



Early Years Newsletter



23/01/2026 Spring Issue 3

#shineatpriorweston

Virtual tour @ <https://bit.ly/32RoLWi>

#unitedagainstbullying

We aim high * We are resilient * We are curious learners * We value diversity * We are respectful

Dear Golden Lane and Prior Weston families,

In this newsletter, we are following on with our focus on literacy and putting the spotlight on how to support early writing. We hope you find the information and links useful.

There is also an update from the different rooms as we find out the focus for their learning for the start of the spring term.

A lot of thought is put into the newsletters. Any feedback or suggestions are welcome.

Happy reading!

Bev & Rae

Deputy Head & Children's Centre Lead

Dates for your Diary

February 2026

Friday 6th

NSPCC Number Day



Monday 16th– 20th

Half term for term time only children

March 2026

Friday 20th March

Red Nose Day



Friday 27th

End of Spring term

April 2026

Friday 3rd

Bank Holiday– Good Friday

Monday 6th

Bank Holiday– Easter Monday

Monday 16th

Start of Summer term





Welcome to this edition of the Early Years Newsletter – Spotlight on Early Writing!

In this edition we're excited to share how early writing develops in the Early Years and how we nurture these important foundations every day. In the early stages of learning, writing isn't just about putting letters on a page—it begins long before that. Children explore mark-making, strengthen their hands and fingers through play, and express themselves long before they can form letters. All these experiences help them build the confidence, coordination, and creativity they need to become successful communicators.

Guidance from Birth to Five Matters highlights the importance of providing rich opportunities for children to explore marks in meaningful ways—whether they're swirling paint with their fingers, drawing treasure maps, or experimenting with chalk outdoors. Through these playful activities, children learn that marks carry meaning, discover that they can communicate ideas in different ways, and start to develop the physical skills that support controlled movements and early hand-writing.

Throughout Early Years, we offer a wide range of sensory, physical, and imaginative activities that encourage children to enjoy making marks and telling stories. In This newsletter we will share simple ways you can support mark-making and early writing at home.

Writing is a journey that begins long before children pick up a pencil. From the moment babies start exploring their hands to the first time they "write" their name, every stage helps build the foundations for confident communication. This month, we're sharing simple, fun, and age-appropriate ways you can support early writing at home.

Together, we're helping our youngest learners grow into confident, curious writers! ✨





0-1 Years: Exploring Through the Senses

At this age, writing is all about hand use, movement, and sensory experiences.



Try:

Finger painting with edible paint (yoghurt with food colouring works!)

Messy play: cornflour gloop, jelly, mud, sand, shaving foam

Tummy time activities with toys to reach and grasp

Board books: pointing, tapping, turning pages

Offering safe household items to bang, hold and explore

Skill focus: Grip, hand-eye coordination, curiosity.



1-2 Years: Mark Making Begins

Children start to enjoy making marks and experimenting.



Try:

Large crayons, chunky markers, or paint dabbers

Drawing on large paper, cardboard boxes or old wallpaper rolls

Water painting outside using a bucket and large brush

Making marks in sand, salt trays, or flour

Skill focus: Intentional mark making (lines, dots, scribbles), strengthening hand muscles.



2-3 Years: Early Scribbles Become Meaningful

Children begin to “write” with purpose — shopping lists, pretend letters, name marks.



Try:

Provide easy-access writing baskets with crayons and paper

Encourage children to “write” in play: “Can you write a menu for your café?”

Let them see you writing lists, notes, and labels

Encourage drawing people, shapes, and patterns

Skill focus: Developing control, early letter awareness, imaginative play.



3–4 Years: Beginning Letters and Shapes

Children can now copy simple shapes and may start forming recognisable letters (often from their name).



Try:

Practising lines, circles, zig-zags, waves — all building blocks for letter formation

Chalk on pavements

Magnetic or foam letters to explore during play

Encourage “real world” writing: birthday cards, signs for play setups, name labels

Skill focus: Pattern making, early phonics connections, hand strength.



4–5 Years: Building Confidence as Young Writers

Children begin to write short words, especially those made up of sounds they know.



Try:

Supporting their interest in writing their name (using correct capital/lowercase)

Short, playful phonics activities:

Matching sounds to pictures

Listening for first sounds in words

Provide small opportunities for writing during play: “Can you write a label for your tower?”

Encourage effort rather than perfection — invented spellings are a healthy step in learning!

Skill focus: Forming letters, linking sounds to writing, developing independence.



General Tips for All Ages

Praise effort: Focus on trying, not neatness.

Model writing: Let your child see you make lists, notes, or cards.

Keep it fun: Writing through play is more effective than worksheets.

Offer choice: pens, crayons, chalk, paint, sticks, water...

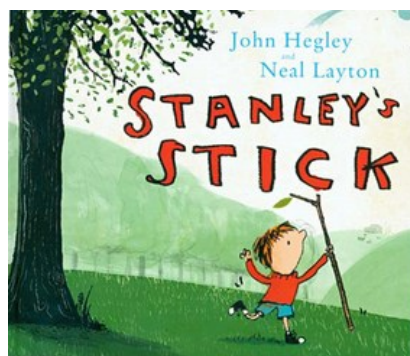
Strengthen hands with playdough, threading, Lego, squeezing sponges.

Remember: Every squiggle counts!

Components of writing

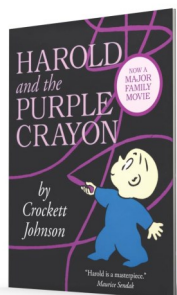


- Motivation** – wanting to have a go
- Communication** – speech and language
- Imaginative skills** – role play and storytelling
- Physical skills** – fine and gross motor skills, handwriting
- Literacy skills** – phonics, spelling and grammar
- Purpose and audience** – reasons for mark making and writing

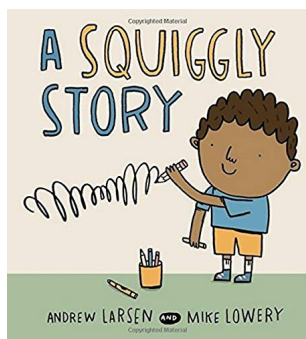


What can you do with a stick?

A stick is an extremely versatile tool. From stirring your 'tea', creating music, fishing with your best friend, writing in the sand– the list is endless! Inspire your child to develop their imagination and writing skills through the activities described in this book.



Armed only with an oversized purple crayon, Harold draws himself a landscape full of beauty and excitement. He conducts his adventure with the utmost care, letting his imagination run free, but keeping his wits about him all the while. This magical journey gives us the wondrous sense that anything is possible.



A young boy wants to write a story, just like his big sister. But there's a problem, he tells her. Though he knows his letters, he doesn't know many words. Every story starts with a single word and every word starts with a single letter, his sister explains patiently. Why don't you start there, with a letter So the boy tries. He writes a letter. An easy letter. The letter I. And from that one skinny letter, the story grows, and the little boy discovers that all of us, including him, have what we need to write our own perfect story.

When should my child be able to write their name?



<https://wordsforlife.org.uk/parent-support/when-should-my-child-be-able-to-write-their-name/>

Stages of writing



Holds the pencil/crayon in the palm of the hand in a fist like grip. Makes early attempts at mark making which feature lots of random marks, often made over other marks. Adults may describe this as scribbles.



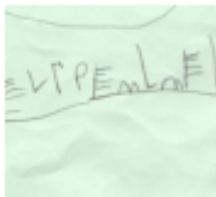
May hold the pencil/crayon in a pincer grip between the thumb and index finger. Makes a definite attempt to make individual marks. Attempts to close shapes making an inside and an outside; these shapes are often circular. Combines shapes and lines; these marks will often represent one word.



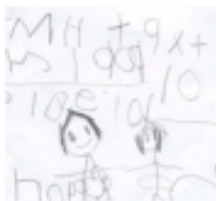
Has a clearer idea of the marks he/she wants to make. Copies adults and makes marks going across the page; these are often zigzags and wavy lines. May use either hand for writing.



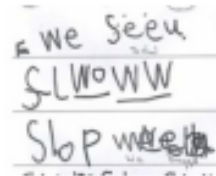
Makes individual marks and uses some letters from own name to communicate a message. Begins to understand that drawing and writing are different. Is becoming aware that print carries a message.



Forms symbols and some recognisable familiar letters that follow on next to each other. Is becoming aware of the left to right direction of print and can point to where the print begins. Is becoming aware that writing conveys meaning and may 'read' their own writing.



Writes a message using familiar letters. Writes some upper and lowercase letters. Writes his/ her name reliably.



Writes most of the alphabet correctly using upper and lower case letters. Writes the first one or two letters correctly then finishes with a jumbled string of letters. Begins to write capital letters and fill stops at the beginning and end of work. Writes a longer sentence and can read it back.

Developmental steps for early writing

At the end of Reception children are assessed against the Early Learning Goals (ELG)

What is often referred to as "early mark-making" is the beginning of writing. It is a sensory and physical, and cognitive experience for babies and toddlers, which enables them to see the connection between their actions and the resulting marks, recognising their own agency. (See roots of mark-making and handwriting in Playing and exploring and Physical Development).

- Begins to understand the cause and effect of their actions in mark making
- Knows that the marks they make are of value
- Enjoys the sensory experience of making marks

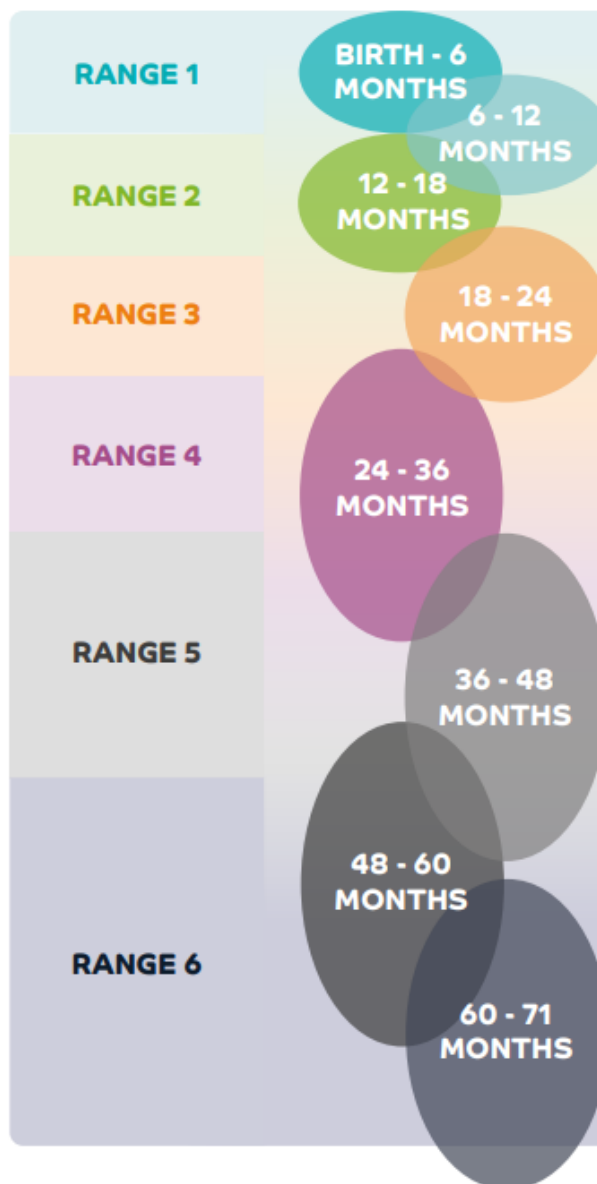
- Enjoys drawing and writing on paper, on screen and on different textures, such as in sand or playdough and through using touch-screen technology.

- Imitates adults' writing by making continuous lines of shapes and symbols (early writing) from left to right

- Begins to make letter-type shapes to represent the initial sound of their name and other familiar words

- Starts to develop phonic knowledge by linking sounds to letters, naming and sounding some of the letters of the alphabet, identifying letters and writing recognisable letters in sequence, such as in their own name

- Uses their developing phonic knowledge to write things such as labels and captions, later progressing to simple sentences



Statutory ELG: Writing

Children at the expected level of development will:

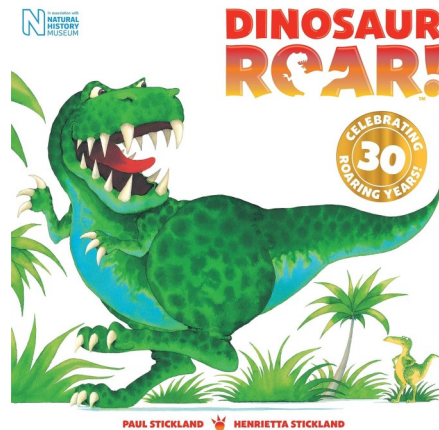
- Write recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed;
- Spell words by identifying sounds in them and representing the sounds with a letter or letters;
- Write simple phrases and sentences that can be read by others.

News from baby room

This month we are looking at the book 'Dinosaur roar' which introduces the children to different dinosaurs and features colourful pictures. The children have been enjoying making dinosaur prints using paint and making footprints using clay.

Alongside this the children have been showing lots of interest in role play in the home corner. Here they are developing their PSHE by showing care and concern for babies as they feed, change their nappies and bath them.

We also set up an office in the home corner and they really enjoyed exploring the keyboard and developing their mark making skills using pens and notepads.

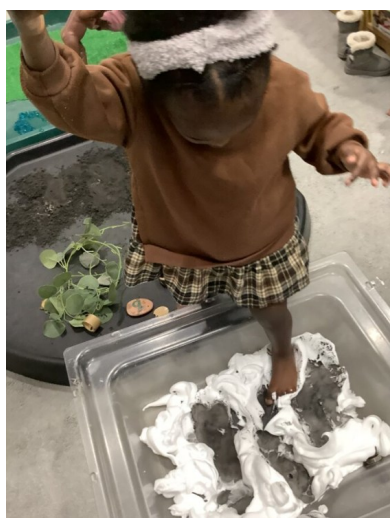
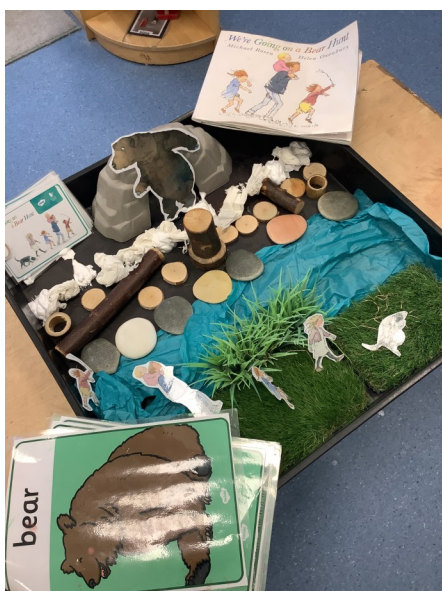


News from Toddler room

The children have been busy bodies venturing of and exploring all the thrilling activities which are on offer. The Book Of The Month In Toddlers is 'We're Going On A Bear Hunt'.

The children have been and will be participating in activities related to this book. A range of messy play, arts and craft, sensory and lots of fun messy play which has been on offer! Through this month toddler room will supports learning across all areas of the EYFS.

Children will be introduced and learning new words such as: over, under, through. All children will develop in their physical development such as gross motor skills for acting out and fine motor skills. Lastly, a significant part which they will contributing in is Expressive Arts & Design (imaginative play, creating sensory experiences like 'mud' or 'water'). It links directly to understanding stories, describing settings, and developing confidence and listening skill.



News from Nursery

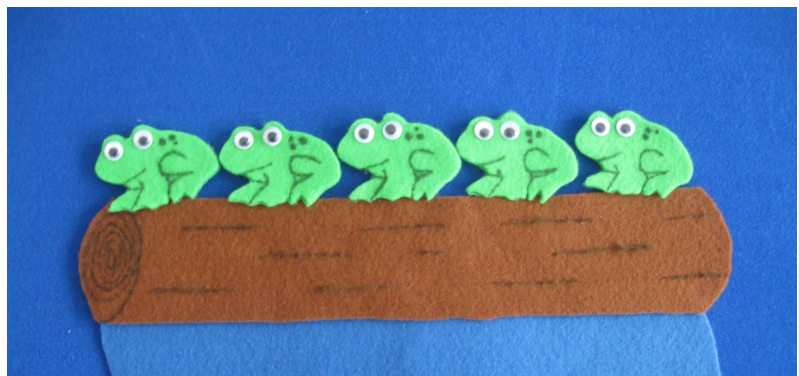
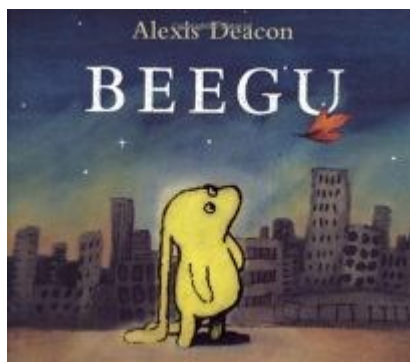
Nursery this term has been super busy. Our toddlers, now nursery children, have settled in well. They have bonded good relationships with the nursery teachers and they have made new friends. The nursery topic for this term has been all about Fairy Tales. Children have had the opportunity to listen to a few old tales, play and explore with fun and exciting activities that the adults have carefully planned and displayed for them. The nursery children have also demonstrated enjoyment in learning new maths skills, becoming more familiar with letter sounds, rhyming words etc.



News from Reception

In Reception we have using the song "five little speckled frogs" to secure our understanding of what makes 5. We have been splitting the frogs between the pool and the log and calculating the missing parts. Everyone in the class is getting super speedy at showing their knowledge of number bonds that make 5!

The children are getting more and more confident using their phonics knowledge to help them read and write words independently. We have been designing homes for our new friend Beegu and sharing ideas of things that might help Beegu feel more safe and welcome on her new planet of Earth.



https://



* JUST ADDED



Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities Course

By Bright Futures Islington Follow

Willow Children's Centre - London, England
Friday, Feb 27 from 9:30 am to 12:30 pm GMT

Free
Feb 27 · 9:30 am GMT

Reserve a spot

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/strengthening-families-strengthening-communities-course-tickets-1980995346408>

Attend Today, Achieve Tomorrow



Every School Day Counts!

Child Absences

We look forward to welcoming in all our children everyday. If your child is unable to attend for any reason, i.e. they are unwell or have an appointment or you they will be in late please contact the office on 0207 786 4800, via parentmail or email office@priorweston.islington.sch.uk and we will pass the information on to their room.

Important Dates

The academic calendar for 2025/26 is available on the school's website. Please check it regularly to stay informed about upcoming closure dates and event days.



VITAMINS FOR MUMS & CHILDREN

Collect your **FREE** Healthy Start vitamins.



Collecting Your Child

If a different adult is collecting your child, please inform a staff member in the room and the receptionist at drop-off. The adult **must** also have your child's password.



What to expect, when?

Guidance to your child's learning and development
in the early years foundation stage



Supported by

Department
for Education



https://www.eyalliance.org.uk/sites/default/files/what_to_expect_when._a_parents_guide.pdf

In this guide, your child's first five years have been divided up into six age bands which overlap. This is because every child is different and children do not grow and develop at the same rate. It highlights what you might notice your child doing at these points. Children learn and develop through playing, exploring, being active, creative and being asked questions to help their thinking. After each age band we give you an example of some ideas and tips as to how you can help your child's learning and development. Page 34 details where you can find out more.

Happy Retirement John

On Friday 30th January we are saying farewell to John Davis who has been our Assistant Premises Manager at the Campus for almost 13 and a half years.

He is finally off to enjoy his hard-earned retirement in pastures new with his lovely family.



He has helped to keep our School and Children's Centre clean and safe and in good working order. He has helped to keep all the staff, children and families safe and made sure everyone feels welcome. He has led on some great well-being events for staff and will be greatly missed by all.

We wish him good luck, good health and good fortune as well as hoping this next chapter of his life will be filled with adventures, laughter and good memories of us and his time at the Campus!