

Writing in the EYFS at Bridge and Patrixbourne CEP School

At Bridge and Patrixbourne CEP School, children in the Reception year follow the [Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum](#). Alongside Comprehension and Word Reading, Writing forms part of the children's Literacy development. In order for children to write effectively, they need to have securely developed skills in the following areas which form the prerequisites for writing.

Communication and Language: - Speaking

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Participate in small group, class and one-to-one discussions, offering their own ideas, using recently introduced vocabulary;
- Offer explanations for why things might happen, making use of recently introduced vocabulary from stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems when appropriate;
- Express their ideas and feelings about their experiences using full sentences, including use of past, present and future tenses and making use of conjunctions, with modelling and support from their teacher.

Physical Development: - Fine Motor Skills

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Hold a pencil effectively in preparation for fluent writing – using the tripod grip in almost all cases;
- Use a range of small tools, including scissors, paint brushes and cutlery;
- Begin to show accuracy and care when drawing.

Literacy: - Word Reading

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Say a sound for each letter in the alphabet and at least 10 digraphs;
- Read words consistent with their phonic knowledge by sound-blending;
- Read aloud simple sentences and books that are consistent with their phonic knowledge, including some common exception words.

Literacy: - Writing

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.

Physical Development

From learning to hold a pencil to getting their thoughts down on paper, learning to write is a tricky milestone for children. The writing process requires a multi-skilled approach where young children are able to effectively develop their communication and language skills before applying pencil to paper. For children in the EYFS, the bone and muscle structure in their hands is not yet fully developed and they therefore need ample physical development opportunities to be able to strengthen their gross motor skills, and hone in on their fine motor skills in order to be able to use tools to write effectively.



An xray of a developed hand (around the age of 7) on the left compared to an EYFS child (around the age of 4 or 5) on the right.

Note the wide spacing between bones which is there to allow their bodies to grow. These spaces are needed for the purpose of moving e.g. squatting, jumping, hopping etc. to be able to develop their sensory motor responses. They are not able to stabilize and hold a fixed position such as sitting still in a chair and holding a pencil for writing.

Learning Environment

The Reception learning environment is designed so that during daily sustained periods of Independent Learning, children are able to develop their skills, understanding and knowledge towards the goals above. Access to continuous provision enables the children to choose the resources they would like to use. The supporting adults in the EYFS will make observations and assessments of the children during their play and use their knowledge of the children and their individual interests and needs to add enhancements to the provision, which will enable each individual to move forward with their learning. The resources will cater for a variety of learning needs and may change over time.

At Bridge, children in the EYFS will learn to write through a combination of adult-directed activities and child-initiated play. For example, they might work in the creative area to make invitations for the birthday party they are having in the home corner, or they might write a label for the model they have made. Their curiosity in writing will be evoked as adults embrace writing themselves and may model writing messages to each other, or will leave written messages around the room for the children to find and read. If a child was drawing a picture for the head teacher and asked what their favourite colour was they would be encouraged to write to them to find out. Children's early mark making and writing is welcomed, praised and valued in our EYFS.

Alongside play, teachers will encourage children to begin to write through more formal activities each week. For example, they might draw a picture of a house and be asked to label the parts or create a story map for a well-known tale such as The Gingerbread Man and be asked to write a new repeating refrain for him using a different action.

Writing Development

Learning to write is a gradual process and to become effective writers children need to develop their writing skills with a multisensory approach (see [Appendix 1 Stages of Emergent Writing](#)). At first, children's writing is just mark-making; a series of drawings or scribbles on paper created through their curiosity of testing out what happens when they place the pen or pencil on the paper.

By then strengthening their gross motor skills in their arm and shoulder movements (e.g. by throwing and catching a ball), combined with strengthening their fine motor skills in their hand muscles (e.g. by rolling and squashing playdough) these marks on paper can begin to progress in complexity – lines, circles, swirls and crosses. They may begin to make letter shapes as they learn to recognise their name.

When children begin their phonics sessions, writing enters a new phase where they will start to write letters. They will write strings of random letters which they may apply meaning to or pretend to read, or may copy from print in the environment.

Then, as their phonics learning progresses, they will write initial sounds such as 'b' for bus, and then will progress to writing more accurately by sounding out the word and writing the graphemes to match, for example; 'b-u-s'. They will start word, or short phrase writing. Through adult modelling in writing and reading, the children will develop an awareness of the concepts of print such as moving left to right on the page, and moving from top to bottom and this will also begin to reflect in their writing. Letters and words scattered over the paper will now start to become more linear and uniform and they will progress into conventional spelling and sentence writing.

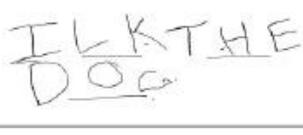
As talking is the basis for all writing in the EYFS, speaking and listening forms the basis of children's early writing experiences. Before writing a repeated refrain for the Gingerbread Man children will need to hear the text being read several times. To embed the learning, the children may act the story out, join in and recite the story, draw it, sequence it and retell it through story maps. Without this, Pie Corbett reminds us that 'children don't have the skills to write anything down, so what they say is a precursor to their writing,' as 'You can't write a sentence unless you can say it.'

Summary

During the Reception year at Bridge and Patixbourne CEP school, the children will have been supported to develop their gross and fine motor skills, will have learnt the sounds (s/a/t/p/i/n/m/d/g/o/c/k/e/u/r/h/b/f/ff/l/l/j/v/w/x/y/z/zz/qu/ch/sh/th/ng/ai/ee/igh/oa/oo/oo/or/ar/ur/ow/oi/er/air), have learnt to speak in sentences, been exposed to new and interesting vocabulary, and heard, and interacted with their favourite stories and key texts throughout the year.

They will have had access to writing resources through continuous and enhanced provision and will have had the process of writing suitably modelled to them by adults. Throughout the year, the children will have developed a resilient and can-do attitude to their writing, their efforts in writing will have been valued and praised and they will be encouraged to persevere with their new skills. Thus by the end of Reception, most children will be writing independently, and writing clearly enough that you can read what they've written. They will have the motor skills, phonic knowledge, basic writing skills and stamina needed in preparation for Writing area of the National Curriculum in Key Stage One.

Appendix 1

Stages of Emergent Writing		
Stage	Description	Example
Drawing	Drawings that represent writing	
Scribbling	Marks or scribbles the child intends to be writing	
Wavy scribbles or mock handwriting	Wavy scribbles that imitate cursive writing and have a left-to-right progression; child pretends to write words	
Letter-like forms or mock letters	Letters and marks that resemble letter-like shapes	
Letter strings	Strings of letters that do not create words, written left to right, including uppercase and lowercase letters	
Transitional writing	Letters with spaces in between to resemble words; letters/words copied from environmental print; letters often reversed	
Invented or phonetic spelling	Different ways to represent the sounds in words; the first letter of the word or beginning and ending sounds represent the entire word	
Beginning word and phrase writing	Words with beginning, middle, and ending letter sounds; short phrases	
Conventional spelling and sentence writing	Correct spelling of words, generally the child's name and words such as <i>mom</i> and <i>dad</i> ; sentences with punctuation and correct use of uppercase and lowercase letters	