



## **Practicing Gross and Fine Motor Skills at Hayton C of E Primary School:**

### **Little Acorns Early Years Provision**

#### **Gross motor skills**

Gross motor skills involve large-scale, whole-body movements, such as, walking, rolling over, jumping, climbing, and throwing a ball to name a few. Gross motor development begins at birth and over time gross motor development helps to strengthen children's core strength and support their co-ordination.

Gross motor skills should not be confused with fine motor skills (see later), as fine motor skills involve the small, precise movements associated with the muscles found in the wrists, hands, and fingers. Fine motor skills help to support children as they grow older with activities, such as zipping up their coats and fastening buttons, eating with a knife and fork, and early writing activities.

In order to be ready to begin to develop their fine motor skills, young children need to have first gained effective gross motor skills from regular activities that support their gross motor development. The delicate movements needed for fine motor activities can be difficult for children who do not yet have effective gross motor skills. Thus, the two are interconnected, with successful gross motor development forming the foundations needed to build successful fine motor skills on.

#### **Why Are Gross Motor Skills Important?**

Activities such as running, stretching, and catching a ball all involve those larger movements that gross motor skills are associated with. This means that gross motor skills are highly important, as large-scale movements occur frequently in everyday life!

As previously mentioned, there is a direct correlation between effective gross motor development and effective fine motor skills. Children who have had the opportunities to hone their gross motor skills will often find fine motor activities, such as cutting with scissors or early writing activities, less challenging than those who are not quite ready due to the ongoing development of their gross motor skills.

Gross motor development is also fundamental to children being healthy. When children are given plenty of opportunities to develop their gross motor skills, through engaging and fun physical activities, they will also be developing healthy bones, muscles, and joints. It is widely believed that physical activity helps to maintain body weight, and flexibility, as well as improving vital connections between the brain and body to help children to focus.

For younger children, gross motor skills have a huge impact on a child's holistic development, not only allowing for children's bodies to be healthy, but will also having the same positive effect on children's social and emotional well-being.

Activities to support gross motor skills for older children include hopping, skipping, jumping, climbing, navigating obstacles, spinning, turning, twisting, and moving in different ways, such as slithering on their tummies.

## **Fine motor skills**

For most people, doing things like writing in a birthday card, or tying your shoelaces probably seem like relatively easy tasks. But in fact, these activities are complex movements that require the coordination of the muscles and the brain.

To be able to carry out these tasks, we have to develop and recognise the importance of fine motor skills in the early years.

Fine motor skills are the ability to make movements using the small muscles in the hands and wrists. These skills involve the coordination of the hands, fingers, and eyes.

Improving these skills is a really important part of our development, as we use fine motor skills in a variety of ways every day.

## **Fine motor skills examples for children**

Some activities that require us to use fine motor skills include:

- Holding a pen, pencil, or paintbrush;
- Drawing, tracing, and writing neatly;
- Stacking and organising objects;
- Using scissors and rulers;
- Typing on a computer;
- Fastening clothing;
- Opening lunch boxes;
- Tying shoelaces;
- Using a knife and fork;
- Opening doors;
- Brushing their teeth.

## **The importance of fine motor skills in early years**

As children progress through their early years into primary education, the majority of meaningful activities for developing fine motor skills will take place in EYFS settings. The importance of fine motor skills in early years is paramount when developing a grasp of different concepts associated with learning.

Fine motor skills are used daily in 'Little Acorns' through a range of activities that encourage the development of stamina and flexibility in the arms, wrists, hands, and fingers. As children are learning practically in settings, we know it is essential that fine motor skills are constantly being developed and used. This could include activities like moving pompoms from one bowl to another as they are counted. Children might also thread beads to encourage really intrinsic handling of something small. These refined activities all help children in early years to hold a pen or pencil for longer periods of time, where they will get used to mark making, and eventually writing.



Underdeveloped fine motor skills in early years can pose challenges for children later in their education. Frustration at not being able to carry out certain activities, such as being unable to cut paper fluidly with scissors, can bring about self-esteem and confidence knocks. It is therefore vital children are supported and given opportunities to engage their fine motor muscles.

Ideas that support the development of fine motor skills:

- Encourage children to play with small toys;
- Modelling dough is ideal for 'Finger Gym' and 'Dough disco';
- 'Squiggle whilst you wiggle'
- Encourage finger food at certain points of the day;
- Painting and crayons to create art;
- Complete puzzles and build tracks;
- Thread beads onto pipe cleaners.