

## Early Writing

Writing is not just about holding a pencil and correctly forming letters. Writing is a skill that children have to learn gradually from birth and the way in which children learn to write is equally as important as learning to read.

Early writing begins when children are babies; the way in which babies effectively 'grab' onto objects such as toys, fingers and even hair, all help. Eventually they learn to crawl or move around using their arms to help them, this helps to build muscle strength in their arms and hands. Even the smallest of daily tasks, such as taking the children to the park or allowing them to explore food with their fingers, will help to develop their gross motor skills and their strength.

Playing with toys that children have to pick up between their thumb, index and second fingers using the pincer grip is also really beneficial for babies and small children.

Furthermore, the opportunity to play with malleable materials such as dough and moulding clay helps lay the foundations for early writing.

When children do pick up a pen, pencil, crayon, paint brush or chalk eventually and wish to make marks with it, this should be wholeheartedly encouraged and praised. It is also important adults ask the children to tell them about what they have written – the ability to give meanings to their early mark making is a vital skill.

### **Physical Development and the Link to writing**

In line with the EYFS curriculum guidance, physical development is one of the prime areas of learning and is key to ensuring the children can make progress in their mark making and writing.

Children need to have developed strong gross and fine motor skills before handwriting can be taught. At Regent Farm, our initial focus is on developing a child's Gross Motor skills. This includes balance, core strength and coordination, alongside their ability to produce large arm movements, climbing and running. Young children need to develop these large motor skills before they will be able to develop their fine motor movements. To support the development of their motor skills, children take part in Dough Disco and Squiggle Whilst You Wiggle activities daily.

## **Dough Disco**

Dough Disco™ is a fun activity which combines the use of play dough with a series of hand and finger exercises designed to improve fine muscle control. The movements develop children's fine motor dexterity, hand-eye coordination and self-esteem. The overall aim is to ultimately support children's hand writing skills.

'Dough Disco' is completed after the morning register as part of our daily routine. We warm up those important muscles in our hands, arms and shoulders in preparation for a busy day at school. Each child is given a ball of play dough and listens to a piece of music. To the beat of the music, the children copy the staff member as he/she demonstrates various ways to manipulate the play dough, exercising as many as those important muscles as possible. The children love the activity and look forward to making their 'hands dance' each day.



Dough Disco follows a careful sequence (see additional documents for details) and is completed in Early Years and Year 1. Children must complete sequence one and two, and be confident in the techniques, before moving onto any of the enhancement sequences to ensure they have understood the basic moves. We also offer it as an intervention for children from Year 2 upwards who may benefit from the additional sessions.

## **Squiggle Whilst You Wiggle**

The aim of 'Squiggle Whilst You Wiggle' is that children develop this same passion for early writing through fun exploration of mark making in different materials whilst developing their physical muscle development and muscle memory. It enables children to develop pre-writing skills, enjoy exploring early marks before moving into making letters and finally develop their handwriting.

Squiggle Whilst You Wiggle focuses on gross motor movements to create specific marks. Squiggle is 9 separate movements that follow letter formation and child development order. By following the Squiggle Whilst You Wiggle program the child will not only begin to form letters correctly but also strengthen all the muscles needed developmentally to become a confident writer.

During the morning we have 'squiggle time' which takes approximately 10-15 minutes. This very active session needs space therefore we have redesigned the layout of our classrooms to ensure children and adults have adequate space for movement. Squiggle time also requires music and we have three songs for each move. Children use 'flipper flappers' (two squares of material) in each session which they hold in each hand to create bilateral movements strengthening the cerebral cortex within the developing brain. Adults taking part also use flipper flappers to ensure the techniques are modelled correctly.

In squiggle time the movement and music then transitions into mark making and requires crayons and rolls of paper. We may also use the outside ground with chalks or large sheets of material, such as a shower curtain, with pens. Everyone taking part must hold two crayons (or alternative medium such as chalks), one in each hand as Squiggle marks require both hands to strengthen the child's body and brain bilaterally.

The sessions are very active, with swift transitions between sections and high levels of energy! They are a lot of fun, for children and adults, and they are based on the DD's - Dance and Drawing. The session always begins with the dance and then moves into the drawing element.

We run Squiggle progressively through our Early Years and into Key Stage one.



- Nursey - Squiggle Whilst You Wiggle is a stand-alone daily activity
- Reception – Squiggle Whilst You Wiggle sessions support their phonics knowledge and letter formation

- Year 1 – Squiggle Whilst You Wiggle will be offered to children as an intervention and children will progress into Squiggle Me into A Writer.

(See additional Squiggle Whilst You Wiggle document for full details and progression.)

### **Early Writing In EYFS**

A well-chosen text provides rich language from which children can learn how writing works and the effect it can have on a reader. To help ensure children are confident young writers, we constantly read aloud and share high quality texts across a range of genres.

Staff ensure that the book of the week is rich in vocabulary, and enable children to hear texts beyond their own reading fluency level. Learning opportunities across the week are linked to this book to help strengthen their understanding and give meaning to their mark making. We create a rich learning environment that demonstrates the written word in all its forms and shares how writing can be used in different ways.

Throughout school, staff create opportunities for writing inspired by meaningful events and experiences. We will always try to bring the learning to life for the children to help give their writing meaning. For example when reading Owl Babies, the children will meet some real owls; when we complete our alligators topic the children will have a live Zoom call with Gatorland in Florida and when reading the book Clean Up, reception visit the beach.

This provides the children with ways to talk and write about their own feelings, experiences and interests and with a purpose in mind. It is important for adults to validate children's writing appreciate their effort and rational/story behind their mark making.

Within the classroom provision, there are lots of further opportunities for writing in addition to the core adult learning tasks. For example, the 'invitation station' will regularly have a stimulus or exploration question for children to discuss, draw or write. Children will complete a review of their learning twice a day when they are encouraged to draw and write what they've been doing, giving meaning to their play.

Every phonics lesson includes writing, either modelled by teacher and written with help from children or scribed by children on individual whiteboards/in books. The skill of

segmenting to write will be modelled and practised. Children should be taught and encouraged to form letters correctly as soon as possible. From year 1, the majority of children should be given opportunities to writing sentences regularly.

With a rich diet of quality texts and enriching experiences children will be able to find their own reasons to write and develop a confidence to 'give it a go'.

### **Summary of the Early Writing Process**

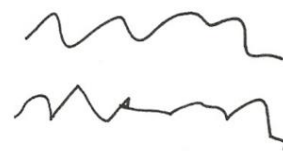
- Children start by drawing freely, this maybe a repeated movement.
- They then go on to give meanings to marks they make by being able to say what it is they have drawn eg "This is a treasure map."
- They might start to make marks that stand for their name.
- They then use some of their print and letter knowledge in their early writing.
- They then start to form some recognisable letters.
- They learn how to form lower case and capital letters correctly.
- Learn to spell words by identifying the sounds and then writing the sound with a letter or letters.
- Write short sentences with words with known sound-letter correspondences using a capital letter and full stop that can be read by others.
- Re-read what they have written to check that it makes sense.

Examples of these early writing stages are shown below.



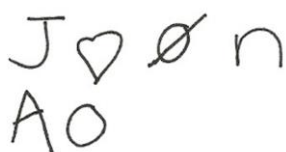
**1. Scribble Stage**

*(Starting point any place on the page)*



**2. Scribble**

*(Left to right progression)*



**3. Mock Letters**

*(Can be personal or conventional)*

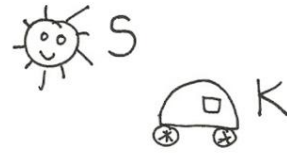


**4. Letter String**

*(Left to right and progressively downwards)*

S SO  
KSK

5. Groups of letters with space in between to resemble words



6. Picture Labelling  
(Matching beginning letter to sound)

desk  
door

7. Copies Environmental Print

I H A S  
I have a sister.

8. Uses first letter of a word to represent the word



9. Uses beginning letter and ending letter to represent word

I see the  
sci

10. Hears Middle Sounds  
(Writes word with beginning, middle and ending letters)

My nis dres



11. Phase Writing

This pumkn  
is min



12. Whole Sentence Writing

Children will have a variety of starting points which begin with giving meaning to their marks and emergent writing, moving onto writing using letter shapes and their phonological knowledge. It is important to create a culture which excites the children to write and to get enjoyment from it. Regent Farm First School recognises the vital role parents and carers play in engaging and supporting their children in the writing process. Specific subject workshops workshops and termly openly classrooms provide parents appropriate ways to support their children's love of learning.