



# PENPALS *for Handwriting*

## Rationale & How to use it

Even in this technological, computer-literate age, good handwriting remains fundamental to our children's educational achievement. Penpals for Handwriting is the only handwriting programme to offer a progression from 3–11 years and will help you teach children to develop fast, fluent and legible handwriting.

**Penpals ensures that appropriate early years experiences are offered before more formal teaching begins.**

### We believe that:

1. A flexible, fluent and legible handwriting style empowers children to write with confidence and creativity. This is an entitlement that needs careful progression and skillful discrete teaching that is frequent and continues beyond the initial foundation stages.
2. Handwriting is a developmental process with its own distinctive stages of sequential growth. We have identified five stages that form the basic organisational structure of *Penpals*:
  - i. Physical preparation for handwriting: gross and fine motor skills leading to mark-making, patterns and letter formation  
**(Foundation, 3–5 years)**
  - ii. Securing correct letter formation  
**(Key Stage 1, 5–6 years)**
  - iii. Beginning to join along with a focus on relative size and spacing  
**(Key Stage 1, 6–7 years)**
  - iv. Securing the joins along with a focus on break letters, legibility, consistency and quality  
**(Lower Key Stage 2, 7–9 years)**
  - v. Practising speed, fluency and developing a personalised style for different purposes  
**(Upper Key Stage 2, 9–11 years)**
3. Handwriting must also be practised discretely and in context. Beyond the initial foundation stages, *Penpals* provides workbooks for handwriting practice in the context of age-appropriate spelling, punctuation and grammar. Learning to associate the kinesthetic handwriting movement with the visual letter pattern and the aural phonemes will help children with learning to spell. However, *Penpals* always takes a 'handwriting first' approach.
4. Choosing the writing implement best suited to the task is an important part of a handwriting education.

### A Practical Approach

**Penpals offers a practical approach to support the delivery of handwriting teaching in the context of the modern curriculum.**

**Time:** A series of units offer time-saving, practical and fun ideas for ensuring the systematic teaching and practice of handwriting skills.

**Planning:** *Penpals* helps with long-, medium- and short-term planning and is correlated to national guidelines. Most of the ideas are generic and can easily be adapted to the current topic or theme in the class or to the interests of a particular child or children.

**Practice:** *Penpals* offers a wealth of opportunities for practising skills in imaginative situations in both indoor and outdoor settings and for continuous provision.

**Assessment for learning:** *Penpals* offers guidance and copiable resources for both record-keeping, observations and baseline checks in line with national guidelines.

**Motivation:** The *Penpals* materials have been written with the support of children, nursery nurses, classroom assistants, teachers, foundation consultants and handwriting experts to stimulate and motivate young children as learners. *Penpals* provides multi-sensory resources including those for teachers to model via the whiteboard or child exploration into mark-making. From Foundation 2 (F2; 5–6 years), *Penpals* also provides practice copy books as well as write-in workbooks.