

ELAN Physical Development (Fine Motor Skills) Curriculum Map for Reception

Educational Programme: Physical Development

Physical activity is vital in children's all-round development, enabling them to pursue happy, healthy and active lives. Gross and fine motor experiences develop incrementally throughout early childhood, starting with sensory explorations and the development of a child's strength, co-ordination and positional awareness through tummy time, crawling and play movement with both objects and educators. By creating games and providing opportunities for play both indoors and outdoors, educators can support children to develop their core strength, stability, balance, spatial awareness, co-ordination and agility. Gross motor skills provide the foundation for developing healthy bodies and social and emotional well-being. Fine motor control and precision helps with **hand-eye co-ordination** which is later linked to early literacy. Repeated and varied opportunities to explore and play with small world activities, puzzles, arts and crafts and the practise of using **small tools**, with feedback and support from educators, allow children to develop **proficiency, control and confidence**.

Early Learning Goal: Fine Motor Skills

- 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.

Our Intent at ELAN Multi-Academy Trust

- Develop children's proficiency, control, coordination, strength and confidence in fine motor movements.
- Provide repeated and varied opportunities to develop hand-eye coordination, finger strength, precision and increasingly refined movements.
- Build progressively from the fine motor experiences established in the 2–4-year-old curriculum, increasing precision, control, independence and complexity.
- Develop the skills needed for everyday independence, including using scissors, knives and forks, tools and a pencil effectively.
- Make purposeful links with other areas of learning.

Further guidance and resources

- Development Matters for any further guidance needed for specific cohort learning and development needs (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/64e6002a20ae890014f26cbc/DfE_Development_Matters_Report_Sep2023.pdf).
- See Expressive Arts and Design for progression in the use of different types of paint brushes, drawing skills and sculpting using small tools.
- EXTEND Letters and Sounds.
- Refer to occupational therapy guidance where individual children need additional support with fine motor development. <https://nhsforthvalley.com/health-services/az-of-services/childrens-services/childrens-occupational-therapy/>
- Movement Matters: <https://www.earlymovers.org.uk/movement-matters>

Ofsted: State-funded school inspection toolkit, for use from 7 September 2026, page 54

Teaching is a broad term that covers the many different ways in which adults help young children to learn. In the early years, it includes their interactions with children during planned and child-initiated play and activities, communicating and modelling language, showing, explaining, demonstrating, exploring ideas, encouraging, questioning, recalling, providing a narrative for what they are doing, facilitating and setting challenges. It takes account of the equipment that adults provide, and the attention given to the physical environment, as well as the structure and routines of the day that establish expectations. Integral to teaching is how practitioners assess what children know, understand and can do, as well as how they take account of their interests and dispositions to learn (characteristics of effective learning), and how they use this information to plan children's next steps in learning and monitor their progress.

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Fine motor skills

Intent	Knowledge/Skills	Language	Implementation
To pour	Develop greater control, accuracy and awareness of amount when pouring.	Pour, pouring, poured, fill, full, empty, measure, amount, stop, control.	Pour from larger containers into smaller containers with increasing control. Pour carefully and stop when the desired amount has been reached. Pour measured amounts into different containers. Vary the materials, container sizes and amount of liquid/material to increase challenge.
To spoon, to fork, to tweeze	Develop precision, control and hand-eye coordination when transferring, feeding and manipulating small objects.	Spoon, spooning, transfer, transferring, tweeze, tweezers, tongs, fork, control, precise, amount.	Encourage use of the thumb, index and middle fingers when using small tools. Use smaller pots and bowls and smaller spoons to increase precision. Develop controlled spooning and pouring, including stopping and starting and managing multiple pours. Use tongs and tweezers to transfer increasingly small or varied objects. Provide varied materials and weights so children adjust the force and control they use. Knife and fork progression is addressed separately. See Reception Knife and Fork Progression, page 4.
To turn, to twist, to hammer	Develop hand strength, wrist control, coordination and precision through increasingly complex tool use.	Turn, turning, twist, twisting, screw, screwing, hammer, hammering, tighten, loosen, tool.	Provide a tinkering table. Provide screws and opportunities to practise screwing into softer materials such as foam before progressing to wood. Use nuts, bolts, hooks, screwdrivers and other appropriate tools with increasing control. Develop turning and twisting through practical construction and problem-solving activities. Provide safe opportunities for hammering.
To cut, to snip and to fringe	Develop scissor grip, hand strength, bilateral coordination, control and increasing cutting accuracy.	Cut, cutting, snip, snipping, fringe, fringing, straight, curve, angle, zigzag, shape.	See Reception Scissor Progression, page 4. Progress from controlled opening and closing of scissors to straight lines, curves, angled lines, zigzags, circles and increasingly complex shapes. Provide left-handed and right-handed scissors and vary scissors and materials to increase challenge.
To cut, to chop, to slice, to peel and to grate	Develop control, coordination and safe use of utensils in food preparation and practical activities.	Cut, chop, slice, peel, grate, spread, knife, peeler, grater, pressure, control.	Spread butter or another suitable soft food onto crackers or bread using an appropriate knife. Explore peeling, slicing and grating suitable foods with increasing independence, where appropriate. Vary materials according to complexity, moving from softer to firmer foods. See Reception Knife and Fork Progression, page 4, for the detailed knife and fork sequence.
To thread, to plait, to sew	Develop bilateral coordination, pincer control, precision and sustained attention through threading, weaving, plaiting and sewing.	Thread, threading, weave, weaving, plait, plaiting, sew, sewing, lace, loop, pattern.	Progress from large-scale weaving to smaller-scale, more precise activities. Weave using large materials outdoors, for example through fences or large structures. Use cardboard weaving and other structured weaving activities. Thread with increasingly smaller beads, buttons and other materials. Plait with cord and develop sewing skills using appropriate equipment. Vary the width of sticks, thread and materials to increase complexity.
To push, to pull, to stretch, to sweep, to mop, to zip, to button	Develop hand strength, coordination and bilateral control through practical tasks and self-care.	Push, pull, stretch, sweep, mop, zip, button, fasten, grip, control.	Use practical tools such as brooms, dustpan and brushes, mops and other appropriate equipment (link to tidy up time). Develop pushing and pulling through construction and practical activities. Practise zips, buttons, poppers and other fastenings as part of everyday independence. Use hole punches, staplers and elastic bands where appropriate to develop hand strength and control.
To fold, to wrap, to tear	Develop precision, bilateral coordination and control when manipulating paper, fabric and other materials.	Fold, folding, wrap, wrapping, tear, tearing, crease, line, diagonal.	Fold paper and fabric using horizontal, diagonal and multiple folds. Wrap objects with increasing care and accuracy. Tear paper and other suitable materials in purposeful creative activities. Increase complexity through the size, thickness and type of material.

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Intent	Knowledge/Skills	Language	Implementation
To mix, to whisk, to stir, to spread, to knead, to roll, to spin,	Develop hand and wrist strength, coordination and control through cooking and malleable-material experiences.	Mix, whisk, stir, spread, knead, roll, spin, pressure, combine.	Develop skills through cooking, for example spreading butter, mixing ingredients, whisking, kneading and rolling. Use a range of malleable materials and tools to increase resistance and control. Use activities such as a salad spinner to develop turning and spinning movements. Link practical tasks to independence and everyday routines, such as laying a table (etiquette).
To squeeze, to prod,	Develop finger and hand strength and precision.	Squeeze, squeezing, prod, prodding, press, pinch, pressure.	Use clay and other malleable materials. Vary the resistance of materials to increase challenge. Use squeezing and pressing activities to strengthen fingers and hands.
To grasp, to pinch, to scoop, to snap, to drum	Develop finger isolation, grasp, pincer control and hand strength.	Grasp, pinch, scoop, snap, drum, fingers, thumb, pincer, manipulate.	Provide opportunities to grasp, pinch, scoop and manipulate a range of materials. Use finger-isolation activities and rhymes to strengthen and coordinate individual fingers. Use tools and resources that require increasingly precise finger movements.
To dig	Develop hand, wrist and arm strength and coordination through purposeful gardening and digging.	Dig, digging, spade, trowel, scoop, soil, sand.	Develop skills through gardening and digging activities. Use a range of appropriately sized gardening tools and materials. Vary the resistance of materials to increase challenge.
To rub, to polish	Develop wrist, hand and finger control through repeated, purposeful rubbing and polishing movements.	Rub, rubbing, polish, polishing, pressure, circular, smooth.	Provide purposeful polishing activities using cloths and suitable materials. Encourage controlled movements and appropriate pressure.
To draw	Develop pencil grasp, posture, hand and finger strength, pressure, control, accuracy and confidence in preparation for fluent writing.	Draw, drawing, pencil grasp, tripod grip, pressure, posture, position, control, accuracy.	See Reception Pencil Grasp, Positioning, Posture and Pressure Progression, page 5. See Expressive Arts and Design for progression in the use of different types of paint brushes, drawing skills and sculpting using small tools.

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Knife and fork progression

Term 1	Term 2	Term 3
Use a fork (an educator has cut up the food).	Maintain a correct grip on knife and fork when positioned by an educator. Be able to cut with the knife.	Maintain a correct grip on knife and fork without assistance. Be able to cut with the knife and eat with the fork.

Consideration needs to be given to the resources provided. For example, using Caring Cutlery which is designed to support children to effectively use a knife and fork. This would be replicated in both the dinner hall and the EYFS classroom (the home corner and the malleable area). Learning in each term could be deepened by providing children with a varying degree of challenge in the materials they are asked to cut (playdough, plasticine, putty and clay).

Scissor skills progression

Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4	Term 5	Term 6
Maintain a correct grip on scissors when positioned by an educator. Be able to open and close scissors.	Maintain a correct grip on scissors without assistance. Be able to open and close scissors using a controlled action. Hold paper and make small random snips.	Cut straight lines across a page.	Cut simple curves and angled lines (one direction change)	Cut simple lines with more than one direction change (zig zag line). Cut out a circle.	Cut complicated shapes with straight and curved lines.

Learning in each term could be further deepened by providing children with scissors of varying sizes and types (zig zag) or providing card instead of paper to cut. Both right-handed and left-handed scissors will be provided.

Pencil grasp, positioning, posture and pressure progression

Autumn Term and continues throughout the year to develop strength, stamina and precision		Teaching focus from Autumn term; expectation by the end of EYFS
Pencil Grasp Provide resources with tweezers/tongs that encourage the use of the thumb, index and middle finger while working the tiny muscles in that nook between the thumb and index. For example, Patch Bed Bugs, Operation, Wok and Roll or Hungry Monkey Motor Skills Game. Provide bubble wrap with children using their tripod fingers to pop the bubbles. Positioning Provide shorter writing implements as they naturally encourage a proper grasp. Encourage the child to rest the ulnar side (the little finger) of their hand on the page when they are writing or drawing. This helps to stabilise the hand. Posture Provide vertical surfaces as this places the wrist in a good position for writing e.g., use pizza boxes. Hand and Finger Movements Teach children to isolate fingers. For example, one finger up and four fingers down, two fingers up and three fingers down). Sing finger rhymes (Tommy Thumb and Here is a Church). Teach other finger skills as recommended by occupational therapists. For example, each finger to touch the thumb (one at a time), kiss each fingertip or running fingers along the table.	Pencil Grasp Teach how to hold the pencil correctly. Resources to support height and positioning that we might use: 1. The Claw Pencil Grip. 2. The Grotto Grip. 3. Twist N Write Pencil. 4. The Dolphin Grip 5. Place an elastic band/hair band around the end of the pencil. 6. Place a small pom pom or marble in the palm, held by the ring and little finger, while the child holds the pencil. Strategies to support this that we might use: 1. Nip, grip and flip. 2. Ali the Alligator: chomp two fingers on top of one finger. Flip it. This could be drawn on children’s hands. 3. Rhyme: My thumb is bent. My pointer points to the tip. Tall man uses his side. I tuck two fingers in and take them for a ride. Pressure Demonstrate how to sit at a table and how to position paper. Focus on applying pressure when using a pencil and drawing the following shapes: Examples of drawing shapes  2 years  2½ years  3 years  3¾-4 years  4 years  4½ years  4½ years  4 years 11 months  5 years 3 months	It is an expectation that, by the end of the EYFS, children will use a tripod grip in almost all cases. To support children to meet the ELG for Writing, including writing recognisable letters that are mostly correctly formed, educators should address pencil grasp, positioning and control earlier in the year, providing appropriate teaching, practice and support. Refer to EXTEND Letters and Sounds. Refer to Communication, Language and Literacy curriculum planning map.

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Physical Development Matters: observation checkpoints for birth to three years

- Look out for children who find it difficult to sit comfortably on chairs. They may need help to develop their core muscles. You can help them by encouraging them to scoot on sit-down trikes without pedals and jump on soft-play equipment.

Sensible and meaningful assessment

Assessment should be based on professional dialogue and observation across a range of contexts. Educators should consider not only whether a child can perform a movement, but how confidently, safely, efficiently and independently they apply it.

Review point	Ready to progress	Children who would benefit from further or different experiences Consider context and range of situations	What experience, adaptation or support will help them progress? End of term 5: What does the Year 1 teacher need to know?
End of Term 1	Percentage of children who are ready to progress:		
End of Term 3	Percentage of children who are ready to progress:		
End of Term 5	Percentage of children who are ready to progress:		

Children who would benefit from further or different experiences should be identified and supported through appropriately graded opportunities. Annotations may be added on this sheet, if necessary, or within other child progress documentation recorded by the school.