Early Years Writing Progression Document

Blessed Edward Bamber Catholic Multi Academy Trust

VERSION: 1

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Blessed Edward Bamber
Catholic Multi Academy Trust

Version Control

Date of last review	24th November 2025
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Review period	1 year
Policy Status	Trust Wide
Owner	Emma Hornby (BEBCMAT Writing Lead) on behalf of the Working Party who created this
Approver	Amanda Stringer
Version	1

Previous versions

Version	Author	Date	Changes

PLEASE NOTE:

WHERE THIS POLICY REFERS TO 'HEADTEACHER' THIS INCLUDES EXECUTIVE HEADTEACHERS AND INTERIM/ACTING HEADTEACHERS.

This is a Trust-Wide Policy which applies to all academies within the Trust

Revelation 21:5

And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true."

Overview: BEBCMAT Early Years Writing Progression Document

The BEBCMAT Early Years Writing Progression document is a collaborative initiative developed by multiple schools within the Blessed Edward Bamber Catholic Multi Academy Trust (BEBCMAT). Its primary aim is to ensure that the teaching and learning of early writing across the Trust is both consistent and progressive, supporting all children from Nursery through to Year 2.

Purpose and Rationale

This document was created in response to the recognised need for a clear, Trust-wide pathway that guides the development of early writing skills. The working party, comprising representatives from several BEBCMAT schools, drew on a range of research, including guidance from the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), and examples from other local authorities, to shape a progression model that is both evidence-informed and tailored to the needs of BEBCMAT pupils.

The progression document is designed to:

- Provide a structured, step-by-step framework for developing children's writing from the earliest mark-making to more complex sentence construction.
- Ensure that all staff, regardless of setting, have a shared understanding of the expectations and developmental milestones in early writing.
- Embed the Trust's values of "Belong, Engage, Become" by fostering a sense of community, high expectations, and inclusive practice across all schools.

Collaborative Development

The document's development involved a working party of early years and English leads from across the Trust, including St John Vianney, St Wulstan's, St Kentigern's and St Cuthbert's. Regular meetings were held to share best practice, review research, and agree on the progression steps and supporting materials. The process included:

- Reviewing and adapting existing progression models (such as those from Essex and Oldfield Brow).

- Incorporating practical examples, including children's writing samples, guidance on letter formation, and strategies for supporting children with SEND.
- Ensuring the inclusion of physical development aspects (e.g., pencil grip, fine and gross motor skills) as foundational to writing success.

Key Features

- **Progression Pathway:** Maps out the journey from early mark-making in Nursery to achieving the Early Learning Goals and beyond, with clear milestones and expectations.
- **Practical Guidance:** Includes advice on teaching letter formation, supporting left-handed writers, and embedding writing across the curriculum and in outdoor environments.
- **SEND and Inclusion:** Provides explicit strategies for supporting children with additional needs, ensuring that all pupils can access and progress in writing.
- **Research-Informed:** Draws on the latest evidence and national guidance, ensuring that the approach is both robust and up to date.
- **Writing framework:** The document aligns with the new DFE Writing Framework document.

Implementation and Impact

The document is intended as a practical guide for teachers and leaders, supporting planning, assessment, and professional development. It is accompanied by training and ongoing support through the English Hub and Trust networks. The ultimate goal is to raise standards in early writing, close attainment gaps, and ensure that every child in BEBCMAT schools has the strongest possible start to their writing journey.

Contents

1. **The Physicality of Writing**
    - Understanding the role of physical development in early writing
    - Fine and gross motor skills
2. **Development of Pencil Grip**
    - Stages of pencil grip development
    - Practical strategies for supporting correct grip
3. **Pre-Writing Skills and Assessment**
    - Early mark-making and foundational skills
    - Assessing readiness for writing
4. **Developmental Progression Model**
    - Step-by-step framework from Nursery to Year 2
    - Milestones and expectations
5. **Examples of Writing in Provision**
    - Practical examples from classroom environments
    - Embedding writing across the curriculum and outdoors
6. **Early Learning Goals (ELG) Writing Examples**
    - Annotated samples demonstrating expected standards
7. **Adaptive Teaching Resources for Writing**
    - Strategies and resources for SEND and inclusion
    - Differentiation and scaffolding
    - Guidance for supporting left-handed writers

Appendices

- **Appendix 1: Links for Parents**
  - Useful websites and resources to support writing at home

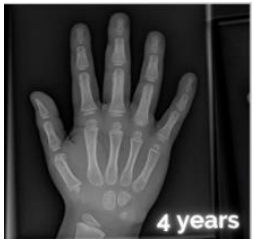
- **Appendix 2: References and Helpful Resources**
  - Research, guidance documents, and further reading

Early Writing - ***The Physicality of Writing*** - *Hand Development*

Why we shouldn't push handwriting too early!

X-ray images of developing hands clearly show the gradual **ossification** of bones and the formation of joints. Forcing a young child to write before their hands are ready can lead to **frustration**, erode their confidence, and even cause joint strain.

It's important to allow children to engage in activities that naturally build motor skills, until their hands are physically prepared for the demands of writing.

2 Years		4 Years	
	*A **2-year-old's** hand is still soft and chubby, with bones that are mostly cartilage and joints that are delicate, making fine motor tasks like writing difficult and uncomfortable.*		*By age 4, the hand's bones are beginning to ossify, but the joints and muscles are still developing, so fine motor control is limited.*
7 Years		**10 Years**	
	*By age 7, the bones and joints are more fully developed, providing the dexterity and strength needed for writing.*		*By age 10, the hand has developed more precise motor control and strength, allowing for more complex and sustained writing tasks.*

The hands say it all!

Young children need opportunities to play, develop strength, dexterity and a forceful grip in their hands. To do this, they need to develop stability in their core, pivotal stability and other gross motor skills too!

Children's hands are not only growing in size but also changing in physicality. Children use their bodies to aid their early mark making, using a sequence of muscle movements.

- The hand of a 3-year-old has cartilage scaffolding, which is a flexible connective tissue found in the joints of the hand.
- In a 3-year-old child, the cartilage in the hand is still undergoing growth and development, this flexibility can impact the child's ability to maintain a stable grip and control over writing tools.
- Gradually over time, the cartilage becomes bone. This transformation from cartilage to bone is a natural part of **skeletal development** and growth in humans and is known as **endochondral ossification**.

Early Writing - *The Development of Pencil Grip*

From Early Grasp to Functional Grasp…

Radical Cross Palmer Grasp

0-2 years



The pencil is positioned across the palm, held with a fisted hand.

Palmer Supinate Grasp

1-2 years



The pencil is held like a dagger.

Digital Pronate Grasp

2-3 years



All fingers hold the pencil and the plam faces down towards the page.

Four Finger Grasp

3-4 years



Four fingers are held on the pencil beginning to form the arc between the thumb and index finger (web space).

Static Tripod Grasp

4-6 years



The pencil is positioned across the palm, held with a fisted hand.

Lateral Tripod Grasp

5-6 years



The index finger lies on top of the pencil with the thumb across the index finger.

Dynamic Tripod Grasp

5-7 years



This tripod grasp is held by the first 3 fingers which move independently to the 4th and 5th fingers. The web space is open and becomes circular.

Inefficient Grasps

Take note of the following grasps and correct them to help the child develop a functional grasp

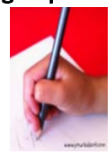
Inter-digital Brace

The pencil is held between the fingers of the hand.



Thumb Tuck grasp

The thumb is tucked under the first three fingers or wrapped around them.



Key or Lateral Pinch

Grasp This grasp has the thumb positioned across the index finger closing the web space between these fingers.



Hyperextended index finger

Tripod grasp where the index finger is extended too far at the DIP (distal interphalangeal joint) due to excessive pressure.



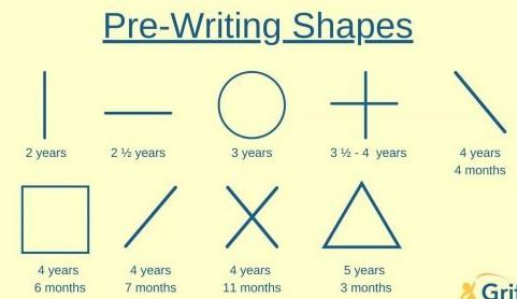
***Early* grasps are identified in the peach boxes and then developing into *functional* grasps in the green boxes.**

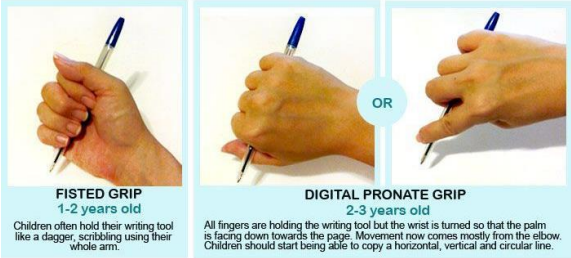
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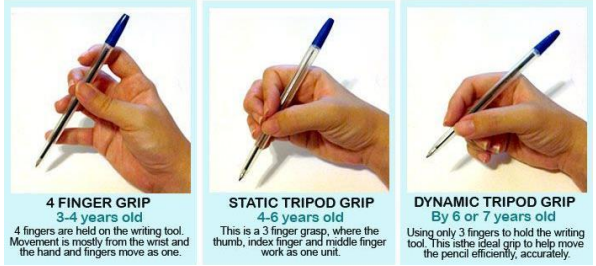
EYFS Mark-Making Baseline

Name:

BELONG, ENGAGE, BECOME







Term	I can write my name	Left / Right handed?	Which Grasp?	vertical	horizontal	circle	upright cross	backwards diagonal	square	forward diagonal	kiss cross	triangle
Autumn 1												
Autumn 2												
Spring 1												
Spring 2												
Summer 1												
Summer 2												

Developmental Progression Model for Writing

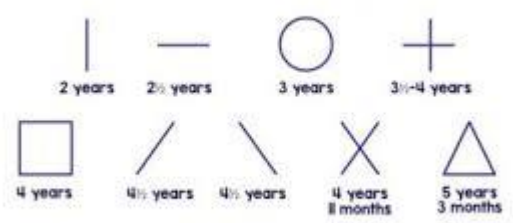
This document provides a structured framework that maps how students typically develop writing skills over time. It serves as a progression map, outlining the path from early writing behaviours to more advanced, proficient writing. This model covers development and expectations from the Early Years Foundation Stage to the start of Year 2 within Key Stage 1.

EYFS: Birth – 3 Years

Prior to entering the Autumn Term of pre-school, many children are in the early stages of mark-making and developing the foundational physical, cognitive, and communication skills needed for writing. At this stage, children explore making marks for enjoyment, using a wide range of tools and materials. They begin to build core fine and gross motor control through play and everyday experiences such as climbing, stacking, threading, and manipulating objects. Children may draw shapes and patterns and start to associate marks with meaning—laying the earliest groundwork for writing. Opportunities for talk-rich play, storytelling, singing, and rhythm are essential in developing the oral language and sequencing skills that underpin composition and sentence structure beyond EYFS.

Pre-Writing Shapes – Children have many opportunities to practise pre-writing shapes following the process of:

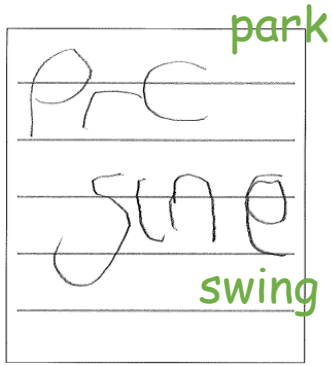
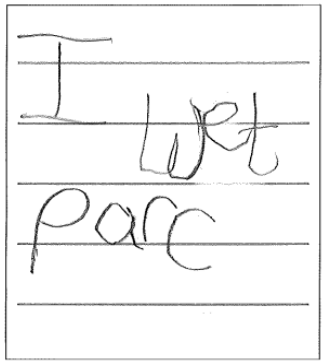
Imitation	Tracing	Copying
Adult to draw shape. Child copy 	Child draws over shape. 	Child given a shape to copy. 



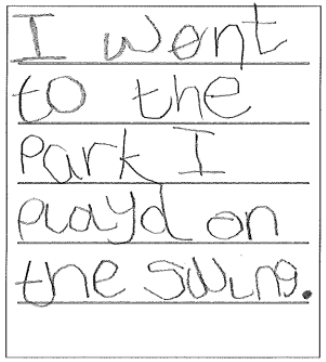
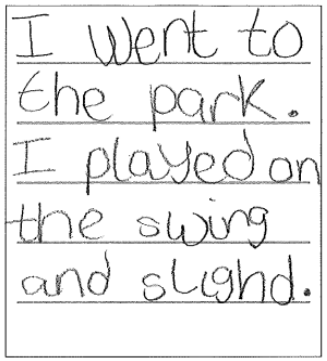
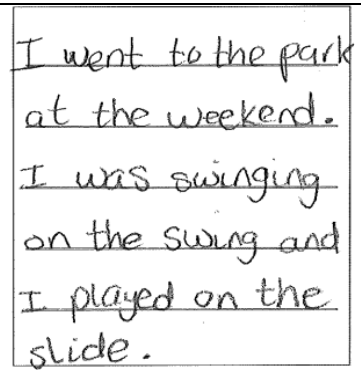
EYFS: Pre-school

Autumn Term Expectations	Spring Term Expectations	Summer Term Expectations
Transcription: • Develop **fine motor control** through mark-making tools (crayons, pencils, paintbrushes, chalks). • Begin to use **dominant hand consistently**. • Experiment with **directional lines**: vertical, horizontal, circular, zigzag.	**Transcription:** • Develop a **secure pencil grip** (preferably tripod). • Continue to build **hand strength** and **control** through threading, tweezers, cutting. • Copy patterns: wavy lines, vertical lines, curves, loops.	**Transcription:** • Form **some recognisable letters**, particularly from own name. • Use a comfortable and consistent **tripod grip** when writing. • Show increased control over **size and direction of marks**.

• Imitate marks and simple shapes in response to stimuli (e.g. lines for grass, circles for faces). **Composition:** • Begin to **give meaning to marks**: "This says mummy." • Talk about drawings and "writing" with adults. • Attempt to label simple pictures with marks or letter-like shapes. • Attempt to label simple pictures with marks or letter-like shapes •	• Begin to copy or form letters from own name. **Composition:** • Start to produce **marks with intent**, often narrating: "I'm writing a story." • Attempt to **represent labels or words.** • Begin to **imitate adult writing behaviour** (shopping lists, signs, labels in role play).	• Begin to **write left to right** on a page or whiteboard. **Composition:** • Ascribe meaning to their writing: "This is my house," "This says 'go away'." • Begin to create **strings of letters** or letter-like shapes that look like writing. • Show understanding that writing conveys a **message or purpose**.
EYFS: Reception		
Autumn Term Expectations	Spring Term Expectations	Summer Term Expectations
Transcription: • Form most lowercase letters **correctly**, starting and finishing in the right place. • Write own name using correct case and orientation. • Use **phonics (Phase 2/3)** to spell simple CVC words (e.g. "dog", "mat"). • Begin to **segment to spell** with some phoneme-grapheme accuracy. **Composition:** • Write **labels, captions and short phrases** (e.g. "A red bus", "I like cats"). • Say what they are going to write and attempt it independently. • Begin to link writing to stories, experiences or role play.	**Transcription:** • Use **known digraphs (Phase 3)** to build words independently. • Spell some tricky words correctly (e.g. "the", "to", "no"). • Begin to apply phonics for less familiar words. **Composition:** • Write **short sentences** independently that match spoken ideas (e.g. "I went to the park."). • Re-read writing to check it makes sense. • Use some story language (e.g. "Once upon a time...") or descriptive phrases. **Punctuation & Grammar:** • Begin using **capital letters and full stops.**	**Transcription:** • Spell regular words **phonetically correctly** and begin to spell irregular/tricky words (e.g. "my", "was", "you"). • Write simple sentences from **memory or dictation** using high-frequency words and known phonics. • Use knowledge of Phase 4 blends (e.g. "st", "mp") to attempt spelling CCVC and CVCC words. **Composition:** • Write a sequence of **simple sentences** to form a narrative or explanation (e.g. recount, short story). • Demonstrate some awareness of structure in writing (e.g. beginning, middle, end).

Punctuation & Grammar: • Begin to use **finger spaces** with adult support. • Attempt capital letters at the beginning of writing. • Introduce the idea of **full stops** at the end of thought/sentence. **Presentation:** • Sit with correct posture and pencil grip. • Write from **left to right**, with growing awareness of word boundaries. • Write with **increasing size consistency** in letters. 	• Use the pronoun "I" correctly in context. • Start using **conjunctions** such as "and" orally and occasionally in writing. **Presentation:** • Begin to use clear finger spaces between words. • Form letters of a consistent size and sit letters correctly on the line. • Begin to use simple writing frameworks or sentence starters. 	• Use writing to express ideas across **multiple genres** (instructions, stories, labels, recounts). **Punctuation & Grammar:** • Use **capital letters**, **full stops**, and **finger spaces** consistently. • Use "and" to join ideas within a sentence. • Re-read writing and make basic **self-corrections** (e.g. add a missing word, full stop). **Presentation:** • Maintain **correctly oriented** letters, with appropriate sizing. • Consistently use a **tripod grip** and sit letters on the line. 
Year 1		
Autumn Term Expectations	Spring Term Expectations	Summer Term Expectations
Transcription • Spell words containing: CVC, CVCC, and CCVC structures using known GPCs. • Begin to spell: Days of the week and some Year 1 **common exception words.**	**Transcription** • Accurately spell: **Most CVC and CVCC words** using phonics and **many common exception words** (e.g. the, said, were, where)	**Transcription** • Spell: **Many Year 1 common exception words,** words using all taught phonemes (Phase 5 secure) and words with taught suffixes (-s, -es, -ing, -ed, -er, -est)

• Begin to form **plural nouns** by adding -s or -es (dogs, boxes). • Introduction to adding **suffixes**: -ing, -ed (where no spelling change is needed). • Handwriting: form all **lowercase and capital letters correctly**, starting and finishing in the right place. **Composition** • Say out loud what they are going to write. • Compose a sentence orally before writing. • Sequence sentences to form **short narratives** or recounts. • Begin to include simple ideas and key details. • Re-read writing to check for sense and simple corrections. **Punctuation & Grammar** • Begin to use: **Capital letters** for sentence openings and proper nouns (names, "I") **Full stops** to demarcate sentences **Question marks and exclamation marks** (introduced through modelled/shared writing) • Understand and begin using **'and'** to join two ideas. **Presentation** • Consistently write **left to right**, top to bottom. • Use **finger spaces** between all words.	• Add suffixes using: -s, -es (for plurals and verbs) -ing, -ed, -er (where spelling of the root word does not change) • Begin to learn and apply simple spelling **rules** (e.g. dropping the 'e', doubling consonants). • Handwriting: Begin to write letters of **uniform size** and develop consistency in **spacing between words and letters**. **Composition** • Begin to write for a **range of purposes** (e.g. instructions, stories, recounts). • Use **adjectives** to describe nouns and add detail. • Sequence ideas across several sentences to show basic structure. • Continue to **re-read and improve writing**, with support. **Punctuation & Grammar** • Use: Capital letters and full stops consistently. Question marks and exclamation marks correctly in context. **'and'** to join sentences and extend ideas. • Begin to use other simple **conjunctions** orally and in writing (e.g. **but**, **so**, **because**). • Identify and use: **Nouns and verbs and regular plural forms** • Start experimenting with **structure and language patterns** (e.g. "First", "Next", "Finally"). **Presentation** • All letters formed correctly with increasing fluency.	• Understand how the **prefix un-** changes meaning (e.g. unkind). • Use taught rules for **adding suffixes** to root words. • Begin to check spelling in writing using **phonics and memory**. • Handwriting: All letters are clearly formed and usually the **correct size** relative to each other. Use of **capital letters** appropriately and correctly sized. **Composition** • Write a **narrative with a clear beginning, middle and end**. • Write other simple texts: **instructions, recounts, poetry, simple explanations**. • Use **expanded noun phrases** (e.g. the big dog, the shiny coin). • Re-read writing independently for accuracy and sense. • Begin to make simple **edits or additions** to improve work. **Punctuation & Grammar** • Consistent use of: Capital letters, full stops, question marks, exclamation marks • Use **'and'** and other conjunctions to extend sentences and link ideas. • Understand the function of: **Nouns, verbs, adjectives** and plural forms **Presentation** • Legible, well-presented writing: Consistent **spacing**, **size**, and **line alignment**. • Maintains **correct grip and posture** when writing at length.

• Write on the line with improving **letter sizing and orientation**. 	• Writing remains **legible**, appropriately sized, and well-spaced. 	
Year 2		
By the end of Year 1, children are expected to write simple but coherent sentences, apply basic punctuation consistently, and spell many common exception words. They can compose short texts with a beginning, middle, and end, and show awareness of audience and purpose in their writing. This solid foundation bridges directly into the Autumn Term of Year 2, where the focus shifts to refining sentence structure, increasing vocabulary choices, and expanding writing length and stamina. Children begin to explore different text types more formally, use varied punctuation (including commas and apostrophes), and apply joined handwriting consistently. The Year 1 endpoints provide a secure platform for the greater fluency, independence, and grammatical accuracy expected in Year 2.		

Letter formation

Writing - transcription (spelling and handwriting) and composition (articulating ideas and structuring them in speech, before writing)

This supportive document is separate to the SSP programme. It can be used as a stand-alone document but it is important to note the children should have been taught to read and identify sounds before focusing on their formation.

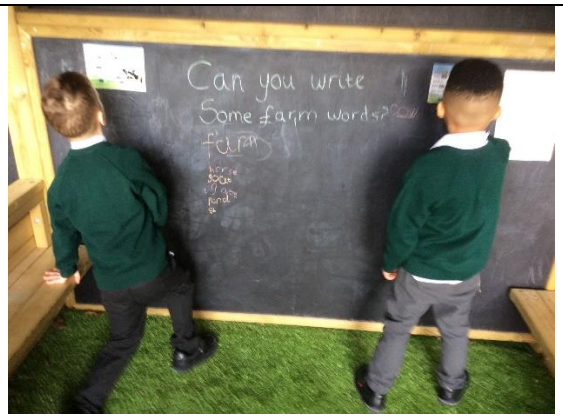
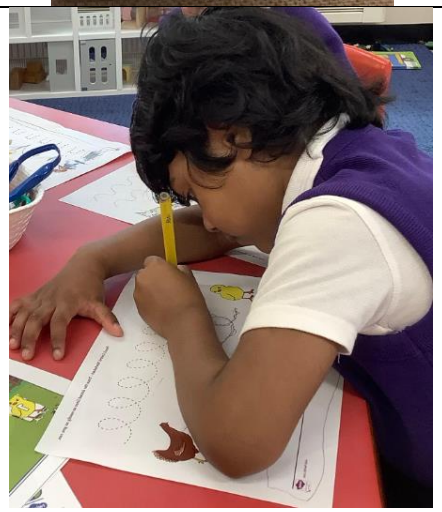
<table>
<tr><td>Autumn</td><td>Correctly forms letters - i, j, l, f, t</td><td rowspan="3">Assessment checkpoints /guidance
Letter needs to be correct orientation.
Letters need to start in the correct position, e.g. i - needs a top to bottom vertical line.
Letters do not need to be positioned on a line (although this should be modelled to children).
Letters do not need to be consistent in size.
Assessment check to be completed before the end of each term.
Complete assessment tracking sheet (optional).
Next steps targets to be produced/ interventions created by class teacher to plug gaps e.g. gross/ fine motor.
Revisit letters throughout year.
Send SSP letter formation sheets home.
Letter formation videos to be shared on social media/ school website.
Formation workshops for parents.
Observation checks
pencil grip
position at table
ability to retrace lines
ability to create curved lines
crossing of mid-line to produce anticlockwise marks</td></tr>
<tr><td>Spring</td><td>Correctly forms letters - a, c, d, g, o, q

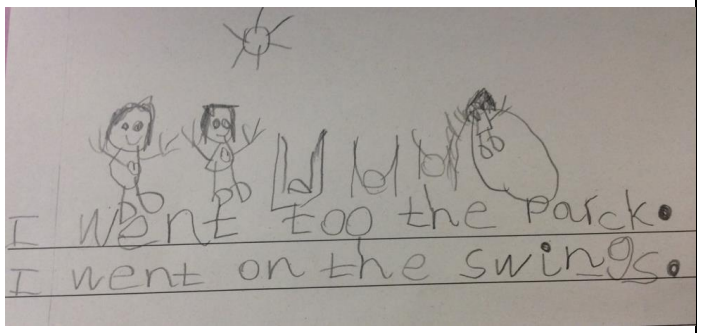
THEN e, s, v, w, x</td></tr>
<tr><td>Summer</td><td>Correctly forms letters - b, h, k, m , n, p, r

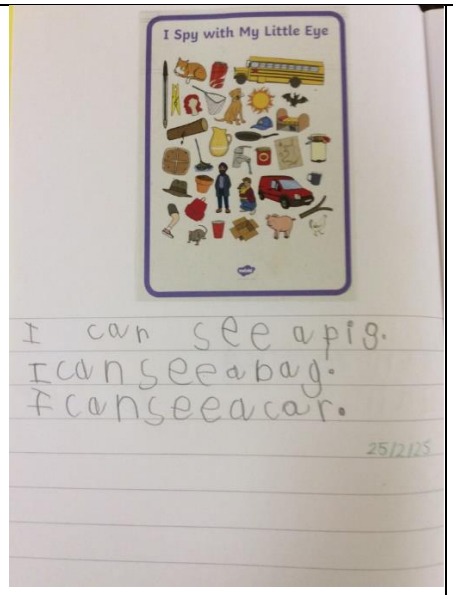
THEN u, y, z</td></tr>
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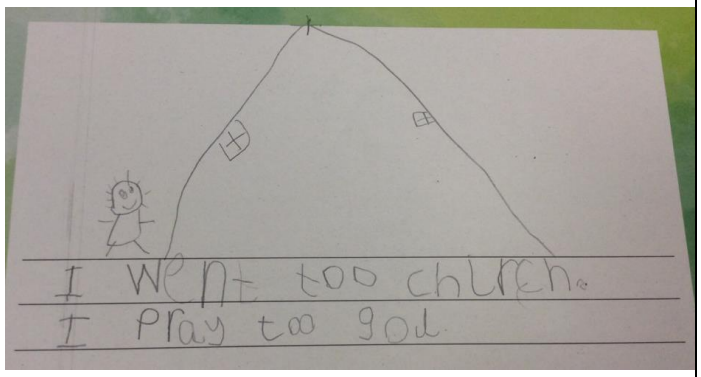
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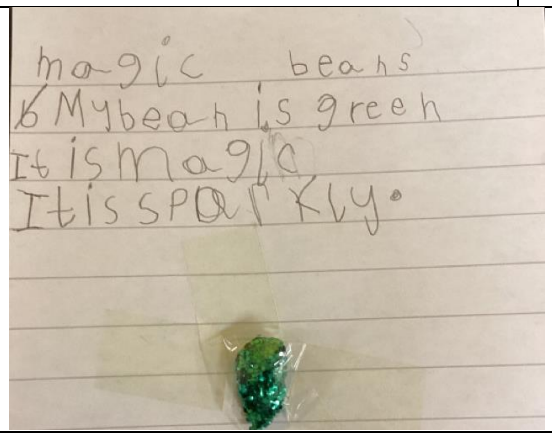
Examples of Writing in Provision

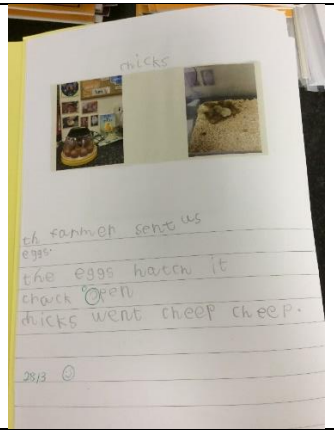
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I went too the parck.
I went on the swings.


I Spy with My Little Eye
I can see a pig.
I can see a bag.
I can see a car.
25/2/25


I went too church.
I pray too god.

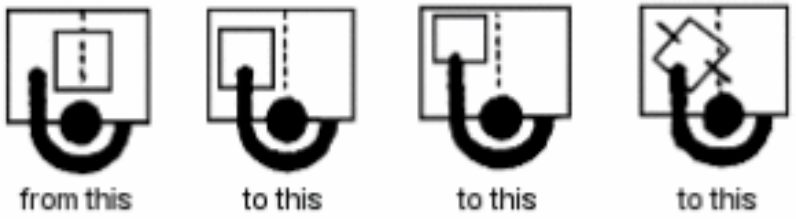

magic beans
My bean is green
It is magic
It is sparkly.


chicks
the farmer sent us eggs.
the eggs hatch it
chick green
chicks went cheep cheep.
28/3

Adaptive Teaching Strategies

Left Handed Writing Tips

Figure 1: Correct positioning of paper for left-handed writer



Cross Strokes

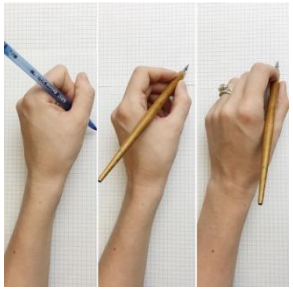
When writing, we typically travel from top to bottom and left to right. At times, left-handed children may choose to cross letters by pulling their writing hand from right to left. This is natural. Model the cross stroke for them in their student editions. Letters with cross strokes are **A**, **E**, **F**, **G**, **H**, **I**, **J**, **T** and lowercase **f** and **t**.

Worksheets

If using a worksheet, give the student another copy of the worksheet to place on their right side if they have directions or words to copy in the left margin. This will give them a way to see those directions or words without having to "hook" their wrist.

Pencil Grip

Teachers and researchers recommend the child grip the pencil around 2.5 cm (1 inch) to 3.8 cm (1.5 inches) from the point (REFS: Gardner 1945; Cole 1955; Clark 1959).

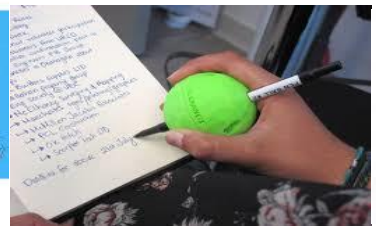


Tape a worksheet or colouring page on the wall. Having a child write or colour on a vertical surface encourages them to bend the wrist back while writing instead of hooking it forward. Better yet, do not tape the paper on the wall but have them use their right hand to stabilize it. This will help coordinate the two hands together for writing.

Writing Aids

Pencil Grips









Writing Slopes



Paper Support






Pens/Pencils







Appendix 1:

Early Writing Parent Links



General Resources

[Early Writing Activities | Early Years Writing Activities]

[Developing Pencil Grip in the Early Years | A Guide For Parents]

Pre-writing activities

[Pre-Writing Activities and Worksheets for Preschoolers]

[28 Pre-Writing Activities for Preschoolers]

Letter formation video for each grapheme

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLv80XE_mA4uy5WO-mMcUQ2vX6AdVpIPEk

Gross Motor Activities

[Gross motor skills [45 fun home physical activities for kids]]

Fine Motor Activities

(1) Fine Motor Activities - YouTube

Appendix 2- References and helpful resources

- Early Excellence: Developing language in Early Years (earlyexcellence.com)
- National Literacy Trust: Early Years: Resources and tools for early language development and parental engagement
- Birth to Five Document: Birthto5matters-download.pdf
- Development matters: Development matters- GOV.UK
- DFE: Writing- Help for early years providers- GOV.UK (education.gov.uk)
- Early Literacy Approaches: Education Endowment Foundation EEF
- Early Years Writing pathway Essex County Council https://eycp.essex.gov.uk/media/2619/9957-early-years-writing-pathway-document-v4-accessible.pdf
- Developing Early Writing: Archived content Developing early writing (national archive.gov.uk)
- Oldfield Brow Primary School
- www.oxfordowl.co.uk
- Left Handed Writers Guidance Helping left handed writers - Surrey County Council
- Writing Supports TTS-Handwriting-Guide-Download.pdf
- Pens, Pencils and Writing Aids | The Dyslexia Shop
- Handwriting from TTS
- Pre-writing Skills Pre-writing shapes – what are they and how to teach them?
- Multi-Sensory Pre-writing - Gateshead Health
- Table taken from : Pre-writing - Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust - CYP Website
- The Writing Framework The writing framework - GOV.UK