



Reception Writing and transcription progression framework

This framework recognises that writing development is a gradual process that begins with physical development and play, progresses through meaningful mark-making, and culminates in independent writing for purpose. Every child will move through these stages at their own pace, and our role is to provide rich opportunities, model purposeful writing, and celebrate every step of their journey.

Key Principles

1. Physical Development Comes First

Children develop their gross motor skills (large muscles) before fine motor skills (small muscles). Core strength, shoulder stability, and arm control must be established before expecting controlled pencil grip.

2. Writing Through Play

Meaningful mark-making opportunities should be embedded throughout continuous provision.

3. Adults Model Purposes for Writing

Children need to see adults writing for real purposes - making lists, writing notes, creating signs, recording observations.

4. Talk Before Writing

Oracy and language development is the foundation for all writing. Children need rich vocabulary and the ability to articulate their thoughts before committing them to paper.

5. Grip Development is Gradual

Pencil grip evolves naturally through a progression of grips as hand muscles strengthen and coordination improves.

Pencil Grip Continuum



This framework provides a structured yet flexible approach to developing writing skills in reception, ensuring children build strong foundations whilst maintaining engagement and enjoyment in their learning journey

Assessment and Tracking

Fine Motor Skills:

- Staff observe during continuous provision noting strengths and areas of development
- Staff track engagement with fine motor challenges, children are expected to engage with a weekly challenge and complete a daily marking/writing task (tracked through washing line).
- Staff track pencil grip development from baseline and record on termly published writing piece.
- Staff monitor stamina during writing activities.

Letter Formation:

- Staff play close attention to corrections and model formation with ULS rhymes during phonics

- Staff make observations during handwriting sessions and writing focus and support correct formation

Intervention

For children requiring additional support staff plan :

- Additional Dough Disco sessions
- Small group fine motor provision
- Small group letter formation practice
- Pencil grip support and resources
- Referral to occupational therapy if needed

In Reception children have opportunities for fine motor development across continuous provision;

Construction Area

- Building with different sized blocks requiring pincer grip
- Using tools like screwdrivers in construction sets
- Manipulating connecting toys (Duplo, Mobilo)

Creative Area

- Tearing and scrunching paper for collage
- Using paintbrushes of varying sizes
- Exploring different mark-making tools (chunky crayons, chalks, pastels)
- Cutting with scissors

Dough Area

- Rolling, squeezing and pinching playdough
- Using tools with playdough (cutters, rolling pins, scissors)
- Creating patterns and marks in playdough
- Strengthening hand muscles through manipulation

Small World Play

- Manipulating small figures and vehicles
- Picking up and placing small objects

Sand and Water

- Pouring and scooping with different sized containers
- Using pipettes and droppers

- Making marks in sand
- Using tools requiring wrist rotation

Children also have opportunities for gross motor play outdoors supporting shoulder development, core strength such as opportunities to climb and reach, dig on a large scale and throw and catch. Children have weekly 'squiggle' sessions and PE to develop motor movements and coordination.

The development and delivery of handwriting sessions in Reception is well planned showing gradual progress as fine skill and strength develops, also following the sequence of typical movement development in the hand muscles and wrist.

Autumn 1 – Building Fine & Gross Motor Strength	Autumn 2 – Pre-Writing Patterns & Controlled Mark-Making	Spring 1 – Introducing Letter Formation (Long Ladder Family)	Spring 2 – Letter Formation (One-Armed Robot Family)	Summer 1 – Letter Formation (Curly Caterpillar Family)	Summer 2 – Letter Formation (Zig-Zag Monster Family & Consolidation)
Focus: Core strength, shoulder stability, hand/finger strength, bilateral coordination. • Dough Disco (hand/finger strengthening). • Daily Threading & bead activities to refine pincer grip. • Squiggle While You Wiggle: large arm movements to music using	Focus: Transition from gross motor to controlled fine motor. • Continue Dough Disco and Squiggle While You Wiggle sessions. • Introduce pre-writing patterns: straight lines,	Focus: Consolidate and expand formation practice. Letter Family 2: Long Ladder (l, t, i, u, j, y). Same sequence: gross motor warm-up →	Focus: Fluency, confidence, size and orientation. Letter Family 3: One-Armed Robots (r, n, m, h, b, k, p). • Increased emphasis on size, orientation, and spacing. • Encourage independence in writing words and	Focus: Starting systematic handwriting using letter families. Lesson sequence: gross motor warm-up → model → practise. Letter Family 1: Curly Caterpillars (c, a, o, d, g, q, s, e, f) • Daily short sessions in	Focus: Completing letter families, embedding fluency, preparing for Year 1. Letter Family 4: Zig-Zag Monsters (v, w, x, z). • Consolidation of all families through games, challenges, and

scarves, ribbons, or large markers on flipchart paper. Use vertical surfaces large-scale drawing/painting with water, chalk, and paintbrushes. letter formation to happen in phonics session for phoneme grapheme correspondence	zigzags, circles, curves, waves. - Sensory writing (sand, shaving foam, rice trays). - Playdough letter impressions (using cutters or stampers). - Threading with smaller beads, weaving, peg boards. - Begin encouraging correct pencil/pen grip.	model → practise. Embed letters in meaningful contexts (name writing, captions, labels). Daily fine motor stations remain available (dough, threading, tweezers).	simple sentences. Introduce pencil control activities (mazes, dot-to-dots, tracing).	(phonics and modelled for writing table): model correct formation with large air writing → whiteboards → paper. - Reinforce through multisensory practice (sand, paintbrushes, rainbow writing). - Continue fine motor activities alongside. Link to phonics sessions for consistency	independent writing. - Handwriting focus during morning routines. - Provide opportunities for writing in meaningful contexts.
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End of Reception Expectations
Children ready for year one will:

Physical Development - Fine Motor Skills ELG

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Hold a pencil effectively in preparation for fluent writing, using the tripod grip in most cases
- Use a range of small tools, including scissors, paintbrushes and cutlery
- Begin to show accuracy and care when drawing

Literacy - Writing ELG

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Write recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed
- Spell words by identifying sounds in them and representing the sounds with a letter or letters
- Write simple phrases and sentences that can be read by others

Practical Implementation tips for handwriting and transcription

1. **Little and often:** Daily fine motor activities are more effective than weekly sessions
2. **Purposeful writing:** Children need meaningful reasons to write
3. **Correct formation from the start: 'Practice makes permanent'** It's harder to correct poor habits later
4. **Individual progression:** Children develop at different rates
5. **Multi-sensory approach:** Use various methods to teach letter formation
6. **Celebrate progress:** Acknowledge all improvements, however small
7. **Home-school links:** Share strategies with parents for home practice