Scholes (Elmet) Primary
St James' CE Primary
Moortown Primary

Our curriculum guide: Handwriting

Date: reviewed regularly; see date in document label for most recent update



Introduction

This Curriculum Guide combines elements of the Little Wandle Handwriting Scheme with our own principles for effective teaching. It relates to handwriting, which forms part of the core subject of English in The National Curriculum (Department for Education, 2014).

We want Sphere Federation schools to be happy and healthy places to learn. (*At St James' CE Primary, this is expressed with one additional element: 'happy and healthy place to achieve and believe'.*) Handwriting is a fundamental life skill and an essential part of the primary curriculum. It is closely linked to children's ability to communicate ideas clearly, develop confidence as writers and achieve success across all areas of learning: '…a place to learn' / '…a place to achieve'.
Research suggests that when handwriting becomes fluent and automatic, children can focus more fully on the content of their writing rather than the physical process of recording it. Secure handwriting therefore supports composition, spelling, working memory and overall writing stamina.

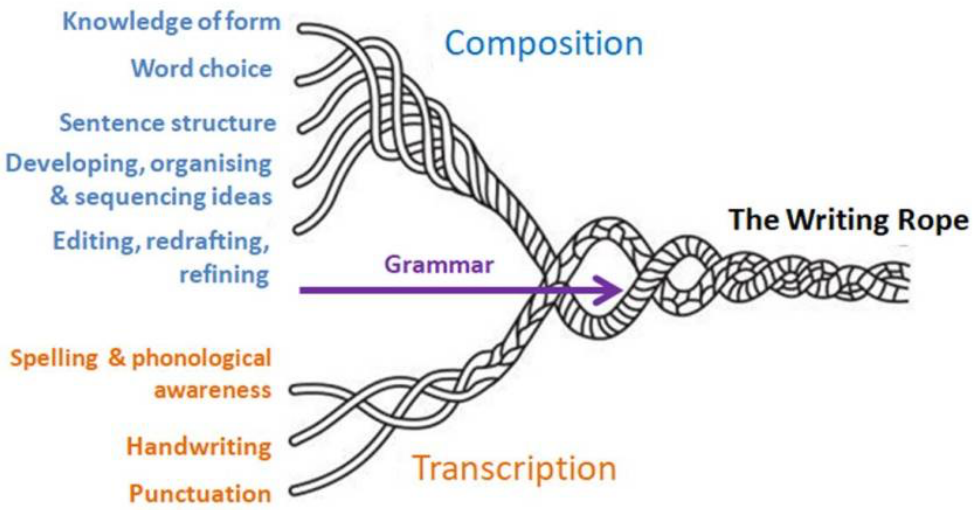
In addition, neat and legible handwriting encourages pride in work and helps children to communicate effectively with their audience.

> *'Handwriting remains a crucial skill in a child's development and daily functioning, even in our increasingly digital world. As educators, it's important to understand why handwriting matters and how to communicate its value to children and parents.'*
> Introduction to Teaching Handwriting (Little Wandle, 2025)

In our schools, we believe that all children should develop a clear, consistent and fluent handwriting style that enables them to write with confidence and independence. We recognise that handwriting is a developmental process which begins in the Early Years through the development of fine motor control, pencil grip and letter formation, before progressing into joined, fluent handwriting from Year 2.

Through consistent teaching, high expectations and regular opportunities for practice across the curriculum, our aim is for every child to become a fluent, neat and confident handwriter who takes pride in the presentation of their work.

Writing skills summary
The skills of writing, including handwriting, are illustrated well in this 'writing rope':

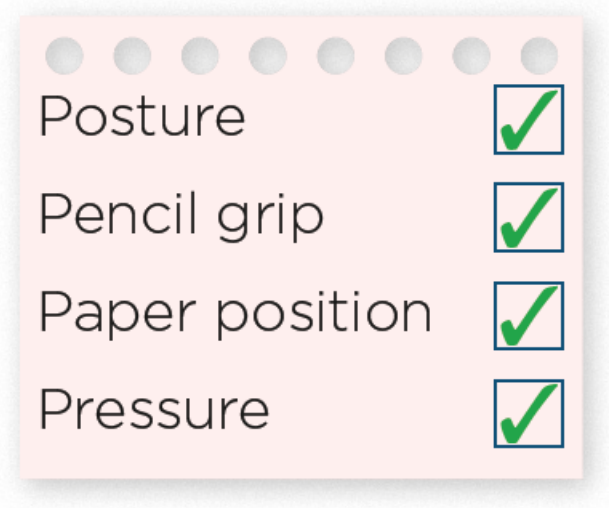


Handwriting: Key features

Ready to write

The 4Ps for handwriting

In our schools, we have a clear routine for ensuring children are ready to write. By teaching and developing the '4Ps' for handwriting, we ensure children are well prepared to start handwriting with confidence and control. Children are taught and reminded of the '4Ps' at the beginning of each handwriting lesson.



Ready to Write Rhyme

The Ready to Write Rhyme is typically used at the beginning of each lesson for our younger children as a reminder of the 4Ps:

"Let's sit up straight, feet nice and flat.

Tilt your paper – just like that!

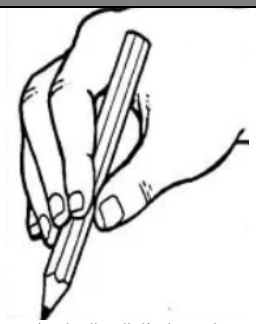
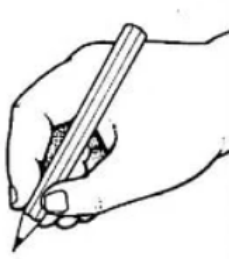
Pinch your pencil, give it a flip,

Check your hold and then your grip.

Now you can begin to write but not too hard and not too light."

Little Wandle LETTERS AND SOUNDS REVISED™

Pencil grip

Cylindrical / Palmer grip 12 months - 1.5/2 years	Digital grip 2 - 3 years	Modified Tripod grip 3 - 4 years	Tripod grip 4 - 7 years
			
Grasp develops as a child improves their ability to grasp and release objects. Movement is derived from the shoulder and the forearm, hand and fingers move as a unit. A child will typically scribble at this stage or try to imitate strokes.	Writing tool is held between all fingers. Movement is derived mainly from the elbow and the forearm, hand and fingers move as a unit. A child's ability to imitate shapes also becomes more refined; including horizontal and vertical lines and circles.	Fingers (typically all 4) sit on the pencil opposite the thumb. Movement is typically derived from the wrist and there is little movement in the fingers.	Grasp develops as a child is more proficient at manipulating objects between the fingers and palm and able to rotate objects within the fingers. In a tripod grasp, the thumb, index and middle fingers work in unison to provide control. The ring finger and little finger sit beneath the middle finger to offer additional support. A child will have developed adequate pencil control when adopting this pencil grip.

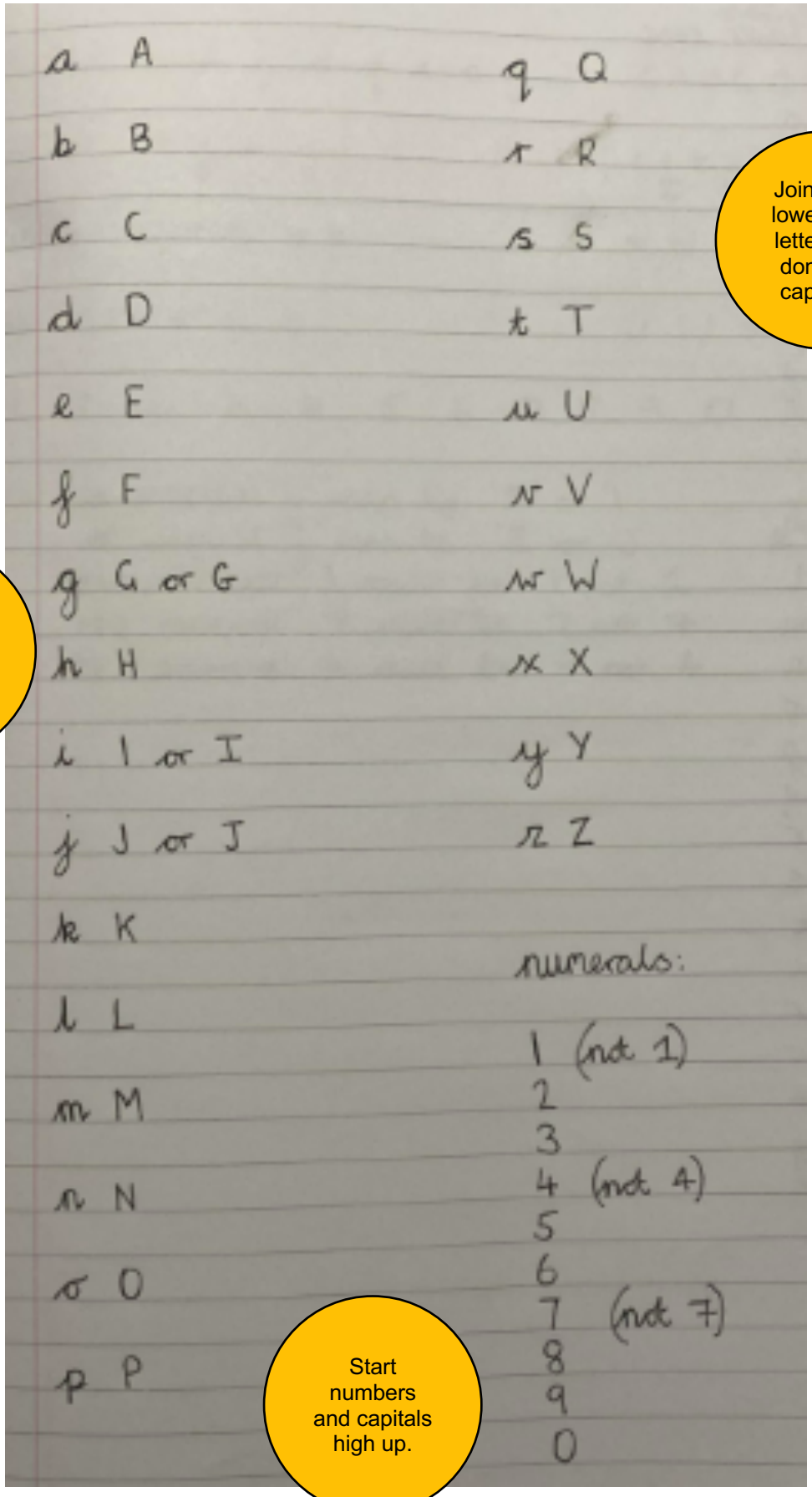
Supporting left-handed children

Left-handed children receive precise instruction to allow them to develop a writing technique suited to their needs. We adopt several, practical strategies when teaching handwriting to left-handed children:

- Providing ample writing space
- Optimising seating arrangements
- Guiding paper positioning
- Encouraging the correct pencil grip, which is often slightly higher for left-handed children
- Fostering a relaxed pencil grip

Letter formation

Letter formation is set out below.



Join every lower case letter (and don't join capitals).

Start all lower case letters with a lead-in.

Start numbers and capitals high up.

Some letters are similar and some are trickier than others – we've thought of this when we thought about our (sequences of learning – see from page 5).

Whole school progression

Nursery	Children practise pre-writing patterns in large and small movements. Children then begin to write some letters using a comfortable grip.
Reception	Children begin by practising prewriting patterns to develop fine motor skills, hand control and other key skills for writing before being taught how to correctly form all lower-case letters in print form. Daily Movement sessions (to support physical development) complement daily Handwriting sessions.
Year 1	Building on Reception, children continue to develop their handwriting control and precision when writing lower case letters in print form. They're also taught how to correctly form capital letters and numerals.
Year 2	For the first half of the year, children refine the formations previously taught. Around halfway through the year, children are taught to join letters in cursive style.
Years 3 and 4	Through regular practice, children continue to refine their handwriting in cursive. Children are taught individual letters, letters within words and in longer, dictated sentences.
Years 5 and 6	Though explicit instruction happens less frequently, children continue to develop their own legible, fluent handwriting style with an increased focus on the correct formation of capital letters.

Termly sequence of learning: Reception

Autumn		
Week	**Family**	**Letter**
1	**Settling in**	
2		
3	**Practising Patterns**	Horizontal lines, vertical lines
4		Wavy lines, circles
5		Up curves, down curves
6		Mixed-height curves, Letter C
7		Spirals, crosses
8		Turrets, diagonals
9		Zig-zags, Sideways V
10		Letter X, triangles
11	**Revisit**	As needed
12	**Curly Letters**	c, a, d
13		g, o, q
14		e, s, f
15	**Revisit**	As needed

Spring		
Week	**Family**	**Letter**
1	**Long Letters**	l, i, t
2		j, u, y
3	**Bouncy Letters**	m, n, r
4		b, p, h
5	**Zig-zag Letters**	v, w, x
6		z, k
7	**Numerals**	1, 4, 7
8		2, 3, 5
9		0, 6, 8, 9
10	**Curly Letters**	c, a, d
11		g, o, q

Summer		
Week	**Family**	**Letter**
1	**Curly Letters**	e, s, f
2	**Long Letters**	l, i, t
3		j, u, y
4	**Bouncy Letters**	m, n, r
5		b, p, h
6	**Zig-zag Letters**	v, w, x
7		z, k
8	**Capitals (~ lower case)**	C, O, P, V, W, X, Y, Z
9	**Capitals (straights)**	E, F, L, H
10		A, M, N
11	**Capitals (curls)**	B, D, U
12	**Capitals (no dots)**	I, J
13	**Capitals (tricky)**	G, K

Termly sequence of learning: Year 1

Autumn		
Week	**Family**	**Letter**
1	**Practising patterns**	Horizontal lines, vertical lines, wavy lines, circles
2		Up curves, down curves, mixed-height curves, letter C
3		Spirals, crosses, turrets, diagonals
4		Zig-zags, sideways V, letter X, triangles
5	**Curly Letters**	c, a
6		d, g
7		o, q
8		e, s
9		f
10	**Long Letters**	l, i
11		t, j
12		u, y
13	**Bouncy Letters**	m, n
14		r, b
15		p, h

Spring		
Week	**Family**	**Letter**
1	**Zig-Zag Letters**	v, w
2		x, z
3		k
4	**Numerals**	1, 4, 7
5		2, 3, 5
6		0, 6, 8, 9
7	**Curly Letters**	c, a
8		d, g
9		o, q
10		e, s
11		f

Capital letters (upper case) are taught alongside lower case each week – see Year 1 Weekly Sequence.

Summer		
Week	**Family**	**Letter**
1	**Long Letters**	l, i
2		t, j
3		u, y
4	**Bouncy Letters**	m, n
5		r, b
6		p, h
7	**Zig-Zag Letters**	v, w
8		x, z
9		k
10	**Numerals**	1, 4, 7
11		2, 3, 5
12		0, 6, 8, 9
13	**Revisit**	As needed

Termly sequence of learning: Year 2

Autumn		
Week	**Family**	**Letter**
1	**Practising patterns**	Horizontal lines, vertical lines, wavy lines, circles
2		Up curves, down curves, mixed-height curves, letter C
3		Spirals, crosses, turrets, diagonals
4		Zig-zags, sideways V, letter X, triangles
5	**Curly Letters**	c, a
6		d, g
7		o, q
8		e, s
9		f
10	**Long Letters**	l, i
11		t, j
12		u, y
13	**Bouncy Letters**	m, n
14		r, b
15		p, h

Spring		
Week	**Family**	**Letter**
1	**Zig-Zag Letters**	v, w
2		x, z
3		k
4	**Numerals (inc what a bad one looks like)**	1, 4, 7
5		2, 3, 5
6		0, 6, 8, 9
7	**Curly Letters Joined**	c, a
8		d, g
9		o, q
10		e, s
11		f

Capital letters (upper case) are taught alongside lower case each week – see Year 2 Weekly Sequence.

Summer		
Week	**Family**	**Letter**
1	**Long Letters Joined**	l, i
2		t, j
3		u, y
4	**Bouncy Letters Joined**	m, n
5		r, b
6		p, h
7	**Zig-Zag Letters Joined**	v, w
8		x, z
9		k
10	**Numerals**	1, 4, 7
11		2, 3, 5
12		6, 8, 9
13	**Revisit**	As needed

Termly sequence of learning: Years 3,4 and 5,6

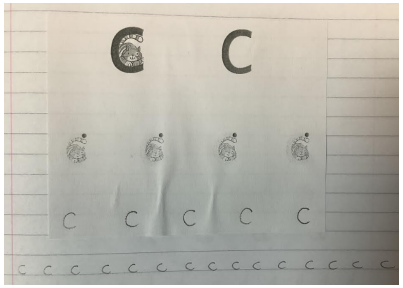
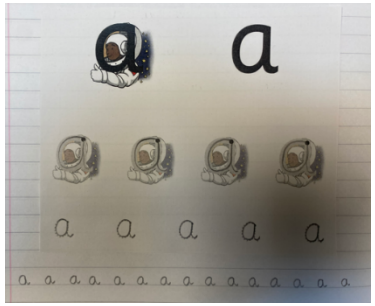
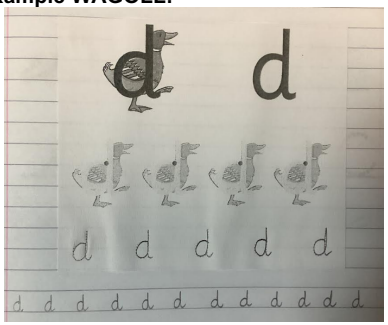
Autumn		
Week	**Family**	**Letter**
1	**Practising patterns**	Horizontal lines, vertical lines, wavy lines, circles
2		Up curves, down curves, mixed-height curves, letter C
3		Spirals, crosses, turrets, diagonals
4		Zig-zags, sideways V, letter X, triangles
5	**Curly Letters**	c
6		a
7		d
8		g
9		o
10		q
11		e
12		s
13		f
14	**Numerals**	1, 4, 7
15		2, 3, 5

Spring		
Week	**Family**	**Letter**
1	**Long Letters**	l
2		i
3		t
4		j
5		u
6		y
7	**Numerals**	6, 8, 9
8		1, 4, 7
9	**Bouncy Letters**	m
10		n
11		r

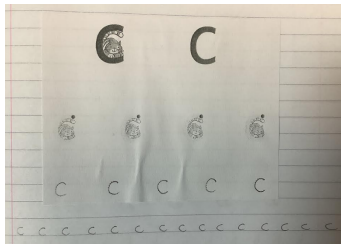
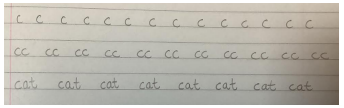
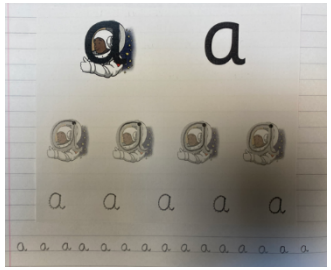
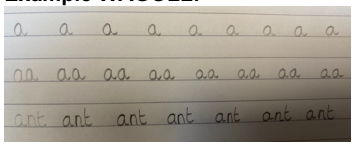
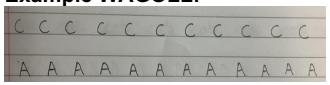
Capital letters (upper case) are taught alongside lower case each week – see Weekly Sequences.

Summer		
Week	**Family**	**Letter**
1	**Bouncy Letters**	b
2		p
3		h
4	**Zig-zag Letters**	v
5		w
6		x
7		z
8		k
9	**Numerals**	2, 3, 5
10		6, 8, 9
11	**Revisit**	As needed
12		
13		

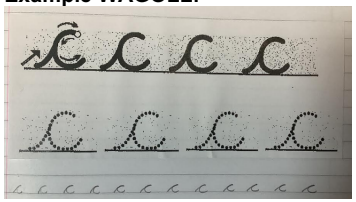
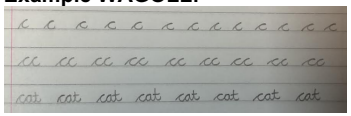
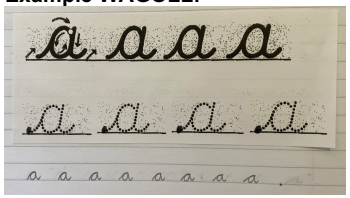
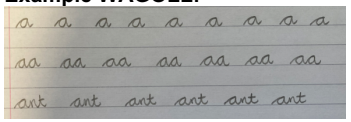
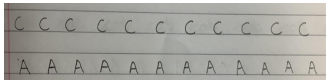
Weekly sequence of learning: Reception Printed

Lesson 1	Lesson 2	Lesson 3	Lesson 4 and 5
Warm up exercises Ready to Write Rhyme – 4 Ps Introduce first letter of week Teacher models writing letter in the air Children practise writing letter in air Teacher models writing letter on palm Children practise writing letter on palm Teacher models section 1 of Little Wandle sheet Children practise section 1 of sheet Teacher models section 2 of sheet Children practise section 2 of sheet Teacher models section 3 of sheet Children practise section 3 of sheet Teacher models writing letter in book Children practise writing letter in book **Example WAGOLL:** 	Warm up exercises Ready to Write Rhyme – 4 Ps Introduce second letter of week Teacher models writing letter in the air Children practise writing letter in air Teacher models writing letter on palm Children practise writing letter on palm Teacher models section 1 of Little Wandle sheet Children practise section 1 of sheet Teacher models section 2 of sheet Children practise section 2 of sheet Teacher models section 3 of sheet Children practise section 3 of sheet Teacher models writing letter in book Children practise writing letter in book **Example WAGOLL:** 	Warm up exercises Ready to Write Rhyme – 4 Ps Introduce third letter of week Teacher models writing letter in the air Children practise writing letter in air Teacher models writing letter on palm Children practise writing letter on palm Teacher models section 1 of Little Wandle sheet Children practise section 1 of sheet Teacher models section 2 of sheet Children practise section 2 of sheet Teacher models section 3 of sheet Children practise section 3 of sheet Teacher models writing letter in book Children practise writing letter in book **Example WAGOLL:** 	Warm up exercises Ready to Write Rhyme – 4 Ps Revisit this week's letters

Weekly sequence of learning: Years 1 and 2 Printed

Lesson 1	Lesson 2	Lesson 3	Lesson 4	Lesson 5
Warm up exercises Ready to Write Rhyme – 4 Ps Introduce first letter of week Teacher models writing letter in the air Children practise writing letter in air Teacher models writing letter on palm Children practise writing letter on palm Teacher models section 1 of Little Wandle sheet Children practise section 1 of sheet Teacher models section 2 of sheet Children practise section 2 of sheet Teacher models section 3 of sheet Children practise section 3 of sheet Teacher models writing letter in book Children practise writing letter in book **Example WAGOLL:** 	Warm up exercises Ready to Write Rhyme – 4 Ps Re-introduce first letter of week Teacher models writing letter in the air Children practise writing letter in air Teacher models writing letter on palm Children practise writing letter on palm Teacher models writing letter in book Children practise writing letter in book Teacher models writing two of same letter Children practise writing two of same letter Teacher models writing a word beginning with letter in book Children practise writing a word beginning with letter in book **Example WAGOLL:** 	Warm up exercises Ready to Write Rhyme – 4 Ps Introduce second letter of week Teacher models writing letter in the air Children practise writing letter in air Teacher models writing letter on palm Children practise writing letter on palm Teacher models section 1 of Little Wandle sheet Children practise section 1 of sheet Teacher models section 2 of sheet Children practise section 2 of sheet Teacher models section 3 of sheet Children practise section 3 of sheet Teacher models writing letter in book Children practise writing letter in book **Example WAGOLL:** 	Warm up exercises Ready to Write Rhyme – 4 Ps Re-introduce second letter of week Teacher models writing letter in the air Children practise writing letter in air Teacher models writing letter on palm Children practise writing letter on palm Teacher models writing letter in book Children practise writing letter in book Teacher models writing two of same letter Children practise writing two of same letter Teacher models writing a word beginning with letter in book Children practise writing a word beginning with letter in book **Example WAGOLL:** 	Warm up exercises Ready to Write Rhyme – 4 Ps Introduce first letter as a capital Teacher models writing letter in the air Children practise writing letter in air Teacher models writing letter on palm Children practise writing letter on palm Teacher models writing letter in book Children practise writing letter in book Introduce second letter as a capital Teacher models writing letter in the air Children practise writing letter in air Teacher models writing letter on palm Children practise writing letter on palm Teacher models writing letter in book Children practise writing letter in book **Example WAGOLL:** 

Weekly sequence of learning: Year 2 Cursive

Lesson 1	Lesson 2	Lesson 3	Lesson 4	Lesson 5
Warm up exercises Ready to Write Rhyme – 4 Ps Introduce first letter of week Teacher models writing letter in the air Children practise writing letter in air Teacher models writing letter on palm Children practise writing letter on palm Teacher models section 1 of Little Wandle sheet Children practise section 1 of sheet Teacher models section 2 of sheet Children practise section 2 of sheet Teacher models section 3 of sheet Children practise section 3 of sheet Teacher models writing letter in book Children practise writing letter in book **Example WAGOLL:** 	Warm up exercises Ready to Write Rhyme – 4 Ps Re-introduce first letter of week Teacher models writing letter in the air Children practise writing letter in air Teacher models writing letter on palm Children practise writing letter on palm Teacher models writing letter in book Children practise writing letter in book Teacher models writing two of same letter Children practise writing two of same letter Teacher models writing a word beginning with letter in book Children practise writing a word beginning with letter in book **Example WAGOLL:** 	Warm up exercises Ready to Write Rhyme – 4 Ps Introduce second letter of week Teacher models writing letter in the air Children practise writing letter in air Teacher models writing letter on palm Children practise writing letter on palm Teacher models section 1 of Little Wandle sheet Children practise section 1 of sheet Teacher models section 2 of sheet Children practise section 2 of sheet Teacher models section 3 of sheet Children practise section 3 of sheet Teacher models writing letter in book Children practise writing letter in book **Example WAGOLL:** 	Warm up exercises Ready to Write Rhyme – 4 Ps Re-introduce second letter of week Teacher models writing letter in the air Children practise writing letter in air Teacher models writing letter on palm Children practise writing letter on palm Teacher models writing letter in book Children practise writing letter in book Teacher models writing two of same letter Children practise writing two of same letter Teacher models writing a word beginning with letter in book Children practise writing a word beginning with letter in book **Example WAGOLL:** 	Warm up exercises Ready to Write Rhyme – 4 Ps Introduce first letter as a capital Teacher models writing letter in the air Children practise writing letter in air Teacher models writing letter on palm Children practise writing letter on palm Teacher models writing letter in book Children practise writing letter in book Introduce second letter as a capital Teacher models writing letter in the air Children practise writing letter in air Teacher models writing letter on palm Children practise writing letter on palm Teacher models writing letter in book Children practise writing letter in book **Example WAGOLL:** 

Weekly sequence of learning: Years 3 and 4 Cursive

Lesson 1

Warm up exercises
Ready to Write Rhyme – 4 Ps

Recap last week's letter:
Teacher models writing letter in book
Children write letter in book

Introduce this week's letter

Teacher models writing letter in the air
Children practise writing letter in air

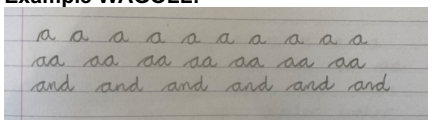
Teacher models writing letter on palm
Children practise writing letter on palm

Teacher models writing letter in book
Children practise writing letter in book

Teacher models writing two of same letter in book
Children practise writing two of same letter in book

Teacher models writing a word beginning with this week's letter in book
Children practise writing a word beginning with this week's letter in book

Example WAGOLL:



Lesson 2

Warm up exercises
Ready to Write Rhyme – 4 Ps

Introduce this week's letter

Teacher models writing letter in the air
Children practise writing letter in air

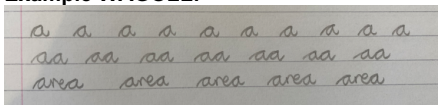
Teacher models writing letter on palm
Children practise writing letter on palm

Teacher models writing letter in book
Children practise writing letter in book

Teacher models writing two of same letter in book
Children practise writing two of same letter in book

Teacher models writing a word ending with this week's letter in books
Children practise writing a word ending with this week's letter in books

Example WAGOLL:



Lesson 3

Warm up exercises
Ready to Write Rhyme – 4 Ps

Introduce this week's letter

Teacher models writing letter in the air
Children practise writing letter in air

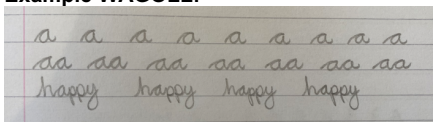
Teacher models writing letter on palm
Children practise writing letter on palm

Teacher models writing letter in book
Children practise writing letter in book

Teacher models writing two of same letter in book
Children practise writing two of same letter in book

Teacher models writing a word with this week's letter in the middle of a word
Children practise writing a word with this week's letter in the middle of a word

Example WAGOLL:



Lesson 4

Warm up exercises
Ready to Write Rhyme – 4 Ps

Introduce this week's letter

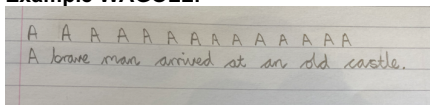
Teacher models writing letter in the air
Children practise writing letter in air

Teacher models writing letter on palm
Children practise writing letter on palm

Teacher models writing letter as a capital letter in books
Children practise writing letter as a capital letter in books

Teacher models writing a dictated sentence containing lots of this week's letter in book – including as a capital letter
Children practise writing a dictated sentence containing lots of this week's letter in book – including as a capital letter

Example WAGOLL:



Weekly sequence of learning: Years 5 and 6 Cursive

Lesson 1

Warm up exercises
Ready to Write Rhyme – 4 Ps

Recap last week's letter:
Teacher models writing letter in book
Children write letter in book

Introduce this week's letter

Teacher models writing letter in the air
Children practise writing letter in air

Teacher models writing letter on palm
Children practise writing letter on palm

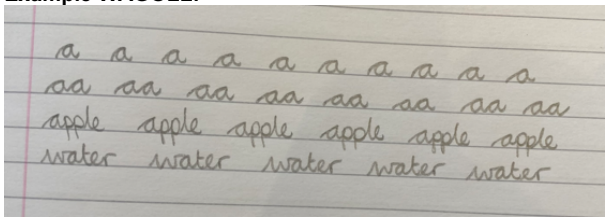
Teacher models writing letter in book
Children practise writing letter in book

Teacher models writing two of same letter in book
Children practise writing two of same letter in book

Teacher models writing a word with this week's letter in book
Children practise writing a word with this week's letter in book

Teacher models writing a different word with this week's letter in book
Children practise writing a different word with this week's letter in book

Example WAGOLL:



Lesson 2

Warm up exercises
Ready to Write Rhyme – 4 Ps

Introduce this week's letter as a capital

Teacher models writing letter as a capital in the air
Children practise writing letter as a capital in air

Teacher models writing letter as a capital on palm
Children practise writing letter as a capital on palm

Teacher models letter as a capital in book
Children practise letter as a capital in book

Teacher models writing a word beginning with this week's letter as a capital in book
Children practise writing a word beginning with this week's letter as a capital in book

Teacher models writing a dictated sentence containing lots of this week's letter in book – including as a capital letter
Children practise writing a dictated sentence containing lots of this week's letter in book – including as a capital letter

Example WAGOLL:

