

Physical Development – Reception Curriculum Framework

Educational Purpose

We develop physically confident and increasingly independent children who build the strength, coordination, balance and control needed to move safely and purposefully. Through frequent opportunities for active play, challenge and practice, children develop gross and fine motor competence, learn to use tools and equipment with increasing control, and build the physical foundations needed for everyday independence and writing.

Golden Threads

Movement & Coordination	Strength, Balance & Control	Fine Motor & Tool Control	Physical Confidence & Independence
Children develop increasingly coordinated ways of moving, combining movements and responding safely and effectively to space, equipment and others.	Children develop the strength, stability, balance and body control needed for increasingly complex movement and sustained physical activity.	Children develop hand strength, dexterity and hand–eye coordination, increasingly controlling tools, equipment and mark–making implements with precision.	Children develop confidence to participate in physical activity, take appropriate physical challenges, manage equipment safely and increasingly meet their own physical needs.

Knowledge = what children are taught to know and understand. Skills = how children increasingly apply that knowledge.

Strand	Typical Starting Points	DP1	DP2	DP3	Statutory ELGs
Gross Motor Skills KNOWLEDGE	• Move in different ways, including walking, running, climbing and jumping. • Explore balancing and changing direction during play. • Begin to notice and negotiate space, people and objects as they move. • Use wheeled toys, balls, large equipment and simple apparatus with varying levels of control.	• I know my body can move in different ways. • I know I need to notice the space and people around me when I move. • I know equipment has to be used safely. • I know practice helps me develop my movements.	• I know different movements need different kinds of control. • I know movement may need to change depending on the space, equipment and people around me. • I know different equipment can be used in different ways. • I know slowing down or changing speed can help me control my movement.	• I know balance, strength and coordination work together to help me move effectively. • I know I need to adapt my movement when the space, equipment or situation changes. • I know choosing how to move and use equipment helps me complete a physical challenge safely. • I know controlled movement helps me move safely and effectively with others.	Gross Motor Skills • Negotiate space and obstacles safely, with consideration for themselves and others. • Demonstrate strength, balance and coordination when playing. • Move energetically, such as running, jumping, dancing, hopping, skipping and climbing. Fine Motor Skills • Hold a pencil effectively in preparation for fluent writing – using the tripod grip in almost all cases. • Use a range of small tools, including scissors, paint brushes and cutlery. • Begin to show accuracy and care when drawing.
Gross Motor Skills SKILLS	• Use their hands and fingers to manipulate toys, construction materials and everyday objects. • Explore tools such as crayons, pencils, paintbrushes and scissors. • Make marks, lines and simple shapes using a range of tools and movements. • Show an emerging preference for one hand when using tools. • Manage some aspects of dressing, eating and personal care with varying levels of support.	• Walk, run and jump; begin to start, stop and change direction. • Explore balancing, climbing, pulling and supporting body weight while travelling over, under, through and around apparatus. • Roll, throw, kick and strike balls; begin to position the body to receive. • Move to music, rhythm and ideas: fast/slow, high/low, big/small. • Explore balance bikes and wheeled equipment; begin to propel, balance, steer and stop, with support where needed. • Move around people, obstacles and equipment safely, responding to simple expectations.	• Start, stop, change direction and alter speed when running/travelling; develop jumping, hopping and early skipping. • Plan routes across apparatus, combining climbing, balancing and travelling; use strength to support and move the body. • Send a ball towards a person or target by rolling, throwing, kicking or striking; position hands/body ready to receive. • Combine movements in games and dance, responding to rhythms, patterns, ideas or instructions. • Propel, balance, steer and stop on balance bikes/wheeled equipment while navigating around people and obstacles. • Navigate space and obstacles, changing direction or movement to avoid collisions and use equipment safely.	• Combine running, jumping, hopping and skipping; change speed and direction for a game, route or challenge. • Plan, combine and adapt movements on apparatus, using strength, balance and coordination to negotiate routes and challenges. • Adjust force, direction and body position when sending, striking and receiving balls; apply these skills with others. • Combine and sequence movements in games and dance, remembering/adapting patterns and responding to music, ideas or others. • Apply and adapt balance, steering and stopping when navigating routes and challenges on balance bikes/wheeled equipment. • Negotiate space, obstacles and other people safely, adapting movement when the environment or activity changes.	
Fine Motor Skills KNOWLEDGE		• I know my hands and fingers help me control objects and tools. • I know tools need to be held and used safely. • I know using my hands and fingers helps them become stronger and more coordinated. • I know marks can be made using different movements and tools.	• I know different tools need different movements and amounts of control. • I know how I hold and position a tool can help me control it. • I know hand and finger strength helps me control tools more precisely. • I know controlled movements help me make the marks and shapes I intend.	• I know precise movements help me use tools accurately and effectively. • I know an efficient grip and comfortable hand position help me control a pencil and other tools. • I know strength and coordination help me sustain control during increasingly precise tasks. • I know letters have a recognised form and are made using particular movements.	
Fine Motor Skills SKILLS		• Manipulate materials by squeezing, pinching, twisting, turning, pushing and pulling. • Make intentional marks; begin to control where and how the tool moves. • Make snips and begin to cut through suitable materials, with support where needed. • Use cutlery and everyday tools, coordinating hands and tool. • Thread, fasten, join and construct, coordinating hands and eyes. • Develop a comfortable and effective grip for mark–making tools.	• Manipulate smaller objects, using fingers separately and together to turn, pinch, place and join. • Draw lines, shapes and recognisable representations, controlling direction and size of movements. • Cut along a simple line and begin to change direction when cutting. • Use everyday tools to scoop, spread, pour, transfer or manipulate, as appropriate. • Complete threading, fastening, construction and joining tasks using coordinated hand/finger movements. • Adjust grip to use pencils and other tools comfortably and effectively for different purposes.	• Manipulate small and more complex objects, coordinating individual fingers and both hands when needed. • Draw recognisable shapes, features and details, controlling direction and size; apply this control when forming letters. • Cut around simple shapes and follow straight, curved and changing lines. • Use cutlery and everyday tools effectively for their intended purpose. • Manage fastening, threading, construction and manipulative tasks requiring smaller, coordinated hand/finger movements. • Use a comfortable and effective pencil grip supporting controlled and sustained mark–making and writing.	
ESSENTIAL VOCABULARY	move – change where or how your body is positioned run – move quickly using your legs jump – push off the ground and land again climb – move up, down or across hold – keep something securely in your hand	space – the area around us balance – keep your body steady grip – the way we hold something tool – something used to do a task safe – acting in a way that helps prevent harm	control – manage how your body or a tool moves strength – how muscles help us move and hold direction – the way something is moving position – how the body, hand or tool is placed practise – repeat something to develop it	coordination – use body parts together smoothly precision – move carefully and accurately adapt – change what you do to suit the situation stable – steady and controlled sequence – movements put together in an order	

Typical Starting Points describe possible prior experiences, not entry expectations. Children may demonstrate aspects from different Development Points at the same time.

Physical Development Entitlement

- Every child has daily opportunities for sustained physical activity, indoors and outdoors.
- Children experience a broad range of movement, including running, jumping, climbing, balancing, negotiating space and combining movements.
- Children have regular access to large equipment and apparatus, with appropriate opportunities for physical challenge and managed risk.
- Children develop ball and object-control experiences through throwing, catching, rolling, kicking, carrying, aiming and striking.
- Children have repeated opportunities to practise and revisit movements, recognising that physical competence develops over time.
- Children develop strength, balance, coordination and control through planned experiences and continuous provision.
- Children have regular opportunities to develop hand and finger strength, dexterity and hand-eye coordination.
- Children use a broad range of tools and materials, including construction resources, malleable materials, scissors, brushes, utensils, pencils and other mark-making tools.
- Children develop increasingly effective pencil control and the physical foundations for letter formation and writing.
- Children are supported to develop physical independence through everyday routines such as dressing, fastenings, eating and managing equipment.
- Appropriate adaptations, equipment and adult support ensure physical challenge is accessible to every child.
- Children regularly use balance bikes and wheeled equipment and participate in the Reception Bikeability programme.
- Squiggle Whilst You Wiggle supports large-scale movement, coordination and the physical foundations for controlled mark-making, particularly early in Reception.
- Get Set 4 PE may support planned PE teaching; practitioners also plan directly in response to children's developmental needs and the scheme does not define the Reception curriculum.

Assessment

Assessment should arise primarily through observation of children moving, playing, using equipment and tools, and managing everyday physical tasks across a range of contexts.

Practitioners should notice over time how children increasingly:

- move with balance, strength, coordination and control;
- negotiate space, obstacles, equipment and other people;
- adapt and combine movements;
- participate in physical challenge and practise developing skills;
- manipulate objects with increasing control and precision;
- use tools safely and effectively;
- develop hand-eye coordination and fine-motor control;
- use an increasingly effective pencil grip;
- control the movements required to form recognisable letters;
- apply physical skills with increasing independence.

Physical Development should not be judged by confidence, speed, competitiveness or comparison with other children. Assessment considers the individual child's developing physical knowledge, control, coordination, precision and application over time.

Where equipment, adaptations or adult support enable a child to participate, these should be understood as part of appropriate provision rather than as evidence that the child has not developed physically.

Transition to Key Stage 1

By the end of Reception, children have developed individual foundations in strength, balance, coordination, movement, spatial awareness, object control, fine-motor precision and physical independence. Transition information shared with Year 1 identifies each child's strengths, developing skills, effective adaptations and appropriate next steps. Year 1 provision should build from children's actual physical development through regular active play, practical movement experiences and progressively challenging opportunities to practise, combine and apply skills. Transition does not require every child to demonstrate identical competence or readiness. Familiar routines, equipment, language and successful support strategies should continue where helpful, while children are gradually introduced to the expectations and physical opportunities of the Key Stage 1 curriculum.