



Early Years Writing Strategy

The Foundations of Early Writing

Writing is a developmental process that begins long before a child can form letters or spell words. According to early childhood research (Clay, 1991; Whitebread, 2012), writing emerges from rich play experiences, oral language development, and purposeful mark-making. The Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework recognises writing as one of the prime ways in which young children communicate, alongside speaking and reading.

As children begin to understand that their marks carry meaning, they start to explore written language. Research highlights the importance of supporting both the cognitive and physical elements of writing through developmentally appropriate practices. An effective strategy must take into account the child's overall development — including language, motor skills, and motivation — to nurture confident, competent young writers.

Why Writing Is Important in the Early Years

Writing is much more than transcription; it supports a wide range of learning and development:

Communication: Writing gives children a way to express thoughts, needs, stories, and ideas.

Language and Literacy: Writing reinforces phonics, vocabulary, and sentence structure.

Cognitive Skills: It helps children organise their thinking, remember ideas, and sequence events.

Emotional Development: Children build confidence and pride in sharing their written creations.

School Readiness: Writing is a core skill across the curriculum in Key Stage 1 and beyond.

Valuing early writing, in all its forms, supports children's identity as capable communicators and thinkers.

Strategic Aims

To support early writing and handwriting, we aim to:

1. Create enabling environments rich in language, print and writing opportunities.
2. Support physical development through daily gross and fine motor activities.
3. Use effective phonics teaching and interventions to build children's segmenting skills.
4. Model and scaffold writing through the teaching of Drawing Club.
5. Track progress through observations, samples of writing, and developmental milestones.
6. Teach handwriting, following the handwriting overview, and in line with the WriteWell handwriting scheme and use of scaffolds where necessary.

How writing is taught in the EYFS

Writing is embedded in all aspects of EYFS provision through a balance of child-initiated and adult directed learning.

This strategy is based on the following principles:

1. Meaningful mark-making

Children are encouraged to make marks from the earliest stages, using a variety of materials (pens, paints, sticks in mud, chalk). Adults celebrate and annotate children's marks, recognising them as the foundations of writing.

2. Language rich environments

Writing opportunities are embedded across continuous provision — from role-play menus to outdoor signs. Books and storytelling inspire children to become storytellers and authors of their own creations.

3. Systematic phonics

Children are taught phoneme-grapheme correspondences through daily phonics, following the Little Wandle scheme. Writing is linked to phonics sessions, where children apply new sounds in words and sentences.

4. Drawing Club

Drawing Club is taught following a set structure, which introduces a new book each week, learning new vocabulary and modelling words and sentences, linked to their phonic knowledge. Adults model the writing process through modelled writing during these sessions.

5. Purposeful writing opportunities

Writing arises from children's interests and real-life contexts in continuous provision, for example, writing postcards, shopping lists, or signs for a den. Children are encouraged to take ownership of their writing through drawing, captions, storybooks, and labelling. Opportunities to practice what they have been taught, writing independently.

6. Development of fine and gross motor skills

Gross motor skills provide the core strength and stability necessary for writing. Fine motor development enables children to grip and manipulate writing tools effectively

7. Handwriting

Handwriting practice is part of the weekly timetable, to ensure correct letter formation.

Drawing Club

Drawing Club is the brainchild of author and childhood advocate, Greg Bottrill, author of the bestselling Early Years book *Can I go and Play now?* and *School and the magic of children*.

Drawing Club is taught three times a week in EYFS and is based on the 3 Ms

Making conversation: talking confidently, using new vocabulary, listening to others, having a back and forth conversation, collaborating, respecting and helping one another

Mark making: writing at the cusp of confidence, reading with interest, developing phonics knowledge, discovering the art of writing, increasing fine motor control with purpose.

Maths: opportunities to count, compare, add, take away, divide, write numbers, recognise numbers.

Drawing Club is taught in 2 simple steps

Step 1

10 minute whole class input

Teach vocabulary with actions

Sharing/reading the story

Modelling the drawing and writing and the 3Ms.

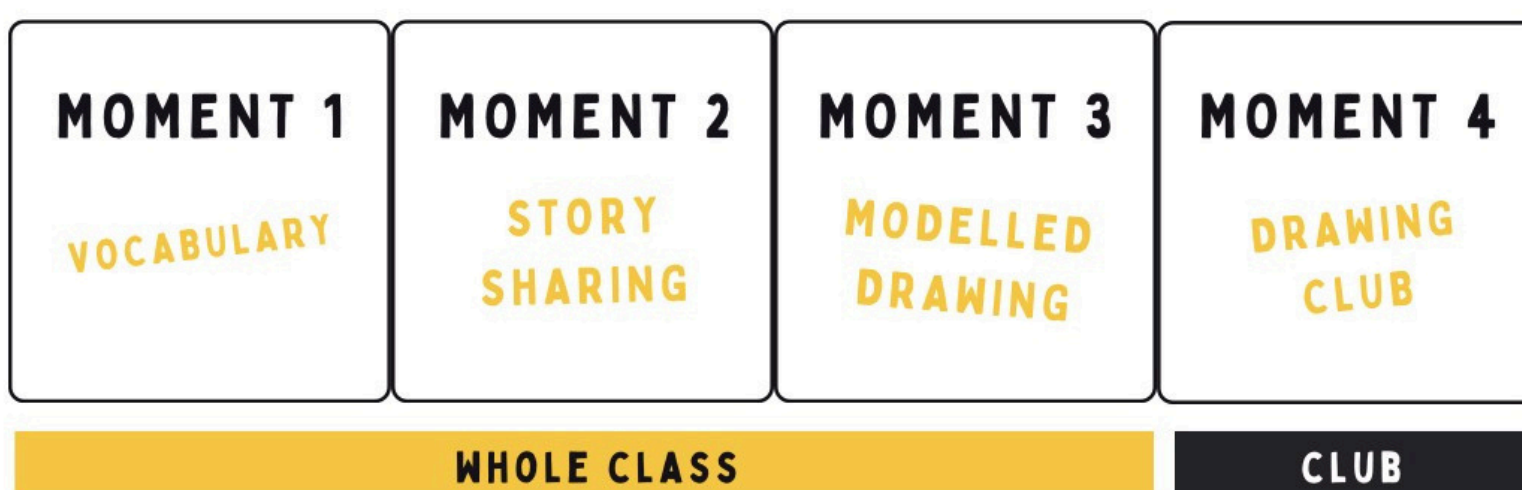
Step 2

Group of 2 - 6 (depending on support needed for the child)

Exploring the story through drawing a picture

Writing words/phrases/sentences linked to phonics and their imagination.

THE 4 MINI MOMENTS



DRAWING CLUB - the Weekly Flow

	DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4	DAY 5
MINI MOMENT 1	The Vocabulary	The Vocabulary	The Vocabulary	The Vocabulary	The Vocabulary
MINI MOMENT 2	Share story	Share story			
MINI MOMENT 3	Modelled drawing Character	Modelled drawing Setting	Modelled drawing Adventure Time 1	Modelled drawing Adventure Time 2	Modelled drawing Adventure Time 3
MINI MOMENT 4	Children's turn	Children's turn	Children's turn	Children's turn	Children's turn

Writing skills taught through Drawing Club are taught sequentially and in line with the EYFS Development Matters. Adaptions will need to be made for those children not working at the expected standards or with additional SEN needs.

<i>Term 1</i>	Handwriting patterns Initial sounds in words Introducing letter formation
<i>Term 2</i>	Hear and write initial and final sounds in words Write CVC words Write phase 2 tricky words e.g. I, the, is, and Begin to write on the line
<i>Term 3</i>	Writing CVC words Write a short phrase - 2/3 words together Scaffolded sentence where needed Write phase 2 tricky words Introduce capital letters (model and expose children to these) Introduce full stops at the end of a sentence Develop writing on the line Identify and write a few digraphs
<i>Term 4</i>	Write short phrases Write phase 2 and some phase 3 tricky words Write some digraphs in words Scaffolded sentences, where needed Develop confidence when using capital letters and full stops Introduce the use of exclamation marks Develop correct letter formation
<i>Term 5</i>	Scaffolded short sentences Write phase 2/3 tricky words Develop use of capital letters and full stops Write phase 3 trigrams in words Develop correct letter formation Begin to write simple independent sentences
<i>Term 6</i>	Write independent simple sentences Write phase 3 tricky words Most letters correctly formed Consolidate capital letters & full stops Develop independence

The role of gross and fine motor development



Physical development is crucial to writing readiness. Children must first develop gross motor control before mastering the fine motor skills needed for letter formation.

Gross Motor Control

Gross motor skills provide the core strength and shoulder stability necessary for writing. This foundational strength helps children maintain good posture and control for seated writing tasks.

These are developed through:
Climbing, balancing, and crawling
Swinging, dancing, and yoga
Large-scale drawing
Write Dance

Fine Motor Control

Fine motor development enables children to grip and manipulate writing tools effectively. Activities to strengthen hand muscles are intentionally planned within provision to ensure children develop the control needed for accurate letter formation.

This is fostered through:
Threading, pegging, and tweezing
Dough disco and finger rhymes
Drawing, cutting, and using small tools
Progression from whole-hand grasps to tripod grips

Every EYFS classroom has a Funky Fingers station, where there are a range of fine motor control activities for the children to engage with. Some children may be directed to this station, if further development is needed.

In Term 1 and 2 a larger focus is on the development of gross motor control development, through continuous provision. Some children working below the age related expectation in fine motor development, will receive extra support in handwriting.

Gross Motor Activities

Obstacle cours
Ball games
Bouncy blending
Stilts
Large paint brushes with water
Giant chalk
Sound (fly) swatting
Parachute games
Climbing equipment
Digging/pouring in sand
Beanbag throwing
Balance boards
Bikes/ trikes
Yoga

Fine Motor Activities

Scissor control
Threading
Lego building
Pom pom and tweezers
Tweezer activities
Bead jewellery making
Glitter trays
Mark making with a range of tools
- paint brushes/ cotton buds/ sticks/ feathers etc.
Tracing patterns
Marshmallow and cocktail stick construction
Spaghetti and colander
Save the toys from the masking tape
Dough disco
Pegs
Magnets
Tracing paper
Straws
Pipe cleaner shapes
Loom/elastic bands/band boards
Peg boards
Pipettes
Paper clip linking
Zips

Handwriting

Handwriting is taught through phonics in the first two terms, and then following the WriteWell scheme. The use of Dough Disco is also used to develop their hand strength and development.



<i>Term 1</i>	<p>Dough disco daily</p> <p>Introducing handwriting & whiteboard etiquette</p> <p>Use of bubble, as a scaffold</p> <p>Introduce letter formation as part of phonics</p> <p>S, a, t, p, i, n, m, d, o, c, k, e, u, r, h, b, f, l</p> <p>Handwriting patterns in provision (<u>Writewell</u> book 1)</p> <p>Gross motor physical activity time</p> <p>Fine motor group for identified children</p>
<i>Term 2</i>	<p>3 days of adult directed handwriting, using bubbles scaffolded whiteboards</p> <p>2 days of dough disco</p> <p>Introduce letter formation as part of phonics</p> <p>J, v, w, x, y, z, <u>ou, th, sh, ch, ng, nk</u></p> <p>Handwriting patterns in provision (<u>Writewell</u> book 1)</p> <p>Gross motor physical activity time</p> <p>Fine motor group for identified children</p>
<i>Term 3</i>	<p>3 days of adult directed handwriting</p> <p><u>Writewell</u> Book 2</p> <p>Long ladder letters – l, i, t, y, j, u</p> <p>Rubber ball letters – r, n, m, p, h, b, k</p> <p>2 days of dough disco</p> <p>Fine motor group for identified children</p>
<i>Term 4</i>	<p>3 days of adult directed handwriting</p> <p><u>Writewell</u> Book 3</p> <p>Cog letters - c, a, o, d, g, q</p> <p>Cog cousins - s, e, f</p> <p>Number formation</p> <p>2 days of dough disco</p> <p>Fine motor group for identified children</p>
<i>Term 5</i>	<p>3 days of adult directed handwriting</p> <p><u>Writewell</u> Book 3</p> <p>Zipwire - z, v, w, x</p> <p>Simple words</p> <p>Number formation</p> <p>2 days of dough disco</p> <p>Fine motor group for identified children</p>
<i>Term 6</i>	<p>4 days of handwriting</p> <p>Consolidation by revisiting any necessary letter formation</p> <p>Dictated sentences</p>

Scaffolding Letter Formation



Some children require extra support with letter formation to ensure they are formed correctly. In this instance the bubble scaffolds may be used to help support.

