Being Active at Galleywood

Thursday 20th November 2025



Physical development is an essential part of high quality early years education. It enhances children's emotional well-being, health, and lays the foundation for essential skills children will need later in their learning.

Did you know?

- There is a strong tradition of active play indoors and outside in early years provision in England. The UK Chief Medical Officers note that ‘the average level of physical activity reaches a lifetime peak around the age of school-entry (5 years old)’
- With the right experiences, children refine their movement, gaining control over gross and fine motor skills. Sensory experiences and body awareness are crucial components of this process, fostering independence and enabling children to take part in a wide range of activities
- Research suggests a link between physical development and early literacy and numeracy outcomes. There is also close link between physical development and self-regulation.

Physical Development

Gross Motor Skills

Birth to three - babies, toddlers and young children	3 & 4-year-olds	Children in reception	EL Goals
• Lift their head while lying on their front. • Push their chest up with straight arms. • Roll over: from front to back, then back to front. • Enjoy moving when outdoors and inside. • Sit without support. • Begin to crawl in different ways and directions. • Pull themselves upright and bouncing in preparation for walking. • Gradually gain control of their whole body through continual practice of large movements, such as waving, kicking, rolling, crawling and walking. • Clap and stamp to music. • Fit themselves into spaces, like tunnels, dens and large boxes, and move around in them. • Enjoy starting to kick, throw and catch balls. • Begin to walk independently – choosing appropriate props to support at first. • Walk, run, jump and climb – and start to use the stairs independently. • Spin, roll and independently use ropes and swings (for example, tyre swings). • Sit on a push-along wheeled toy, use a scooter or ride a tricycle.	• Continue to develop their movement, balancing, riding (scooters, trikes and bikes) and ball skills. • Go up steps and stairs, or climb up apparatus, using alternate feet. • Skip, hop, stand on one leg and hold a pose for a game like musical statues. • Use large-muscle movements to wave flags and streamers, paint and make marks. • Start taking part in some group activities which they make up for themselves, or in teams. • Are increasingly able to use and remember sequences and patterns of movements which are related to music and rhythm. • Match their developing physical skills to tasks and activities in the setting. For example, they decide whether to crawl, walk or run across a plank, depending on its length and width. • Choose the right resources to carry out their own plan. For example, choosing a spade to enlarge a small hole they dug with a trowel. • Collaborate with others to manage large items, such as moving a long plank safely, carrying large hollow blocks.	• Revise and refine the fundamental movement skills they have already acquired: - rolling – crawling – walking – jumping – running – hopping – skipping - climbing • Progress towards a more fluent style of moving, with developing control and grace. • Develop the overall body strength, co-ordination, balance and agility needed to engage successfully with future physical education sessions and other physical disciplines including dance, gymnastics, sport and swimming. • Use their core muscle strength to achieve a good posture when sitting at a table or sitting on the floor. • Combine different movements with ease and fluency. • Confidently and safely use a range of large and small apparatus indoors and outside, alone and in a group. • Develop overall body-strength, balance, co-ordination and agility. • Further develop and refine a range of ball skills including: throwing, catching, kicking, passing, batting, and aiming. • Develop confidence, competence, precision and accuracy when engaging in activities that involve a ball.	• 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

Birth to three - babies, toddlers and young children	3 & 4-year-olds	Children in reception	EL Goals
• Reach out for objects as co-ordination develops. • Pass things from one hand to the other. Let go of things and hands them to another person, or drops them. • Build independently with a range of appropriate resources. • Develop manipulation and control. • Explore different materials and tools. • Use large and small motor skills to do things independently, for example manage buttons and zips, and pour drinks. • Start to eat independently and learning how to use a knife and fork. • Show an increasing desire to be independent, such as wanting to feed themselves and dress or undress.	• Use one-handed tools and equipment, for example, making snips in paper with scissors. • Use a comfortable grip with good control when holding pens and pencils. • Show a preference for a dominant hand. • Be increasingly independent as they get dressed and undressed, for example, putting coats on and doing up zips. • Make healthy choices about food, drink, activity and toothbrushing.	• Develop their small motor skills so that they can use a range of tools competently, safely and confidently. Suggested tools: pencils for drawing and writing, paintbrushes, scissors, knives, forks and spoons. • Develop the foundations of a handwriting style which is fast, accurate and efficient. • Further develop the skills they need to manage the school day successfully: - lining up and queuing - mealtimes	• 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

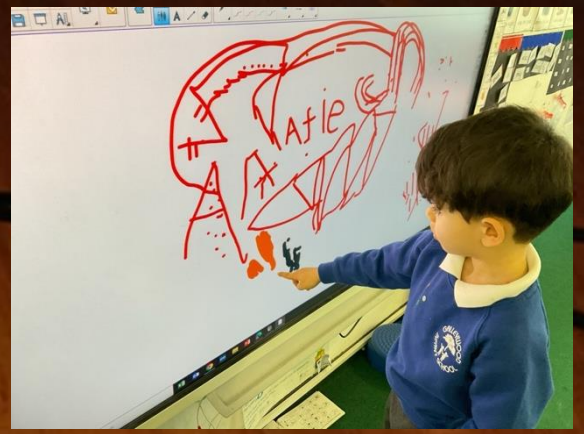
The EYFS curriculum underscores the importance of development in both gross and fine motor skills. This involves building core strength, stability, balance, coordination, and agility, setting the stage for a lifetime of physical well-being.

Gross Motor





Both gross and fine motor skills are vital components of physical development. Gross motor skills, starting from the top and moving down, provide the foundation for fine motor skills. Opportunities for varied movements contribute to coordination and body control.













Fine Motor



Fine motor skills, developed through activities like drawing, painting and threading, enhance control over objects. We can help children by carefully selecting equipment and tools that aid skill development, considering the child's development and individual needs.















In conclusion ...

the curriculum for physical development should be tailored to individual needs and identify the small steps that lead to proficiency. Some children may need explicit teaching of fundamental movement skills, coupled with intentional activities, to maximise their physical development.

Each child is unique, and supporting their physical development is not just about movement—it's about fostering confidence, resilience, and a positive self-perception that can last a lifetime.

How to help at home...

Gross Motor Ideas

- Carry some shopping
- Lay the table
- Throw and catch games
- Tummy time
- Swishing the bath water
- Make the bed
- Journey to school
- Painting large scale

Fine Motor Ideas

- Hanging out the washing
- Using cutlery
- Turning pages of a book/magazine
- Model writing for a purpose
- Playdough
- Finger mazes
- Lego
- Polly pockets
- Painting small scale

Activity Time....

- Obstacle course
- Nuts and bolts
- Threading
- Mark making