JOIN THE JOINING DEBATE
Sassoon starts us off

Rosemary Sassoon is ideally placed and well qualified to start a discussion on the question of how and when we should teach joining in our schools today. She is a leading expert in the field. Her PhD was entitled “Joins in Children’s Handwriting: The Effects of Models and Teaching Methods” (Sassoon, 1988). From the 1980’s to the present day Rosemary has made an invaluable contribution to our understanding of how children learn to write as well as how we help those with handwriting difficulties across the age span.

In view of the depth and breadth of her knowledge Rosemary is uniquely qualified to offer advice on issues relating to handwriting. In contrast to many educational experts in the field, Rosemary began her career in the arts world, working in textiles, lettering and calligraphy. With this background she always maintained that the acquisition of movement patterns which underpin our system of letter formation is absolutely essential as a basis for learning handwriting – a point which she develops in three consecutive volumes – “The Practical Guide to Children’s Handwriting” (1983), “Handwriting – the way to teach it” (1990) and “Handwriting – a new perspective” (1990). No primary school should be without at least one of these books.

Over the years, Rosemary has maintained an interest in lettering, calligraphy and typography alongside her work on handwriting and handwriting difficulties. She has published work on children’s pen holds, on writer’s cramp, on handwriting difficulties, in both children and adults as well as producing a typography which aims to link reading and writing together for young children. After forty plus years in the field, the present article argues against the current practice of teaching fully joined-up handwriting from the start. She begins her article on the grounds of efficiency.

Sheila Henderson