

## Help with Handwriting.

### 1. Dyslexic children sometimes have problems with handwriting.

When learning to read, children first have to link the shape of the word on the page with the sound it makes. Then, when it comes to writing, they have to recreate that shape back onto paper. For children with dyslexia, decoding these patterns and making these links can often be very difficult. As a result, they frequently fail to develop the automatic flow of writing which will help them to express themselves clearly and easily in writing.

### 2. It is recommended that children learn the continuous cursive style.

Typically, when first learning to write, children 'print' their letters. They then move on to 'joined up' writing at a later stage. For children with dyslexia, learning two styles of handwriting can add an extra layer of difficulty and cause confusion. It is, therefore, much more helpful if a young child can learn to use a single system of handwriting right from the start.

The most widely recommended handwriting style is called continuous cursive. Its most important feature is that each letter is formed without taking the pencil off the paper – and consequently, each word is formed in one, flowing movement.

The key advantages to this system are:

- By making each letter in one movement, children's hands develop a 'physical memory' of it, making it easier to produce the correct shape;

- Because letters and words flow from left to right, children are less likely to reverse letters which are typically difficult (like b/d or p/q);

- There is a clearer distinction between capital letters and lower case;

- The continuous flow of writing ultimately improves speed and spelling.

### 3. Practising continuous cursive handwriting.

If you wish to practise handwriting with your child, it is advisable to use a recommended teaching resource. This will show you exactly how to form the letters and how best to practise them. It is also worth paying attention to a few basics, such as:

**Paper:** It is a good idea to use lined paper. At the earliest stages, you can use double lines to show the correct size of ascenders and descenders. Lines should be well spaced to start with – eg 10mm apart – gradually reducing to single lines about 5mm apart.

**Posture:** Make sure that the chair and desk are at the correct height. Your child's back should be straight and feet resting on the floor. A right-handed child should have their book slanted to the left. For a left-handed child the book should be slanted to the right.

**Implements:** It is best to use a standard HB pencil, well sharpened. With the youngest ages, you might use a chunky triangular pencil to aid the grip. As children get older and more confident, they can move on to a fountain pen or a special handwriting pen. You should avoid using ballpoint pens for handwriting exercises.

