

## Difficulty with Fine motor skills

These are the small movements you do with your fingers. Examples of fine motor skills include using a pencil, holding a knife and fork, tying your shoelaces or doing zips and buttons.

## Handwriting

### Why is it difficult?

- ☐☐ **Poor posture** e.g. difficulty holding body upright while writing.
- ☐☐ **Poor motor planning** e.g. to make all the letters the same size.
- ☐☐ **Fine motor skills** e.g. to move the pen in a controlled way.
- ☐☐ **Weak shoulder stability** e.g. to hold the arm and hand in a steady position.
- ☐☐ **Motor memory** e.g. to remember what movements make a letter.
- ☐☐ **Complex** Handwriting draws on all these skills at once.
- ☐☐ **Ideation** It may take so much of a child's effort to cope with the physical requirements of writing that they lose their train of thought.

### Helping your child with handwriting

- ☐☐ **The pencil** Thicker pencils and pencil grips are easier to hold. Pencils with soft leads are easier to move. Ask the child about the type of pencil they prefer.
- ☐☐ **The paper** Tape or clip the paper to the desk, or use a non-slip mat under the copybook to stop it slipping.
- ☐☐ **Grasp** This should only become a concern if it affects the writing or causes pain. A correct grasp uses the thumb, index and middle finger to support the pencil.

### Here are some of the common problems and solutions you may wish to try

- Weak grasp. Use large pencils
- Grasp too tight, thumb tucked under or over index finger. Use Stetro or other pencil grips to position fingers and open up grasp.
- Presses too hard. Practice with a towel under the page
- Presses too lightly. Use carbon paper
- Holds pencil straight up. Wrap an elastic band around wrist and the end of the pencil.
- Moves whole arm when writing. Practice while lying on stomach

### ☐☐ **Seating**

- Correct position. Sitting back in the chair with hips, knees and ankles at 90 degrees.
- Use cushions and footrests to get the right height.
- Try a slope desk to aid in positioning and make copying from the board easier. (A lever arch folder makes a good slope)

### ☐☐ **Other considerations**

- Focus on the content rather than appearance of the writing.
- Allow extra time.
- Allow your child to stop when they are tired.
- Encourage older children to do rough drafts to organise their work.
- Encourage your child to develop **typing skills** so that this can be alternative later on if required.