



Longvernal Primary School

EYFS Curriculum 25/26

Physical Development

Early years foundation stage statutory framework

Physical activity is vital in children's all-round development, enabling them to pursue happy, healthy and active lives. Gross and fine motor experiences develop incrementally throughout early childhood, starting with sensory explorations and the development of a child's strength, co-ordination and positional awareness through tummy time, crawling and play movement with both objects and adults. By creating games and providing opportunities for play both indoors and outdoors, adults can support children to develop their core strength, stability, balance, spatial awareness, co-ordination and agility. Gross motor skills provide the foundation for developing healthy bodies and social and emotional well-being. Fine motor control and precision helps with hand-eye co-ordination, which is later linked to early literacy. Repeated and varied opportunities to explore and play with small world activities, puzzles, arts and crafts and the practice of using small tools, with feedback and support from adults, allow children to develop proficiency, control and confidence.

What is physical development?

Physical development in the EYFS is one of the prime areas of learning and focuses on helping children improve their movement, coordination, and control. It includes both gross motor skills (like running and jumping) and fine motor skills (like holding a pencil). It also supports children's health, self-care, and confidence in physical activities.

What are Fine Motor Skills?

Fine motor skills in the EYFS are the small movements children make using their hands and fingers, such as holding a pencil, using scissors, or buttoning clothes. These skills are developed through activities like drawing, threading, and playing with small toys. Supporting fine motor development is important as it helps children gain independence and prepares them for writing and everyday tasks.

What are Gross Motor Skills?

Gross motor skills are the abilities that involve large movements of the body, using big muscles in areas like the arms, legs, and torso. These skills include actions such as running, jumping, climbing, throwing, and balancing. In the EYFS, developing gross motor skills helps children build strength, coordination, and confidence in their physical abilities, supporting overall health and readiness for school.

What does the evidence say?

Evidence shows that strong fine motor skills in early childhood are closely linked to later success in writing, reading, and overall academic achievement. Research highlights that:

- Early development of fine motor skills supports better handwriting, which contributes to clearer communication and learning in school.
- Children with well-developed fine motor control tend to perform better in literacy and numeracy tasks.
- Engaging in fine motor activities, like drawing, cutting, or building with blocks, strengthens hand muscles and improves coordination needed for classroom tasks.
- Delays in fine motor development can impact school readiness and may require targeted support to catch up.

The EEF highlights the critical role of fine motor skills as part of broader physical development in early years settings:

- Fine motor skills—controlling small muscles in the hands, fingers, lips, tongue, and eyes—are essential for tasks like eating, dressing, cutting, mark-making, and manipulating objects
[Reddit+12help-for-early-years-providers.education.gov.uk+12educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk+12.](#)
- The development of fine motor abilities is intertwined with gross motor development; a coordinated, whole-body approach fosters better outcomes in both domains [help-for-early-years-providers.education.gov.uk.](#)
- Activities that provide varied, repeated opportunities—like puzzles, small-world play, crafts, and using tools—help children build proficiency, precision, and confidence [help-for-early-years-providers.education.gov.uk.](#)
- The EEF encourages educators to intentionally structure sessions (e.g., 3+ times a week over months), include feedback, and adapt task difficulty to support gradual skill mastery
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- Importantly, physical development approaches, including fine motor skills training, not only enhance motor competence but also support cognitive areas like literacy, spatial reasoning, and executive function educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk+3educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk+3educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk+3.

Intent

We recognise that physical development is a foundational aspect of children's all-round growth, supporting healthy, happy, and active lives. It encompasses changes in body size, muscle strength, balance, coordination, sensory development, and skills such as movement and handling. The development of physical skills begins with whole-body experiences and progresses toward more refined movements, such as those involving the hands, which are among the last parts of the body to fully mature. As hand development is complex and supports a wide range of lifelong skills—from handwriting and feeding to music, sewing, and cooking—we are committed to providing children with repeated and varied opportunities to strengthen all the muscles in their hands, helping them to develop the tripod grip and master essential everyday tasks like dressing, using cutlery, and handling tools.

Our intent is also to nurture children's gross motor skills by offering rich, stimulating experiences indoors and outdoors that promote core strength, balance, spatial awareness, agility, and stamina through activities such as running, jumping, riding, and dancing. Outdoor spaces, in particular, offer children the freedom to explore physical challenges and take safe risks, which we support by providing appropriate safety equipment and encouraging children to make decisions based on their own capabilities. We also understand the importance of sensory development—both the five main senses and lesser-known ones like proprioception, the vestibular sense, and interoception—and will offer multisensory experiences to enhance children's overall development. Educators will closely observe each child's physical abilities, tailoring resources and activities to ensure progression and challenge based on individual needs. We acknowledge that physical development underpins and is supported by other areas of learning, including language, problem-solving, and literacy, and aim to help children achieve at least three hours of physical activity each day, as recommended by NHS guidelines for children under five.

Implementation

Fine Motor Skills

Children will have the opportunity to develop their hand-eye coordination by engaging with resources such as puzzles and small world toys. They will also build proficiency, control, and confidence through the use of tools like tweezers, nuts and bolts, clothes pegs, construction materials, digging tools, and threading activities. Adults will actively support this development by providing a variety of opportunities to strengthen the muscles in children's hands.

Examples in practice: Nursery & Reception – 2yrs – 5yrs **(considering complexity and levels of difficulty)**

- Engaging in water play using sponges to encourage squeezing and grasping. Using spray bottles & pipettes.
- Exploring stacking toys to support coordination and fine motor control.
- Having daily opportunities to explore and manipulate materials like playdough, plasticine, and clay.
- Investigating real-life objects through treasure baskets to build sensory awareness and handling skills.
- Handling a variety of objects with different sizes and weights during everyday play.
- Holding and drinking from a bottle or cup, progressing from a spouted cup to an open cup.
- Exploring how objects fit together, such as placing balls down tubes, posting toys, or filling and emptying containers.
- Participating in finger and number rhymes like '*Two Little Dickie Birds*' and '*1,2,3,4,5 Once I Caught a Fish Alive*' to develop finger coordination and rhythm.
- Practising self-care skills such as dressing and undressing.
- Manipulating modelling materials with and without tools—using hands to roll, squeeze, stretch, press, prod, and pinch, and using tools like rolling pins, cutters, garlic presses, knives, and forks.
- Twisting bottle tops, cutting their own fruit, pouring drinks from jugs, and peeling fruit to build hand strength and control.
- Taking part in cooking activities, including making their own playdough, to develop functional hand skills.
- Searching for small items hidden in sensory trays filled with rice, cereal, or other textures.
- Using hands and tools to explore various sensory materials like shaving foam, cornflour, baby lotion (need risk assessment for), and more.

- Threading materials on both large and small scales—e.g., through fences or old bike wheels, and using beads, buttons, or pasta on string.
- Creating detailed patterns using small objects like shells, buttons, shapes, or natural items.
- Peeling and placing stickers to support precise finger control.
 - o Practising digging and scooping with small tools like teaspoons and eggcups.
 - o Finger drumming and other rhythmic finger exercises to enhance dexterity.
 - o Developing independence in dressing, such as doing up zips, pulling up trousers and underwear and putting on shoes.
- PenPals Scheme followed, in line with the whole school approach to handwriting/ fine motor skill development.

Educators will teach the skills needed for movement and handling by...

- Clearly teaching and reinforcing movement and handling skills through both verbal and physical prompts. This includes giving feedback, cues, explanations, and suggestions, as well as modelling and demonstrating actions.
- Balancing structured teaching sessions—where task difficulty is often adapted—with unstructured time for children to independently practise newly learned skills.
- Organising the environment to promote the development of physical skills, ensuring it encourages active exploration and movement.
- Carefully selecting equipment and resources that enable children to revisit, and practise taught skills during free play and independent activities.

Gross Motor Skills

Inside Environment

- Provide children with daily opportunities to move freely throughout the day.
- Support children in using push and pull toys to enhance movement skills.
- Offer low-level climbing equipment, including steps, for children to practice climbing up and down.

Outside Environment

- Provide children with daily opportunities to move freely throughout the day.
- Encourage children to sit or move on a variety of safe large surfaces, both vertical and horizontal, such as real and artificial grass and sand.

- Provide large, medium, and small lightweight balls with different textures for children to handle.
- Adults will promote proprioception by encouraging whole-body movements such as carrying, digging, pushing, pulling, stretching, and climbing.
- Adults will offer a variety of objects that children can lift, carry, and organise independently.
- During group and story times, adults will encourage children to change positions, such as squatting, kneeling, sitting with legs straight or crossed, or lying on their tummy with knees bent.
- Adults will use transitions as chances for children to practice different movements, including walking on knees with hands on heads, sliding on hands and knees, taking wide steps, and walking on tiptoes.
- Adults will support proprioception by encouraging whole-body movements like carrying, digging, pushing, pulling, stretching, climbing, jumping, running, kicking, and throwing.
- Adults will regularly provide opportunities to develop upper arm strength, coordination, and alternate arm and leg movements through activities like dance, yoga, role-play, and action songs.
- Children will be given frequent chances to move their bodies, dance to music, and copy simple dance moves or sequences.

- Offer opportunities for independent exploration of natural surfaces like woodland floors, grassy areas for example.
- Support proprioception by encouraging whole-body movements such as carrying, digging, pushing, pulling, stretching, and climbing.
- Support interoception through repetitive and rhythmic activities like pushing, pulling, sweeping, and digging.
- Include sensory experiences involving temperature, such as exploring hot and cold objects.
- Adults will ensure outdoor spaces are free from obstructions to allow children to move freely. Outdoor areas will feature a variety of surfaces for movement, including large vertical and horizontal spaces, areas and materials for digging and filling, plenty of objects to lift, carry, and transport, wheeled vehicles, and quiet spots for rest and recuperation.
- Children will have at least one set weekly opportunity to explore the forest during their Forest session.
- For older children, adults will focus on weight-bearing activities to develop upper arm strength, mobility, control, and balance, such as hanging from climbing equipment or lifting and manipulating large, heavy, or awkward objects.
- A range of equipment will be provided to support the development of children's gross motor skills, including:
 - Low-level balance beams and planks
 - Slides (play park)
 - Tunnels
 - Swings and hammocks (during Forest School)

- Wobble/balance boards
 - Space hoppers
- Children will have access to materials for building their own obstacle courses and dens, such as crates, wooden planks, bread trays, tunnels, hoops, cones, blankets and tyres.
- Fixed climbing equipment, outdoor furniture, paths, and natural features like tree stumps and fallen branches will also be incorporated into the environment.
- Adults will observe and support children as they create and explore obstacle courses, encouraging them to travel over, under, and through different structures. Children may help build courses and test sections as they go, revisiting and improving their skills over time by negotiating the course faster and more confidently.
- Designated areas will be provided for developing ball skills, ensuring balls don't disrupt other outdoor activities.
 - A variety of balls of different sizes and textures will be available, suited to children's ages and skill levels—such as soft balls, lightweight kicking balls, beanbags, basketballs, rugby balls, and Velcro catch balls. Different targets, including low-level basketball hoops and wall targets, will also be offered – use of the playground to achieve this.
- Push-along toys like buggies and prams to encourage movement and strength development.

	• A designated area or track will be set up for children to practice riding skills without interfering with other outdoor play. Ride-on vehicles will be provided, matched to the child's developmental stage and skills, with varying levels of complexity and coordination required. • Adults will support proprioception by encouraging whole-body movements such as carrying, digging, pushing, pulling, stretching, climbing, jumping, running, kicking, and throwing.
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Glossary

Vestibular Sense – This sense is in the inner ear and helps us with balance. It tells us if we are moving or still, and if we are upside down or standing up. It works with our neck, head, and eyes to keep our vision steady, so we don't fall over. It also helps with hearing and understanding language. When children move around a lot, their balance gets better, and this helps them sit still, pay attention, and listen.

Interoception – This sense comes from inside our body. It sends messages to our brain about things like being hungry, thirsty, tired, or needing the toilet. Children learn to understand these feelings and know how to respond. It also helps them understand their emotions, like if they are scared or excited, and helps them feel safe and calm.

Proprioception – It tells us where we are in space, how our bodies relate to the environment around us, where they begin and end. Proprioceptive sensors lie under the skin and continually send information to the brain about where we are and what we are doing.

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