

## Helping with handwriting

Start by asking the school about helping with handwriting. Do they teach a particular style of handwriting? At what point do they teach the children to join up letters from a printed to a cursive method? Some schools start this in Reception, others leave it until later.

Find out if the school uses any specific phrases when teaching handwriting. For example, 'c' is often referred to as curly 'c' and 'k' as kicking 'k'.

### Gross and fine motor skills

Children need to develop control over both large (gross) muscles and fine (small) muscles. The gross muscles are required for running, walking, crawling, throwing etc.

The fine muscles of the hands and wrists need to be developed because they help with the small movements needed for handwriting.

Schools provide a range of activities to support the development of both sets of muscles. Some of the activities that help to develop gross motor skills in relation to handwriting are:

- Sky writing – writing letters in the air
- Writing a letter on someone's back
- Moving ribbons attached to sticks through the air in letter-shapes

School activities in the early years that help to develop fine motor skills include:

- Sewing and weaving
- Finger rhymes
- Sand and water play
- Finger painting - making large and small patterns
- Playing with clay, playdough, plasticine
- Cutting out shapes
- Painting and drawing

As a parent, you can, of course, do some of these activities at home. Sometimes boys develop fine motor control more slowly than girls.

### Some things to consider

**Posture** Is your child able to sit comfortably with their feet flat on the floor?

**Pencil grip** Check whether your child is holding the pencil too tightly. Are they holding the pencil between the thumb and forefinger with the pencil resting on the third finger? You can buy pencil grips that help.

**Left-handed children** They usually need to have the paper slightly to the left of the centre of their body and should tilt their work slightly to the right so they can see what they have written. Encourage them to position their fingers about 1.5cm away from the end of their pencil. If your child is left-handed, ask if they sit on the left of right-handed children. If not, they may bump arms.