and accurate movement patterns. They learn lower-case letters and digits through explicit, cumulative teaching, progressing to capital letters and, when developmentally appropriate, joining. Accuracy and automaticity come before speed or joining. Pupils who need longer at an earlier stage receive additional practice without losing access to age-appropriate ideas and writing purposes.	Formation is taught from the start of Reception through RWI phonics and short, additional handwriting practice. Once pupils know Set 1 sounds, daily ten-minute RWI handwriting lessons consolidate letters in formation families. Stage 2 develops relative size and join-ready formation; Stage 3 teaches the RWI hill and bridge joins only after secure formation. Stage 4 develops a mature, speedy style and is not a blanket Key Stage 1 expectation. Teachers model precisely, use consistent language, provide immediate feedback and expect gradual transfer into Hold a Sentence, dictation and independent writing.	Pupils sit and position paper effectively, use an efficient grip, form letters from the correct starting point and control orientation, size and spacing. They write capitals and digits accurately and know that capitals are not joined. By the end of Year 2, most pupils write clearly and with sufficient ease to sustain several sentences; pupils who are ready begin to use taught joins. Progress is judged through accuracy, consistency, legibility, fluency and independence, not through a single polished sample.

How handwriting is taught at Westbury Infant School

Handwriting is a discrete, cumulative curriculum and is also practised in meaningful transcription. The sequence is readiness-led: year-group expectations identify the statutory destination, while RWI assessment identifies the teaching starting point.

Curriculum component	Knowledge pupils acquire	Skills pupils develop
Physical readiness	Stable posture, paper position and an efficient grip allow controlled movement; the helping hand keeps the page still.	Sit with feet supported; position body and chair; stabilise paper; use shoulder, wrist, hand and finger movements with increasing control.
Movement and formation	Every letter has a starting point, direction, sequence and finishing point. Letters with shared movements belong to formation families.	Visualise the letter; form it from memory; maintain orientation; lift and reposition the pencil only where the model requires.
Placement and proportion	Letters sit in different zones and have relative sizes; ascenders rise and descenders fall below the writing line.	Place letters on the line; control x-height, ascenders and descenders; size capitals and digits in relation to lower-case letters.
Spacing	Spaces separate words and must reflect the size of the handwriting.	Leave consistent spaces within and between words; maintain spacing while writing a sentence.
Joining	Joins are efficient movement patterns, not decoration. Some letters are best left unjoined and capitals are never joined.	Use only the RWI joins already taught; retain correct formation, orientation and legibility when joining.
Fluency	Automatic movement reduces the attention needed for transcription, but speed must not erode accuracy or legibility.	Write taught letters, words and sentences with increasing ease; sustain a readable style across a short piece.

The shared lesson routine

Step	Teacher action	Pupil action and assessment
Ready to write	Check seating, feet, chair, paper, helping hand, pencil and view of the model.	Adopt the routine promptly; adjust position when prompted.
Visualise and model	Think aloud about the movement; model the whole letter or join accurately using the RWI language.	Watch closely, rehearse the movement and build a mental image.
Write from memory	Remove the model where the RWI lesson requires visualisation rather than copying; circulate and intervene early.	Form the letter, join or word independently and repeat it carefully.
Check and improve	Model an error and a correction; direct attention to the taught success points.	Identify two secure features and one point to improve; select the best attempt.
Apply gradually	Move from isolated movement to a word, dictated sentence and self-composed writing when secure.	Transfer the taught formation without losing spelling, spacing or sentence meaning.

Reception handwriting progression

Reception teaching begins with explicit formation alongside RWI Set 1 sounds and regular additional handwriting practice. Physical development continues through Squiggle Whilst You Wiggle, provision and purposeful tool use, but these experiences do not replace direct handwriting instruction.

Progression point	Knowledge	Skills	Teaching and evidence
Entry foundations	Writing carries meaning. Marks and letter shapes are made through controlled movements. A pencil is held and moved differently from large-scale tools.	Develop shoulder stability and hand strength; cross the midline; use both hands together; make controlled vertical, horizontal, circular and diagonal movements; begin an efficient grip.	Large and small movement experiences; short seated practice; observation of posture, pressure, control and hand preference. Adults do not delay formation teaching until grip is perfect.
Set 1 formation	Each taught lower-case letter has a fixed starting point, direction and finish. The RWI picture mnemonic and phrase cue the same movement every time.	Watch, rehearse and form each taught letter; say or internalise the formation phrase; orient the letter correctly; return to the start when an attempt is inaccurate.	Explicit modelling in RWI phonics and additional practice. Use paper and pencil for handwriting; assess the movement, not resemblance alone.
Stage 1 families	Letters with related movements are grouped: adgocq; uy; bp; hnmr; esfi; ltkj; vwz. Similarity supports recall and discrimination.	Retrieve and form family members from memory; compare shared movement and the point at which letters differ; produce repeated accurate forms on unlined paper.	Begin separate daily ten-minute Stage 1 lessons when pupils can read Set 1 sounds; revisit difficult letters responsively.
Capitals and digits	Secure lower-case formation is the main Reception priority. A capital has a distinct form and may mark a name or the beginning of a sentence. Digits each have a conventional orientation and formation.	Recognise familiar capitals and form personally meaningful capitals, particularly those in the child's name and at the beginning of a supported sentence; begin conventional formation of digits 0 to 9.	Introduce capitals meaningfully through names, RWI Storybooks, teacher modelling and Hold a Sentence. Reception pupils are not expected to master the complete capital alphabet. Teach digit formation explicitly because it is not assumed from letter teaching.
Towards the ELGs	Accurate formation supports readable words, phrases and sentences. Spaces separate words; print moves from left to right.	Use an effective tripod grip in almost all cases; form recognisable letters, most correctly; place writing from left to right; use emerging spaces; sustain formation in a short phrase or sentence.	Sample isolated formation, dictation and self-composed writing. Judge the ELGs through professional knowledge of the child, not a handwriting worksheet alone.

Reception end point

By the end of Reception, children at the expected level hold a pencil effectively in preparation for fluent writing, usually using a tripod grip, and write recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed. Children may still vary in size and spacing; the priority is a secure movement pattern that can be refined in Year 1.

Year 1 handwriting progression

Year 1 secures the National Curriculum requirement for correct formation and introduces RWI Stage 2 when a pupil can form lower-case letters accurately. Stage 2 is not an automatic September starting point: pupils first repair insecure direction, orientation or starting points.

Strand	Knowledge	Skills and increasing control	Teaching response
Posture grip and paper	An efficient position reduces fatigue and gives a clear view of the writing.	Sit correctly; hold the pencil comfortably and efficiently; stabilise and angle the paper; reset position independently.	Check at the start of every lesson and during wider writing; adapt equipment or seating when a specific barrier is identified.
Lower-case formation	Every lower-case letter begins and ends in the correct place and follows the RWI movement pattern. Formation families share a motor plan.	Form all lower-case letters in the correct direction; retrieve formation without copying; correct reversals and inefficient retracing; maintain accuracy in words.	Continue Stage 1 practice for any insecure family. Give immediate, precise feedback on the first incorrect movement.
RWI Stage 2	Relative size and line position make writing legible. Stage 2 formations prepare letters to flow into a joined style later.	Use the line and RWI sponge-cake zones; distinguish short letters, ascenders and descenders; form letters at a consistent relative size.	Start only when basic formation is secure. Use 15 mm lines or RWI tram lines where helpful; gradually apply the style beyond the lesson.
Capital letters	Capitals have their own conventional shapes, are used for specific purposes and are never joined.	Form the full capital alphabet; size capitals clearly; select a capital at the start of a sentence and for taught proper nouns and I.	Display paired lower-case and capital forms; model the reason for a capital in Hold a Sentence and proofread for omissions.
Digits	Digits 0 to 9 have fixed orientation and formation; similarly shaped digits must remain distinguishable.	Form digits 0 to 9 correctly and legibly; place them on the line and use a consistent size.	Teach and revisit digits explicitly in handwriting and mathematics; correct reversals through the same model-practise-review routine.
Spacing and fluency	A space marks a word boundary. Fluency develops through accurate repeated retrieval, not hurried copying.	Leave clear spaces; maintain readable letter shapes in a dictated sentence; increase ease and stamina while preserving accuracy.	Use Hold a Sentence and short cumulative dictation to integrate formation, spelling, spaces and punctuation.

Year 1 end point

Pupils sit correctly, hold a pencil comfortably, form lower-case letters in the correct direction from the correct starting point, form capitals and digits 0 to 9, and understand and practise formation families. Many pupils will also be working securely within RWI Stage 2, but joining is not a Year 1 requirement.

Year 2 handwriting progression

Year 2 teaching improves proportion, spacing, consistency and ease. Pupils start RWI Stage 3 only when lower-case formation, orientation and Stage 2 size are secure. The statutory requirement is to start using some joining strokes and understand when letters are best left unjoined; fully joined handwriting is not required from every Year 2 pupil.

Strand	Knowledge	Skills and increasing control	Teaching response
Secure formation	Correct motor patterns remain essential under the additional demands of spelling and composition.	Maintain accurate formation, orientation and line placement across several connected sentences; self-correct an inefficient form.	Use Stage 1 or 2 practice where a pupil's basic movement remains insecure; do not mask errors by introducing joins.
Size and proportion	Lower-case letters have relative sizes; ascenders, x-height letters and descenders occupy predictable zones.	Form lower-case letters at a consistent relative size; place ascenders and descenders accurately; relate capitals and digits appropriately to lower case.	Use Stage 2 Letter Village teaching, lines or tram lines until the spatial pattern is secure.
Word spacing	The space between words reflects the size of the letters and allows the reader to see boundaries quickly.	Maintain consistent spaces across a sentence and short text; notice and repair crowded or excessive spacing.	Check spacing in dictation and self-composed writing, particularly for left-handed pupils whose hand may cover the previous word.
RWI Stage 3 joins	RWI uses hill and bridge joins, each with variations according to the next letter. Not every adjacent pair should be joined. Capitals are never joined.	Use only taught join combinations; keep joins within the correct zone; retain legibility; leave g, j, q, y and z unjoined to the following letter in the RWI style.	Begin after secure Stage 2 formation. Teach combinations cumulatively, practise them in words, and expect transfer gradually rather than immediately.
Fluency stamina and application	A fluent style is accurate, economical and readable. Speed is increased after the movement pattern is secure.	Write words and sentences with increasing automaticity; sustain a consistent style; reread handwriting as a reader and improve one feature.	Move from the isolated form or join to a word, dictated sentence and self-composed writing. Increase the amount only when quality can be maintained.
Stage 4 readiness	Stage 4 consolidates secure joins and develops a mature and speedy style through repeated words and sentences.	For pupils who have securely completed Stage 3, build speed without losing legibility or spelling accuracy.	Use only for genuinely ready pupils and agree transition expectations with the receiving junior school; it is not a blanket Year 2 destination.

Year 2 end point

Pupils form lower-case letters at the correct relative size, use appropriate word spacing, and write capitals and digits with correct size, orientation and relationship to lower case. They start using the diagonal and horizontal strokes needed for joins when ready and understand which adjacent letters are best left unjoined.

Westbury Infant School RWI handwriting route

RWI point	Readiness to begin	Principal teaching	Paper and transfer	Likely location
Initial Set 1 formation	From the start of Reception; no need to wait for perfect strength or grip.	Lower-case formation linked to the RWI picture mnemonic and formation phrase; correct start, direction and finish.	Paper and pencil for deliberate practice; immediate application in phonics and early writing.	Reception; continue for any pupil with an insecure Set 1 form.
Stage 1	Pupil can read Set 1 sounds and is ready for separate family practice.	Accurate basic formation through the families adgocq; vy; bp; hnmr; esfi; ltkj; vwxz; visualise and write rather than copy.	Unlined paper so attention remains on movement; transfer into words and dictated material.	Reception into Year 1, with responsive continuation beyond.
Stage 2	Pupil forms lower-case letters with correct basic formation.	Relative size, consistent line placement and letter forms that will flow into later joining.	15 mm lines or RWI tram lines; extend application from a title and first sentence, then more sentences over time.	Usually Year 1; Year 2 pupils complete this before joining if needed.
Stage 3	Pupil forms Stage 2 letters correctly and consistently.	RWI hill and bridge joins and their variations; taught letter combinations; words containing practised joins; exceptions left unjoined.	15 mm lines or tram lines; gradual transfer after joins have been practised.	Usually Year 2 onwards;
Stage 4	Pupil securely forms letters and uses the Stage 3 hill and bridge joins.	Mature, speedy style through joins, words and sentences while maintaining legibility.	Normally 8 mm lines; cumulative practice and application in sustained writing.	Generally later than Key Stage 1; selected ready pupils may begin.

Non negotiables for scheme fidelity

Consistent practice	What this means at Westbury Infant School
One model	All adults use the current RWI letter and join forms and the agreed formation language. Staff do not introduce competing pre-cursive models or personal styles.
Visualise to memorise	Pupils watch the accurate model, build a mental image and then reproduce the movement. Repeated copying from a visible line is not the main teaching method.
Accuracy before joining	Stage 2 is completed sufficiently securely before Stage 3. A pupil who reverses or starts letters incorrectly returns to the relevant formation teaching.
Daily short practice	Practice is brief, frequent and cumulative. Once pupils can read Set 1 sounds, the RWI handbook specifies a separate daily ten-minute handwriting lesson.
Gradual transfer	A newly taught style is first applied to a manageable amount. Staff increase the number of words or sentences week by week as control becomes secure.

Handwriting knowledge and skills continuum

This grid shows the cumulative journey at a glance. It should be read alongside the detailed phase pages and used to identify the next teachable component.

Strand	Reception	Year 1	Year 2
Posture and grip	Know and practise the ready-to-write position. Develop an effective tripod grip in almost all cases and use the helping hand to steady paper.	Adopt correct seated posture and a comfortable efficient grip with decreasing prompting; position paper to see the writing.	Sustain an efficient position and adjust it independently; maintain comfort and control across a longer task.
Motor control	Move from large controlled patterns to smaller finger-led movements; regulate pressure and direction.	Control repeated letter movements with consistent orientation and without unnecessary retracing.	Use economical movements and sustain control while attention is shared with spelling and composition.
Lower-case formation	Form taught Set 1 letters and then families from the correct start in the correct direction; most letters are recognisable and correctly formed by the ELG.	Form the full lower-case alphabet correctly and confidently; retrieve from memory; use formation families to repair errors.	Maintain secure formation across connected sentences and under increasing fluency demands.
Capital formation	Recognise familiar capitals; know that a capital differs from its lower-case partner; form personally meaningful capitals for a name and supported sentence start. Full alphabet mastery is not expected.	Form the full capital alphabet accurately; use capitals for sentence starts, names, places, days and I.	Maintain accurate capital orientation and proportion; use capitals correctly and never join them.
Digit formation	Begin conventional formation and orientation of digits in meaningful contexts.	Form digits 0 to 9 accurately and distinguish easily confused forms.	Write digits consistently with correct size, orientation and relationship to other symbols.
Size and placement	Write from left to right with emerging line awareness and increasingly controlled size.	Use the line; distinguish short letters, ascenders and descenders through Stage 2 teaching.	Maintain correct relative size and consistent placement across a sentence and short text.
Spacing	Notice that words are separate and begin to leave visible spaces.	Leave clear spaces between words and retain them in dictated and self-composed sentences.	Use spacing that reflects letter size and maintain it consistently across several sentences.
Joining and fluency	Write separate lower-case letters accurately; increase ease through frequent retrieval.	Develop join-ready Stage 2 forms; joining is not required.	Start using taught RWJ joins after secure formation; know exceptions; increase speed only while legibility is maintained.
Self-monitoring	Select a best attempt and respond to one precise point for improvement.	Compare with the success point, identify an error in movement or spacing and correct it.	Evaluate formation, proportion, spacing and joins; independently improve a selected feature.

Application capitals digits and mixed age teaching

From handwriting lesson to writing

Context	Purpose	Expected application
RWI phonics	Introduce or retrieve the sound-letter link and the accurate movement for Set 1 letters.	Use the RWI formation phrase and model; do not allow repeated inaccurate rehearsal.
Discrete handwriting	Teach the next motor pattern, proportion, join or fluency step without the full cognitive demand of composition.	Focus on a small number of success points; practise sufficiently; review and improve.
Hold a Sentence and dictation	Integrate letter formation, sentence memory, spelling, spaces, capitals and punctuation.	Maintain the current handwriting expectation while transcribing a controlled sentence.
Independent writing	Transfer the skill while generating and organising ideas.	Expect only securely taught forms and joins; give untaught spellings so handwriting and composition can both succeed.
Across the curriculum	Use a legible style to communicate knowledge in every subject.	Use the same posture, formation, spacing and presentation expectations without turning every task into a handwriting lesson.

Capital letters and digits

RWI phonics initially emphasises lower-case letters, so capitals and digits require planned teaching rather than incidental exposure. Capitals are displayed beside their lower-case partners, modelled through Think Out Loud in sentence writing, rehearsed in Hold a Sentence and checked during proofreading. Capitals are never joined. Digits 0 to 9 are explicitly modelled, practised and revisited in handwriting and mathematics so that the full National Curriculum entitlement is secured.

Mixed Year 1 and Year 2 classes

Shared whole class elements	Year 1 destination	Year 2 destination	Responsive grouping
Ready-to-write routine; teacher model; RWI language; visualisation; partner or self-check; accurate practice; short application.	Secure lower-case formation, capitals, digits, families, line placement and word spaces; develop Stage 2 forms when ready.	Secure relative size, spacing, capital and digit proportion; begin selected RWI Stage 3 joins when ready; develop fluency across several sentences.	Group by the component being taught, not by a permanent handwriting label. A Year 2 pupil may need Stage 1 repair while continuing age-appropriate composition; a secure Year 1 pupil may begin Stage 2.

Assessment adaptation and monitoring

Assessment is diagnostic: staff identify the precise barrier rather than describing handwriting only as neat or untidy. Evidence is drawn from deliberate practice, dictation and independent writing because a pupil may succeed in one context but not yet transfer the skill to another.

What staff assess	Questions to ask	Teaching response
Physical access	Can the pupil sit stably, see the model and their own writing, control pressure and move the pencil without fatigue or pain?	Adjust chair or foot support, paper angle, pencil or grip; build movement and strength alongside direct formation teaching; seek specialist advice where appropriate.
Motor pattern	Does the pupil start, move and finish correctly, or only produce a similar final shape through an inefficient route?	Return to the RWI model and formation phrase; rehearse one component; interrupt incorrect repetitions immediately.
Orientation and retrieval	Can the pupil form the letter from memory without reversal or a visible copy?	Strengthen visualisation, discrimination and retrieval; practise the relevant family in short frequent sessions.
Size placement and spacing	Are letters placed on the line, proportionate and clearly separated into words?	Use Stage 2 zones, appropriate lines and one precise spatial target; reduce the written amount while the target is practised.
Joining readiness	Are basic forms secure and proportionate? Does joining preserve legibility?	Delay or pause joins when prerequisite formation is insecure; teach only the next RWI join combination and apply it gradually.
Fluency and transfer	Can the pupil maintain handwriting while spelling and composing? Does quality collapse as the amount increases?	Use short dictation, reduce competing demands, supply untaught spellings and increase the amount in manageable steps.

Inclusive practice

Need	Provision without lowering the curriculum ambition
Left-handed writers	Seat to the left of a right-handed partner; angle paper to the right; hold the pencil slightly higher so writing remains visible; monitor spacing that may be hidden by the writing hand.
Fine-motor or physical difficulty	Use targeted equipment or seating only when it solves an identified problem. Continue explicit formation teaching in smaller steps and coordinate with the SENCO or relevant professional.
Persistent reversals or insecure formation	Increase short successful practice, use the RWI family and mnemonic, reduce the number of forms practised at once and revisit until movement is stable.
High cognitive load	Separate composition from transcription support: orally rehearse, shorten the amount, dictate manageable sentences and supply untaught spellings while retaining age-appropriate ideas.
Ready for greater fluency	Increase retrieval, word and sentence practice, written stamina and independence. Move to the next RWI stage only when prerequisites are consistently secure.

Monitoring looks for consistent implementation, accurate modelling, stage-appropriate practice and transfer into meaningful writing. Leaders sample provision and pupils' work over time; they do not require additional evidence solely for inspection.

Statutory coverage and curriculum references

Requirement or guidance	Where it is secured
EYFS Fine Motor Skills ELG: hold a pencil effectively in preparation for fluent writing, using the tripod grip in almost all cases.	Reception physical readiness, ready-to-write routine, daily tool use and direct formation teaching.
EYFS Writing ELG: write recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed.	Set 1 formation, Stage 1 families, immediate feedback and application in phonically decodable words, phrases and sentences.
Year 1: correct sitting and pencil hold; lower-case letters formed in the correct direction from the correct start and finish; capital letters; digits 0 to 9; formation families.	Year 1 progression, continued Stage 1 repair, RWI Stage 2 readiness, planned capital alphabet and explicit digit teaching.
Year 2: correct relative size; start using joining strokes and know when letters are best left unjoined; correctly proportioned capitals and digits; spacing that reflects letter size.	Year 2 progression and readiness-led RWI Stages 2 and 3, with capitals, digits, spacing and fluency assessed in sentence contexts.
Writing Framework: regular, explicit, precise and cumulative handwriting teaching beginning early in Reception, in addition to phonics; ready-to-write routines; support for physical demands.	Short frequent teaching, the common routine, physical foundations, RWI stage progression, deliberate practice and diagnostic adaptation.
National Curriculum principle: fluent, legible and eventually speedy handwriting supports effective transcription.	Accuracy before speed, gradual transfer from form to sentence, and assessment across dictation and independent composition.

How this document works with the English curriculum

This is the operational progression for handwriting within the Westbury Infant School Writing Subject Overview and Progression. RWI phonics assessments and the current RWI Handwriting Handbook determine the teaching stage; Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 statutory statements determine the entitlement and end point. Medium-term writing plans identify where pupils apply handwriting through Hold a Sentence, dictation and purposeful composition.

References

Source	Use in this progression
Department for Education, The writing framework, updated September 2025	Principles for early, regular, explicit and cumulative handwriting teaching; physical access; accuracy, automaticity and cognitive load.
Department for Education, National curriculum in England English programmes of study, Key Stages 1 and 2	Statutory Year 1 and Year 2 handwriting content and notes.
Department for Education, Early years foundation stage statutory framework for group and school-based providers, effective September 2026	Fine Motor Skills and Writing early learning goals.
Ruth Miskin Training and Oxford University Press, Read Write Inc. Handwriting Handbook, 2026	Four-stage teaching route, routines, formation families, readiness, materials, left-handed support and gradual application.
Read Write Inc. Phonics, Teaching capital letters guidance, 2021	Capital and lower-case correspondence, sentence application, modelling and proofreading; capitals are not joined.

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