Coffee & Curriculum: Writing

Thank you to all parents who joined us for our *Coffee & Curriculum* session about writing in the Early Years. Below is a simple summary of what we discussed, based on the presentation and meeting notes.

How children learn to write in the Early Years

In the Early Years, writing does not start with pencils and paper straight away. Writing skills grow slowly and are closely linked to children's **physical development**.
There are **seven areas of learning** in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Writing links especially to:

- Communication and Language
- Physical Development
- Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- Literacy

These areas work together and support one another.

Building the body before writing

Before children are ready to write letters, they need strong bodies and hands.

- Children develop control **from shoulders → elbows → wrists → fingers**
- Large movements (gross motor skills) need to develop before small movements (fine motor skills)
- The bones and muscles in children's hands are **not fully developed until around age 6–7**

This is why activities like climbing, crawling, balancing, dancing and outdoor play are very important.

Fine motor skills and hand strength

We help children build hand strength and control through fun activities such as:

- Painting and drawing
- Playing with sand, water and gloop
- Using tweezers, pegs and threading
- Mark making on vertical surfaces (walls, easels, outdoors)
- Using whiteboards, chalks, paint brushes and water sprays

Children are not expected to hold a pencil correctly straight away. Grip develops over time.

What writing looks like in school

Writing in the Early Years includes:

- Mark making (lines, shapes, pictures)
- Drawing pictures with meaning
- Writing some letters and simple words
- Oral rehearsal – saying a sentence before writing it

We teach **phonics using Little Wandle**, currently working on Phase 2 and moving towards Phase 3. Children are supported with:

- Sound mats
- Tricky words
- Visual prompts and actions

Writing is taught in **small groups**, with lots of adult support.

Letter formation and spelling

We support children to:

- Learn the correct letter formation from the start
- Practise on whiteboards before using paper
- Break words into sounds (segmenting)
- Build sentences orally before writing

Letter reversals (for example b/d or writing letters backwards) are **very normal** at this age. This often improves as hand strength and muscle memory develop.

Writing through play

Children learn best when writing has a purpose. We encourage writing through play, such as:

- Labelling models and drawings
- Writing notes or messages
- Making signs, menus or lists
- Writing during role play

Writing is fun, active and meaningful.

How you can help at home

You do not need worksheets to help your child with writing. Simple, real-life activities are best:

- Writing birthday or thank you cards
- Helping write a shopping list
- Labelling pictures or models
- Writing messages to family or friends
- Singing songs and talking about sounds

If you would like to borrow resources or need ideas, please speak to a member of staff – we are always happy to help.

Thank you for supporting your child's writing journey. Together, we are helping them build strong foundations for life-long writing skills.