# Monitoring and assessment

Students will demonstrate a range of behaviours, attitudes and skills depending on the complexity of the writing task and the degree of support provided. To identify starting points for specific teaching and to monitor progress, teachers should assess students’ handwriting in terms of the following qualities:

* legibility
* aesthetic appeal
* speed and fluency.

These can be assessed both formally – approximately every eight to ten weeks depending on the needs of the students – and informally, on an ongoing basis.

**Legibility**

Teachers should assess the five main components of legibility: formation, spacing, shape, size and slope.

Teachers will need to be aware of possible disparities between the development of some students’ handwriting skills and their ability to compose a text.

**Quality of letter formation**

* How well are the letters formed? Examine:
* The starting position
* The direction of movement
* the completion of letters as well as the joins where appropriate.

Be aware that starting positions and direction of movement may be different for left-handers for some letters.

**Consistency of spacing**

* Are the words spaced evenly or are they over-spaced or too compacted?
* Is the spacing between letters consistent and appropriate?

**Consistency of shape**

* Are similarly formed letters and letter families consistent in shape – particularly on the bodies of letters?

**Consistency of size**

* Are the letters – particularly the bodies of letters – consistent in size?

**Consistency of slope**

* Is there uniformity in the slope of the writing?
* Are letters upright or sloping 10-20 degrees to the right?

**Aesthetic appeal**

The aesthetic appeal of handwriting is largely determined by its *legibility*.

Can it be read easily and quickly?

Is it attractive and pleasing to view?

Teachers can also look at *letter structure and quality*:

* How consistent is the balance between the ascender (head) and the descender (tail)?



* Has the writing been formed using appropriate pen pressure?



* Is there excessive rotating in letter forms, joining and looping?

Presentation and format also contribute to the attractiveness of the writing:

* Where appropriate, is the student using conventions such as ruling margins, using clear headings, dating work and using available space on the page to advantage?

**Pencil grasp**

Are students demonstrating one of the mature pencil grasps? Are they able to maintain their pencil grasp or does it change after they have been writing for a length of time appropriate for their age?

**Automaticity and pace**

Fluent writers who have acquired the necessary skills and are developing an automatic handwriting style can be assessed in terms of the speed of their handwriting in an authentic context. Students could be given a few minutes to familiarise themselves with some information they need to write, say a message for their parents, and then given a few minutes to write it. This could take place on a regular basis – for example, monthly.

**Posture**

After checking that the furniture is the correct size for a student, note whether or not the student is sitting in a correct way as they write. This includes having their feet flat of the floor and supporting the page with the hand not used for writing. They should not be lying on the table as they write. Can they maintain correct sitting for a reasonable length of time? If they cannot, they may have poor core strength. This can affect their ability to write for the amount of time necessary to complete classwork.