



Ideas to support your child with mark making

Writing, together with reading is part of literacy, a specific area of learning in the early years. Being able to read and write confidently are important life skills that we all need. We have written separate guidance on supporting your child’s reading at home.

Being able to write is one of the many things that most of us take for granted. Even if we’re not keen writers, we may still write out a shopping list or jot down the odd note. For children, writing is a skill that they have to learn and, like so much during their childhood, it develops gradually.

Children begin to explore writing by making marks, starting as a baby by making marks in their spilt food and progressing to using crayons, chalks or sticks in mud to make big circular marks and lines. These are important steps in exploring mark making. Over time the marks your child makes will begin to have more meaning to them, they will tell you that a line is mummy or a circular shape is a picture of them. Next your child will begin to understand the difference between ‘writing’ and ‘drawing’ and may start to ‘act out’ writing if they have seen you do this, things like writing a birthday card or a shopping list. Your child may begin to write some recognisable letters, usually from their own name and start to add more detail to their drawing. They will see their writing and drawing as important and you can encourage them by valuing it too.

Sandy Lane Nursery and Forest School provide a stimulating learning environment with a broad range of mark making equipment which will encourage your child to explore both drawing and writing for a variety of purposes; from making marks to self-register at the start of the day to writing signs and labels for their models or in forest school, drawing a picture of their favourite part of a story in family group sessions to making their own books, the list is endless.

We are privileged, at Sandy Lane Nursery and Forest School, to support your child on their literacy journey and hope you find the suggestions of how you can support mark making at home useful. If you have any questions or concerns about your child’s literacy development please speak to your key worker who will be happy to help.

Did you know??

Research shows that children’s communication skills are directly linked to their writing ability. Children need to be able to make up simple stories as part of their play before they are able to ‘write’ about them



At home you could

- Point out to your child that you write for different purposes – a shopping list, a note to remind you of something, a birthday card. Let your child ‘write’ with you too
- Praise your child’s mark making and don’t get concerned that, for example, the line they have drawn that is mummy doesn’t have detailed features. Positive encouragement will mean your child will want to write and draw more often
- Provide opportunities for your child to make marks as part of ‘messy play’ activities. Use things like water mixed with cornflour (gloop), wet sand, shaving foam, finger paints, salt. Give your child a range of different mark making tools – sticks, paint brushes, spoons and forks.
- Point out ‘words’ and ‘pictures’ in books to help your child to see the difference between these
- Provide your child with lots of different opportunities to make marks on a big scale – sticks in mud, chalk on flags, brushes and water to paint the bricks outside, floor brushes to move water around, rolls of wallpaper and crayons. All these opportunities will help your child to develop the muscles needed to make smaller, more detailed marks later on and may encourage reluctant writers
- Try activities like ‘Dough Disco’, or using ribbons to make circles and move them up and down and making left to right movements to help to develop the muscles needed for good pencil control
- Encourage your child to make labels for things around the house or items in their toy boxes – children will enjoy making marks if they have a real purpose
- Talk with your child as they play, helping them to make up simple stories. This will help them with ideas of things they want to write about
- Point out to your child that we start ‘writing’ at the top of the page and work left to right
- Talk with your child about what they have drawn or written, return to it later in the day and point out that it still says the same thing
- Let your child make mark on drawing apps using a tablet or iPad to express themselves and tell their own stories
- Make simple books by folding paper, home made books will often motivate children to make marks

Useful Websites



Pablo – Uses his crayons to create fantastic adventures

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/shows/pablo>

Alphablocks – Watch the letters come together to make words

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/shows/alphablocks>

Get Squiggling – Join Squiglet as he draws pictures with his squiggle stick and pad

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/shows/get-squiggling>

Learning to write – further guidance for parents

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/grownups/its-not-just-scribbling-its-mark-making>

Dough Disco – Join Shonette Bason Wood at the dough disco

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3K-CQrjI0uY>



Our guidance on phonics provides information on letter formation, where letters start and end when writing, as well as how your child’s pencil grip develops over time

IMPORTANT – Please remember to check all website links to ensure the content is appropriate before sharing with your child