Workshop for Parents - **Year 3**

Handwriting and Reading

Wednesday 7th October 2026

Ben Jonson Primary School



Workshop Aims

Helping your child develop fluent, legible and confident handwriting

- What children are expected to achieve
- How we use Penpals
- How you can help at home

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Icebreaker

- Try this: Write your child's name using your non-dominant hand!



- How does it feel?

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Why does handwriting matter?

Handwriting supports the whole writing process.

- Fluent handwriting helps children focus on their ideas.
- Automatic letter formation reduces the demands on working memory.
- Clear handwriting helps children communicate successfully.
- Short, regular practice builds confidence and fluency.

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What does the DfE Writing Framework tell us?

Handwriting is not just about presentation — it is an essential part of learning to write.

- Handwriting and spelling are known as transcription skills.
- These skills need to become increasingly automatic.
- Automatic transcription frees up working memory for composition — thinking about ideas, vocabulary and sentences.
- Writing places significant demands on children's working memory, so skills need to be taught in a carefully sequenced way.
- The foundations of handwriting, spelling and sentence construction matter more than simply producing lots of writing.

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National Curriculum expectations

By the end of Years 3, pupils should be developing a fluent and consistent handwriting style.

- Use the diagonal and horizontal strokes needed to join letters.
- Understand which adjacent letters are best left unjoined.
- Increase the legibility, consistency and quality of handwriting.
- Keep downstrokes parallel and evenly spaced.
- Space lines so ascenders and descenders do not touch.

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What are we looking for in Year 3?

From correct formation towards fluent, joined handwriting.

- Correct letter formation
- Consistent letter size
- Letters sitting on the line
- Clear ascenders and descenders
- Appropriate spacing between words
- Accurate joins where appropriate
- Increasing fluency while remaining legible

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How we teach handwriting

At Ben Jonson we use Penpals for Handwriting.

- A consistent handwriting style across the school
- Explicit modelling of letter shapes and joins
- Regular opportunities to practise patterns, words and sentences
- Application of handwriting skills in everyday writing
- Clear feedback so children know their next step

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What does Penpals teach?

Handwriting is made up of several skills that work together.

Posture
Sitting comfortably and being ready to write.

Pencil grip
Holding and controlling the pencil effectively.

Letter formation
Forming letters accurately and consistently.

Size & position
Keeping letters appropriately sized and placed on the line.

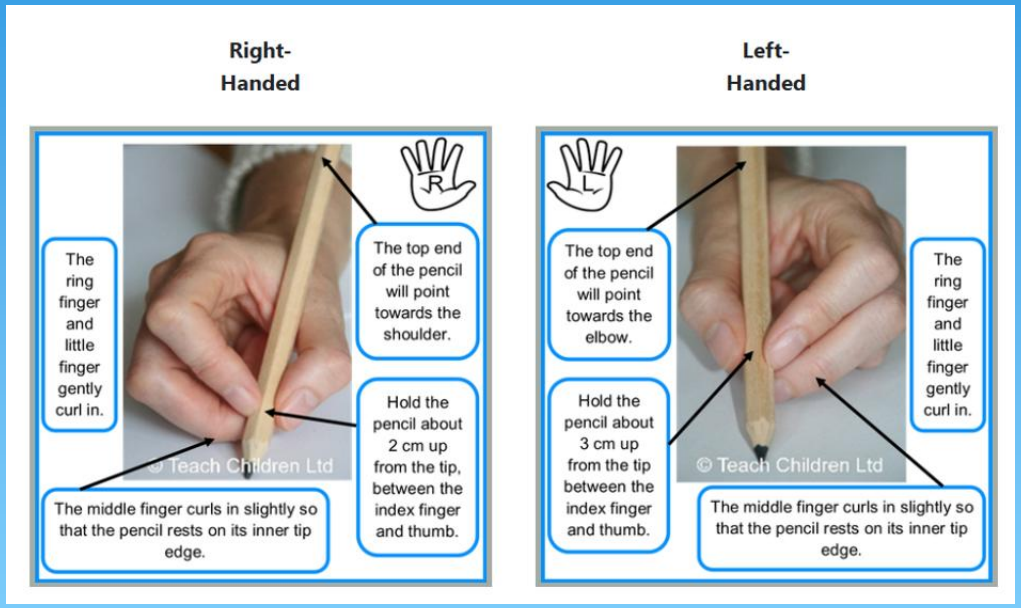
Spacing
Creating clear spaces between words and letters.

Fluency
Writing with increasing ease, rhythm and stamina.



Correct Posture and Pencil Grip

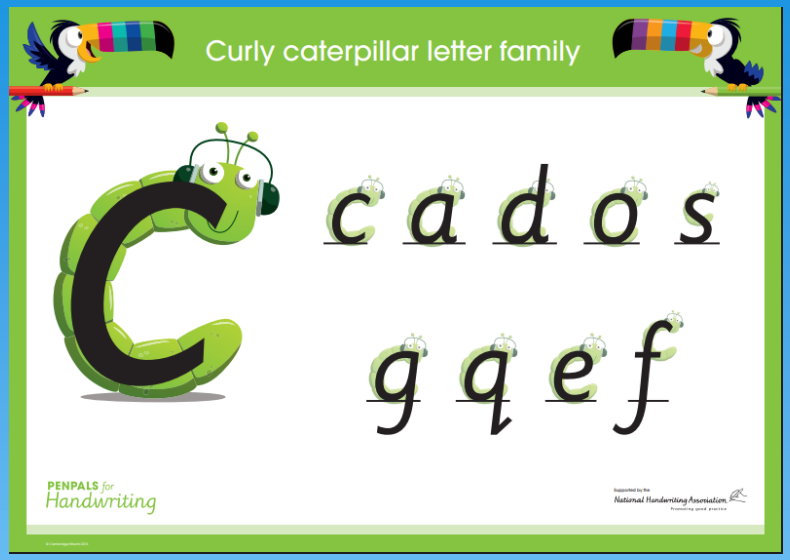




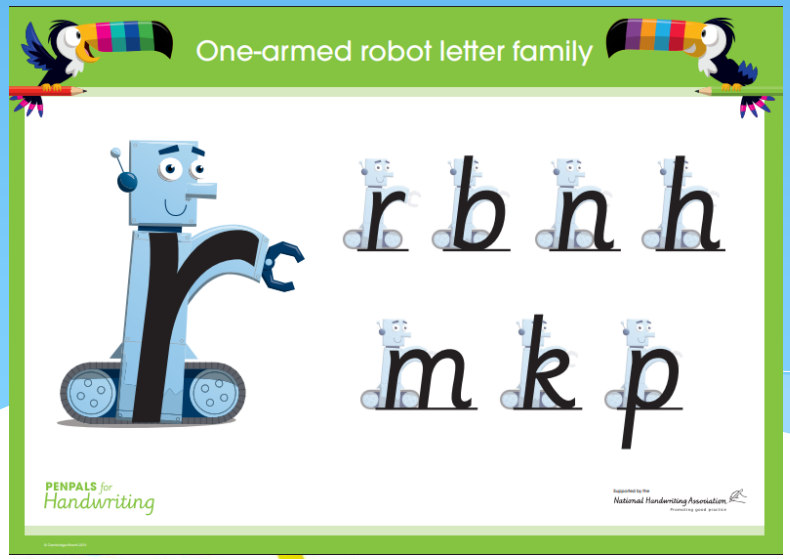
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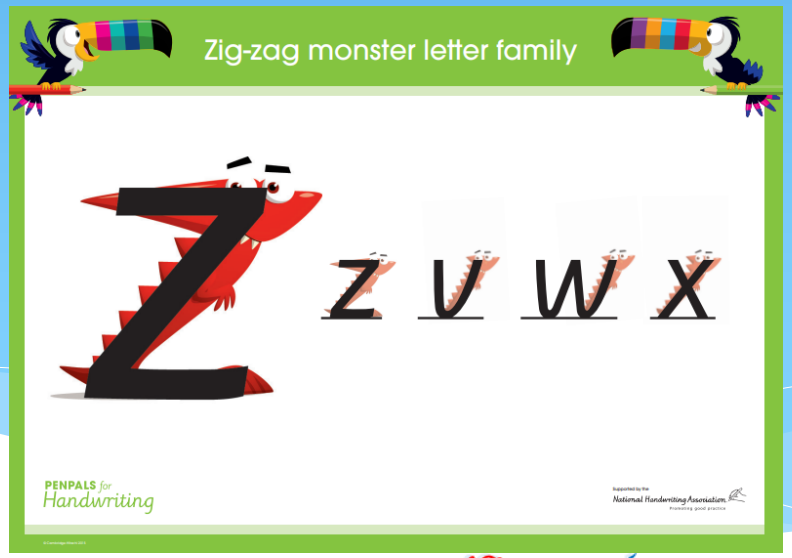
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Let's practise









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How can you help at home?

Short, regular handwriting practice helps Year 3 children develop consistency, fluency and confidence.

Consistent letter size

Encourage letters to be a consistent size and sit correctly on the line.

Practise joins

Practise the joins taught in school. Remember, some letters are best left unjoined.

Spacing & position

Encourage clear spaces between words and consistent spacing between letters.

Ascenders & descenders

Check tall letters reach up and letters such as g, j, p, q and y descend below the line.

Words & sentences

Practise through useful words, spelling practice and short sentences.

Build fluency

Encourage a smooth, comfortable writing rhythm without rushing or losing legibility.

Write for a purpose

Try lists, cards, notes, diary entries, labels and instructions.

Praise & improve

Notice a specific success, then choose ONE thing to improve.

Keep practice short, purposeful and positive.

The aim is increasingly fluent, legible and consistent handwriting that allows your child to concentrate on their ideas.

Handwriting Focus – Year 3

Key Handwriting Skills:

- Maintaining secure and consistent letter formation
- Using the correct size and positioning of letters
- Using diagonal and horizontal strokes to join letters
- Knowing which letters should be joined and which are best left unjoined
- Keeping spacing between letters and words clear and consistent
- Positioning letters correctly on the line, with clear ascenders and descenders
- Developing a consistent, legible and increasingly fluent handwriting style
- Applying good handwriting habits across independent writing

The aim: increasingly fluent, legible and consistent handwriting that becomes automatic and supports children to focus on their ideas.

Common Challenges – Year 3

⚠ Common hurdles

- Inconsistent size or spacing when children begin to join
- Joining every letter, including letters that are best left unjoined
- Incorrect or awkward joins that interrupt the flow of writing
- Ascenders and descenders becoming unclear or inconsistent
- Handwriting becoming less legible when writing at speed
- Good handwriting in practice books not transferring to independent writing
- Hand fatigue or reduced stamina during longer pieces of writing

💡 How we can help

- Focus on one handwriting target at a time
- Model and practise the Penpals joins taught in school
- Remind children that not every letter needs to be joined
- Use short, regular practice rather than copying long passages
- Encourage a smooth rhythm while keeping writing legible
- Use real writing tasks so skills transfer into everyday writing
- Build stamina gradually and praise specific improvements

The aim is increasing consistency and fluency — not speed at the expense of legibility.

Why is reading so important in Year 3?

Year 3 is an important stage: children move from learning to read towards reading confidently to learn.

- Builds fluency and reading stamina
- Develops vocabulary and language
- Strengthens comprehension

- Supports spelling and writing
- Builds knowledge across the curriculum
- Develops imagination, empathy and enjoyment

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Read • Talk • Enjoy • Repeat



Fluency Reading

What is reading fluency?

Accuracy



Reading accurately means to decode and read words correctly. It is the ability to apply knowledge of letter-sound relationships when reading and saying written words. Pupils' level of accuracy will impact their speed and ease of reading.

Automaticity



The more cognitive space that is taken up with trying to decode words, the less space that is available to comprehend meaning in a text. Therefore, readers must be able to decode words without thinking about the decoding.

Reading with automaticity is reading words on sight automatically and at an appropriate pace. It feels and sounds effortless for pupils.

Prosody



Prosody is reading aloud (and silently in the reader's head) with appropriate use of stress, intonation and expression. It requires both reading accuracy and a level of comprehension.

Understanding words and ideas enables pupils to make decisions about how they might vary their volume, phrasing, smoothness and pace to reflect emotion, emphasis or tone. Reading with prosody sounds interesting and engaging to others.

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From learning to read → reading to learn

In Key Stage 2, children need to read increasingly independently and understand what they read.

- Read unfamiliar words accurately
- Read with appropriate pace, phrasing and expression
- Check that the text makes sense
- Retrieve important information

- Infer meaning using clues from the text
- Discuss words, ideas, characters and themes
- Explain answers using evidence from the text

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Read • Talk • Enjoy • Repeat



Reading and vocabulary

Books introduce children to words and language they may not meet in everyday conversation.

- Notice interesting or unfamiliar words
- Talk about what new words mean
- Use clues in the sentence to work out meaning
- Discuss synonyms and shades of meaning
- Encourage children to use new vocabulary when speaking and writing

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Read • Talk • Enjoy • Repeat







Reading helps children become better writers

What children read provides models for what they can write.

- Books expose children to rich vocabulary
- Children see how sentences are constructed
- They encounter punctuation used in context

- They learn how authors describe characters and settings
- They notice how texts are organised
- They collect ideas, language and structures for their own writing

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Read • Talk • Enjoy • Repeat







Reading for pleasure matters too

We want children to become readers who choose to read — not children who only read because they have been told to.

- Let your child choose books that genuinely interest them
- Keep reading aloud to your child — Year 3 is not too old
- Enjoy stories, poetry, comics, non-fiction and magazines

- Talk about books without turning every reading session into a test
- Visit the library and explore new authors
- Let children see adults enjoying reading too

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Read • Talk • Enjoy • Repeat



How can you help with reading at home?

A little reading and conversation, regularly, can make a big difference.

- Make reading part of the daily routine
- Listen to your child read and give them time to work out unfamiliar words
- Read aloud to your child and take turns
- Ask open questions: Why? How do you know? What makes you think that?

- Discuss interesting vocabulary
- Encourage your child to recommend and choose books
- Praise effort, fluency and thoughtful responses



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Read • Talk • Enjoy • Repeat



Try these questions when reading together

Good questions help children think, explain and return to the text.

- What has happened so far?
- Which word or phrase tells you…?
- Why do you think the character did that?
- How do you know they are feeling that way?

- What do you think will happen next? Why?
- What does this word mean here?
- What was your favourite part? Why?
- Would you recommend this book? Explain your answer.

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Read • Talk • Enjoy • Repeat



Our key message

Reading in Year 3 should develop skill, knowledge AND enjoyment.

- Read regularly
- Keep reading aloud together
- Talk about books and new vocabulary

- Encourage choice and reading for pleasure
- Ask children to explain their thinking
- Celebrate your child as a reader

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Read • Talk • Enjoy • Repeat



2026: National Year of Reading



At Ben Jonson, we want every child and family to GO ALL IN with reading.

- The National Year of Reading 2026 is a Department for Education campaign delivered with the National Literacy Trust.
- The campaign is called GO ALL IN.
- Its message is simple: If you're into it, read into it.
- Reading can connect with anything your child loves — football, animals, space, cooking, music, gaming, history or humour.
- Books are important, but meaningful reading can also include comics, magazines, recipes, articles, e-books and audiobooks.
- Families are encouraged to make space for shared reading and conversation.

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GO ALL IN • If you're into it, read into it

Brave Kind Curious

Reading for Pleasure – what do we mean?

Reading for pleasure is reading that children choose because it interests, excites or matters to them.

- Choice matters — children need opportunities to choose what they want to read.
- All kinds of reading can count: stories, poetry, non-fiction, comics, magazines and more.
- Children need time to become absorbed in reading without always completing a task afterwards.
- Talking about books, authors and recommendations helps create a community of readers.
- Reading aloud remains valuable in Year 3 — children can enjoy books beyond their independent reading level.
- Adults who talk about and enjoy reading show children that reading is part of everyday life.

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GO ALL IN • If you're into it, read into it



GO ALL IN at home

Start with your child's interests and use reading to help them explore those interests further.

- If they're into football → try player biographies, match reports, football magazines or fiction.
- If they're into animals → try fact books, nature magazines, stories and wildlife websites.
- If they're into cooking → read recipes, menus and food books together.
- If they're into gaming → explore guides, character stories, reviews or game-related fiction.
- If they're into drawing or humour → try graphic novels, comics and joke books.
- Visit the library together and let your child browse and choose.

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Skill and Pleasure

We do not have to choose between teaching children to read well and helping them love reading.

- Reading instruction develops decoding, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension.
- Reading for pleasure develops motivation, curiosity and a desire to keep reading.
- Children need books they can read successfully AND books they are excited to explore.
- Adults can read more challenging books aloud while children continue practising books at their own reading level.
- At Ben Jonson, our aim is to develop capable readers who also see themselves as readers.

Reading for Pleasure



Reading Challenge at school to earn badges.

9 books – Bronze Award
18 books – Silver Award
27 books – Gold Award

Read the books and complete book reviews!

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Reflection & Questions

- What's one idea you'll try at home this week?

- Q&A Time

Please complete the feedback survey.

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