

# You Can... **Develop fine motor skills**

*Young children need to develop the big muscles in their arms in order to develop and refine the smaller muscles in their hands and fingers. These are the muscles they will need to use to become competent mark makers, writers, picture makers and craftspeople. When you include your outdoor area in your planning, look closely at your provision to ensure that you are offering enough scope to develop these skills. Choose resources that will give the children opportunities to work on a bigger scale than they can inside.*

## **Thinking points**

- Do you plan for activities outside which involve using one-handed tools?
- How do you record children's achievements in the outside mark-making or craft area?
- Observe children at play outside to see how they are using their fine motor skills. How can you interact to develop the skills observed?
- Have you noticed whether the majority of boys are more willing to make marks outside rather than inside? Think about the types of resources needed outside to enhance this interest with particular regard to play themes chosen by the children.
- Are you able to give the children the time they need outside to develop these skills? Timetabling restrictions or difficulty in accessing the area can be a problem. What strategies can you put in place to overcome any such difficulties?

## **Tips, ideas and activities**

- Think big when organising outdoor resources. A big blackboard attached to the wall with playground chalks and big blackboard rubbers all provide excellent opportunities for fine motor skill development.
- Magic painting is always popular and a wonderful learning tool for young children. Use big paintbrushes and big jugs for the water. Let the children fill these themselves from the outside tap. Turning the tap on and off is exercising the small muscles in the child's hand and the bigger muscles come into play as the jug begins to fill up and become heavier and heavier. The children can use their magic paint to make marks on flags, playgrounds or walls. You can vary this activity by using big painting rollers and trays.
- If you have willow structures in your area, encourage the children to keep these under control by weaving new shoots back into the main structure. This can be done too, with extra gentle care, with climbing plants on wire fences such as honeysuckle and clematis.
- Use the natural materials found outside to develop mark-making techniques and control. Sticks can be used to make wonderful marks in mud. They are also good for making patterns in water.
- The children could make a rope hanging and have it attached to a tree by a nail. Challenge them to collect long blades of grass and to twist these into circular shapes. Then demonstrate how to tie these circles of grass to the hanging using more lengths of grass. Over time, the children could weave in seasonal flowers, leaves and twigs. The hanging should be left until the end of the season if possible, when the children say goodbye to it as it dies off. A new hanging can be developed during the next season.