

Loops and lines : Writing like a 4 year old

In the first half of the year we focused on oral story telling using story stones and drama. This has given the children lots of experience and confidence to tell stories and to understand that the elements of a story include – setting, characters, a problem and conclusion. This is the platform that we are using to encourage the children’s writing.

Recently we have been grappling with how we encourage the children to attempt their own writing. We have given the children some opportunities to copy scribed texts (writing that we have written and they copy) but we know this does not encourage them to be independent writers rather they come to rely on us to write for them. We want to encourage the children to have a go at making *marks* that represent their thinking and stories.

“When children begin writing they can tell more complex stories than they can write. This is because learning to write – to represent language in written symbols – involves learning to use a pencil, to hold it properly and create letters, words and sentences to convey meaning to others.” (Hill 2006, *Developing Early Literacy* p. 312).

As children move through the early years of schooling they will develop letter – sound knowledge and begin to use these elements in their writing in more complex ways. However, for 4 and 5 year olds it is not developmentally appropriate to expect they know all their letters and sounds but we know that they certainly are writers and we can encourage them to develop these skills.

We have considered the early stages of writing development.

There are a number of sequential stages in children’s writing development. In preschool and early years of schooling we will notice *beginning writing*, *early emergent writing* and *later emergent writing*. (Hill 2006, *Developing Early Literacy* p. 316-17)

Beginning writing – children might use drawing to communicate a message and then read out the message. Writing can occur in large circle shapes or in scribble-like lines that may proceed from left to right.

Early emergent writing – children begin to explore the use of symbols – either drawings or letters to represent words. They may use some letters to represent the sounds in the word.

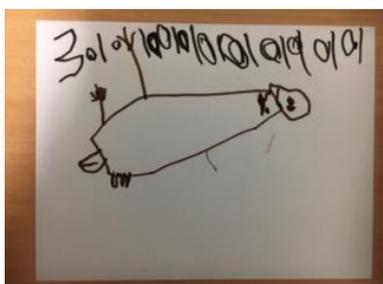
Emergent writing – the child begins to create more letter-like shapes. There are spaces between letters and letters begin to represent sounds in words. There may be strings of repeated letters.

This term we have begun explicitly talking with the children about being writers and modelling what being a writer looks like with a focus on **BOOK MAKING**. We modelled the use of *loops, lines and letters* and you may hear the children talking about this at home. *Loops and lines* are a way of encouraging the children to make marks and symbols to represent what they want to say. Including *letters* encourages children to write the letters they are learning with their loops and lines. In the early years of school, the children will come to understand that they can write words with the letters and sounds they know.

When children write using *loops, lines and letters* we encourage them to read their stories back to us. We acknowledge their writing by listening to them read and noticing their writing as well as their illustration. We encourage every mark making and writing attempt. You will notice that when the children read back the same piece of writing (loops, lines and letters) to multiple listeners they read it very similarly which supports their story telling and oral language.

Here are some examples of the children’s writing this term.

Loops and Lines



Loops, lines & letters



Copy scribed text



On some occasions the children may copy scribed text but not often when BOOK MAKING.

For example, the children might copy scribed text when captioning an observational drawing, writing their name or a making birthday card.