

COIN STREET NURSERY CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT POLICY



'In early years settings, the starting point must be the needs and characteristics of the child; the educator must assess these through observation and by collaborating with parents. The wide range of developmental stages and needs of very young children puts a great responsibility on educators to provide a curriculum which can take into account the similarities and differences within any group of under-fives and also provide continuity with what went before and progression to what will follow.' *Starting with quality: the 'Rumbold Report' 1990*

Principles

- All children are entitled to high quality learning and teaching. This will equip them with the skills, knowledge and understanding they need today, and prepare them well for tomorrow.
- Children learn at different rates and each child's development is unique.
- Children learn best when they are happy, secure and actively involved in their own learning. We discuss children's learning with them. We make children's enjoyment and choices our priority.
- Effective teaching and learning in the EYFS meets children's identified needs and interests and helps children to learn and develop in all seven areas of learning and development.
- Different aspects of early learning require different approaches. Much of early maths learning is sequential: learning new concepts must build on the solid foundations of earlier concepts. On the other hand, learning about the world is much less sequential. The order of learning matters less than building on children's interests and widening their horizons.
- We regularly discuss and review our work with each other, and with parents. This discussion and review help us to ensure that children take in learning with joy and enthusiasm. It helps us to ensure that their learning in our nursery prepares them well for reception, so that they can confidently handle a transition and continue their learning journey.
- Curriculum development is practitioner development: what we do, and how we do it, matter equally.
- Every child can progress well in their learning, with the right support. Every child can thrive.

Curriculum Overview

We offer a high quality broad and balanced curriculum which has four main elements.

Teaching and Learning based on children's interests

- All aspects of our curriculum require practitioners to be flexible and take account of children's interests. This is especially true of the first element.

A regular cycle of learning

- All aspects of our curriculum have a 'progress model'. When we are building on children's interests, we are planning to broaden or deepen those interests.

Core experiences: growing beans and looking after chicks and caterpillars

- For example, our cycle of 'Core Books' begins with very simple, repetitive texts. Over time, children progress onto texts with more complex vocabulary and structures.

Our curricular goals for children

- The curriculum is modified to meet the needs of individual children depending on the stage of development.

Learning at Coin Street Nursery

- Most learning is play-based and takes place indoors and outside.
- There is a balance between adult-initiated experiences (guided learning) and child-initiated activities
- Adults take children's interests and strengths as a starting point, seeing each child as a competent learner.
- Parent involvement is crucial. We learn a great deal about each child from their parents. Parental support and a high quality home learning environment make a huge difference to children.

We designed our curriculum with the particular strengths and needs of the children of who attend our nursery in mind. For example, many children are multilingual: we celebrate the different languages children speak, and staff use a range of languages when interacting with children. We also put a strong focus on helping children to learn English. Many children attend nursery for 10 hours a day and live in small flats/houses with little access to garden or outdoor play spaces. We offer lots of learning outdoors to build children's core strength and co-ordination, for example through opportunities at the Columbo Fitness Centre, dance at Rambert company and sensory walks in our locality.

The goals are ambitious. They provide an overview of many of the different things we would like children to know and be able to do.

The goals are adaptable to our children on roll. We offer scaffolding and extra support to help every child to access the curriculum and to ensure they make progress through it. However, we recognise that every child will not make the same progress through the curricular goals. Many children will learn to bake bread. For some children with complex needs, managing to tolerate the feel of flour and water, and mix it together to make playdough, will represent strong progress. All children are participating in the same curriculum.

Where children move on quickly, our emphasis is on deepening their learning rather than introducing new skills or concepts. For example, a child may follow different recipe cards to make different types of bread and may help other children.

Our 8 curricular goals

Settle in	Settle in and become a confident learner
Follow	Follow a recipe to bake a bread roll
Make	Make a model at the woodwork table
Ride	Ride a balance bike
Create	Create your own dance to a piece of music
Sew	Sew using a running stitch
Make up	Make up your own story
Write	Write the first two letters of your name

Curricular goals are shared with parents throughout the year. Their clarity helps parents to get involved and support their children's learning at home. We plan in the moment for children capturing the interest of a child or children in the present moment. Young children have a natural desire to learn, explore and question. We offer an environment that enables child-initiated play to capture the moment of engagement. Practitioners observe children and seize the moment when a child shows interest in an activity and then build upon the needs and interests, these are called 'teachable moments'. Written 'planning' is then carried out in the form of observations, records of the interactions and notes on the outcomes. Teachable moments are about recognising that children learn in an unconscious way during informal interactions and when they are engaged in open ended activities which are a combination of child initiated and adult led. Secure and nurturing relationships are at the heart of our curriculum, and we know they are crucial for development in the early years.

We regularly review our curriculum and the resources we use to ensure our approach is tailored to the children on roll.

Planning and assessment

As children start nursery, most of our planning is focused on the three prime areas. These are communication, self-confidence and awareness and physical health. Key people spend quality time getting to know their key children and their families. Trusting relationship helps children to grow in confidence as they settle into their new environment. Our assessment starts with home visits and a 10-day settling-in and starting points assessment.

Home Visits

Every child is offered a home visit or video call via an online platform if the visit to the home is not possible. As well as sharing care routines, parents share information about their child's interests, communication, confidence, and physical health with the key person. The key person will use the information shared by parents to add to the child's 10 day assessment. They will also build on the child's interests into the planning of the provision.

10-Day assessments

Practitioners meet with parents after their child has had 10 days in nursery. They discuss how the child has settled in and what they have observed. This is a snapshot of a child's starting points and is a joint assessment with the parents of the child. The practitioner will refer to the Development Matters checkpoints, checking children's progress in the prime areas. These assessments will inform a discussion with parents about how well their child is settling and will be used to help notice children who may need extra help.

Next steps from children's starting points are usually linked to how the children have settled into nursery or anything of significance e.g. toilet training. Once children have settled and can access the nursery environment, we begin thinking with more detail about how they will access the curriculum and we support learning around their interests. For the children who settle quickly and are confident, we can move into using the wider curricular goals quickly.

If we notice that a child might be having difficulties with their development, we will take action quickly. It is important that we get to know and understand these 'vulnerable starters' so we will spend time observing them closely and reflecting on what we notice. We will continue to develop a strong relationship with their parents/carers supporting them to also give their child the extra help they need. The curriculum for these children will remain ambitious and inclusive. It is important that we focus on support, scaffolding and helping children overcome barriers to their learning.

Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

For children with SEND, precise assessment needs to focus on what the child can do, and what the barriers to their learning are. If a child has specific difficulties with their communication, for example, they may need to have aids like a core board so that they can make choices and share their ideas. All children are entitled to the whole of the early years curriculum. Of course, they won't all manage to do and know everything that's mapped out: but some who appear vulnerable at first may thrive later in the year.

Assessment and tracking overview

We are not driven by assessment and tracking. Assessment serves children's learning and our curriculum.

Most assessment is formative, so that it quickly helps us to make a difference to children's learning. However, we also need to have an overview of children's progress, so that we can take further actions where needed, and so we can monitor equalities. Our aim is for the system to be proportionate, and to ensure it is not overly burdensome.

Our objectives:

- Dialogue with parents, so that we can work in a respectful partnership to support children's learning at home and in the nursery
- Dialogue with children, focused on how they learn, to promote metacognitive thinking
- Early identification of children who need extra help, and children who may have special educational needs
- Through on-going observations and focus child weeks, we are checking that individual children, and groups of children, are making progress and taking prompt action where this is not the case.
- Reporting formally to parents and to the receiving reception teacher in the summer of their transition so that children can continue their learning journey through the EYFS as seamlessly as possible.

Activity	Key features of the activity	Planned outcomes
10 - day assessment	Will include next steps in settling-in, if needed	<p>Most children will be on the 'universal' pathway, accessing the curriculum with appropriate scaffolding and support.</p> <p>Room leads and senior leaders continue to review progress. Additional assessment tools maybe used if appropriate e.g., the Leuven well-being scale or a SALT Communication Screening assessment.</p> <p>Some children will be referred to the SENCO to assess whether they have emerging needs.</p>
Two-year old check	This review will create and share a broad picture of the child's development	This will be in partnership with parents/carers integrating information from the two-year health visitor check.
Special books	<p>Will include a significant example of the child's learning over time, showing their characteristics as a learner.</p> <p>There will also be some additional, brief observations and photos of the child's progress towards curricular goals.</p>	These observations help us to develop the partnership with parents and to celebrate the child's learning.
Termly cycle of in the moment planning followed by focus child meetings	<p>We meet with every parent to celebrate the child's learning. We summarise and evaluate how we are working together in partnership and agree on what we will do next.</p> <p>This information is woven into the children's In the Moment Planning Focus sheets, so parents have joint access and ownership. This discussion may include an exploration of a child's barriers to learning and how we can work together to help the child overcome these.</p>	This discussion is central to our partnership approach. We ensure that parents are kept fully informed. We act in the best interests of every child. Our approach is open, honest, supportive and accountable.

Assessment and planning

One of the most powerful forms of assessment takes place in the here-and-now, not-on-screen, on the First Steps app or in special books . This is when we notice something important about a child’s learning and respond to it to help them build their learning. That response can take different forms – we might:

- stand back and be encouraging;
- get involved to extend the learning, by joining in with the play, engaging in a conversation, or showing the child a specific skill to help them accomplish what they want to do;
- reflect afterwards and bring in new resources or plan something special in response to what we noticed.

This type of assessment work is not written down. It often focuses on the key milestones on the way to the curricular goals. It shows how we can assess what children know and can do, and help them to progress, through our minute-by-minute interactions

Examples of assessment in the here-and-now

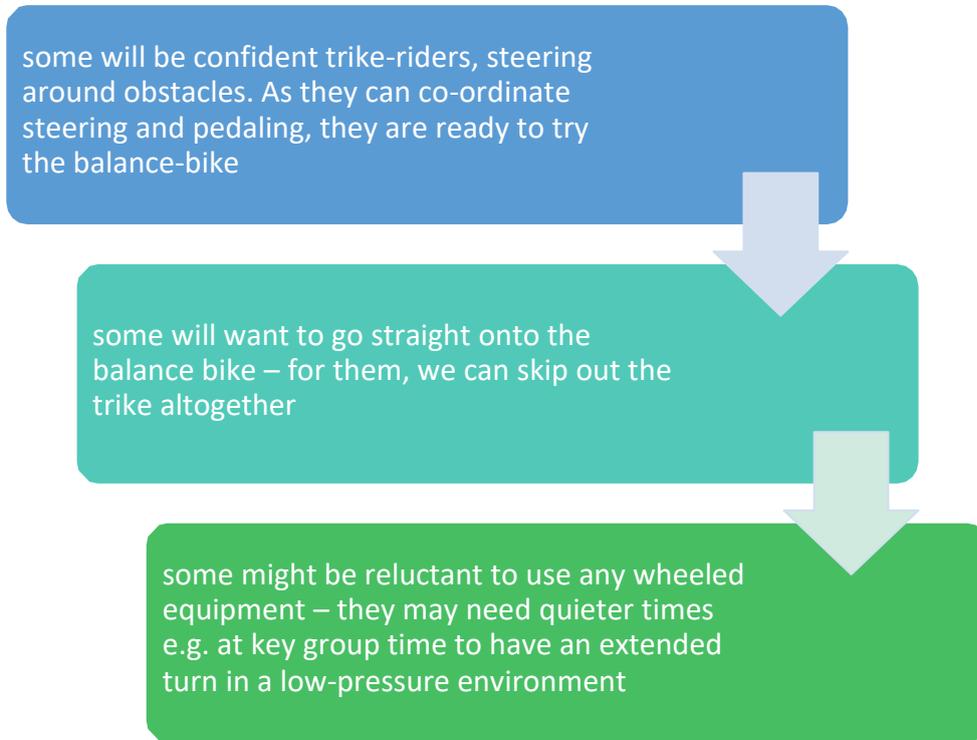
Tyrone was using the wooden spoon to stir a lumpy mixture of water and flour. For the first time, he tentatively put his fingers into the mixture to feel it. His key person sat near him and smiled encouragingly. A few moments later, she took some of the mixture out and kneaded it. Tyrone watched her doing this and pressed the mixture a few times with his fingers. This helped Tyrone, a child with an ASD, towards achieving the first milestone in the goal of baking bread.

Aysha was playing in the home corner, stirring a pot with some conkers in it. Her key person joined in with the play. They had a long conversation about how Aysha’s mum makes dhal. Then her key person pretended to be the child in the family and Aysha served up dinner. After dinner, her key person noticed that Aysha had used up all the lentils and the onions, so she encouraged her to write a shopping list. This helped Aysha towards achieving the second milestone in the goal of writing the first two letters of her name.

Peter wanted to join wheels onto a small block of wood to make a car. The practitioner with him showed him how to grip the block of wood in the vice and then hammer a nail in to secure the wheel. She hammered one nail in whilst he watched. Then she talked him through all the steps, so he hammered in the second nail. Peter hammered the other two nails in completely independently. This helped Peter towards the third milestone in the goal of making a model at the woodwork table.

Jamila played with the small world dinosaurs for most of the morning. Reflecting on what she had observed, her key person set up a much larger area for dinosaur play the following day, supported with books about dinosaurs. The next day, during Jamila’s play, they looked at some of the model dinosaurs and found them in the books. Jamila was interested to learn about what they ate, and she memorised their names. This deepened Jamila’s learning about animals, linked to the core experiences of seeing ducklings hatch and the lifecycle of the butterfly.

An example of different pathways children might take to achieve the curricular goal of learning to ride a bike (goal 4)



The focus of our assessment is on clear and specific things that a child needs to be able to do, or needs to know. In order to do this practitioners need to understand how the different elements of the curriculum fit together to help children build their learning over time. Reflective discussions about practitioners' key children support this understanding.

Practitioners also need to have a secure understanding of child development, as well as the features of effective pedagogy. This will help with judging when to get involved and when to encourage and knowing how to scaffold children's learning, so we support them to keep trying without over-helping them.

Some children will need a lot more help and scaffolding to access that curriculum. This is what we are working on with the practitioners at Coin Street Nursery. We are supporting them to notice what children can and can't do. We are good at deciding when it will be helpful to step in and support, and when it's best to be encouraging but hang back. It is important that we are certain that children are secure in what they know and can do, before introducing them to something new.

This curriculum learning must be balanced with learning that stems from the children's interests. Plans must be flexible, and go with children's fascinations. Children learn a huge amount through the play they choose. We will help maximise this learning by making sure we provide a high-quality learning environment. We can then sensitively get involved and extend their play. It is important that we have a systematic approach to evaluating the quality of the environment, and those interactions, so that we can build on what we do well, and improve where we need to.

Practitioners will bring the observations, assessments and focus sheets to they have made of their key children to meetings with the SLT. These are based on work the child is making towards a particular curricular goal or learning that has arisen from their interests.

Each child is discussed once a term during focus week. The practitioners talk about their observations and what they think it shows about the child. We discuss what the child knows, what they can do, and any barriers to learning. In collaboration with the team the practitioner then decides what action to take next in order to support the child's learning. The majority of assessment and responsive action or teaching will happen in the here-and-now. Discussions at planning often involve discussing the actions practitioners had already taken, how successful they were and what will happen next.

Feedback

The majority of our assessment of children's learning is done through feedback in the here-and-now. Practitioners are developing their skills in modelling metacognitive thinking for children and this in turn helps children to develop a growth mindset.

Metacognitive thinking enables children to talk more specifically about thinking in different contexts. It enables children to use a plan, do, review approach in their learning. They become independent and more powerful learners. This in turn supports their approach to managing their own learning later in their school years.

A practical example of this is:

- Child A is trying to build a tower using the blocks. The tower is wobbly and keeps falling down.
- Practitioner comments by saying "Oh no, it has fallen down. I wonder why that happened?" This enables the child to think about why the tower has fallen rather than continuing with the same strategy.
- Child comments by saying "It is too wobbly."
- Practitioner responds by saying "I wonder why it is wobbly. Let's have a look at the shape of the blocks you have used."
- Child looks closely at the shape of the blocks whilst the practitioner talks to the child about this. The practitioner asks "What do you think you need to do differently?"
- If the child doesn't know then the practitioner could model this by building their own tower alongside the child using the blocks. Practitioner thinks aloud to model this process. Practitioner says "I need to make sure I balance these blocks one on top of the other to make my tower sturdy."
- The child manages to build a tower that is sturdy. The practitioner provides instant feedback by saying "That is amazing. You took your time to look at the way you were placing the blocks and worked out that you needed similar shapes and kept trying until you built the tower."

When giving instant feedback to children it is important to give appropriate but honest comments about their work. Specific praise is helpful, but supporting children to look carefully at their work and see if it can be improved, is even better. This feedback needs to be age appropriate and tailored specifically to the child. It is important to ensure that the feedback is kind, specific, helpful and related to the work, not the child.

This type of feedback is descriptive and includes elements of critique. Supporting children to give and receive feedback teaches them that effort and revision are valuable and that the things they do can be improved. This develops the mindset of continuous improvement

Our 8 curricular goals

1. Settle in and become a confident learner

First milestone: children make a strong relationship with their key person. Increasingly, they separate confidently from their parent at the start of the session and become involved in their play. They use their key person as a 'secure base' throughout the session, 'touching base' as/when needed.

Second milestone: children take part in pretend play, communicating and negotiating with their friends.

Third milestone: children persevere with difficulties. They make comments about their learning and play in their Special Books and show pleasure/pride in what they have done.

Final milestone: children reflect on their learning, through their Special Books. They comment on their 'thinking' and the ways they go about their learning. They reflect on what helps them to persevere through difficulties and what helps them when they find things hard. Children show they are developing their metacognition.

Where children need individualised and additional help, this will be offered promptly. Help includes: individual meetings with parents to map a way forward; this could be requesting support from a children's centre.

As children grow in confidence, their involvement in nursery activities deepens. They explore a wider range of activities. They play for longer periods of time. They play alongside friends. They play collaboratively. They develop their 'pretend play'.

As children's engagement and perseverance grows, they either challenge themselves with more difficult activities, or they respond positively to adults challenging them.

As children play and learn more collaboratively, over longer time periods, and taking part in more challenging activities, they talk about and reflect on their learning.

2. Follow a recipe to bake a bread roll

First milestone: children take part in role play using a variety of resources, with adult support.

Children mix different ingredients, including sand and water, and flour and water to make simple playdough. They use the following tools: wooden spoons, sieves, scoops, rolling pins, cookie cutters and knives. They follow simple recipes in areas such as the mud kitchen.

Second milestone: in a small group, children follow the steps in making playdo. The adult draws children's attention to the recipe card. With adult help, children use measures (teaspoon, tablespoon, cup etc.) and tip in the ingredients. With adult help, they knead the flour until it becomes soft and cover it. With adult help, they roll the dough into small balls and flatten. They help to cook these and reflect on the process.

Third milestone: In small group cooking activities, children follow the steps in making a bread roll with an adult. They independently fill measures carefully to the top (teaspoon, tablespoon, cup etc.). They recognise the numerals in the recipe card. When they count out quantities (e.g. 3 teaspoons of salt) they say the numbers in the correct order (1-2-3) and they know that the last number they say (3) is the total number of spoonfuls they have added.

Final milestone: children follow the steps of a recipe independently. They measure ingredients, mix them and create their own bread roll by placing the mixture onto a greaseproof tray ready to be baked.

As children take part in these activities, they become more precise in using scoops (filling the scoop carefully to the top) they count the scoops as they tip them out; they use a wide range of different-sized buckets, tins and other containers.

Children become confident in using tools at the snack table to prepare their own snack e.g. spreading butter on toast or cutting their own fruit

As children become more used to cooking, the adult reduces their support for the group. Children also mix other substances together carefully, with adult guidance, e.g. mixing water and powderpaint.

As children become more independent, there is minimal adult support as they follow recipe cards and follow paint-mixing cards.

3. Make a model at the woodwork table

First milestone:

Children handle books, toys, knives and forks confidently. Children explore using one-handed tools such as: one-handed scissors, knives to spread/cut and wooden spoons to stir/pour.

Second milestone: children confidently use one-handed tools to create changes in materials e.g., Children confidently use one-handed tools to create changes in materials e.g., Use a peeler to peel a carrot or a knife to cut a banana

Third milestone: children have repeated experiences at the woodwork bench. They think about what they are creating and how they want it to look e.g., "I'm making a car, it has four wheels." They are introduced to more tools and how to use these safely.

Final milestone: children decide on the model they will make. They choose the materials they want to use, shape materials with tools, and join materials together.

With adult support, children learn how to use these tools correctly and understand their use. Children begin to understand how to use tools safely and are supported to do so by the adults.

Children take part in junk modelling and use scissors and Sellotape to join things together.

As children grow in confidence, they are introduced to the woodwork tools and shown how to use these safely. They access the woodwork bench and explore using some tools with adult support e.g. hammering nails into pieces of soft wood.

With support children use tools such as: hammers, hand drills, screw drivers, saws and the glue gun safely and with increasing confidence. They have an idea of what they want to make and how they want it to look.

4. Ride a balance bike

First milestone: children sit on a trike with good balance and scoot along.

As children become more confident at scooting, they will develop more control through steering and stopping/starting. They will not crash into so many things.

Second milestone: children pedal and steer their trike.

As children become better at coordinating pedaling and steering, they will be able to navigate challenges e.g. riding in and out of cones, or over a set of hollow blocks.

Third milestone: children sit on a Balance Bike with good balance, with both feet on the ground.

Once children become confident at balancing, they scoot slowly along keeping one or both feet on the floor. They begin to use the handlebars to avoid obstacles and other children. Adults will slowly raise the seat to encourage balancing.

Final milestone: children ride a Balance Bike, balancing with both feet off the ground, and maintaining control by steering and being able to slow down or speed up. They can ride a Balance Bike safely along the pavement.

5. Create your own dance to a piece of music

First milestone: Children respond by moving their whole bodies to sounds they enjoy, such as music or a regular beat.

As children join in with repeated experiences they grow in confidence and begin to join in with repeated words or actions e.g. "If you're happy and you know it clap your hands."

Second milestone: children enjoy joining in with dancing and ring games. They can follow simple instructions such as "Clap your hands" or "Let's turn around."

Third milestone: children explore a wide range of music from different cultural backgrounds and can describe the sudden changes they hear e.g. Loud, fast, slow etc.

They explore different ways of moving their bodies and can follow an adult's lead.

Final milestone: children choose a piece of music individually or in a small group. They create their own dance routine, moving in time to the pulse of the music being listened to and physically responding to changes in the music, e.g. jump in response to loud/sudden changes in the music.

Children develop their spatial awareness and enjoy moving to music, listening to rhymes/songs and join in.

As children's interest and understanding of music develops, they begin to move rhythmically and in response to the music they hear. They can use props such as ribbons or pom poms to create different actions.

As children become more confident in themselves and the space, they can follow a simple dance routine led by an adult.

They can then perform their dance routine in front of a small group.

6. Sew using running-stitch

First milestone: Children pull themselves up into a standing position. Children use upper body strength to hang on A frame or ropes etc.

Children weave ribbons in and out of a large frame outdoors on a large scale with adult support. As they grow in confidence, they begin to do this independently on a smaller scale.

Second milestone: children will begin their interest in sewing by looking at examples and designs. Adults will model the process and they will observe.

Children will select their colour of thread and continue practicing threading the thread through the eye of the needle.

Third milestone: children will thread the needle through the aida/binka cloth using the desired coloured thread.

Children will think about the size of the aida/binka cloth that they need as part of the design and can cut it out themselves. Children are thinking about how their design will fit into a space.

Final milestone: children think about the pattern or design they want to create. They cut out the binka or aida cloth they need, choose the colour thread they want, and thread the needles. They use running-stitch to create their pattern or design.

With adult support children thread beads/pasta onto a piece of string. Adults model how to thread the thread through the eye of the needle.

Children will start to think more purposefully about their designs i.e. what colour thread for what purpose and in which direction they want their pattern to flow. They will begin to master the skill of threading the needle using a running stitch.

Children will reflect upon and discuss the trials they faced whilst taking part in this activity.

7. Make up your own stories

First milestone: children listen to rhymes and stories with interest. Children take part in pretend play, making up or developing a story.

Children may begin by pretend-playing on their own with toys like farm animals, wild animals, dinosaurs or Duplo people. They may put on a costume to become a superhero or another character. Over time, their play becomes more complex. They are able to play with other children, developing the play together (e.g. deciding who will play what role in the home corner, or telling a story with the Duplo people where different Duplo people have different characters).

Second milestone: children take part in interactive reading. They respond to the features of the story. Children engage in number rhymes with props and join in with the actions.

As children become more used to interactive reading, they ask questions and make links between what happens in the story and their own experiences.

Children join in with rhymes and songs e.g. repeating words or following actions.

Children play with props to retell/make up their own stories including use of the Tales Toolkit story telling bags

Third milestone: children take part in telling a story using Tales Toolkit with adult help or can create their own story of their day using a visual timetable. They begin to become familiar of the way stories are structured

As children become more used to using Tales Toolkit, they can increasingly take over and use the symbols and the props. They can make up their own story or 'tell the story of their day in nursery' with little prompting from the adult.

Final milestone: children use the Tales Toolkit materials to develop the character, setting, problem and solution for their story. They tell their story to one or more people.

8. Write the first two letters of your name

First milestone: children can use the muscles in their hands and arms to pick up things. Children make big movements and bring together hand and eye movements to fix on and make contact with objects.

Children will increasingly become confident in engaging in activities such as: throwing and catching balls, pushing the wagon, exploring a musical instrument, playdough and paint.

Second milestone: Children can make random marks with their fingers and some tools. Children will engage in a variety of ways to make marks e.g. making marks in dough/clay/sand, holding a paint brush to make marks or using chalk on the ground in the garden etc.

Third milestone: as children's mark making develops they make more small controlled movements and can draw lines and circles. They can distinguish between these marks e.g. 'line, circle, zig zag' etc. They begin to use anticlockwise movements and retrace vertical lines. Children are familiar with language of directionality such as 'up, down, round and round.'

Children can find their name card and are observed looking at it when attempting to write their name.

Final milestone: children hold their pen or pencil with a comfortable grip. They write the first two letters of their name clearly and with correct directionality.

As children build up their large and fine motor skills they engage in activities for a longer period of time. They can grasp objects and can focus on what they are doing e.g. hold arms out and wait to catch a ball, thread beads on to a piece of string or build a stable tower of up to 10 blocks etc

Where children need individualised and additional help, this will be offered promptly. Help includes individualised support from key person; small group work; individual meetings with parents to map a way forward.

As children become more confident in making marks they begin to talk about their marks with others and give meaning to these e.g. "That's mummy" or "It's a dinosaur."

As children use their name cards repeatedly and becoming familiar with the RWI formation sheet they become more confident in attempting to form letters. Some children will begin to form recognisable letters.

