Supporting Physical Development in the Early Years



- Educators can implement approaches that benefit young children's physical development. Evidence shows that physical development approaches may also benefit cognitive outcomes.
- · Physical development programmes that involve parents and carers are more effective than those which do not.
- Physical development is linked to children's personal, social and emotional development (PSED) and early literacy skills. Consider exploring these associated themes in the evidence store, alongside the physical development theme.



What is it?

Evidence summary of the approach

Put the approach into action



O1
Promoting physical activity

The educator aims to improve children's physical development by encouraging their active play and prioritising enjoyment.

The educator prioritises the general promotion of physical activity, not just teaching a specific skill.

Establishing a positive culture that motivates every child to be physically active and enjoy active play can have positive effects.

There is evidence that this approach can be effective at improving children's gross and fine motor skills, balance and stability.

Offering a range of resources both outdoors and indoors leads to improvements in children's physical development. This might include equipment like jigsaws, hand tools, balls and climbing frames.

Natural play approaches include freedom to play and climb with natural resources like grass, branches and rocks. By introducing different resources, educators stimulate children's interests and provide children with choice and a high degree of independence.

- Participating
- Repetition
- Combining learning opportunities
- Sparking or tempting
- Suggesting
- Experimenting



Supporting Physical Development in the Early Years



Effective approaches to support **Physical Development**

What is it?

Evidence summary of the approach Put the approach into action



Teaching the skills needed for movement and handling

The educator aims to support physical development by focusing on the skills children need for movement and handling. This could include verbal and/or physical prompts, modelling and other strategies to help children acquire and consolidate skills.

Teaching movement skills positively impacts children's physical development. Educators can use playful or motivating contexts and combine some structured teaching time with opportunities for children to play and practise freely.

Focusing on a specific skill can improve competency in that skill.

Teaching may be more effective when educators thoughtfully vary difficulty levels and give verbal and physical direction. Verbal direction includes giving feedback and making suggestions. Physical direction includes the educator demonstrating movements.

- Explaining
- Narrating
- Repetition
- Reminding
- Commenting
- Reflecting
- Showing
- Breaking down and sequencing
- Physically supporting

- Signposting
- Targeting
- Extending
- Suggesting
- Using mistakes as teaching and learning opportunities
- Adapting



03 Teaching the skills needed for markmaking and letter formation

The educator uses strategies to encourage children's mark-making and their developing motor skills.

Gross motor skills are the building blocks for the more focused coordination needed for mark-making.

Engaging in mark-making can improve children's fine motor skills, visual motor skills and manual dexterity. This can be supported by a wider range of activities like playing with construction toys, using tools like scissors, threading, and fastening buttons and zips.

Providing older children with feedback, encouragement, and goal setting can also support their mark-making outcomes.

- Preparing
- Modelling
- Narrating
- Demonstrating
- Using memory prompts
- Commenting
- Repetition





Explore the Early Years Evidence Store to find out more about Physical Development and other themes, including PSED and Early Mathematics.

Scan the QR code for detailed examples and videos of the approaches in action.