Handwriting FIRSY Fundamental

Updated: September 2026

Handwriting Scheme

We teach handwriting using the 'Improvement in School through Handwriting and Art' (ISHA—Martin Harvey) handwriting scheme. This is based on the Nelson handwriting scheme. However, we appreciate that many of pupils who start the school (particularly in Key Stage 2) have different prior schooling experiences and may arrive at Firs Primary having already learned to use a different style of cursive writing. **If children are proficient in another handwriting style, we believe it is counterproductive to their progress in writing to change this.**

However, should number formation in another handwriting style potentially disadvantage a student during formal maths assessment, this will be addressed on an individual basis.

Introduction of Formal Handwriting

Children are taught formal handwriting letter formation once they are developmentally ready—usually during the last term of the reception year. We use a handwriting assessment based on 'Handwriting Development' (South Warwickshire NHS Foundation Trust, Children Young People and Families OT Team) to support this judgement.

During the EYFS children are supported to develop the foundations of handwriting skills through Squiggle While you Wiggle, Dough Disco and regular fine motor skills activities.

Teacher Modelling

Teachers should always model good handwriting practice based upon the ISHA scheme whether in pupil books or on working walls. Teacher handwriting should model the develop-mentally appropriate expectations of their class i.e. cursive handwriting should only be modelled by the teacher once it is being taught.

Frequency of Handwriting Instruction

Handwriting is taught frequently in the first few weeks of the academic year. Once children have achieved a suitable level of handwriting for their age and stage, the session amount is reduced but handwriting is still taught regularly to keep expectations clear. At any point, handwriting sessions may increase where identified necessary by the class teacher.

Expectations for Presentation

It is expected that 'best' handwriting (using either ruled handwriting lined paper or guide-lines behind plain paper as developmentally appropriate) is used for; English and topic work to go on display in the school halls and end of unit extended writing ('hot' writes).

Whilst children still require the additional support (depending on schooling experience and developmental level), English books include printed handwriting guidelines to support the use of correct letter height and formation. Some children may require additional support and are provided with highlighted rows to indicate the line on which their letters should sit.