

Early Years

Early Writing Pathway



Rationale for developing a writing pathway

Data in EYFS has shown a year on year trend of writing being the area of learning where the least number of children achieve the Early Learning Goal, often holding them back from achieving a good level of development. The pandemic is likely to have exacerbated this deficit, with many children having very little nursery or pre-school experience prior to starting school.

The expected stage of writing at the end of the Reception year is described as follows:

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.

In order to reach this outcome, stages of muscle development, mark making and PSED must all be experienced and come together at the right time.

This document aims to give EYFS settings and Reception classes the opportunity to audit the provision in place for writing, using Birth to Five matters*, and consider the role adults play in this development. As part of the EYFS strategy, the document signposts parents to ways in which home learning can be supported, what prewriting activities look like and outcomes that can be expected at different stages, using the 'Making it Real' materials.

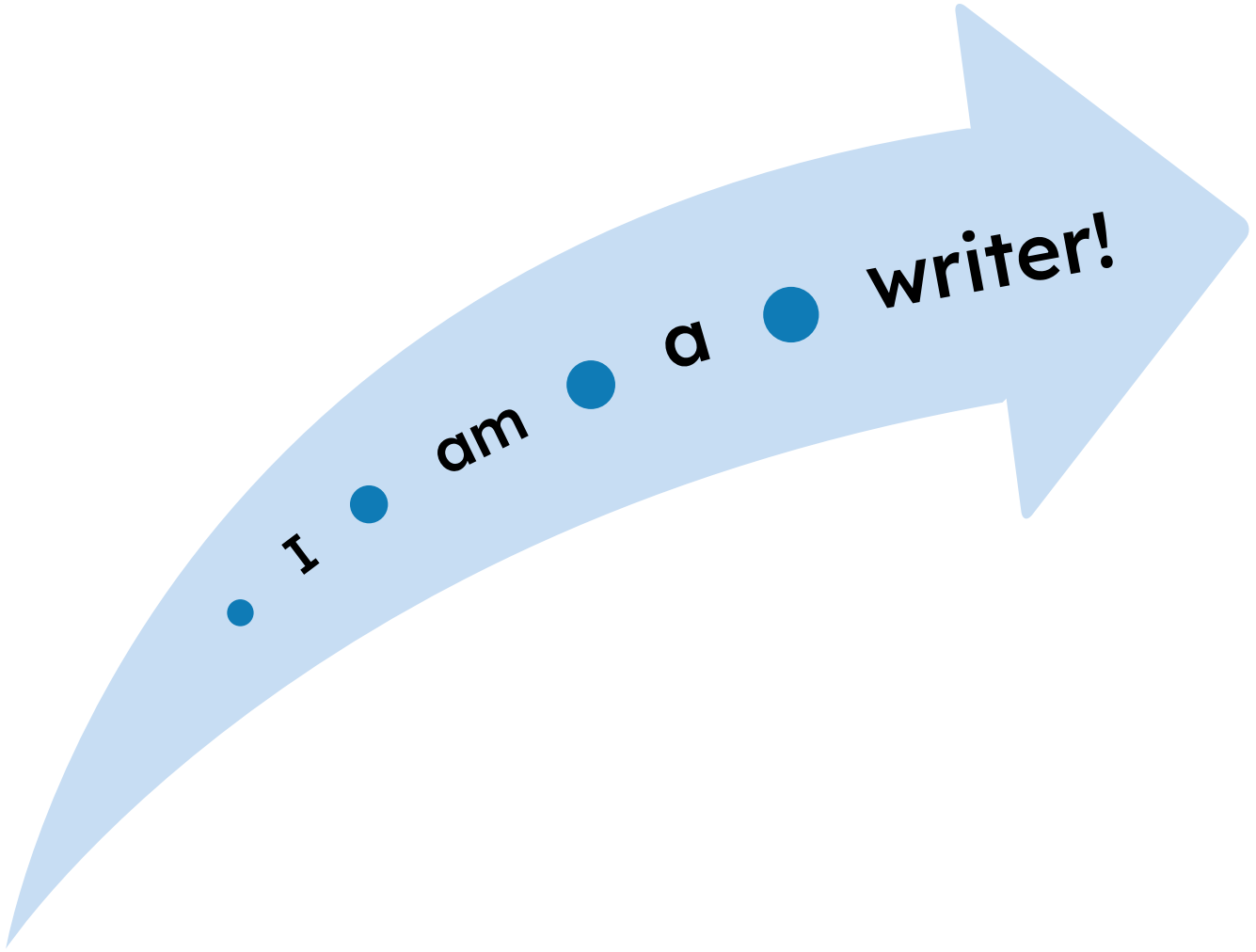
All criteria and exemplifications in this document are taken from published materials that are already available to all practitioners. They have simply been brought together to allow Essex practitioners the opportunity to reflect and adjust the provision offered.

*A non-statutory document to support the EYFS



Contents

Rationale for developing a writing pathway	2
Thinking frame based on Birth to 5 Matters (Writing)	4
Further thoughts and comments	15
Purposeful Mark Making/Writing	16
Two examples of ELG writing	18
Appendices	19



I • am • a • writer!

Thinking frame based on Birth to 5 Matters (Writing)

Range 4 (24-36)

A unique child (what a child might be doing)

- Distinguishes between the different marks they make
- Enjoys drawing and writing on paper, on screen and on different textures, such as in sand or playdough and through using touch-screen technology

Positive Relationships (what adults might do)

- Listen and support what children tell you about their drawings and early writing
- Write down (scribe) the words that children use and display these words, for example, with photos
- Co-create stories orally with individual children and in small groups. Scribe the stories and display them for children to look at independently or with a parent or friend
- Encourage children to make recordings of their own stories (e.g. on a digital tablet) and create opportunities for children to perform their stories to each other

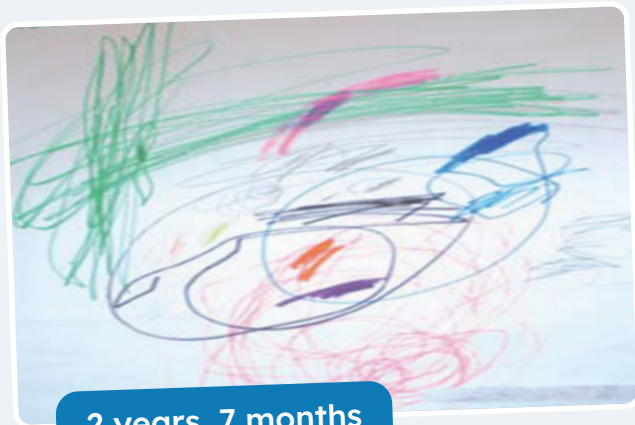
Enabling Environments (what adults might provide)

- Draw attention to marks, signs and symbols in the environment and talk about what they represent. Ensure this involves recognition of English, other languages and scripts
- Provide materials which reflect cultural diversity, so children see symbols and marks with which they are familiar, and learn that there are many different script systems e.g. Arabic, Chinese, Greek and Braille
- Try to have a notepad to hand (e.g. A5 size) in which you can scribe children's stories and special words and share these stories and words with children
- Ensure children see you writing for a purpose, e.g. a shopping list, message for parents, labels in children's play areas or reminders for ourselves

Reflection Questions

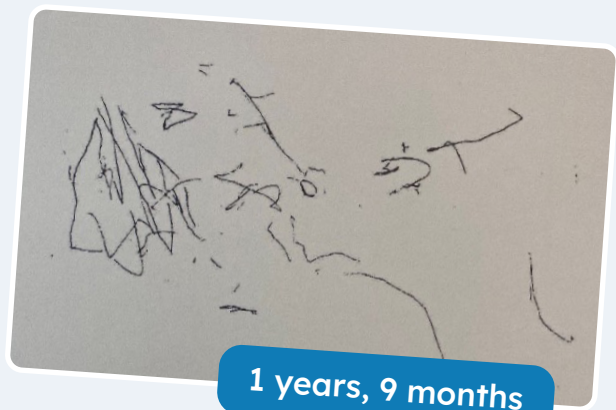
- Do children see adults writing for a purpose?
- Do you have a variety of resources for children to self select?
- Are children discouraged from writing as they think they have nothing that needs to be communicated through writing?
- Is children's intentional mark making valued so they are learning that writing communicates meaning and is powerful?
- Are ideas for writing experiences shared with parents to support the Home Learning Environment?

Comments



2 years, 7 months

Variety of marks...
dabbling, rotation, vertical..
Changes implements.
No meaning attached.



1 years, 9 months



2 years, 8 months

Clear lines- indicate purpose in mark making-
make marks for writing and drawing.
Has drawn family and make a writing like marks....
' Mummy, Daddy, Macca and Kas' Significant
shift... ascribing meaning to mark.



Range 5 (36-48)

A unique child (what a child might be doing)

- Makes up stories, play scenarios, and drawings in response to experiences, such as outings
- Sometimes gives meaning to their drawings and paintings
- Ascribes meanings to signs, symbols and words that they see in different places, including those they make themselves
- Includes mark making and early writing in their play
- Imitates adults' writing by making continuous lines of shapes and symbols (early writing) from left to right
- Attempts to write their own name, or other names and words, using combinations of lines, circles and curves, or letter-type shapes
- Shows interest in letters on a keyboard, identifying the initial letter of their own name and other familiar words
- Begins to make letter-type shapes to represent the initial sound of their name and other familiar words

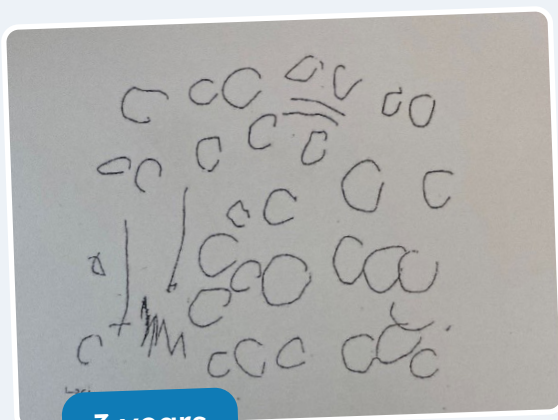
Positive Relationships (what adults might do)

- Notice and encourage children's drawing, painting and early writing and the meanings that they give to them, such as when a child covers a whole piece of paper and says, "I'm writing"
- Celebrate and value children's early attempts at graphic representation – focusing on the meaning and content rather than letter formation
- Model and include children in using signs and writing to expand playful experiences such as making signs for a shop or car wash, instructions for a ball game, a list of names for a taking turns
- Support children in recognising and writing their own names
- Make paper and digital books with children of activities they have been doing, using photographs of them as illustrations



Enabling Environments (what adults might provide)

- Write down things children say to support their developing understanding that what they say can be written down, and then read and understood by someone else. Encourage parents to do this as well
- Set up environments of offices, dens in the garden, library, shop, home corner with greetings cards, etc., so that children engage in literacy events in which they spontaneously participate
- Provide a range of accessible materials and tools for writing as part of everyday play activity, including role play, both indoors and outdoors
- Write poems and short stories together with the children, writing down ideas they suggest
- Scribe children's stories and re-read and enact their stories in small group activities
- Involve children when you make lists or write notes and messages.
- Think out loud and talk through what you are doing when writing or typing on screen
- Break down your flow of speech into individual words, exemplifying the correspondence between the spoken and written word
- Provide activities during which children can experiment with writing, for example, leaving a message
- Encourage children to use their phonic knowledge when writing, and model this in your own writing



3 years



3 years, 7 months

More define mark making- clear purpose and meaning 'My name and some fireworks'.

Reflection Questions

- Are children able to join in with an adult's writing?
- Do children gain experience by seeing writing around them, copying and exploring the 'code'?
- In a role play area do children have knowledge and experience of the context to support them in their writing?
- Are children given time to experiment with each stage of the writing process?
- Do teachers respond in a positive and genuine way to children's attempts?
- Can children return to their writing alone or with help?
- Are writing materials freely available and offered inside and outside the setting?
- Do children have the chance to experiment with different writing mediums? Chalk, pastels, pencils, crayons, felt tips, charcoal, iPad?
- Are both fine motor and gross motor mark making experiences offered?
- Do children have opportunities to write, post and receive letters?
- Do staff record/scribe children's verbal stories – showing that talk can become words on paper?

Comments

Range 6 (48-60)

A unique child (what a child might be doing)

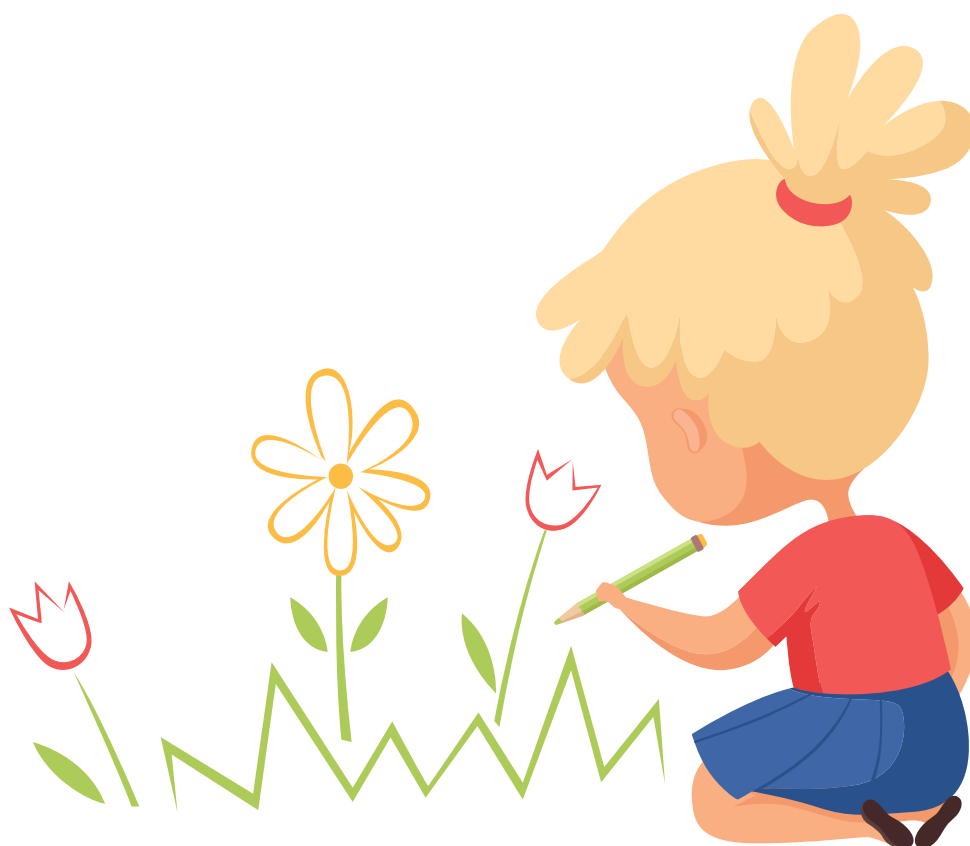
- Enjoys creating texts to communicate meaning for an increasingly wide range of purposes, such as making greetings cards, tickets, lists, invitations and creating their own stories and books with images and sometimes with words, in print and digital formats
- Gives meaning to the marks they make as they draw, write, paint and type using a keyboard or touch-screen technology
- Begins to break the flow of speech into words, to hear and say the initial sound in words and may start to segment the sounds in words and blend them together
- Starts to develop phonic knowledge by linking sounds to letters, naming and sounding some of the letters of the alphabet, identifying letters and writing recognisable letters in sequence, such as in their own name
- Uses their developing phonic knowledge to write things such as labels and captions, later progressing to simple sentences

Positive Relationships (what adults might do)

- Find out about, show interest in and legitimise children's out-of-school writing practices and interests. Remember that not all writing formats go from left to right
- Talk to children about things they might write to support their play inside and outside, e.g. they might make a map for a journey, a job list for a builder, or spells for potion making
- Write stories, poems, jokes, lists, plans, maps etc. together with children on paper and using digital technology so that children they can see authorship and spelling in action
- Talk to children about the letters that represent the sounds they hear at the beginning of their own names and other familiar words
- Model how to segment the sounds (phonemes) in simple words and how the sounds are represented by letters (graphemes)
- Encourage children to apply their own grapheme/phoneme knowledge to what they write in meaningful contexts
- Support and scaffold individual children's writing as opportunities arise

Enabling Environments (what adults might provide)

- Provide word banks, notebooks, clipboards, post-its and other writing resources for both indoor and outdoor play.
- Ensure resources enable children to draw on their out-of-school practices and personal interests, such as children's popular culture or sports teams
- Include oral stories and explore ways for both adults and children to develop oral storytelling skills
- Provide a range of opportunities to write for different purposes about things that interest children
- Resource role-play areas with listening and writing equipment, and ensure that role-play areas encourage writing of signs with a real purpose, e.g. a pet shop
- Plan enjoyable activities and games that help children create rhyming strings of real and imaginary words, e.g. Maddie, daddy, baddie, laddie
- Support children to understand that the letter shapes they write (graphemes) link to units of sound (phonemes)
- Provide regular playful multi-sensory systematic phonics activities that help children to represent phonemes in their writing
- When reading stories, talk with children about the author and illustrator, to help children identify with these roles. For example, ask children why they think the author wrote the story, if the author knew the people in the story, or why the illustrator chose to draw a particular moment in the story
- Ask children if they would like to be an author and/or illustrator

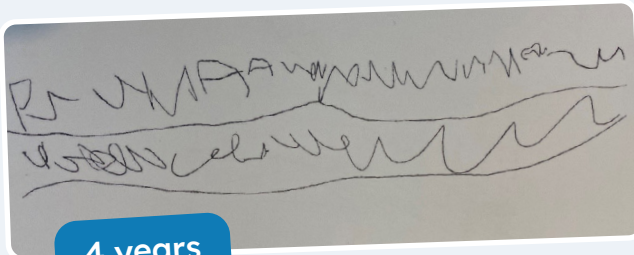


Reflection Questions

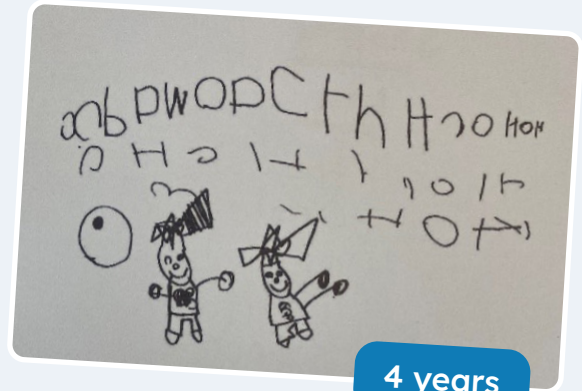
- Are writing sessions regular enough for children to spend sufficient time producing something that can be shared with others?
- Do writing sessions take place too often so children don't see the purpose?
- Do children see a purpose for their writing and is that relevant to their present needs?
- Do children see an advantage of writing something as opposed to the message that can be more easily communicated through speaking?
- Are the first attempts at spelling and handwriting encouraged without worry of it being 'wrong'?
- Do children have the opportunity to discuss their writing?
- Are children given sensitive feedback on their attempts?
- Do practitioners work on a couple of mistakes at a time?
- Are writing tasks interesting and engaging?
- Are the opportunities for writing inviting and attractive to all children?
- Do children need to write in one area or can they collect their resources and move to a different area?
- What opportunities are there for child led writing in the continuous provision?
- What planned opportunities for writing are there each week?
- How is writing valued?
- What writing media is available?
- What activities encourage children to write instead of talking?
- When do children have the opportunity to share their writing?
- How is feedback on writing given?
- How are writing opportunities made attractive to reluctant writers?
- Are resources available for writing anywhere in the provision?



Comments



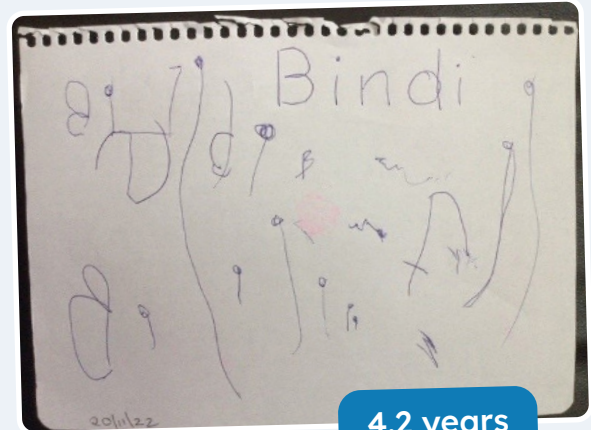
4 years



4 years



4 years, 1 months



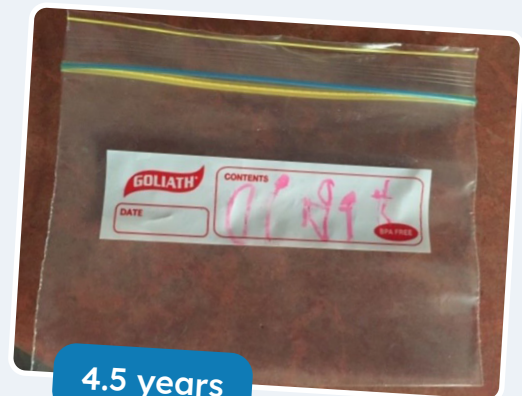
4.2 years

Drawing develops- letter strings evident-
beginning of letter writing

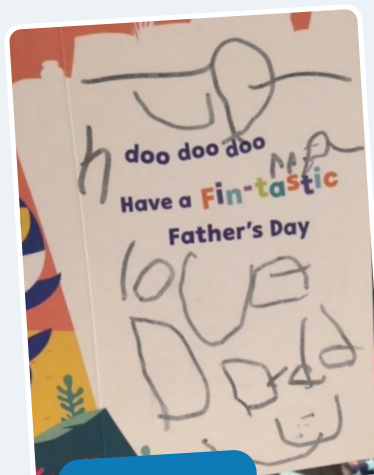
'This is a crocodile. I done a dark river....
Now the crocodile is wearing stripy hair.
Now the crocodiles got BIG hair. Now its got
BIG BIG hair and now a tail.... I'm painting.'

Uses extended narrative giving story
meaning to his marks.

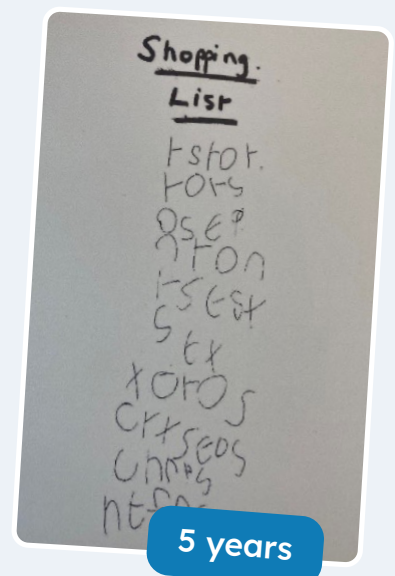
Adults role... to act as scribe as isn't
developmentally ready to write this.



4.5 years

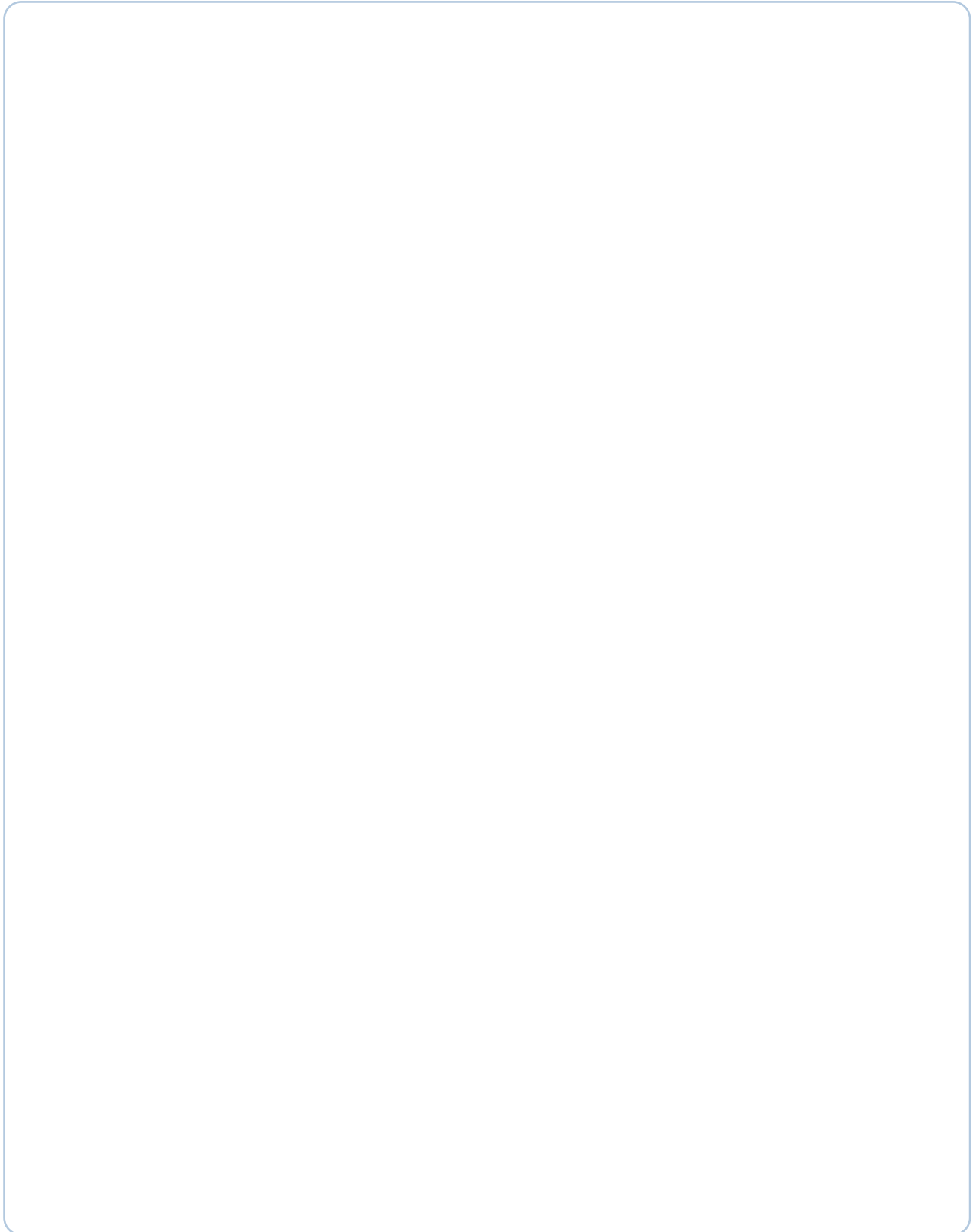


4.7 years



5 years

Further thoughts and comments

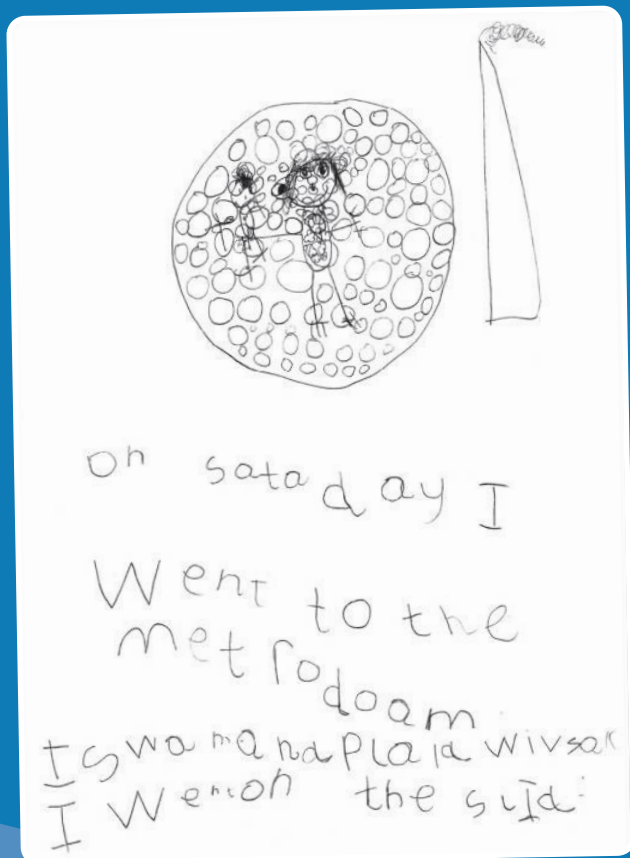


Purposeful Mark Making/Writing





Two examples of ELG writing



Context
Ben is in the role play area which is a hospital

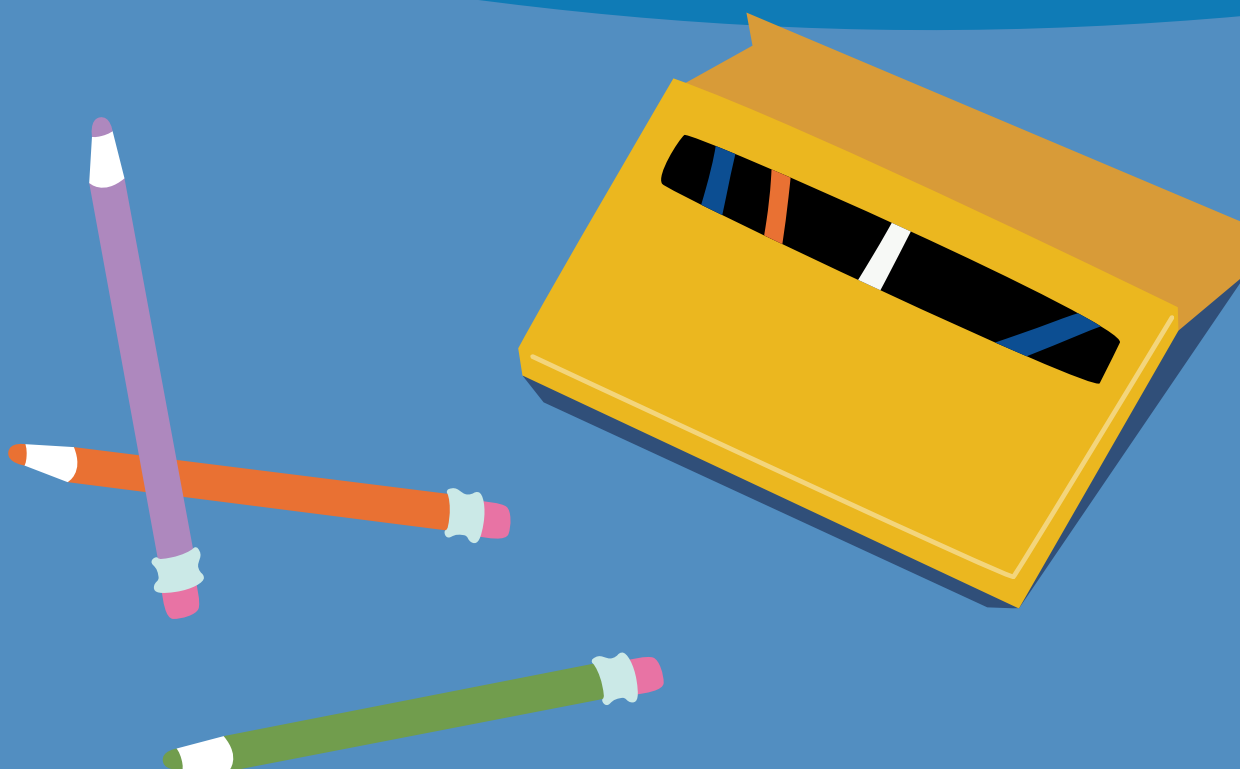
Observation

a packet of tablets
and medicine and
a can of medicine.
this is all.

"a packet of tablets and
medicine and a can of
medicine. This is all".

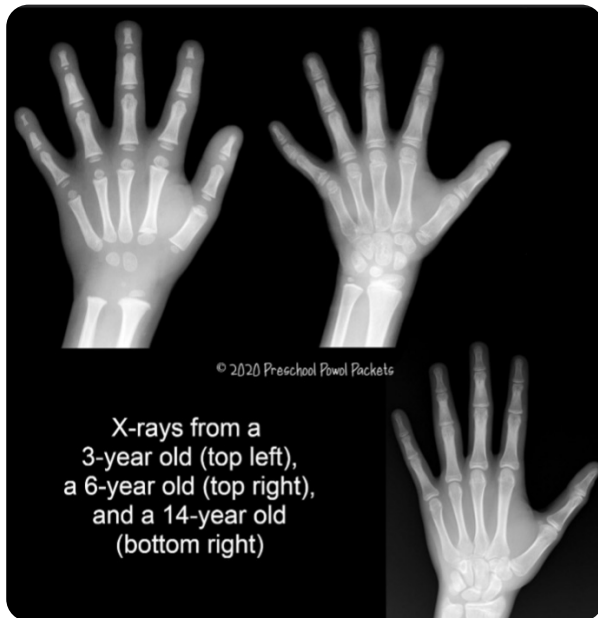
Ben and Natalie were in the role play area. Natalie is pretending to be poorly. Ben writes out a prescription which will make her better he says.

'A packet of tablets and medicine and a can of medicine. This is all'



Appendices

Appendix A



Shows importance of allowing children to develop and strengthen the hand/finger muscles and age appropriate expectations

Appendix B

Essex Early Years website: [Early years and childcare \(essex.gov.uk\)](https://www.essex.gov.uk/early-years)

Essex Talk Listen and Cuddle campaign Resources for parents
[Celebrate the Scribble! - TLC \(tlc-essex.info\)](https://www.tlc-essex.info/)

Birth to Five Document: [Birthto5Matters-download.pdf](#)

Development Matters: [Development Matters - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/development-matters)

DfE: [Writing - Help for early years providers - GOV.UK \(education.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/writing-help-for-early-years-providers)

Early Excellence: [Developing language in Early Years \(earlyexcellence.com\)](https://www.earlyexcellence.com/)

National Literacy Trust

[Early years: resources and tools for early language development and parental engagement | National Literacy Trust](#)

Developing Early Writing

[\[ARCHIVED CONTENT\] Developing early writing \(nationalarchives.gov.uk\)](#)

The National Strategies Early Years

[Crucial role of the Early Years practitioner in supporting young writers within a literacy-rich environment \(foundationyears.org.uk\)](#)

Early Literacy Approaches: [Education Endowment Foundation | EEF](#)

Appendix C

Pencil Grasp Reference Cheat Sheet

Early Grasp

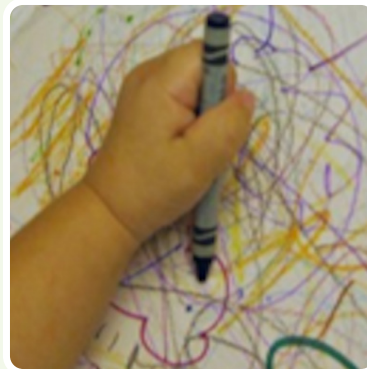
Radial Cross Palmer



0-2 years

Pencil positioned across palm held with a fist hand.

Palmer Supinate



1-2 years

Pencil held like a dagger.

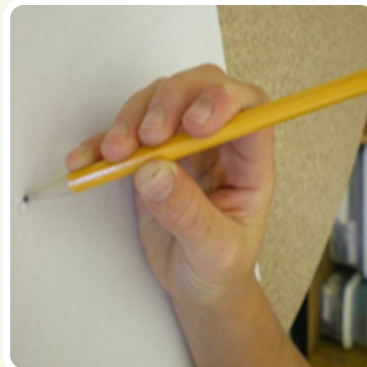
Digital Pronate Grasp



2-3 years

All fingers hold the pencil and the palm 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).

Inefficient Grasp

Inter-Digital Brace



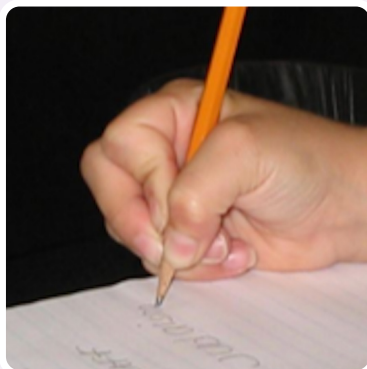
The pencil is held between the fingers of the hand.

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 the fingers.

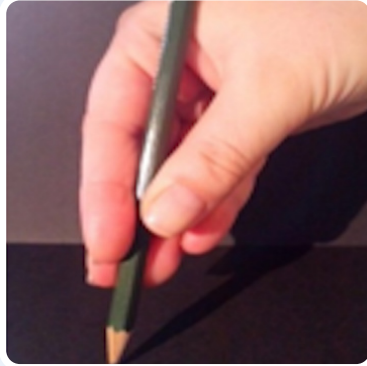
Hyperextended Index Finger



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

Functional Grasp

Static Tripod Grasp



4-6 years

A 3 finger grasp where the thumb, index and third finger work together as one unit.

Dynamic Tripod Grasp



5-7 years

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

Lateral Tripod Grasp



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

Practitioners should routinely offer activities that continue to build and strengthen children's muscles, working towards a functional grip.

This information is issued by:
Essex County Council Early Years & Childcare

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