

Physical Development Policy

Policy statement

How children gain control of their bodies, learn about keeping themselves active and healthy and how they use equipment and materials successfully and safely is the ethos behind Physical Development. In the Revised Early Years Foundation Stage, Physical Development is broken down into two aspects:

- Moving and Handling
- Health and Self-Care

From splashing in muddy puddles to pouring water down drainpipes, children learn by “doing” and so develop healthily, emotionally and physically. A child who has the opportunity to run, roll, jump and balance, clap a rhythm, dance or sing an action song can learn about numbers, letters, literature, social relationships and different cultures and much, much more without ever having to sit at a table.

Children’s health is an integral part of their emotional, mental, social, environmental and spiritual well-being and is supported by attention to those aspects. The children will be taught to move confidently and imaginatively with increasing control and co-ordination and an awareness of space and of others. They will be encouraged to think about the effect physical activities have on their bodies and the factors that contribute to a healthy body. The children will have opportunities to use large equipment for balancing and climbing as well as small equipment such as balls, bean bags and hoops etc. Children will also respond to rhythm, music and story. For example, they may join together to make a huge Chinese Dragon and move in response to Chinese music

Physical Development (PD) is one of the **three prime areas** of learning in the EYFS framework, the other two being Personal, Social and Emotional Development (PSED) and Communication and Language (CL). These three areas are recognised as prime because they form the basis of all other aspects of young children’s learning and development. The three prime areas are regarded as particularly important for inspiring young children’s curiosity and enthusiasm, laying the foundations for future success in all aspects of life and education.

Health and self-care cover’s how children can be helped to understand the importance of physical activity, and to make healthy choices in relation to food.

The **moving and handling** aspect of physical development involves providing opportunities for young children to be active and interactive and to develop their coordination, control and movement.

Early Years Physical Activity Guidelines (Dept. of Health 2010)

- Physical activity should be encouraged from birth, particularly through floor-based play and water-based activities in safe environments.
- Children of pre-school age who are capable of walking unaided should be physically active daily for at least 180 minutes (3 hours), spread throughout the day.
- All under-fives should minimise the amount of time spent being sedentary (being restrained or sitting) for extended periods (except when sleeping).

Prime and specific areas of learning

The **three prime areas** of the EYFS should be the focus for practitioners working with the youngest children, as these form the basis for successful learning and progress in the **four specific areas**.

As children get older the emphasis will shift towards a more equal focus on **all areas of learning** as children's confidence and abilities increase.

If at any time a child's progress within any of the prime areas gives cause for concern practitioners should discuss this with the child's parents and provide focused support in that area. This approach is designed to ensure that any issues are addressed at an early stage of a child's life.

Supporting young children to develop their moving and handling skills

To help young children to develop their moving and handling skills, practitioners should provide lots of opportunities for them to:

- use large muscle movements to explore their immediate environment
- develop fine motor control through manipulating materials and using tools and equipment.

Being physically active not only strengthens muscles and develops the heart and lungs, it also supports the development of the brain. As babies progressively gain control over the muscles which determine their eye movements, lift their heads, roll over, sit up, and then stand, they are able to view the world from different perspectives. This provides a wealth of information which their brains process to deepen their understanding of the world they live in.

Muscles in the neck which a baby uses when learning how to control his head are important for the development of speech and language skills. As babies grow, they gain the muscle control and strength to push up, roll, and move into a crawling position, which in turn develops shoulder stability, hand strength, and coordination – important for later movement skills including handwriting.

Large muscle control develops before fine motor control, so children need lots of opportunities to make big movements with their arms before they can develop the fine motor

control needed for holding a pencil. Writing requires a combination of fine motor control and hand eye coordination; skills which need lots of practise indoors and out of doors.

The relationship between Physical Development and the other prime areas of learning

'Physical Development supports Personal, Social and Emotional Development as increasing physical control provides experiences of the self as an active agent in the environment, promoting growth in confidence and awareness of control. It supports Communication and Language because a child who can effectively use the large movements, gestures and the fine movements involved in speech is able to convey messages to others.

[Tickell Review of the EYFS, 2011]

Summary of development for two-year-olds

When a child is aged between 24 and 36 months, practitioners must review progress in Physical Development, along with the other two prime areas of learning. Parents or carers should be given a short-written summary of their child's development as part of the ongoing dialogue between the setting and the family. This summary should identify any areas where the child's progress is less than expected, and should shape a targeted plan to support that child's future learning and development in the setting.

What physical play looks like in our setting

Children have access to a wide range of malleable materials that they can squash, stretch, poke, and bend. As well as mixing and manipulating playdough, the children enjoy exploring the properties of clay. This is available in large lumps that require real effort to push and squash into shape, with the emphasis being on the process of manipulating the clay rather than on trying to produce an end product.

Manipulative toys and games are freely available and the sand and water areas have lots of resources for filling, emptying, moving, and shaping. The children also enjoy moving and dancing to a wide range of different types of music and story times can often become very active sessions as children act out the stories they hear.

Outdoors there is a large sandpit and a wide selection of tools, buckets and containers which children use for filling, emptying, and moving sand from place to place. In one corner of the garden there are child-sized garden tools and a patch of soil where children can dig to their hearts content.

Practitioners equip the indoor and outdoor environment to give children opportunities to practise large muscle movements as a precursor to developing fine motor control. There are easels and powder paints that the children can mix themselves and a selection of different sized brushes and mark making resources.

Mark making is encouraged in all areas of the setting by making resources available in ways that will encourage the children to use them – clipboards, pens, pencils, and paper in

containers. Practitioners model mark making in different situations, helping children to see the connection between the spoken and the written word.

Practitioners are creative in how they use the outdoor environment and encourage the children to move equipment and resources around to change the spaces. Den making materials and large construction blocks that the children can carry around without adult help and there are also opportunities to use brushes, sponges, squeeze bottles and water to practise large motor movements by creating patterns.

Children are encouraged to build obstacle courses that involve crawling, balancing, swinging, climbing, and jumping and to challenge themselves to develop their individual skills. There is space for children to engage in vigorous fantasy play, and the value of this type of creative expression is understood and appreciated.

Ideas for parents

Physical development

Guidelines on physical activity

The latest recommendations from the Department of Health are that:

- Physical activity should be encouraged from birth, particularly through floor-based play and safe waterbased
- Children of pre-school age who are walking should be physically active daily for at least 180 minutes (3 hours), spread throughout the day.
- All children under five should minimise the amount of time spent sitting down for extended periods, except when sleeping.

Helping your child to develop their moving and handling skills

To encourage children to be physically active, and to help them learn how to use tools and materials, they need lots of opportunities to:

- move around and make big movements using their arms, legs and whole bodies
- handle smaller objects to help develop their small muscle control.

You could use the ideas below as starting points to help you to do this.

Under twos

- Place a mobile above your baby's cot so he can practise controlling his eye movements.
- Reaching out to grasp a toy strengthens muscles and develops hand eye coordination.
- Place your baby on his tummy on a rug to encourage him to lift his head and to strengthen the muscles in his arms, body and neck.

- Your baby needs lots of opportunities for free movement during the day, rather than being strapped into a baby carrier or high chair.
- Stacking things up, knocking them down, ‘posting’ things, and putting things into bags and boxes are activities which toddlers love, and they help to develop their coordination and control.
- Try to find time for your child to be active out of doors every day – walking, running, and playing.
- Let your child go barefoot out of doors on a warm day to experience walking on different surfaces.

Two- to three-year-olds

- Dancing is a great way to develop coordination skills.
- Read a story together and act out what is happening – this is also a good way to develop imagination and
- Poking and pinching playdough or clay helps to strengthen the fingers, hand and wrist.
- Jigsaw puzzles and toys that fit together are good ways to develop hand control.
- Threading things – pasta shapes, buttons or large beads – encourages fine finger movements.
- Helping with simple chores around the home such as sweeping, tidying up toys, and lifting things develops and strengthens muscles.
- Play throwing and catching games that involve big arm movements strengthen shoulder and arm muscles.

Four- to five-year-olds

- Help your child to learn how to use simple tools such as scissors – practice makes perfect.
- Helping with household tasks such as setting the table builds coordination and control.
- Draw outdoors with chalks or make patterns in the mud with a stick.
- Use a squeezezy bottle filled with water to shoot at a target or knock down a skittle.
- Make a place to dig outside where children can develop muscle control and coordination.
- Bikes and scooters are an exciting way to get lots of vigorous exercise.
- Try to make sure your child is physically active for at least three hours every day.

This policy was adopted at a meeting of _____ name of setting

Held on _____ (date)

Date to be reviewed _____

Signed on behalf of the management
committee

Name of signatory

Role of signatory (e.g. chair/owner)
