

### Helpful tips to support your child with cursive handwriting

1. **Cursive handwriting is, put simply, joined-up writing.** At Firle C of E Primary School we teach fully (or continuous) cursive, where every letter in a word is joined, so you don't lift the pen off the paper until the end of the word. We will of course begin by teaching separate letter shapes, one at a time.
2. We teach cursive handwriting right from the start. The main benefit is that children tend to reach fluency faster, whereas if they learn to print first and then learn to join up, it's like learning two different languages.
3. When learning cursive handwriting, **children are not taught letters in alphabetical order, but in groups according to their formation:** for example, 'a', 'c', 'e' and 'o' are taught together because they're all based on an anticlockwise circle. Initially, in Catkins Class, we will be teaching the cursive letter shapes as we introduce each letter in phonics lessons.
4. Each letter will be written with a lead-in (entry stroke) and flick (exit stroke), which paves the way for learning to join them later.
5. **Cursive handwriting has a number of advantages.** It generally has a nicer style, and does seem to help children speed up their writing. Children who write quickly generally get more words on the paper and produce better quality content. Cursive writing also helps with spelling as you develop a muscle memory of the movements of each word.
6. **Good posture is important** for cursive writing. Children are encouraged to sit with their feet flat on the floor, their back straight (no heads on the table) and relaxed shoulders.
7. Rather than starting with just paper and pen, it is helpful to also use a blackboard and chalk. The rough, resistive surface sends stronger sensory feedback to the brain, and helps the movements become automatic.
8. We also provide opportunities for the children to practise cursive handwriting with felt tips and gel pens, which have a nice, fluid delivery of ink.
9. If your child is using a pencil, the softer B pencils are generally easier to write with as they move more fluently across the page. Triangular barrels are best because we hold pencils with a tripod grip, and large-barrelled pencils reduce strain on the fingers.
10. Lined paper can help your child achieve uniformity in his/her handwriting, but plain paper is also good for practising cursive. Lines can be quite constraining, so let him/her practise on unlined paper so s/he masters the free flow of movement needed for cursive.
11. Don't stick to practising on paper. Let children practise specific joins in other mediums, such as tracing them in the air, in sand with a stick or on another person's back with their finger. You could also try chalks on the patio or shaving foam on a tray.

12. **Keep an eye on your child's pen grip.** It's important that the pad of the thumb connects with the pencil; if the side or tip of the thumb touches, it closes up the hand and restricts the flow of movement. Try chopping a pencil down to 3cm long; it's impossible to hold it incorrectly!

13. Your child may find cursive writing easier if his/her paper is at an angle. You can turn the page up to 45 degrees in either direction.

14. Boys tend to be slower than girls at mastering cursive writing. Left-handers may also have more trouble as they push the pencil across the paper, rather than pulling it. A writing slope can be beneficial for left-handed children as it helps them see their writing.

15. Practising patterns of joined up letters (such as a string of connected 'c's) helps children master cursive. The more your child practises patterning, the sooner he/she'll establish the neuro-motor pathways that make them automatic,' (There are useful examples of activities online eg look through all 'TheSchoolRun's' patterning worksheets in the [Handwriting Learning Journey](#), )

16. '[Handwriting worksheets](#)' showing letter formation, with dots at the starting point and arrows showing the direction of movement, can be very helpful. You can also encourage your child to do other non-writing activities to improve his/her fine motor control, such as colouring and dot-to-dot puzzles.

17. If you don't already have one, please ask for a copy of our school cursive alphabet, to ensure consistency. At school we refer to 'lead in' strokes and 'flicks' (exit stroke) and remind the children that we start every letter 'on the line' or 'at the bottom'.

18. Finally, **keep handwriting practice separate from other writing activities, as this can stifle creativity and confidence in writing.** Make writing fun and positive, give praise where it's due, and don't hover over them - they need time to fully experience each task.

Thank you for your support.