

Reception Stay and Learn: Physical Development

25th November 2025

What is Physical Development?



- ▶ Physical development in the early years refers to the growth of the body and brain from birth through early childhood.
- ▶ This includes changes in body size, muscle strength, balance, coordination, sensory development, and skills such as movement and handling.
- ▶ Physical development is a foundational area that enables children to engage with the world around them and lays the building blocks for later physical capabilities and health.

Gross motor skills involve the use of the whole body and include movements like crawling, walking, and running. Stability is the ability to control and coordinate movement using core strength, for example, sitting and balancing.

Fine motor skills involve the control of small muscles in activities like pinching, grasping, and handling. Fine motor development encompasses hand muscle strength, wrist movement, and pincer control: skills which facilitate independence in daily tasks such as eating, dressing, and mark-making. The development of motor skills is also needed for mark-making and letter formation.

The Early Years Foundation Stage

Prime Areas

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

Specific Areas

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the World
- Expressive Arts and Design

ELG: Gross Motor Skills

Children at the expected level of development will:

- 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.

ELG: Fine Motor Skills

Children at the expected level of development will:

- 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.

What can we do to support Physical Development in EYFS...

- 1. Promoting physical activity:** educators can encourage and provide opportunities, including play, for children to regularly engage in physical activity, both indoors and outdoors.
- 2. Teaching the skills needed for movement and handling:** educators can aim to improve physical development by explicitly teaching and consolidating movement and handling skills.
- 3. Teaching the skills needed for mark-making and letter formation:** educators can support the development of the skills and mechanics required to actively engage in mark-making opportunities.

What do we need to do before we can write?

- ▶ Develop Postural Control & Gross Motor Control
- ▶ Improving bilateral coordination
- ▶ Building shoulder, hand and wrist strength
- ▶ Strengthening all muscles including hand muscles
- ▶ Develop visual perception skills
- ▶ Developing spatial awareness
- ▶ Making various small and large movements
- ▶ Work on our motor memory
- ▶ Combining and refining fine and gross motor skills into purposeful mark making.

Developing Postural Control & Gross Motor Control

How we are helping develop these skills in school:

- PE sessions with Coach Dave
- Artis Sessions with Crunchie/Hum
- Forest Schools
- Climbing frame at playtime, climbing wall
- Animal walking (all fours, crab walking and bunny hops),
- Yoga for kids
- Singing action songs
- Obstacle courses
- Building - construction materials



Crossing the mid-line

The ability to cross the imaginary line running from a person's nose to pelvis that divides the body into left and right sides.

How we are helping these skills in school:

- Scarf dancing
- Threading activities
- Dough disco
- Simon says games
- Hand clapping games
- Marching Games
- Painting activities
- Using musical instruments.



Bilateral Coordination: Using more than one limb at once.

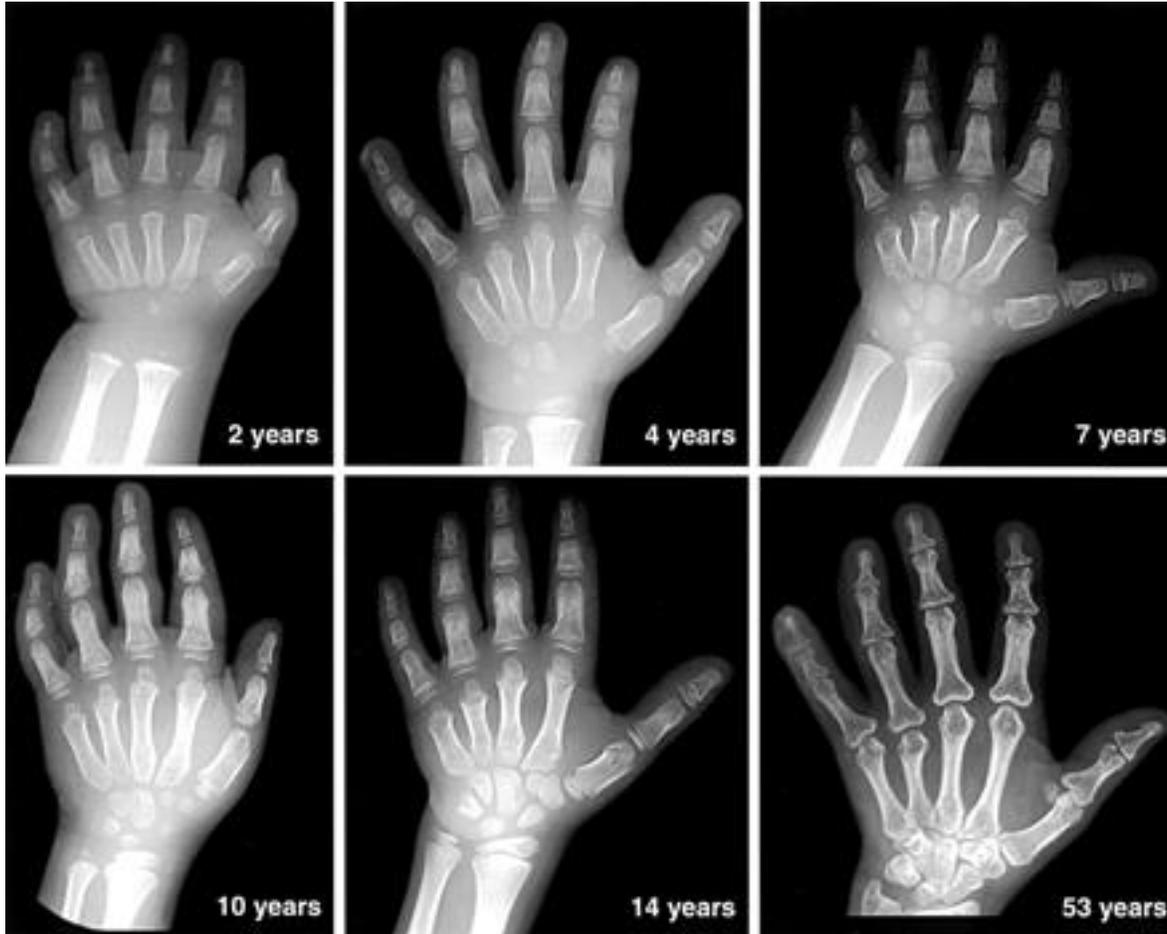
How we are helping develop these skills in school:

- *Getting changed for PE (buttons, zips)*
- *PE Activities with Coach Dave*
- *Using knives and forks*
- *Threading activities*
- *Scissor cutting*
- *Jumping and hopping patterns*
- *Large scale paintings*
- *Hammers and nails*
- *Catching a ball with two hands*



Importance of building up muscle strength

Bone development in the hand of a small child.



Ruth "Award Winning" Swailes @SwailesRuth · Jul 11, 2019



Replying to @SwailesRuth @iQuirky_Teacher and 3 others

There are physical reasons children go through the phases of palmar supinate, digital pronate, static tripod and eventually to dynamic tripod. Children also have to develop upper and core body strength and proprioceptor control in addition to fine motor control.



Ruth "Award Winning" Swailes

@SwailesRuth

An x ray of a developed hand (around the age of 7) compared to an EYFS age child's hand is pretty informative. Also occupational therapists issue fantastic advice on how to develop handwriting in an age appropriate way matched to children's physical development.



6:48 PM · Jul 11, 2019



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Hand and finger strength - Hand eye coordination - Object manipulation/visual motor:
Grasping and manipulating activities that support dexterity and separation of the two sides of the hand plus visual motor support.

How we are helping develop these skills in school:

- finger exercise with thumb to each finger, counting on fingers,
- threading and lacing,
- scrunching paper,
- using tweezers,
- using dough with different tools including rolling pins
- Dough disco
- single hole punches,
- anti-clockwise motions with finger in the sensory materials such as, flour, rice and paint, throwing and catching activities,
- controlled use of everyday tools, vehicles with pens, finger games: that practice specific finger movement.
- putting rings on a stick,
- closing zippers and poppers,
- turning single pages in a book, vertical drawing on paper on walls, magnet play on the easel, chalk on upright board or wall,
- craft - make things using old boxes, egg cartons, wool, paper and sticky or masking tape, construction: building with duplo, lego, mobilo or other construction toys.





Visual Perception skills:
the brain's ability to make sense of what the eyes sees, to receive, interpret, and act upon visual stimuli.

How we are helping these skills in school:

- Puzzles
- Mazes
- Board games
- Card games
- Memory games
- Matching and sorting activities.



Motor Memory:

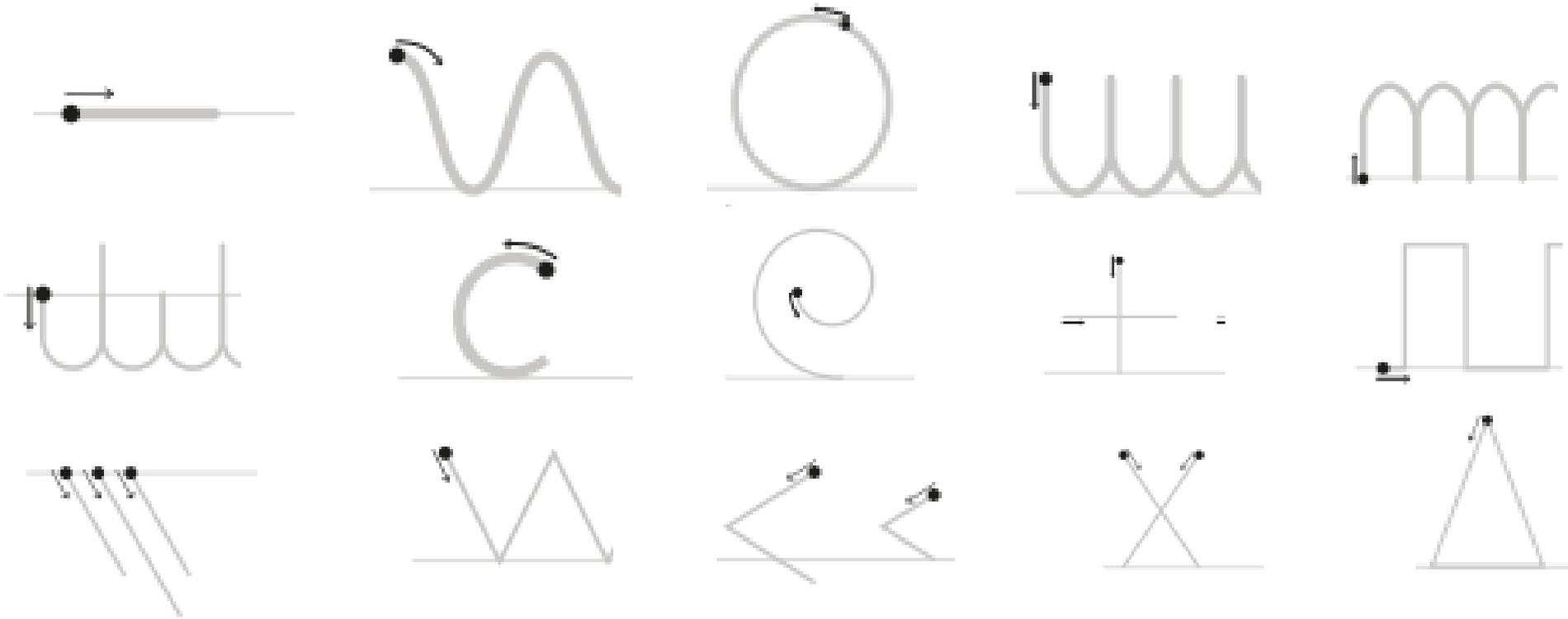
Motor memory is the result of motor learning, which involves developing new muscular coordination. This allows us to recall motor coordination we have learned in order for us to interact with the environment.

How we are helping these skills in school:

- *Playing instruments,*
- *Balance bikes*
- *Catching various sizes of balls.*
- *Writing the letters or numbers on their back,*
- *Writing and forming letters with dough, foam, salt,*
- *Feely bag letters and numbers.*
- *Cutting activities*



Mark Making - early handwriting



By tracing and copying patterns, children build key skills that support early writing development, in particular, pencil control, as well as specific letter formation skills related to letter families and individual letters.

The 'Ready to write' checklist.

- The checklist supports correct posture, pencil grip, paper position and pressure, all of which are essential for forming letters accurately and efficiently.
- By embedding these habits early, children are more likely to write with ease, confidence and legibility.
- Following the 'Ready to write' checklist also helps to prevent the development of poor habits that can be difficult to correct later on, promoting long-term writing fluency and comfort

'Ready to write' rhyme

Let's sit up straight, feet nice and flat,
Tilt your paper - just like that!
Pinch your pencil, give it a flip,
Check your hold and then your grip.
Now we can begin to write,
But not too hard and not too light.



Unit 2: Curly letter family

Letter mnemonic	Formation phrase	Letter mnemonic	Formation phrase
	Curl around the cat.		Around the queen's face, down her robe and a flick at the end.
	Around the astronaut's helmet and down into space.		Around the elephant's eye and curl down its trunk.
	Around the duck's body, up to its head and down to its feet.		Down the snake from head to tail.
	Around the goat's face and curl under its chin.		Down the flamingo to its foot and across its wings.
	All around the octopus.		

Unit 3: Long letter family

Letter mnemonic	Formation phrase	Letter mnemonic	Formation phrase
	Down the lollipop stick.		Down the jellyfish and dot its head.
	Down the iguana and dot the leaf.		Down and around the umbrella and back to the ground.
	Down the tiger and across its neck.		Down, around the yo-yo and curl around the string.

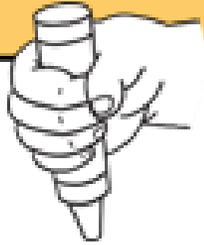
Unit 4: Bouncy letter family

Letter mnemonic	Formation phrase	Letter mnemonic	Formation phrase
	Down, up and over the mouse's ears.		Down the bear's back, up and around its tummy.
	Down, up and over the net.		Down the penguin's back, up and around its head.
	From the cloud to the ground and over the rainbow.		Down, up and over the helicopter.

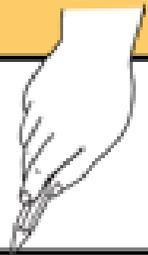
Unit 5: Zig-zag letter family

Letter mnemonic	Formation phrase	Letter mnemonic	Formation phrase
	Down to the bottom of the volcano and back up to the top.		Across the top of the zebra's head, zig-zag down its neck and along.
	Down and up and down and up the waves.		Down the kite, up to the top corner and down to the bottom corner.
	From the top, across the box to the bottom. From the top again, across the box to the bottom.		

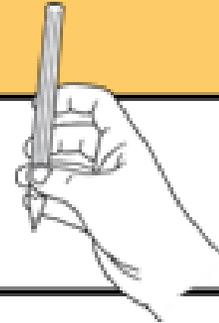
Pencil grip



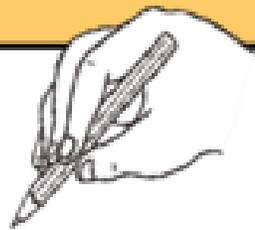
Palmer supinate



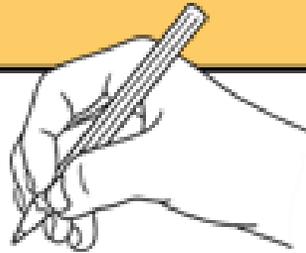
Digital pronate



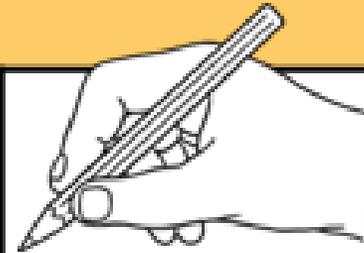
Four finger



Static quadropod



Static tripod



Dynamic tripod

Resources we use in school to support pencil grips

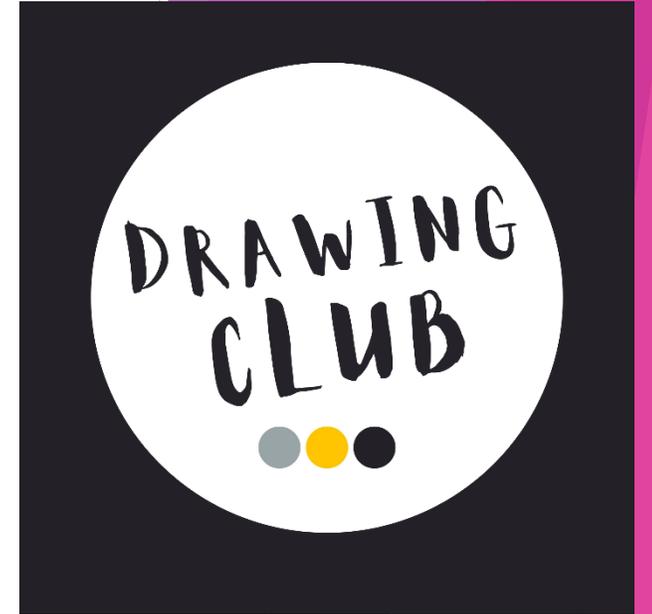


Drawing Club

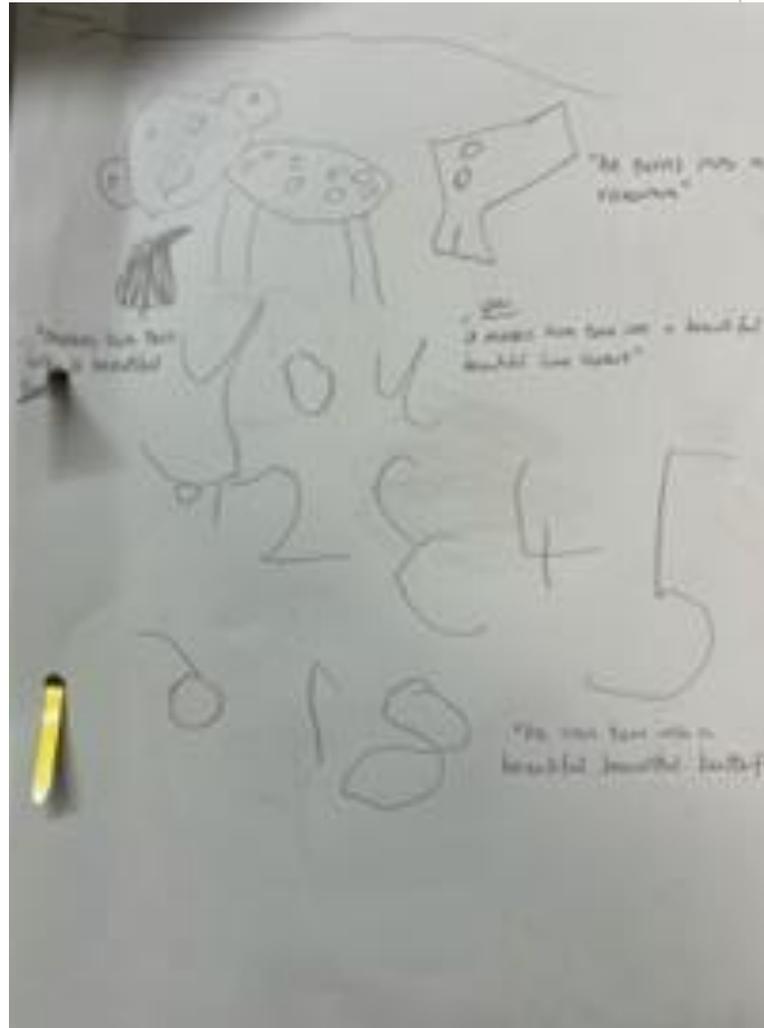
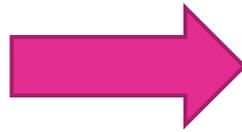
- Children love drawing
- Children love clubs
- Drawing club brings imagination to life
- Vocabulary is introduced in a contextual way
- Drawing develops the hand and mind and has a huge impact on the children's confidence, joy and progress!

- Use stories linked to topic, traditional tales, retro cartoons to build imagination.

- 3 M's - Making Conversation, Mark Making and Maths.

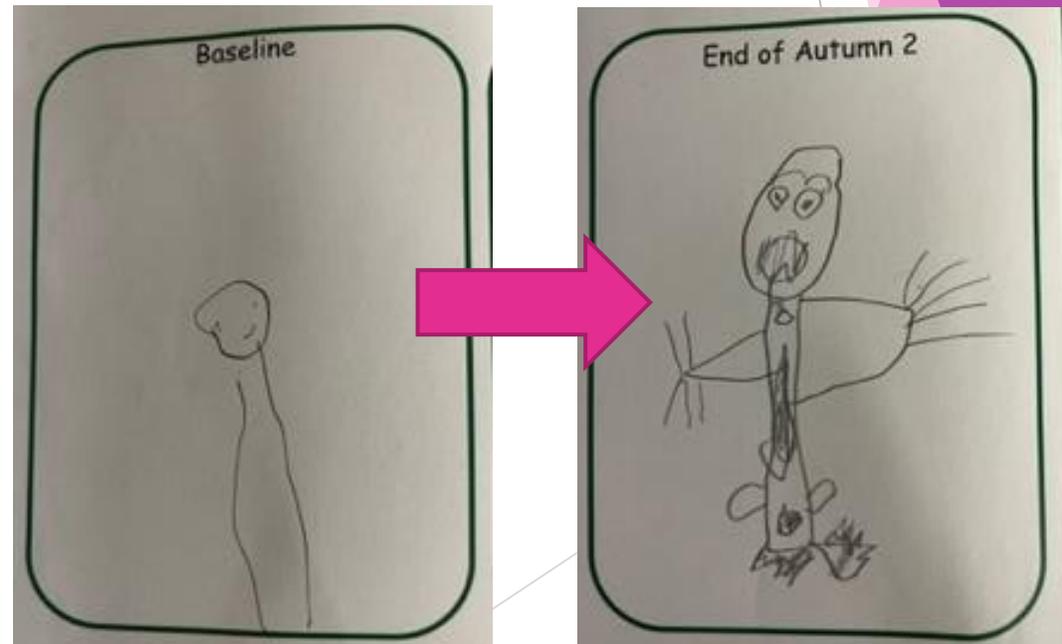
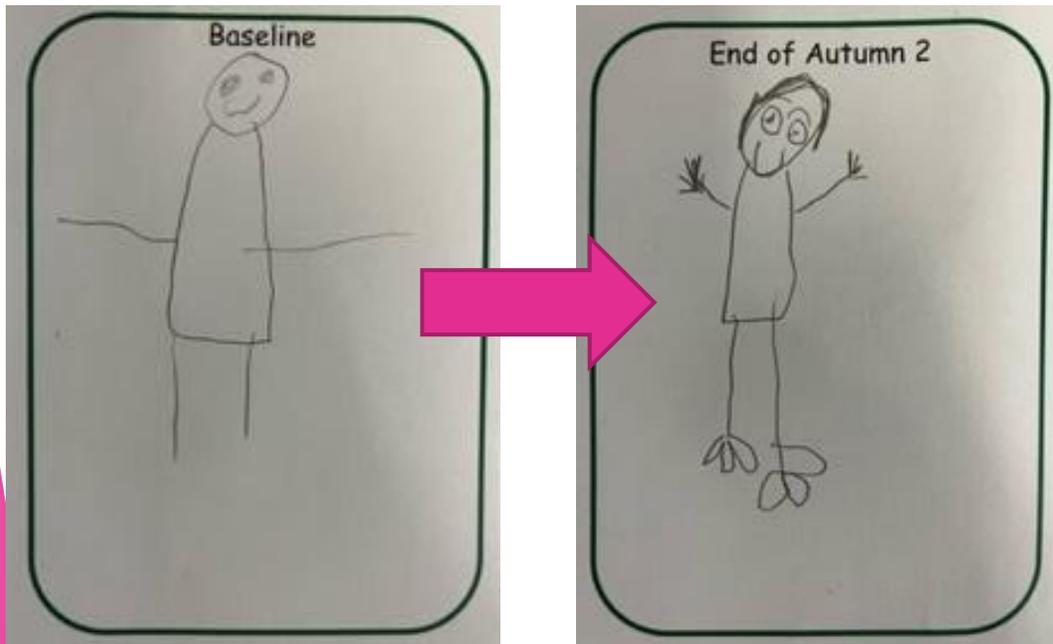


Example of Drawing Club



Baseline - (Draw A Person Approach)

- ▶ Research by Goodenough and later adapted by J.A. Naglieri and Shonette Bason Wood.
- ▶ Draw a Person approach shows how much of the child's brain controls the body. You will instantly see whether a child has arms, fingers or even hands. If they do not have them then fine and gross motor muscles need developing and strengthening.
- ▶ At the start of Reception we baseline the children and repeat this process each term to see how their gross and fine motor is developing.



Important Dates

- ▶ PTA Christmas Fair - Friday 5th December
- ▶ Christmas Dinner and Christmas Jumper Day - Wednesday 10th December
- ▶ Rec/KS1 Nativity - Tuesday 16th December 2pm and 5.30pm
- ▶ Christmas Party Day - Wednesday 17th December
- ▶ Carol Service - Friday 19th December 2.30pm

- Reception/Year 1 and Year 2 - Christmas Crafts Club
- ▶ Christmas Reading Competition

Time to play...
all of today's activities are based
on Fine and Gross Motor
Development.

Please leave us some feedback as
you leave today.
Thank you!