

Literacy Sparks: Building the foundations for reading and writing.

Our Literacy Sparks sessions bring together a range of important literacy skills in short, focused activities, with children working in small groups of no more than 15, organised by year group. This gives teachers the opportunity to tailor activities to the children's age and stage of development, while providing focused teaching and time to practise key skills.

The sessions begin with hand and wrist exercises to support the fine motor control needed for handwriting. Children then practise letter formation or joined handwriting, depending on their age and stage, before moving on to spelling, reading comprehension or Nessy, (online learning platform). Teachers also spend time hearing individual children read, providing opportunities to develop fluency, accuracy and understanding.

On Fridays, the children put some of these skills into practice by writing a diary entry about what they have been doing at school that week. This gives them a regular opportunity to apply their handwriting and spelling skills in their own writing, while recalling and reflecting on their learning and experiences.

Each activity lasts around five to ten minutes, allowing us to cover several areas of learning within one session. The variety keeps the sessions purposeful, while regular practice helps children consolidate what they have been learnt, building consistency across their reading and writing.

This approach reflects the emphasis in the Department for Education's *Writing Framework*, published in July 2025, on explicitly teaching handwriting and spelling from Reception onwards. The framework highlights the importance of developing these skills so that they become increasingly automatic, allowing children to concentrate more fully on the ideas they want to express in their writing.

Literacy Sparks sits alongside our English lessons, which provide more opportunity to explore writing as a creative or practical skill, developing ideas, content, structure and purpose. While English lessons give children the opportunity to focus on what they want to communicate and how to engage their reader, Literacy Sparks provides dedicated time to practise and strengthen the underlying skills that help them do this successfully.

Together, these sessions support the development of confident, capable readers and writers, ensuring that the mechanics of literacy receive the same thoughtful attention as the ideas, imagination and communication that bring writing to life.

