

Overview of Writing at The Dales School

Writing and Mark Making at The Dales School

Writing and mark making opportunities are supported in all curriculum pathways and phases at the school. Some opportunities throughout the day may include tactile exploration, mark making through continuous play provision, Write Dance sessions, overwriting or tracing with sensory resources or pens, and directed written work. Prior to accessing writing and mark making activities, pupils are supported to build and strengthen the pre-requisite gross and fine motor skills needed for writing. Pupils have opportunities across the curriculum to work on head/trunk control, seating position and grasp. These skills can be taught implicitly, through everyday routine, or explicitly through MAPP PLIs or specific lesson objectives. Pupils at The Dales School often present with spikey profiles and the following guidance should be personalised to meet specific pupil need.

Modelling and Practice

Providing a writing and literacy rich environment models good practice and encourages an interest in text and writing. Consider writing / text on display boards, in annotated pupils' workbooks and labels, using Comic Sans for printed text. Resources to support writing should be considered as part of the differentiated approach to personalised learning e.g., pencil grips, tripod pencils, writing slopes. Modelling good practice in letter formation is an essential aspect in the delivery of writing. Supporting tripod grip, left to right directional sentence formation, letter spaces and using the correct grammatical structures including punctuation.

In some circumstances our occupational therapy colleagues can support in functional fine motor skills development and resources to support writing.

Pre-Requisite Gross and Fine motor Skills

To enable pupils to learn to write, they need the skills and motivation to sit, attend and hold and control a pen or pencil. Here are some early pre-requisite physical skills needed:

Pre-requisite Gross Motor Skills (not exclusive)

- Develops ability to hold own head up.
- Movements with arms and legs gradually become more controlled.
- Play with hands at midline of body.
- Use core muscle strength to achieve a good posture when sitting.
- Moves whole body to sounds they enjoy.

Pre-requisite Fine Motor Skills (not exclusive)


- Grips objects firmly that are placed into hand.
- Explores by grabbing or scratching textures and surfaces within reach.
- Holds an object and bangs or dabs it against a surface.
- Uses hands to twist, turn and manipulate an object.
- Develop single finger isolation

Development of Mark Making

When gross and fine motor skills are developing, pupils may begin to make spontaneous marks. Mark making can be done with a writing implement and paper or using fingers in sensory resources like sand or paint. Pupils notice their actions create marks. As mark making develops, pupils may begin to assign meaning to their symbols and marks.

Overview of Writing at The Dales School

Typical development of mark making



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scribbles • Vertical and horizontal lines • Multiple lines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Circular (nests) • To-and-fro scribbles • Dots 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Horizontal and vertical lines • Multiple loops and spirals • Roughly drawn circles • Shapes resemble letters T and V 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Circles and squares • Crosses • Dots • Shapes resemble letters T, V and H 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Squares, circles, rectangles • Attempts triangles and diamonds • Crosses • Letters (pretend writing) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic shapes • Triangles and diamonds • Spontaneous letters (imitating writing)
--	--	---	--	---	---

Development of Writing

After developing their mark making, pupils may begin to further develop their writing skills. Pupils may move through the preliterate writing stage - scribbling, making marks with intentional meaning, writing mock letters - to the emergent writing stage. In the emergent writing stage pupils may begin to write strings or groups of letters and copy words and letters they have seen in their environment. Next, pupils may move into the transitional writing stage where they write one letter to represent a sound or word, or they may use multiple letters to represent a word while missing out the middle sound (e.g. "dg" to mean to word "dog"). At the final stage of writing development pupils reach the fluency writing stage where they write phrases alongside images and full sentences.

When teaching letter formation explicitly, letters should be taught in families of letters. These can be taught using a range of prompts (physical, visual, gestural, verbal), in sensory resources (e.g. sand or paint), and / or by using tracing sheets, white boards or paper. Lower case letters should be taught first.

Letter family order:

- Long letters: l, t, i, u, j, y
- Curly letters: c, a, g, q, o, e, f, s
- Bouncy letters: r, n, m, p, h, b, d
- Zig zag letters: v, w, x, k, z

Further information about pre-requisite skills, mark making and writing progression can be found in the Cherry Garden branch maps (Communication, Language & Literacy, Physical Development and Expressive Arts & Design), Birth to 5 Matters and Pre-Key Stage Standards.

Impact is Evidenced through:

- Tapestry, WOWs, pupil work, practitioner discussions.
- Progress of MAPP targets on the CSD.
- Cherry Garden Framework, EYFS Prime and Specific Area Tracker, Functional Skills NCFE.