



Messages for Parents

PENPALS *for Handwriting*

Preparation for handwriting involves developing four key areas:

1. Gross motor control:

The control and co-ordination of the big movements the body can make.

2. Fine motor control:

Being able to fine-tune the movements of the arm, hand and fingers.

3. Visual control: Making sure hand and eye movements are working well together.

4. Spatial control: Helping children to be able to move themselves confidently in a space with an awareness of direction (left/right) and plane (horizontal/vertical), and eventually helping them to transfer that sense of space on to paper.

As part of developing confidence in these key areas children begin to explore patterns and basic letter shapes. We experiment with the following six basic patterns and their variations as they provide excellent preparation for more formal work on letter formation:

- Investigating dots.
- Investigating straight lines and crosses.
- Investigating circles.
- Investigating curves, loops and waves.
- Investigating joined straight lines and angled patterns.
- Investigating eights and spirals.

Here are some things you can do at home to develop these key areas:

- Play with a ball, e.g. kick, catch, throw and bounce.
- Play with hoops, frisbees and stilts (the upside-down flowerpot kind).
- Encourage play on large climbing frames in parks.
- Play with large scale building kits.
- Enjoy finger rhymes.
- Encourage your child to make things and model things (e.g. cutting, sticking, moulding, cooking, sewing and threading) using a range of materials. (e.g. dough, Plasticine®, wood)
- Encourage your child to experiment with a range of tools and equipment. (e.g. pens, pencils, crayons, felt tips, scissors, hole punches and tweezers)
- Share jigsaw puzzles and board games.
- Provide opportunities for painting, colouring and 'making marks' on different sizes of paper.
- Enjoy household tasks together (e.g. mixing ingredients with implements or hands, using a dustpan and brush, scooping compost into plant pots and digging in the garden).

