



St Francis CE Primary School

Early Years Foundation Stage
Reception Class



Your child's continued journey
towards being a writer.

Mark Making

Adults role:

It is important that children regularly see adults modelling mark making and writing so that they can see the link between spoken and written language.

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

Continuing on from good nursery practice, in reception we continue to talk 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.

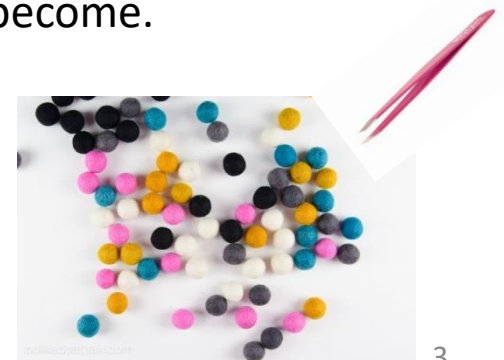
Manipulating – plasticine, playdough, clay, scissors etc.

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	Catching	Hopping	Jumping	Throwing
Tiptoeing	Hopping	Striding	Stamping	Kicking
Crawling	Skiping	Running	Climbing	
Scooting	Pedalling tricycle			
Vacuuming	Sweeping	Digging		
Building with large bricks or crates and planks				



Fine motor skills

Playdough – rolling, squeezing, pinching, twisting etc.



Threading beads or pasta



Cutting with scissors



Manipulating tweezers



Finger painting

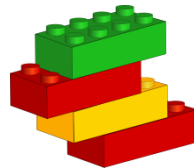
Cotton Bud Painting



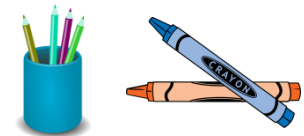
Sticking/gluing



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.

Activities where children use both sides of the body



- Making patterns in gloop, shaving foam, custard, paint on the table etc.
- Ribbon/scarf/streamer dancing
- Holding objects in each hand and moving arms up and down from side to side e.g. flags, instruments, hoops etc.
- Music and dancing to develop rhythm and flow in their movements.
- Dressing up, getting dressed and un-dressed.
- Moving prams, wheelbarrows, trolleys, carts, toy lawn mowers, bikes, scooters etc.
- Playing musical instruments

Writing

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

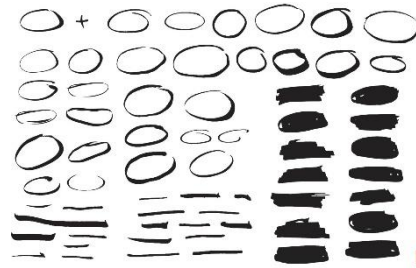
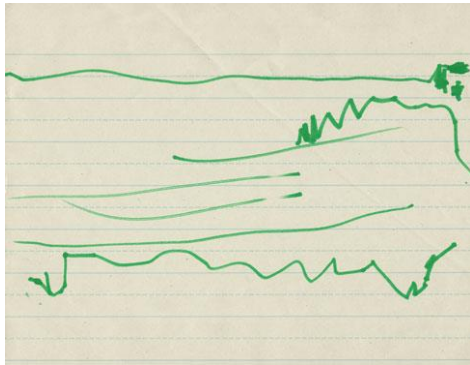
- **Personal, social and emotional development** - children need to draw on their experiences from home and nursery and apply these skills so that they have the self confidence to 'have a go.' They will develop persistence and the ability to recognise their own abilities as writers.
- **Communication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

Writing development



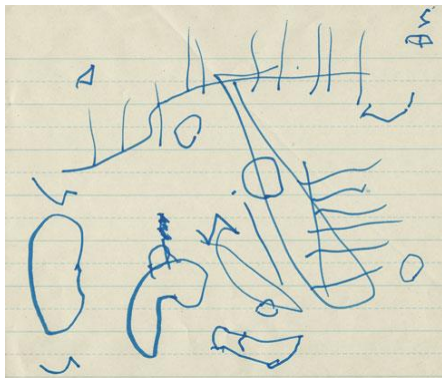
Scribbles:

These wonderful marks mean something to the child that has produced them. We encourage and support children to hold their mark making tools (chalks, pastels, pens, pencils, crayons, paint brushes etc.) correctly. We play alongside the child modelling a good grip and talking about what the scribbles/marks mean.



Lines, circles and patterns:

Children enjoying drawing lines, circles and creating patterns.



Letter shapes:

Children start to show an interest in letter shapes and attempting to represent some of the letters they know. They are beginning to display an understanding that their marks convey meaning. You may be asked by your child “What does this say?” Discuss what you can see and ask them to tell you about their marks.

Writing development



Letters and name writing:

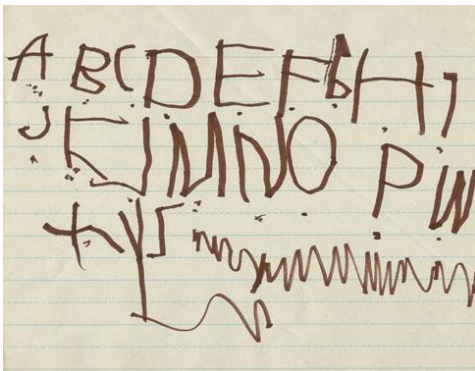
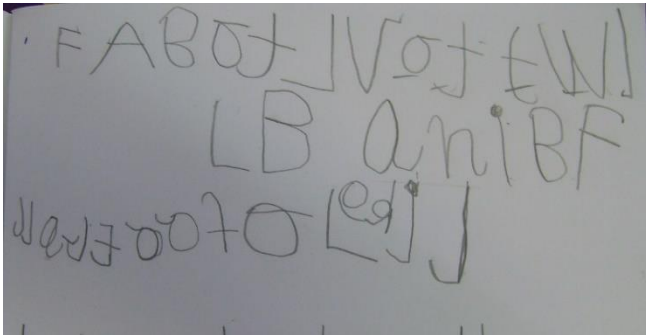
Your child will begin to use random letters, usually from their name when they write. Letters are usually in strings with no spaces.

Children's earliest attempts at writing letters often involve their name or their age, as these are of particular interest to them. This is often the first prompt for conversations about the link between letters (graphemes) and the sounds they make (phonemes).

Children should be offered opportunities to write their names in a variety of different contexts such as:

- List for taking turns
- Labels for models
- On cards and invitations

You can also support your child at this stage by modelling how to form different letters.

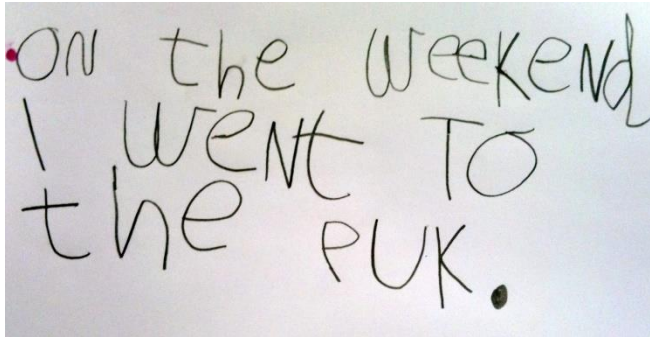


Capital letters:

We do not teach children to write in capital letters. Children should write their name in lower case, with a capital letter for the initial letter of their name only. E.g. Sarah not SARAH.

Children will also be encouraged to use a capital letter at the start of a sentence. E.g. I saw a cat.

Writing development



Conventional Words:

Children begin by breaking their string of letters into 'words.' As their understanding of 'Phonics' grows, they will start writing initial sounds. (The first sound they hear in a word.)

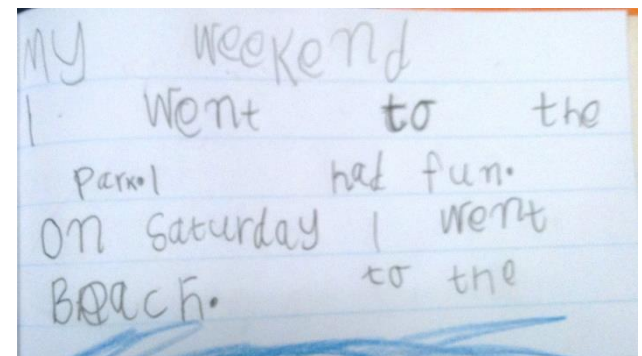
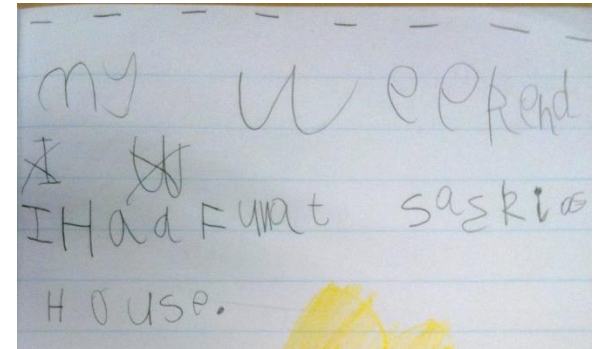
Then they will start to write the final sound of a word. (The last sound they hear in a word.)

Then finally they will write the medial/middle sound in the word.

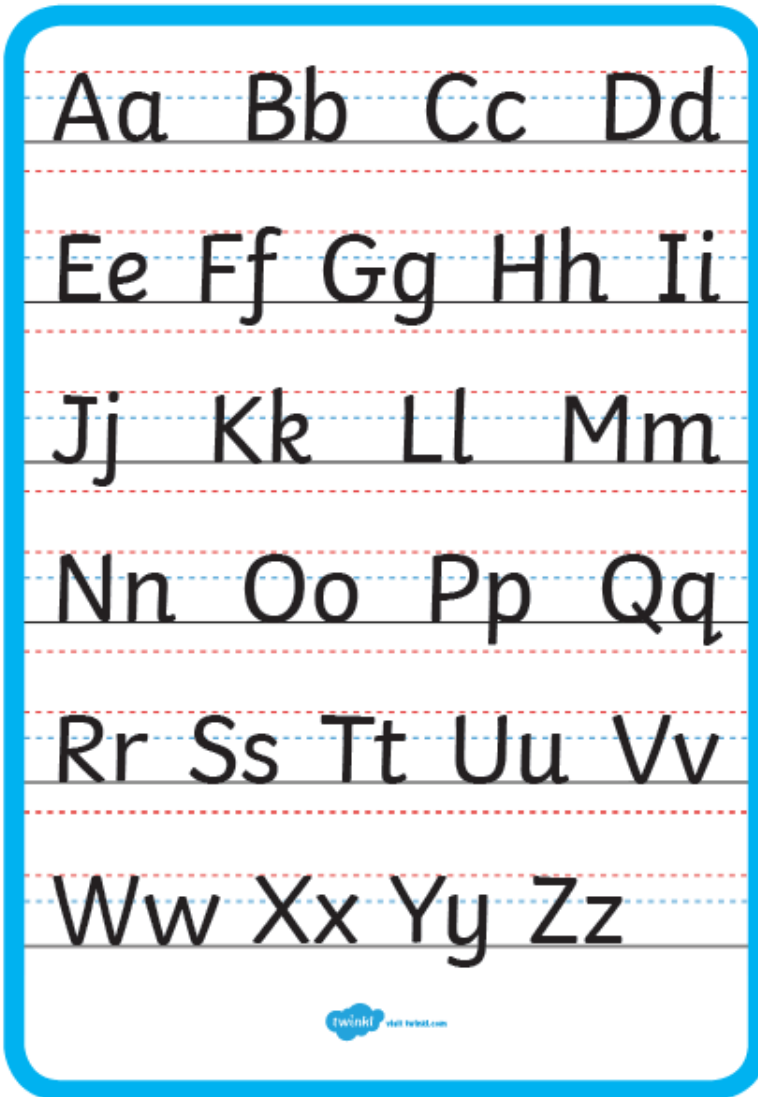
At this point the child has developed initial-medial-final sound correspondence!

You may see some known **tricky words** and **high frequency words**.

You may also see some known sight words, especially linked to their family and friends.



Letter formation at St Francis CE Primary School



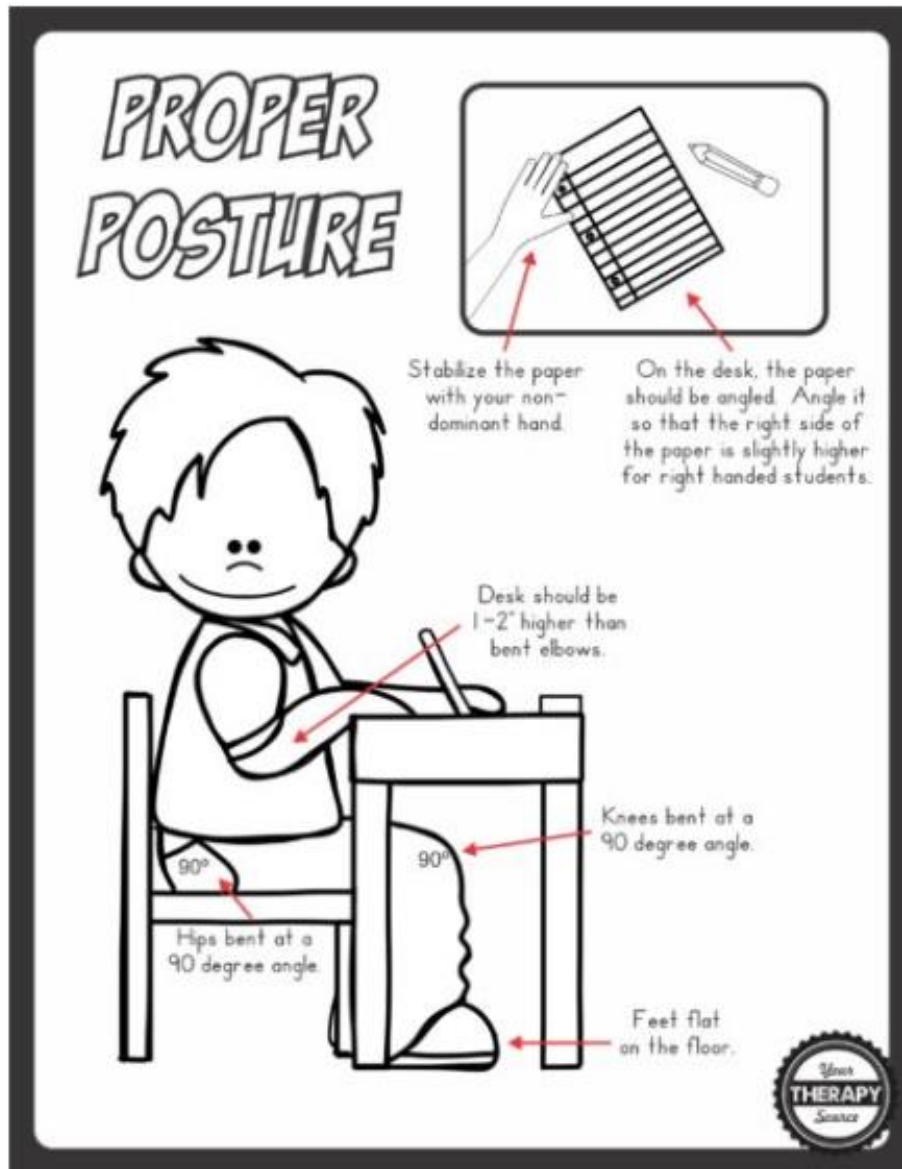
Lower case letters (little letters)

We encourage children to create a little flick as they lead out of the letter which helps prepare them for joined up writing in the future.

Upper case letters (Capital/big letters)

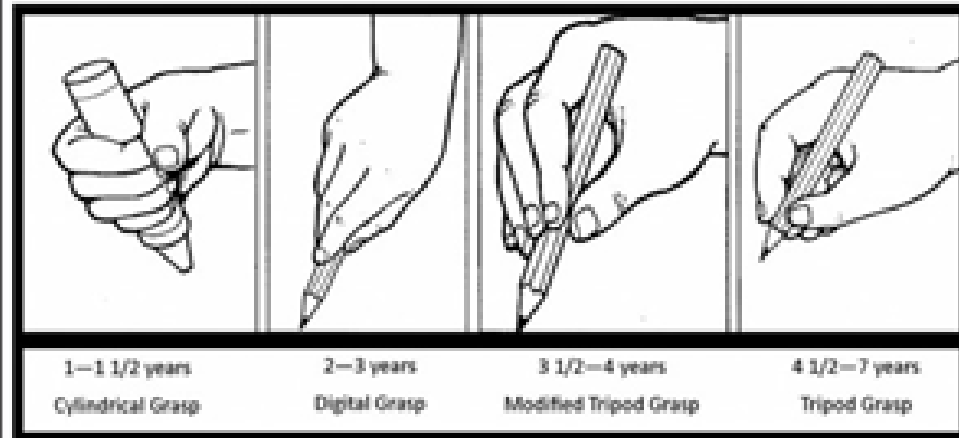
We use upper case letters at the start of your child's name, for days of the week, place names and at the beginning of a sentence.

How should my child hold their pens or pencils?



We monitor each child's pencil grip throughout reception.

Children often develop through the stages shown below:



Proper posture:

Left handed children should angle their paper so that the left side of the paper is slightly higher.



What do we do to support children's mark making and writing in the Foundation Stage?

Children learn through their environment, engaging with others, playing and exploring, active learning and creating and thinking critically. Children in their early years learn best through play.

- Providing opportunities for children to develop their fine and gross motor skills.
- Communication Friendly Spaces - develop language in a child friendly space.
- Observing adults and other children writing (models of writers).
- Observing and noticing print in their environment (examples of writing).
- Opportunities for mark making in all aspects of their learning, inside and outside.
- Sending and receiving messages – cards, letters, postcards, notes (recognising the purposes of writing as sending a message).
- Observing writing in books and other written material (seeing the difference between pictures and print).
- Experimenting with mark making and writing themselves ('having a go' and seeing themselves as writers).



How can you help your child to become a writer?

Children need opportunities and encouragement to experiment with different materials to become confident mark makers. Providing open spaces, time and freedom to explore a variety of resources will help children to develop their coordination, motor skills and positive dispositions for mark making.

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

- Provide a range of mark making materials, such as pens, pencils, chalks, crayons etc of varying thicknesses, paint, different types of paper (lined/plain, note books, diaries), clipboards, blackboards or whiteboards.
- Mark making in different media using fingers, paintbrushes and other tools, such as sand, playdough, gloop, shaving foam or slime.
- Let your child see you writing and write things together such as shopping lists, write labels, birthday cards and invitations.
- Value every mark your child makes. Talk about them and celebrate what they have created. Stick it up on the wall, on the fridge or in your child's bedroom.
- Practice making the marks needed for letter formation. These include circles, crosses, dots, loops, spirals, humps, lines – diagonal, vertical, horizontal and zig zag.
- When your child is ready, work on letter formation, begin with lower case letters (apart from the initial letter). It is very hard to help a child who is writing their name and letters in capital letters switch to lower case letters.
- Focus on letter formation by modelling it yourself.
- Play games together to develop motor control so that your child can comfortably hold a writing tool for a period of time.



How can you help your child to become a writer?

Ideas to develop motor skills at home:

- Go outside, climb trees, run around, ride a bike or scooter, try roller skating, play ball games like catch.
- Dance! Use material like scarves or ribbons to make shapes in the air. Try a scarf in each hand.
- Water play – pouring, filling and emptying containers.
- Helping to wash the car, squeezing out wet sponges.
- ‘Painting’ outdoor surfaces with water and a large brush. Paint on horizontal or vertical surfaces.
- Finger painting, printing with sponges or found objects.
- Chalking on the floor outside or on the walls.
- Digging in the mud or sand pit.
- Using pegs to help hang out the washing or to pick up small things like pom poms.
- Picking up grains of rice with fingers or large blunt tweezers, which all help develop the grip needed for writing.
- Sewing, weaving or finger knitting.
- Developing scissor skills – cutting along lines or cutting out shapes.
- Threading activities using beads or pasta threaded on to string or pipe cleaners.
- Play games like Kerplunk, Tiddlywinks, Buckaroo, Operation which involve delicate fine motor skills.
- Building with construction kits, bricks, lego, duplo, jenga sets etc.
- Playing with and manipulating different types of dough – squeezing, rolling, pinching, twisting.



Have fun!

Remember:

If your child can't say it, then it will be very hard for them to write it!



The basis of good writing is good talk.

Ongoing rich play experiences are the foundation for good writing. If a child has good experience of playing with stories they will be able to tell stories. If they can play and tell stories they will be better equipped to write stories and they will be more likely to do so with enthusiasm, commitment and enjoyment. They will feel more confident and they will have a sense of ownership and importance of the task.

Provide opportunities for your child to hear stories every day (tell stories, listen to stories on the TV, on YouTube,) act out stories and make funny changes to the stories. Having a rich knowledge of stories, rhymes, songs and poems broadens your child's vocabulary. When they are ready to write they will have a bank of ideas ready to use, a good range of vocabulary and the idea of story language.

Talk to your child at home, at the shops, on journeys, on walks etc.

Go to different places and see things with your child, then talk about what has been seen, heard, smelled, tasted and touched.

Read aloud anything you have written and ask your children their opinion of what you've said.

Talk through your child's ideas with them; help them discover what they want to say and write.