The Carlton & Faceby and Bilsdale CE Federation

Progression in Physical Development – Nursery and Reception

Curriculum Intent

We prioritise physical development as foundational to all learning. Children develop gross motor control first (core strength, balance, coordination) before refining fine motor precision (hand strength, control, pencil grip) to support early writing and independence.

The progression shown below maps the clearly sequenced steps of progression in gross and fine motor skills which are outlined in our EYFS curriculum.

Progression Overview

Stage 1 – Nursery, Autumn-Spring Term

Focus – core strength, whole body movement, early hand control

Rationale – Children build shoulder and core strength first, which underpins later fine motor control

	Skill	Suggested provision
Gross Motor	Develop core stability through climbing, balancing and large movements Begin to move safely within their space and develop a growing awareness of the presence of others Explore movement (running, jumping, dancing) to rhythms and music	Climbing and crawling zones (soft play, tunnels, low apparatus) Obstacle courses (stepping stones, mats, ramps) Music and movement sessions (action songs, scarves, ribbons) Ride-on toys and push-along equipment Parachute games for whole-body movement
Fine Motor	Begin to use one hand more consistently (developing dominance) Explore mark making with large and small tools Begin to use tools (scissors, paintbrushes) with support Develop hand strength through sensory play (squeezing, pouring)	Large-scale mark making: chalk outdoors, paint rollers, water brushes Sensory play: sand, water, pouring, scooping, squeezing Posting and slot activities: posting boxes, shape sorters Playdough: squeezing, flattening, rolling Peg boards and stacking rings

Stage 2 – Nursery, Spring-Summer Term

Focus – coordination, control and purposeful tool use

Rationale – Children move from exploration to more controlled movement, strengthening joints needed for writing (shoulder, elbow and wrist)

	Skill	Suggested provision
Gross Motor	Move with increasing coordination (climbing, running, negotiating space) Begin to negotiate obstacles and show some spatial awareness Join simple movement sequences (music, dance)	Structured obstacle courses: over/under/through challenges Balancing activities: beams, tyres, crates Dance and movement patterns: copying sequences Ball play: rolling, throwing large balls Scooters and bikes with pathways
Fine Motor	Use tools with increasing control (snipping with scissors, threading large beads, pouring with greater control) Develop more wrist and elbow control through repeated practise Begin to form recognisable shapes, letters or numbers, although these may not be formed correctly	Threading and lacing activities Cutting stations: snipping paper, straight lines Pattern copying: peg boards, drawing patterns Tool use: tweezers, tongs, scoops Mark making with control: whiteboards, tracing shapes

Stage 3 – Reception, Autumn-Spring Term

Focus – refinement of movement and control

Rationale – Children refine movement into greater precision and accuracy, preparing for writing tasks

	Skill	Suggested provision
Gross Motor	Balance and coordinate movements with increasing control Negotiate space confidently and safely Begin to develop ball skills (throwing, catching, kicking) with a large ball Build core strength for posture and sitting	PE circuits: jumping, balancing, hopping stations Ball skill stations: throwing, catching, kicking targets Balance challenges: walking lines, beams, uneven surfaces Team games: simple rules (e.g. relay-style activities) Core strength activities: planks, crawling races, yoga for children
Fine Motor	Begin to use the tripod grip with increasing consistency Form letters and numbers with growing accuracy Use scissors and tools in a more controlled and confident way Show greater control in drawing and mark making	Writing and mark making areas: pencils, whiteboards, clipboards Scissor skill progression: zig-zag, curved cutting Finger gym stations: pegs, elastic bands, nuts and bolts Drawing challenges: adding detail to pictures Construction with small parts: lego, connectors

Stage 4 – Reception, Spring-Summer Term

Focus – automaticity, fluency and application

Rationale – Children move from controlled practise to fluent, automatic movement, enabling a focus on writing content rather than physical effort

	Skill	Suggested provision
Gross Motor	Move confidently and safely in a range of ways (running, hopping, skipping) Demonstrate strength, balance and coordination in play Apply movement skills in games and structured activities	Complex obstacle courses: combined skills (balance + jump + crawl) Games with rules: team games, target games Sports-based activities: mini football, throwing games Outdoor challenges: timed runs, agility courses Dance routines: following sequences to music
Fine Motor	Become more confident with the tripod grip for writing Write letters and words with control and fluency Use a range of tools with accuracy and care Produce more detailed drawings with control	Independent writing opportunities: writing for purpose (lists, labels, cards) Detailed drawing and colouring: staying within lines, adding features Advanced cutting and crafting: cutting shapes accurately Small construction tasks: model making with precision Tool stations: hole punches, staplers, weaving

End of Reception outcomes (ELGs)

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.

Assessment

Ongoing observations of:

- Grip development
- Coordination and balance
- Tool control

Children needing additional support receive:

- Targeted fine motor activities
- Additional gross motor development sessions
- Staff adapt provision to ensure progression for all learners

Adaptations for SEND pupils

We ensure that all children, including those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), can access and make progress within the Physical Development curriculum. Adaptations are made to support engagement, independence and success, while maintaining high expectations for all learners.

Curriculum Adaptations

- Skills are broken down into smaller, achievable steps (e.g. from whole-arm movements → wrist control → finger precision)
- Learning is sequenced more gradually, with opportunities for repetition and overlearning
- A focus is placed on fundamental movement patterns before introducing more complex skills
- Provide low-distraction workspaces where needed
- Ensure resources are accessible, clearly organised and labelled
- Offer a balance of structured adult-led tasks and child-initiated exploration
- Use visual timetables and consistent routines to support understanding
- Scaffolding and modelling of movements and techniques
- Targeted intervention sessions for children requiring additional support
- Immediate feedback and encouragement to build confidence

Gross Motor Adaptations

- Provide additional opportunities to develop core strength and coordination (e.g. targeted climbing, balance activities, soft play)
- Adapt equipment to support access:
  - ❖ Wider balance beams
  - ❖ Larger balls for catching and throwing
  - ❖ Stable ride-on equipment
- Use adult modelling and physical prompting where appropriate
- Provide clear, simple instructions supported by visual cues or demonstrations

Fine Motor Adaptations

- Use adapted resources to support grip and control:
  - ❖ Pencil grips, chunky crayons, adapted scissors
  - ❖ Vertical mark making (e.g. easels, walls) to build shoulder strength
- Provide additional hand-strengthening activities (e.g. dough, tweezers, peg boards)
- Allow more time and repeated practice to develop control

- Use multi-sensory approaches (e.g. tracing in sand, paint, shaving foam)