

Early Years PE- Physical development

Physical development is one of the three prime areas in EYFS. The prime areas of learning are vital for all babies and young children because they underpin all later learning.

In Early Years, we encourage children's physical development in three different ways:

- play-based learning, with well-timed and sensitive interaction with adults;
- guided play, where adults have learning outcomes in mind; and
- short periods of direct instruction to introduce new knowledge.

Given the right experiences and interactions, babies and young children can refine their physical movement over time, gaining increasing control over both gross and fine motor skills. To do this, children need sensory experiences, and to develop an understanding of the position of their body parts in relation to one another and to the world around them.

Baseline assessments

We carry out a baseline assessment for all children when they enter our Purple Poppies (2 year old), preschool nursery (3 & 4 year olds) and reception class. This helps us to know what children can do and what they need to learn next, to support their early physical development.

In nursery, we use Birth to 5 Matters to assess children against age related statements such as, can they run well, kick a ball, and jump with both feet off the ground at the same time?

In Reception Class, the baseline assessment comes from Jungle Journey- a programme for the development of early fine and gross motor skills. Children then move onto the Get Set for PE scheme which is used throughout school.

These baselines inform future planning for not only direct teaching of physical development skills, but also, planning for our provision and play based learning involving gross and fine motor skills. This means we can provide activities that deepen and extend a child's capabilities.

Gross motor skills

For babies and very young children, physical development starts from the top and works down. They gain control of their head before their shoulders; they learn to sit before they can walk. Control also starts from the centre and moves out. For example, children develop strength and control of their shoulders before their elbows. We create opportunities for children to move in lots of different ways, such as twisting, turning, jumping, stretching and bending, help them to gain more control of their body, refine their gross motor skills and develop coordination.

Activities we do in Early years to develop gross motor skills:

- Gross motor skill development through movement and games in the forest area
- Dough Disco (both gross and fine)
- Squiggle Whilst You Wiggle (both gross and fine)
- Yoga Bugs
- Core strength yoga balls- bouncing and rolling to music
- Dancing
- Parachute games
- Jungle Journey (Summer term with children who are due to move to reception class)

Fine Motor skills

Learning gross motor skills helps children to develop fine motor skills. For example, once a child can sit without support, their arms and hands are freed up to reach, grasp and hold objects and equipment.

Fine motor skills give children more control over objects. For example, they will go from whole-hand grasping, to a pincer grip using the thumb and forefinger, to a pincer grip using the thumb, middle finger and index finger. This eventually gives them the ability to hold and control equipment ease and confidence. They will need repeated practice to develop the muscle strength and hand-eye coordination needed.

Activities we do in Early years to develop fine motor skills:

- Dough Disco
- Squiggle Whilst You Wiggle
- Funky Finger activities
- Throwing and catching