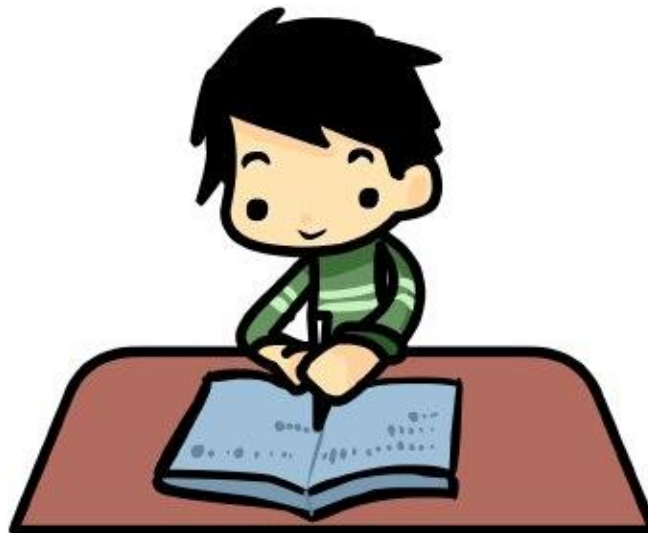




St Francis CE Primary School Ducklings Nursery Class

Your child's journey to
becoming a writer



Mark Making



Adults role:

Children must see adults writing, we should all model good practice for our children.

We should offer opportunities to write wherever possible, but understand that writing begins by making marks and not producing letters.

Mark making for children should be about the enjoyment of creating, doing and achieving.

Before any child is ready to make marks confidently they need many opportunities to refine both their **gross and fine motor skills** through movement.



Motor Skills

At nursery we talk a great deal about developing your child's motor skills – these are the skills a child needs to manipulate and control a range of tools and materials.

A **motor skill** is simply an action that involves using your muscles.

Fine motor skills are the small precise thumb, finger, hand and wrist movements used in co-ordination with the eyes.

Fine motor skills are used when:

Grasping – using crayons, pencils, paintbrushes, glue sticks, blocks etc.

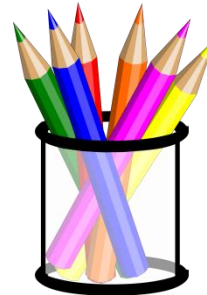
Manipulating – plasticine, playdough, clay, scissors etc.

Developing hand and eye coordination – mark making, writing, cutting, threading, moving a computer cursor, throwing and catching etc.

Children need to have developed the necessary strength and dexterity in their hands and fingers before being asked to manipulate a pencil on paper.

The more children use their hands the finer these movements become.

We try and support this through our 'Funky Fingers' activities.



Motor Skills

Gross **motor skills** are larger movements made with arms, legs, feet, or your entire body. Usually large muscles develop before smaller ones, so gross motor skills can be seen as the foundation for developing skills in other areas such as fine motor skills.

Gross motor skills include:

Balance, body awareness, major muscle coordination, crossing the mid line, spatial awareness and laterality (awareness and use of both sides of their bodies and a dominance of one hand, foot or eye in some activities.)

Walking

Tiptoeing

Crawling

Kicking

Vacuuuming

Building with large bricks or crates and planks

Catching

Hopping

Skipping

Scooting

Sweeping

Hopping

Striding

Running

Pedalling tricycle

Digging

Jumping

Stamping

Climbing Throwing



What does a FINE MOTOR skill look like?

Playdough – rolling, squeezing, pinching, twisting etc.



Threading beads or pasta



Cutting with scissors



Manipulating tweezers



Finger painting

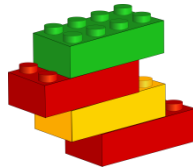
Cotton Bud Painting



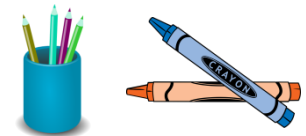
Sticking/gluing



Lego and small construction



Using writing tools



Fine motor skills are the small precise thumb, finger, hand and wrist movements used in co-ordination with the eyes. Children need to develop strong muscles and good levels of control of their muscles in order to become good writers. The above activities at home and at nursery will help them gain the strength and control and the ability to hold and manipulate mark-making tools.



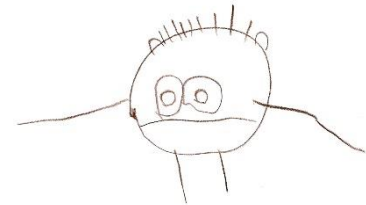
Mark Making



Mark making isn't just about pencils or paint on paper, you can make a mark with any part of your body on any type of surface. You can use kitchen implements, tools, materials, toys.....the list is as long as your imagination!

Mark making should be fun!

The journey towards writing begins in making marks and early marks happen when fingers make patterns in food on high chair trays! Mark making skills develop rapidly as children explore materials and learn that they can make marks.



The early stages of writing is called mark making. These attempts should be praised and encouraged and not referred to as just scribbling.

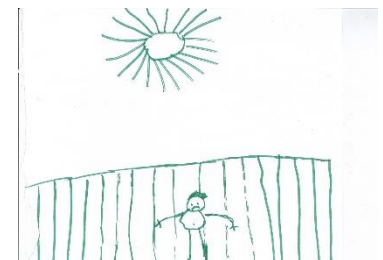
Confident mark makers can become confident writers.

We want all children to feel confident to pick up a writing tool:

pen, pencil, chalk, paint, crayon, pastels and draw lines, circles, patterns, squiggles, dots etc.



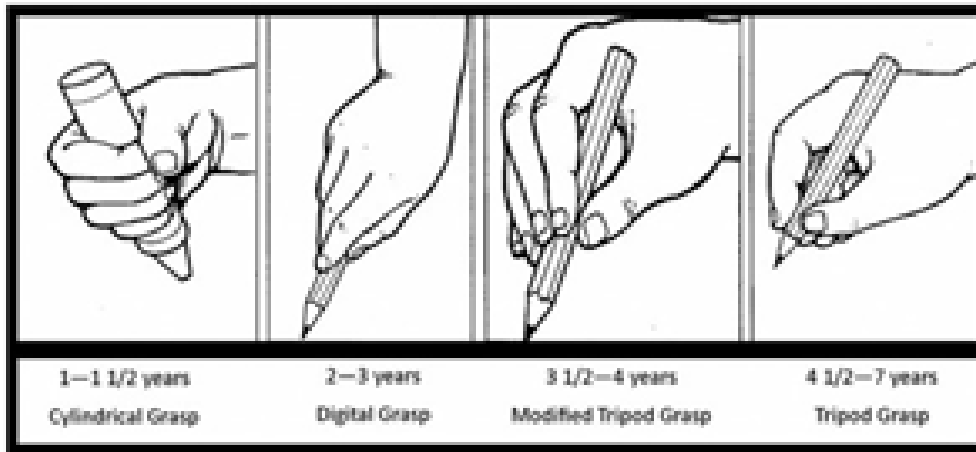
Learning to create the letter shapes of the child's name or the letters of the alphabet takes time. A child can not really achieve this until they have had plenty of opportunities at making marks at home and at nursery.



How should my child hold their pens or pencils?

We monitor each child's pencil grip in nursery.

Children often develop through the stages shown below:



Some children hold their pencil in their right hand.



Some children hold their pencil in their left hand.

Some children swap the pencil from right hand to left hand and take longer to settle on a dominant hand.

How can you help your child to become a writer?

Here are some ideas that you can try with your child:

Early stages:

- Digging in the mud or sand pit.
- Hanging out the washing.
- 'Painting' outdoor surfaces with water and a large brush .
- Picking up grains of rice with fingers or large plastic tweezers, which all help develop the grip needed for writing.
- Helping them to make marks on paper with their fingers, brushes, crayons, pencils, pens etc.



Later stages:

- Helping them to write labels, birthday cards and invitations
- Modelling different forms of writing e.g. a shopping list or a notice
- Modelling the correct letter formation and upper/lower case- e.g. names Sarah (Capital letter at the beginning followed by smaller letters)
- Talking with your child and writing down what they say.
- Make a scrapbook, add labels, captions or speech bubbles
- Have fun!!



Mark making and writing

Becoming a writer requires children to develop many different skills; initially the Prime Areas in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS):

Personal, social and emotional development - children need to draw on their experiences from home and nursery and apply these skills so that they have the self confidence to 'have a go.' They will develop persistence and the ability to recognise their own abilities as writers.

Communication and Language - from a young age children begin to listen to stories and familiar sounds, they listen to and sing songs and rhymes, they recognise patterns in words and recall stories using story language.

Physical development – using their gross motor and fine motor skills to manipulate mark making tools successfully.

The Characteristics of Effective Learning and Teaching

Playing and exploring

Engagement:

- Finding out and exploring
- Playing with what they know
- Being willing to 'have a go'



Active Learning

Motivation:

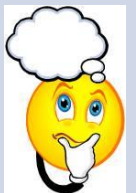
- Being involved and concentrating
- Keeping trying
- Enjoying achieving what they set out to do



Creating and thinking critically

Thinking:

- Having their own ideas
- Making links
- Choosing ways to do things



Links to the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum

In nursery we observe children's physical development:

- Shows control in holding and using jugs to pour, hammers, books and mark making tools.
- Is beginning to use three fingers (tripod grip) to hold writing tools
- Imitates drawing simple shapes such as circles and lines.
- May be beginning to show preference for dominant hand.
- Holds pencil between thumb and two fingers, no longer using whole-hand grasp.
- Holds pencil near point between first two fingers and thumb and uses it with good control.
- Can copy some letters, e.g. letters from their name.
- Shows a preference for a dominant hand.
- Begins to use anticlockwise movement and retrace vertical lines.
- Begins to form recognisable letters.
- Uses a pencil and holds it effectively to form recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed.

In nursery we observe children's mark making/writing skills:

- Distinguishes between the different marks they make.
- Sometimes gives meaning to marks as they draw and paint.
- Ascribes meanings to marks that they see in different places.
- Gives meaning to marks they make as they draw, write and paint.
- Uses some clearly identifiable letters to communicate meaning, representing some sounds correctly and in sequence.
- Writes own name and other things such as labels and captions.
- Attempts to write short sentences in meaningful contexts.

By carefully observing each child as they make marks and hold mark making tools, we can then support each child on their individual journey to becoming a writer.