

## Alexandra Park Research School

### Developing Literacy in the Early Years

Developing the literacy skills of our children is a fundamental aspect of our approach to curriculum here at Alexandra Park Primary. We know that this needs to start with our youngest children. We have spent many years developing our approach, we are currently using the Preparing for Literacy Guidance report and have a particular focus on recommendation three, as we have identified children's capability and motivation to write as an area for development. We have developed our role play areas, storytelling opportunities and group reading to ensure children have many varied and rich opportunities to engage in activities to develop their expressive language skills. We have identified, that alongside this work, we must ensure children have the necessary motor, including visual motor-skills, to improve their handwriting and letter formation.

We have seen over the years that a growing number of children are starting our school unequipped with basic motor skills. With this in mind, we decided to implement the Nexus Pegs to Paper, designed by Dr Angela Webb, to improve children's motor skills and we hope, in time their handwriting. Pegs to Paper facilitates cognitive development through physical activity using concrete experience within a child's environment. It is particularly effective at engaging boys at a young age because of the element of construction through the child-initiated play. We currently have a gender gap in writing outcomes between our girls and boys - so are interested in an approach that engages our youngest boys. Children use the pegboard and pegs to follow patterns developing the tripod grip.



We have found that the intervention helps all our children develop their handwriting skills but it is particularly useful for those who struggle.

The evidence-based program guarantees visible improvement in early years learning within 6 weeks as it helps form the best connections in the brain which stimulate learning. A child can see evidence of how far they have come by recording their progress as they work their way through the programme. We have already seen a positive impact with an increase in children's confidence and we are beginning to see an improvement in the number of children using the tripod grip. We know from the Preparing for Literacy Guidance Report that early intervention is more likely to be effective than later intervention and hope that Pegs to Paper will help us provide the early support for our children that will develop their Literacy skills so that they can fully access and enjoy our school's curriculum.

By Claire Williams and Sarah Cresswell.



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