Sedlescombe Church of England Primary School

Handwriting Policy 2025 - 2028

Implemented	September 2025
Review Cycle	Three Years
Review Date	Academic Year 2028-2031

DIOCESE OF CHICHESTER ACADEMY TRUST

Learning, Loving and Growing Together with God

Introduction:

At Sedlescombe Church of England Primary School we believe that it is important that children learn to write in a legible, cursive (joined) style as research shows it brings many benefits to the children's learning.

While electronic devices have added an element of convenience to the writing process, evidence is mounting that putting pen to paper has benefits that typing cannot replace. Researchers have found ties between writing by hand and everything from language skills to memory, to critical thinking.

In the 2014 study entitled, "The Pen is Mightier than the Keyboard," researchers Pam Mueller and Daniel Oppenheimer found that students who take notes by hand perform better on conceptual questions than students who take notes on laptops. This is because students who take notes by hand actually digest the content and reframe it in their own words---a process that increases both understanding and recall.

By looking at several different studies, Graham and Santengelo found that teaching handwriting strongly correlates to improvement in the quality of the composition of a piece of writing not just the legibility.

When writing, children use several low-level skills such as handwriting, grammar and spelling as well as high level skills such as organisation, considering the effect on the reader and the parameters of the topic or genre they are writing about. If children aren't proficient at these skills, they have less working memory available to think about the high-level skills which impacts on the quality of the composition. Therefore, if we want children to be able to focus on what and who they are writing for, we need to ensure they are proficient in spelling, grammar and handwriting.

Foundational Knowledge

It is important that the children have the correct posture and age-appropriate pencil grip.

Posture:

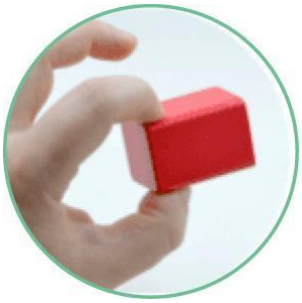
For children to be able to learn to write and to write neatly they need to have the correct posture. For this reason, when writing, children should be taught to sit correctly at the table. This means they should have both legs down, their feet flat on the floor and their chair tucked in to the table. The hand which isn't used for writing should be used to hold the paper still on the table to stop it moving and sliding whilst writing.

Pencil Grip:

How a child holds a pencil is very important when it comes to letter formation and learning to write. A functional, comfortable pencil grip will lead to efficient, pain-free handwriting. The development of a child's pencil grip, however, is a gradual process that will develop as the child grows. In reception the development of the muscles in the shoulders, arms and hands as well as finger strengthening are all incorporated into the children's play to help them develop their pencil grip.

There are six developmental stages of a maturing pencil grip, but it is important to remember that while these stages are 'typical 'every child is different and will develop in their own way and at their own speed.

Stage 1- Pincer Grip



This grip, although not a grip normally used to grasp pencils, is the starting point of picking up small objects with the fingers. Ultimately it will be used by older children to pick up their writing utensil.

This grip is typically seen from 8 to 9 months when the child will start to use the pads of their index finger and thumb and later advance into using the tips of these digits (typically between the ages of 10 to 12 months). This grip is often seen when children start to pick up food to feed themselves.

Stage 2 - Palmar Supinate Grip

This is basically a whole fist grip and is quite commonly seen in pre-toddlers when they first start experimenting with drawing /painting. The crayon /paintbrush will be held in a closed fist with all fingers curled around the pencil. They will use their shoulder (whole arm movements) to make marks on the surface. During this stage children may prefer to use more vertical surfaces to mark make on. This grip typically develops between 12 to 18 months.

Stage 3 - Digital Pronate Grip

In this grip, all 4 fingers and the thumb are used to grip the pencil with the palm of the hand facing downwards towards the paper and also the fingers pointing downwards. This grip is typically seen in children aged between 2 and 3 years. The movement comes from the shoulder and elbow and again vertical surfaces may be the preferred choice of creativity.

Stage 4 - Quadrupod Grip

This grip uses 3 fingers (index, middle and ring fingers) and the thumb and can be either static or dynamic.

A 'static' grip is where the fingers are locked in their position, with the hand muscles doing little work. This pencil movement is, therefore, coming largely from the wrist and above.

A 'dynamic grip' is where the fingers can move the pencil allowing for more precise drawing and writing. This is typically seen in children aged 3 to 4 years.

Stage 5- Static Tripod Grip

This is nearly the most efficient grip. The child uses their index and middle finger along with their thumb to grip the pencil however, the web space is much smaller in this stage. Web space is the area between your thumb and index finger. This grip is typically seen in children aged 3 to 4 years.

Stage 6 - Dynamic Tripod Grip

The child will start to hold the pencil between the thumb and index finger with the pencil supported on the middle finger. The ring and little fingers are gently curled inwards. This gives an open wide web space which means the movement comes from the fingers. This is typically seen in children aged 4 to 5 years.

Progression in Letter Formation and Joining

Reception:

In Reception, children at Sedlescombe are taught to form individual letters as they learn their phonics sounds. Children are taught the correct formation, size and spacing.

It is important for the children to learn to form their letters correctly before attempting to join their writing.

Children are taught each letter during Phonics lessons, using the Little Wandle formation phrases and picture guides. In addition to this, children work one to one with an adult to look at groups of similar letters that progress in difficulty.

Groups of similar letters that progress in difficulty:

Long Ladder Letters:

These letters have long, straight lines:

l i j t u y

One-armed Robot Letters:

When you write these, your pen or pencil goes down then up and over:

r m n h b k p

Zig-Zag Letters:

These can be recognised by their zig-zagging, diagonal lines:

v w x z

Curly Caterpillar Letters:

These are written with a looping, curling shape:

c a o q g d e s f

Little Wandle Formation Phrases:

Phase 2 grapheme information sheet — Autumn 1

Grapheme and mnemonic	Picture card	Pronunciation phrase	Formation phrase
s s	snake	Show your teeth and and let the **s** hiss out **ssssss sssss**	Down the snake from head to tail.
a a	astronaut	Open your mouth wide and make the **a** sound at the back of your mouth **a a a**	Around the astronaut's helmet and down into space.
t t	tiger	Open your lips; put the tip of your tongue behind your teeth and press **t t t**	Down the tiger and across its neck.
p p	penguin	Bring your lips together, push them open and say **p p p**	Down the penguin's back, up and around its head.
i i	iguana	Pull your lips back and make the **i** sound at the back of your mouth **i i i**	Down the iguana and dot the leaf.
n n	net	Open your lips a bit, put your tongue behind your teeth and make the **nnnnn** sound **nnnnn**	Down, up and over the net.
m m	mouse	Put your lips together and make the **mmmmm** sound **mmmmm**	Down, up and over the mouse's ears.

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Grapheme and mnemonic	Picture card	Pronunciation phrase	Formation phrase
d	duck	Put your tongue to the top and front of your mouth and make a quick **d** sound **d d d**	Round the duck's body, up to its head and down to its feet.
g	goat	Give me a big smile that shows your teeth; press the middle of your tongue to the top and back of your mouth; push your tongue down and forward to make the **g** sound **g g g**	Round the goat's face and curl under its chin.
o	octopus	Make your mouth into round shape and say **o o o**	All around the octopus.
c	cat	Open your mouth into a little smile; make your tongue flat and move it up towards the top of your mouth to say **c c c**	Curl around the cat.
k	kite	Open your mouth into a little smile; make your tongue flat and move it up towards the top of your mouth to say **k k k**	Down the kite, up to the top corner and down to the bottom corner.
ck	sock	Open your mouth into a little smile, make your tongue flat and move it up towards the top of your mouth to say **c c c**	c Curl around the heel of the sock. k Down the sock, up and back down to the toe. **Catchphrase:** Rock that sock!
e	elephant	Open your mouth wide and say **e e e**	Around the elephant's eye and curl down its trunk.

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Grapheme and mnemonic	Picture card	Pronunciation phrase	Formation phrase
u u	umbrella	Open your mouth wide and say u u u	Down and around the umbrella, and back to the ground.
r r	rainbow	Show me your teeth to make a rrrrr sound rrrrr rrrrr	From the cloud to the ground and over the rainbow.
h h	helicopter	Open your mouth and breathe out sharply h h h	Down, up and over the helicopter.
b b	bear	Put your lips together and say b as you open them b b b	Down the bear's back, up and round its tummy.
f f	flamingo	Open your lips a little; put your teeth on your bottom lip and push the air out to make the sound fffff fffff	Down the flamingo to its foot and across its wings.
l l	lollipop	Open your mouth a little; put your tongue up to the top of your mouth, behind your teeth, and press llllll llllll	Down the lollipop stick.

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By the end of Reception, children should be able to form all 26 lower-case letters and upper-case letters.

Year 1:

In Year 1, children are taught the same progression of letters identified above and the Little Wandle formation phrases but this time with a lead in cursive line.

The phrase: ***"From the line, get ready…"*** is used to start the lead in line from the correct place and get into position to form the letter which has been practised correctly in Reception.

When children can form all lower-case letters with a lead in line correctly, they are taught the continuous cursive handwriting joins in the following order:

Progression of cursive letter formation:

Group 1

Straight line continuous cursive

i

l

t

r

Group 2

Forming curves starting continuous letters

c

a

d

g

o

q

As above, but more complex

e

s

Group 3

Forming tunnel continuous cursive letters:

b bbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbb

h hhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh

m mmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm

n nnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnn

p pppppppppppppppppppppppppppppppppppppppppppppp

u uuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuu

Group 4

Forming top exit continuous cursive letters:

r rrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr

v vvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvv

w wwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwww

x xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Group 5

Forming hooks, lines and loops:

f fffffff

Year 2

Once children are confident in forming continuous cursive letters, they are ready for joining.

Joining Progression

Here is a progression of the different joins to take the children through when teaching them to join letters.

Joins 1

Continuous cursive bottom letter joins

ai ai ai ai ai ai ai ai ai ai ai ai ai ai ai

but but but but but but but but but but but

ch ch ch ch ch ch ch ch ch ch ch ch ch

ck ck ck ck ck ck ck ck ck ck ck ck ck

er er er er er er er er er er er er er er

sh sh sh sh sh sh sh sh sh sh sh sh sh

th th th th th th th th th th th th th th

ip ip ip ip ip ip ip ip ip ip ip ip ip ip

ig ig ig ig ig ig ig ig ig ig ig ig ig ig

Joins 2

as as as as as as as as as as as as as

ea ea ea ea ea ea ea ea ea ea ea ea

ed ed ed ed ed ed ed ed ed ed ed ed

ing ing ing ing ing ing ing ing ing ing ing

sat sat sat sat sat sat sat sat sat sat sat

ss ss ss ss ss ss ss ss ss ss ss ss ss

Continuous cursive bottom 'e' letter joins:

be be be be be be be be be be be be be

her her her her her her her her her her her

ie ie ie ie ie ie ie ie ie ie ie ie ie

men men men men men men men men men

se se se se se se se se se se se se se

Joins 3

Continuous cursive top e letter joins

ere ere ere ere ere ere ere ere ere ere

ae ae ae ae ae ae ae ae ae ae ae

re re re re re re re re re re re re re

ure ure ure ure ure ure ure ure ure

ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve ve

we we we we we we we we we we we

Joins 4

Continuous cursive top letters

aa aa aa aa aa aa aa aa aa aa aa

oh oh oh oh oh oh oh oh oh oh oh

oi oi oi oi oi oi oi oi oi oi oi oi

on on on on on on on on on on on

oo oo oo oo oo oo oo oo oo oo oo oo oo

or or or or or or or or or or or or or

ou ou ou ou ou ou ou ou ou ou ou

ov ov ov ov ov ov ov ov ov ov ov

ow ow ow ow ow ow ow ow ow ow ow

oy oy oy oy oy oy oy oy oy oy oy

wh wh wh wh wh wh wh wh wh wh

Capital letters never join lower case letters:

Monday
January
Polly
London

By the end of Year 2, we aim for all children to be cursive joining.

Year 3 and Year 4

During these years, children perfect their penmanship and by the end of Year 4, we aim for all children to be using a handwriting pen instead of pencil.

Year 5 and Year 6

Children continue to use a handwriting pen and have mastered a fluent cursive handwriting style.

Support and Resources

For children to master any skill, they need to be taught the skills, practice this skill regularly and then apply the skill more widely. For this reason, at Sedlescombe, we immerse children in the art of letter formation and joining from the very first day of school.

Our 'Handwriting at Sedlescombe Church of England Primary School' crib sheet outlines our implementation of support and resources for each child:

The Teaching of Handwriting at Sedlescombe Church of England Primary School

Intent:

Handwriting is an essential skill. We aim for all children to develop clear, legible, and fluent handwriting that they can use confidently across all subjects.

We aim to:

Promote Legibility - To ensure that every child can write clearly, forming letters and words in a way that is easy to read and understand.

Encourage Consistency - To help children develop consistent letter formation, spacing, and sizing, which will improve the presentation of their work.

Build Fluency - To support children in writing quickly and comfortably, without sacrificing the quality of their handwriting.

Foster Pride in Work - To encourage children to take pride in the presentation of their written work, helping to boost their self-confidence.

Support Progression - To provide a structured approach to handwriting development that builds from early mark-making through to joined, cursive handwriting as the children progress through the school.

Our handwriting curriculum is designed to provide a progression of skills that is in line with the National Curriculum, taking into account the individual needs of each child. Through focused practice, positive reinforcement, and clear guidance, we aim to ensure that all children leave Sedlescombe with the ability to write with pride, purpose, and confidence.

Implementation:

Consistently High Expectations: Clear Standard and Supportive Environment

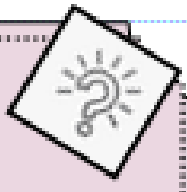
We foster an atmosphere where effort and improvement are valued, not just the end result. We tenaciously encourage students to take pride in their work. We define what good handwriting looks like in terms of legibility, consistency, and neatness and these expectations are shared with the children regularly.

Consistently High Expectations: Modelling Technique

At every opportunity, we demonstrate correct letter formation, posture, and pencil grip frequently, both in practice and during lessons. This includes when we model writing on flipchart paper, the white boards or the interactive white board. Each class has a modelling book.

Consistently High Expectations: Providing Regular Practice:

We ensure our pupils have frequent opportunities for focused handwriting practice, with targeted exercises to reinforce proper technique.



Consistently High Expectations: Encouraging Self Reflection:

We build in opportunities for children to assess their own handwriting, identifying areas for improvement and setting goals.

Consistently High Expectations: Offering Constructive Feedback

We provide regular, specific feedback that highlights progress and areas for improvement. We ensure we celebrate small successes to motivate students. We aim to inspire all students to believe that they CAN do it. We also give clear reminders when a pupil may have forgotten or simply does not want to.

Consistently High Expectations: Consistency across subjects

We ensure handwriting expectations are maintained not only in dedicated handwriting lessons or English lessons but across all subject areas to reinforce the importance of good handwriting.

Children at risk of falling behind

We use our formative and summative assessment analysis to identify children who are at risk of falling behind. Interventions are devised one to ones to support these children to keep up. Teacher's planning is adapted as and when appropriate, to incorporate key handwriting objectives that children are struggling with.

Impact:

-Children can write confidently, consistently using a neat, legible style, ensuring their ideas are heard

-Children can write quickly and efficiently across a range of subjects as they have secured the transcriptional skill of handwriting

-Children will have improved confidence when they take pride in their handwriting and seeing regular improvements

-Children will have increased focus and attention to detail as developing neat handwriting requires these as it encourages patience, practice, and perseverance.

-Children will foster good habits. By valuing neat handwriting, children develop habits of organisation, discipline, and pride in their work, which can positively affect other areas of their school life.

-Children will have improved memory retention. Writing by hand, especially in a clear and thoughtful manner, can improve this. The physical act of writing helps reinforce learning and strengthens neural connections.

-Through assessment, the quantity of children who struggle to cursively join in their writing decreases

Improving Handwriting- Adult Top Tips

1. RAG

Green children = Good to go so insist upon joined, cursive handwriting

Amber children = Stop in time and show them correct joins and may need constant reminders to join

Red children = Need 1 to 1 adult support and intervention to go back to basics

E.g. Correct letter formation, cursive lead in line practise, use of formation phrases, sizing and spacing

2. Always model

Always model correct pencil grip and cursive, joined handwriting yourself- no matter what you are writing on.

Talk through your process if necessary:

"From the line, get ready, around the duck's body, up to his head and down to his feet. I do not need to take my pencil/pen off the paper/board and I am ready for my next letter..."

3. Live Marking

When moving around the room, spot the joining errors or remind children of joining- insist upon it!

If an error is spotted: model in pink pen in the children's book or in board pen on a board the join.

Talk through the process.

4. No Opt Out!

Remind the children this is something we do which is purposeful!

It WILL help them to have neat, joined handwriting.

5. Inspire and Motivate

You can do it!

I believe in you!

I can help you.

Give party points for the smallest successes.

Show and celebrate the successes for that child under the visualiser.

Interventions for Fine Motor Skills and Handwriting

Funky Fingers & Dough Disco
Funky Fingers and Dough Disco are two engaging and fun activities used in Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) to develop fine motor skills in young children. Both activities build hand and finger strength, coordination, and dexterity, which are important for tasks such as writing, drawing, and self-care routines. These activities are aimed to develop fine motor skills, ensuring children have built enough strength not only in their hands, but in their wrist, elbows and shoulders.

Jump Ahead
Jump Ahead is an early intervention program designed to support young children in developing their fine motor skills. These skills are essential for tasks such as grasping, manipulating objects, and using tools like pencils, scissors, or utensils.

If it is believed that there is an issue such as fine motor control difficulties that is impacting on a child's ability to develop a neat, cursive handwriting style, then this is be discussed with the Inclusion Leader so that an assessment can be undertaken and interventions implemented if needed such as a continuation of Funky Fingers or Dough Disco or Jump Ahead.

Handwriting and Font Style:

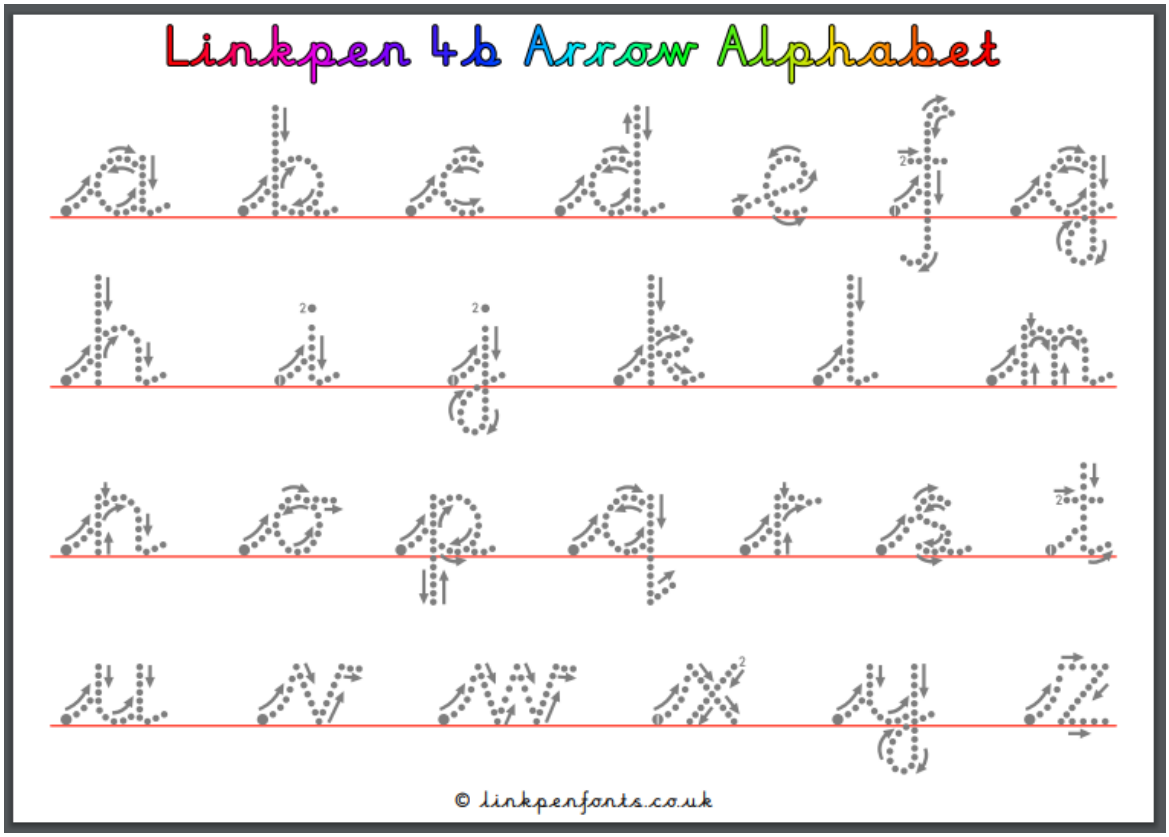
We want our children at Sedlescombe to be immersed in an environment which models our expectations. As a school we use the font for typed print from Linkpen 4b. Our licence allows staff and children to use the font on all school laptops. https://1drv.ms/u/s!AoZ4yLWpV3sFnzlTyRiyi_Jbd61j?e=rNC4lN

Across the school, display print on worksheets, printed titles and in books will be printed using this font. It will also be used by children when typing on computers and word processing.

It is an expectation that children write with neat, joined handwriting, at their own current handwriting development and should be used every time the children write in their exercise books, whatever the subject.

Teachers will model neat, joined handwriting whenever they write on the boards, flip charts or in a book.

This diagram shows the formation of our handwriting.


Linkpen 4b Arrow Alphabet
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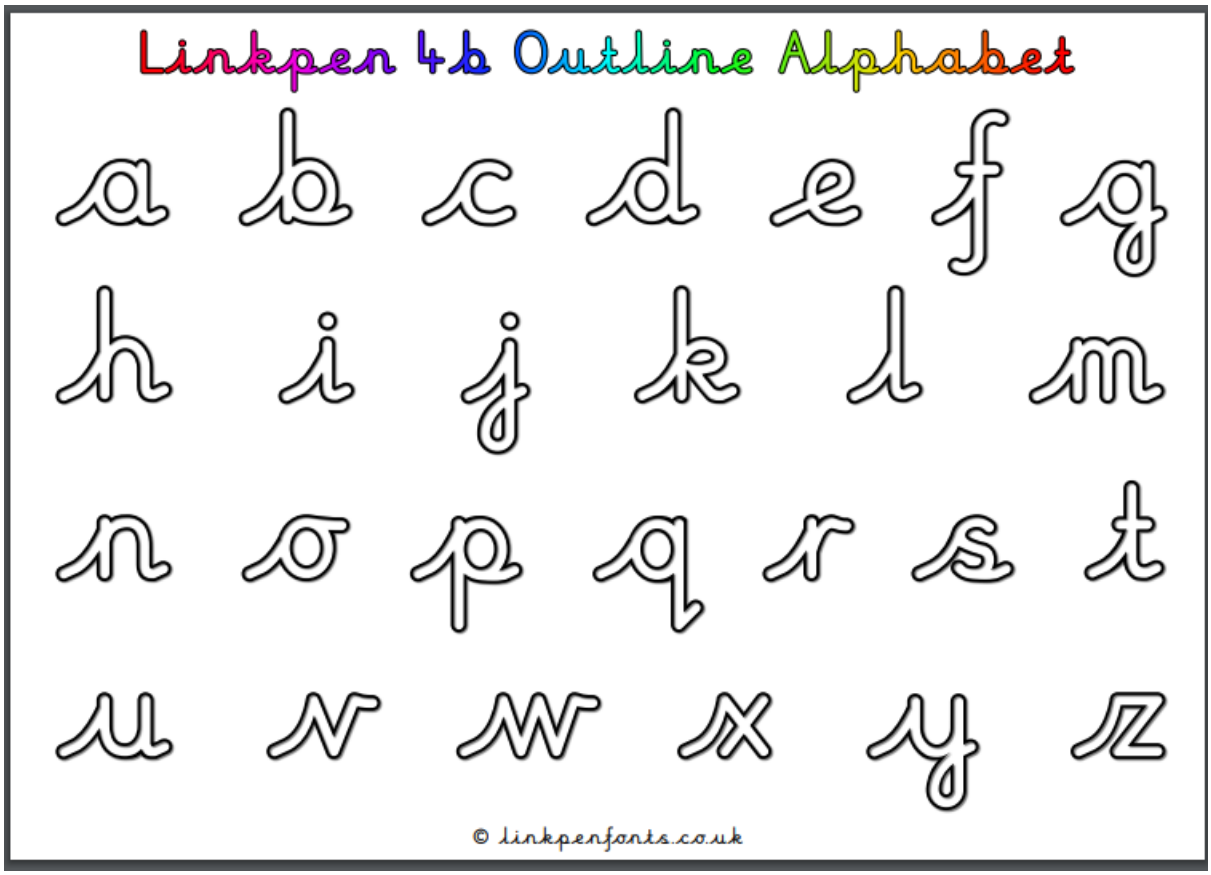
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