



# Peak School

# Writing Policy

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Policy Owner: Mrs Marie Old (Head of School)

Ratified in June 2026 by the Governing body of Peak school

# Introduction

At Peak School, we believe that writing is a fundamental life skill that enables pupils to communicate, record, create, express ideas and participate fully in learning and everyday life.

At Peak School, writing is viewed as a developmental process rather than solely the production of written text. Progress may therefore be demonstrated through communication, representation, mark making, physical development, transcription and composition.

We recognise that pupils develop as writers at different rates and that writing may take many forms including sensory exploration, mark making, symbols, objects of reference, drawing, emergent writing, handwriting, typing and independent written composition.

Our writing curriculum is built upon the principle that all pupils are writers and that every pupil should have opportunities to develop communication, transcription and composition skills appropriate to their stage of development.

This policy reflects:

- The Early Years Foundation Stage Framework
- Development Matters
- The National Curriculum for English
- The DfE Writing Framework (2025)

Peak School maintains high expectations for all pupils and recognises that pupils may demonstrate writing development through a range of communication and recording methods appropriate to their needs.

## Aims

We aim to:

- develop confident and motivated communicators
- develop pupils' ability to express ideas, experiences, knowledge and opinions
- provide a clear developmental pathway from sensory exploration to independent writing
- develop secure transcription skills including handwriting and spelling
- develop composition skills including oral rehearsal, sentence construction and written communication
- promote writing across the curriculum
- ensure all pupils can access writing through appropriate adaptations and support
- foster pride, independence and enjoyment in writing

# Our Approach to Writing

The school's approach to writing is informed by:

- The DfE Writing Framework (2025)
- The Simple View of Writing
- The Early Years Foundation Stage Framework
- Development Matters
- Education Endowment Foundation guidance on literacy and communication
- Research relating to physical development and handwriting

This evidence highlights the importance of:

- communication as a foundation for writing
- transcription and composition working together
- explicit handwriting instruction
- systematic spelling instruction
- physical development as a precursor to handwriting
- opportunities to apply writing across the curriculum

The DfE Writing Framework identifies writing as consisting of two interconnected elements: transcription and composition. Research suggests that when transcription skills become increasingly automatic, pupils are able to devote more cognitive resources to generating, organising and communicating ideas. For this reason, both elements are taught alongside one another throughout the curriculum.

## Transcription

- Handwriting
- Spelling

## Composition

- Vocabulary
- Grammar
- Punctuation
- Sentence construction
- Organising ideas

Our curriculum reflects this model whilst recognising that many pupils require additional developmental foundations before formal transcription can begin.



We recognise that pupils may progress through these stages at different rates and may work across several stages simultaneously.

## Communication, Oracy and Oral Composition

Communication is the foundation of writing.

Oral language is one of the strongest predictors of later literacy achievement. For many pupils at Peak School, communication may take place through speech, signing, symbols, AAC or other alternative communication methods. These forms of communication are valued equally as foundations for writing.

Shared reading, storytelling and book-based experiences further support the development of vocabulary, language structures and communication skills that underpin writing.

Pupils may compose and communicate ideas using a range of methods appropriate to their developmental stage and communication needs.

These may include:

- spoken language
- signing
- symbols
- core boards

- AAC devices
- objects of reference
- photographs and pictures
- gestures
- eye gaze
- choosing, sequencing and matching activities

Teachers support pupils to:

- communicate wants, needs, preferences and opinions
- make choices and express ideas
- develop and use vocabulary
- sequence events, stories and experiences
- retell familiar experiences
- organise ideas for communication
- construct and rehearse sentences, messages or representations before recording them

For pupils who are non-verbal or minimally speaking, oral composition may involve selecting symbols, sequencing pictures, using AAC, choosing objects of reference or communicating through alternative means. These activities represent the early stages of composition and form an important foundation for later writing.

## **Physical Development as a Foundation for Writing**

Writing development begins long before pupils are able to form letters or record words on paper. Development Matters (2021) highlights the importance of sensory exploration, gross motor development, fine motor development and mark making as foundations for later handwriting. At Peak School these skills are viewed as an integral part of the writing curriculum rather than a separate area of learning.

### **Gross Motor Development**

Pupils are supported to develop:

- core stability
- postural control
- shoulder stability
- bilateral coordination
- crossing the midline
- body awareness
- balance and coordination

These skills support pupils to maintain a stable position for writing, control movements and develop the endurance required for recording.

## **Fine Motor Development**

Pupils are supported to develop:

- hand strength
- finger strength
- pincer grip
- finger isolation
- hand-eye coordination
- in-hand manipulation
- wrist stability
- tool control

These skills enable pupils to manipulate writing tools effectively and develop increasingly precise movements.

## **Sensory Development and Mark Making**

Pupils are provided with opportunities to explore and make marks using a wide range of materials and sensory experiences.

Early writing development may include:

- sensory exploration
- messy play
- finger painting
- making marks in different materials
- using large-scale movements
- exploring cause and effect
- creating intentional marks

The school recognises that pupils may spend significant time developing these prerequisite skills and that this represents meaningful progress within the writing curriculum.

## **Writing Curriculum Structure**

The writing curriculum is organised into three strands:

### **Handwriting and Spelling**

Developing:

- gross motor control
- fine motor control
- mark making
- letter formation

- handwriting fluency
- spelling knowledge
- transcription skills

## **Composition**

Developing:

- communication
- representation
- oral composition
- sentence construction
- written composition
- planning and organisation

## **Vocabulary, Grammar and Punctuation**

Developing:

- vocabulary knowledge
- sentence structure
- grammar
- punctuation
- editing and improving writing

Progression is developmental rather than age-related and is matched to pupils' learning pathways.

## **Teaching Writing**

Writing is taught through a gradual sequence:

### **Experience**

Pupils engage with experiences through sensory exploration, communication and play.

### **Represent**

Pupils communicate meaning through marks, symbols, objects, pictures and drawings.

### **Compose Orally**

Pupils develop vocabulary and rehearse ideas verbally or through alternative communication methods.

### **Record**

Pupils begin to record sounds, words, symbols and ideas.

## **Compose in Writing**

Pupils create labels, captions, phrases, sentences and extended pieces of writing.

## **Review and Improve**

Pupils develop independence in reviewing and improving their work.

Teaching follows an explicit model of:

- shared reading and text exploration
- modelled writing
- shared writing
- guided writing
- independent writing

## **Handwriting and Spelling**

Explicit and systematic handwriting instruction improves letter formation, fluency and writing quality. Handwriting is therefore taught through direct modelling, guided practice and repeated opportunities for application across the curriculum.

Handwriting instruction begins with physical readiness for writing and develops through a clearly sequenced pathway.

## **Ready to Write**

Teachers establish consistent routines to support successful handwriting.

Pupils are supported to:

- sit comfortably and securely
- position paper appropriately
- stabilise paper with the supporting hand
- adopt an effective writing grip
- maintain an appropriate posture

## **Pencil Grip**

The school promotes the development of an efficient and comfortable pencil grip.

Expected progression includes:

## Early Development:

Fisted or palmar grasp

- Pencil is held in the palm.
- All fingers and thumb are used.
- Movement is from the shoulder; the arm and the hand move as a unit.
- Light scribbles are produced with this pencil grip.



Digital Pronate Grasp

- All fingers are holding the pencil, but the wrist is turned so that the palm is facing down towards the page.
- Movement comes mostly from the elbow and the shoulder is now stabilized.
- Horizontal lines, vertical lines and circular lines can be copied.



## Developing Control

Four-finger grasp

- Fingers are held on the pencil shaft opposite the thumb, beginning to form the arc between the thumb and index finger.
- Movement occurs from the wrist; the hand and fingers move as a whole unit.
- Zigzag lines, crossed lines and simple humans can be drawn with this grip



Static tripod grasp or static quadropod grasp

- A three-finger grasp, where the thumb, index finger and middle finger work as one unit.
- Movement is usually from the wrist with this static grasp.
- A static quadropod grip has a fourth finger involved.
- Triangles, circles and squares can be copied with this grip.



## Mature Grip

Dynamic tripod grip

- Pencil is held in a stable position between the thumb, index and middle finger.
- The ring and little fingers are bent and rest comfortably on the table.
- The index finger and thumb form an open space.
- Movement comes from the fingertips.
- This is the ideal grip to move the pencil efficiently, accurately and for letter formation practice



The priority is that a pupil's grip is:

- functional
- comfortable
- sustainable
- supportive of legible handwriting

Adaptations may include:

- chunky pencils
- triangular pencils
- pencil grips
- adapted writing tools
- specialist Occupational Therapy recommendations

## Handwriting Teaching Sequence

### Stage 1 – Gross Motor Development

Writing begins with the development of whole-body movement and postural control. Gross motor skills provide the physical foundations required for successful handwriting by supporting stability, endurance and coordinated movement.

Pupils develop:

- core stability
- shoulder stability
- postural control
- bilateral coordination
- crossing the midline
- body awareness

These skills enable pupils to maintain an effective position for writing, control arm movements and develop the stamina required for sustained recording. Opportunities to develop gross motor skills are embedded throughout the curriculum through movement, physical activity, sensory experiences and play.

### Stage 2 – Fine Motor Development

Fine motor skills build upon gross motor development and support increasingly precise hand and finger movements. These skills are essential for controlling writing tools and developing efficient handwriting movements.

Pupils develop:

- hand strength
- finger strength
- finger isolation
- pincer grip

- hand-eye coordination
- wrist stability
- in-hand manipulation
- tool control

Opportunities to develop fine motor skills are provided through practical activities, sensory exploration, manipulation tasks and structured interventions where appropriate.

### **Stage 3 – Mark Making**

Mark making provides the bridge between physical development and formal handwriting instruction. Through mark making, pupils learn that movements create marks and that marks can carry meaning.

Pupils develop:

- intentional mark making
- movement control
- visual tracking
- hand-eye coordination
- tool exploration
- cause-and-effect understanding
- early representation skills

Pupils are encouraged to make marks using a wide range of materials, surfaces and tools. Mark making may include sensory materials, painting, drawing, chalking, finger tracing and large-scale movements.

The school recognises that mark making is a significant stage in writing development. Through repeated opportunities to explore and create marks, pupils develop the control, confidence and understanding required for later letter formation, handwriting and written composition.

### **Stage 4 – Pre-Writing Shapes**

Pre-writing shapes provide the foundation for letter formation. Before pupils can form letters accurately and fluently, they must first develop control of the movements and shapes that underpin handwriting.

Pupils are taught to form and control:

- vertical lines
- horizontal lines
- circles
- curves
- crosses
- diagonal lines
- zig-zags
- waves

- repeated patterns

Through repeated practice, pupils develop:

- movement control
- directionality
- visual tracking
- hand-eye coordination
- pencil control
- spatial awareness
- shape formation

Teaching begins with large-scale movements and gradually progresses to smaller, more precise marks. Pupils may practise shapes using a range of materials and surfaces including paint, chalk, sand, sensory materials and paper-based activities.

Peak School recognises that many letters are composed of combinations of pre-writing shapes. Secure formation of these shapes therefore supports the development of accurate letter formation, handwriting fluency and written composition.

## **Stage 5 – Letter Formation**

Once pupils have developed secure pre-writing shapes and movement patterns, they progress to formal letter formation.

Letters are taught in movement families rather than alphabetical order. This approach enables pupils to practise similar movements repeatedly, supporting motor memory, consistency and handwriting fluency.

Teaching focuses on:

- correct starting points
- directionality
- letter orientation
- size and proportion
- movement patterns
- accuracy and consistency
- developing automaticity

Letters are taught in the following sequence:

Anti Clockwise Letters

**c, o, a, d, g, q**

Pupils learn to:

- start at the correct point
- move anti-clockwise
- close circular shapes

- maintain consistent curved movements

## Downward Letters

### **l, t, i, j, u, y**

Pupils learn to:

- move from top to bottom
- control stopping points
- maintain straight line formation
- add dots and tails accurately where required

## Hump Letters

### **n, m, h, r, b, p**

Pupils learn to:

- retrace lines
- form arches and humps
- maintain line orientation
- combine vertical and curved movements

## Diagonal Letters

### **v, w, x, z, k**

Pupils learn to:

- control diagonal strokes
- change direction smoothly
- cross lines accurately
- maintain consistency in more complex movements

## Irregular Letters

### **e, f, s**

Pupils learn to:

- form more complex curves and directional changes
- sequence multiple movements accurately
- maintain correct orientation
- develop fluency in less regular letter patterns

Teachers model letter formation explicitly and provide guided practice before pupils apply skills independently. Pupils are encouraged to verbalise movement patterns where appropriate (e.g. "start at the top", "go around", "back down") to support motor memory and letter formation.

Teaching progresses from large-scale formation to smaller, more controlled handwriting, with regular opportunities for rehearsal and application across the curriculum.

The school recognises that secure letter formation is an important component of transcription and supports pupils to develop increasingly fluent, legible and automatic handwriting.

## **Stage 6 – Transcription**

Once pupils have developed secure letter formation, they begin to apply these skills within purposeful writing activities. At this stage, the focus moves from forming individual letters to using handwriting as a tool for recording words, sentences and ideas.

Pupils learn to:

- recognise letters
- match sounds to letters
- form letters correctly
- write letters from memory
- spell words using phonics
- write words and sentences fluently

Teaching focuses on developing:

- accurate letter formation
- automatic recall of letter shapes
- phoneme-grapheme correspondence
- spelling using phonics knowledge
- writing fluency
- legibility
- stamina and endurance for writing

Pupils are supported to apply transcription skills within meaningful writing activities across the curriculum. As handwriting and spelling become increasingly automatic, pupils are able to devote more attention to generating, organising and communicating ideas.

Teaching progresses from:

- letters
- sounds
- words
- phrases
- simple sentences
- increasingly independent written composition

Opportunities are provided for pupils to practise transcription skills through handwriting activities, spelling practice, dictation, sentence construction and purposeful writing tasks.

The school recognises that secure transcription skills provide the foundation for successful written composition and support pupils to become increasingly fluent, confident and independent writers

## **Composition**

Composition is the process of generating, organising, communicating and refining ideas. At Peak School, pupils are supported to develop composition skills through communication, representation, oral rehearsal and written recording.

Reading plays a vital role in the development of writing. Through shared reading, storytelling, book exploration and exposure to high-quality texts, pupils encounter new vocabulary, language structures, ideas and text types that support their development as writers. Teachers use texts, stories and real-life experiences to model language, stimulate ideas and provide meaningful contexts for communication and composition.

Teaching supports pupils to:

- generate and communicate ideas
- draw upon experiences, stories, knowledge and interests
- develop and use increasingly ambitious vocabulary
- organise and sequence ideas
- orally rehearse sentences, messages and texts
- construct phrases, sentences and longer pieces of writing
- write for a range of purposes
- consider the intended audience for their writing
- communicate information, experiences, opinions and ideas
- make choices about vocabulary and content
- review, edit and improve their work
- develop increasing independence as writers

Pupils are provided with opportunities to write for meaningful purposes and, where appropriate, for a range of audiences. Writing may be used to communicate messages, record learning, recount experiences, tell stories, explain ideas, express opinions, solve problems and support learning across the curriculum.

The school recognises that composition develops before independent transcription for many pupils. Opportunities for communication, representation, sequencing, oral rehearsal and planning are therefore embedded throughout the curriculum. As pupils develop, they are supported to organise ideas with increasing clarity and to make appropriate choices about the content, vocabulary and structure of their writing according to its purpose and audience.

Teaching follows a graduated approach in which pupils move from communicating ideas through speech, symbols, AAC, objects, pictures and mark making towards increasingly independent written composition.

As pupils develop as writers, they are encouraged to review, edit and improve their work. Editing may include revising vocabulary, improving sentence construction, correcting transcription errors, adding information, refining organisation or improving communication through symbols, AAC or written language. The level of editing and improvement will be appropriate to each pupil's stage of development and communication needs.

## **Vocabulary, Grammar and Punctuation**

Vocabulary, grammar and punctuation are taught progressively through speaking, reading and writing activities. Teaching focuses on developing pupils' understanding and use of vocabulary, sentence structures and punctuation appropriate to their stage of development. Opportunities to apply these skills are embedded within meaningful writing activities across the curriculum.

Teaching may include:

- developing vocabulary through experience, reading and communication
- modelling sentence structures
- teaching grammar through meaningful contexts
- introducing punctuation progressively
- applying vocabulary, grammar and punctuation within purposeful writing

## **Teaching Spelling**

Effective spelling instruction combines phonics knowledge, visual memory, repeated retrieval and application within meaningful writing contexts. Spelling is therefore taught through direct instruction, rehearsal, retrieval practice and purposeful writing opportunities.

Spelling is taught systematically alongside phonics, handwriting and writing.

Pupils are taught to:

- hear sounds in words
- segment words for spelling
- apply phonics knowledge
- learn common exception words
- develop increasingly accurate spelling

## **Read – Look – Cover – Write – Check**

Pupils are taught to:

### **Read**

Read the word carefully.

**Look**

Study the word and identify patterns or tricky parts.

**Cover**

Cover the word.

**Write**

Write the word from memory.

**Check**

Compare their spelling with the original and correct any errors.

This process may be adapted through tracing, overwriting, underwriting, symbols, magnetic letters or AAC systems where appropriate.

**Dictation**

Dictation may include sounds, words, phrases and sentences and provides opportunities to apply handwriting, spelling, punctuation and sentence construction knowledge.

## Writing Across the Curriculum

Writing is taught across all curriculum areas. Teachers provide purposeful opportunities for pupils to apply writing skills in different contexts so that knowledge and skills become increasingly transferable and meaningful.

Writing tasks are purposeful and linked to curriculum content. Writing opportunities may include:

- recording observations in science
- labelling and captioning in humanities
- recording findings in mathematics
- completing vocational records
- communicating experiences in personal development
- writing for real-life purposes within independent living

Teachers ensure that writing supports learning without detracting from the primary purpose of the lesson and wherever possible, writing activities link to real-life purposes and meaningful audiences.

Writing across the curriculum provides meaningful opportunities for pupils to communicate, record information, explain ideas, reflect on experiences and demonstrate understanding.

# Inclusion and Adaptive Practice

All pupils are entitled to access writing.

Adaptations may include:

- symbols
- communication aids
- AAC systems
- objects of reference
- alternative recording methods
- adapted writing tools
- specialist seating and positioning
- technology and typing
- adult support
- smaller learning steps

Where handwriting is not currently appropriate, alternative methods of recording may be used whilst continuing to develop communication and transcription skills wherever possible. Pupils may use technology to support transcription, composition and communication.

## Assessment

Assessment is ongoing and informs future planning.

Teachers assess progress in:

- communication and oral composition
- gross and fine motor development
- handwriting and spelling
- composition
- vocabulary, grammar and punctuation

Assessment is based on the school's Writing Peak Progression Steps and focuses on identifying pupils' current stage of development, celebrating progress and informing next steps in learning.

## Monitoring and Review

The English Lead is responsible for:

- monitoring writing across the school
- supporting staff development

- reviewing curriculum progression
- monitoring standards and outcomes
- ensuring consistency in teaching and assessment

This policy will be reviewed annually.