Progression of Tools for Fine Motor Control

At Pensans, children develop fine-motor control through a clear progression of tools and materials. Although this progression is shown in age bands, we know children arrive with different starting points, so tools are offered according to developmental stage rather than age. This ensures every child can access equipment that is safe, appropriate and suitably challenging.

Children strengthen their coordination and dexterity through purposeful opportunities to use a wide range of tools. Early-stage provision includes chunky mark-making tools, large construction pieces, simple self-care implements and basic cooking tools. As children show readiness, they progress to finer tools such as standard pencils, scissors, small construction kits, full cutlery sets and child-safe peelers or graters. Staff observe closely, introducing new tools when children demonstrate control and revisiting earlier ones when consolidation is needed.

This responsive approach ensures all children experience success, independence and pride as they build the fine-motor foundations essential for writing, creative work, self-care and early cooking. By offering tools intentionally and at the right developmental moment, we create an inclusive environment where every child can explore, practise and refine their skills at a pace that suits them

Area	2-Year-Olds	3-4-Year-Olds	Reception
Mark-Making Tools 	Chunky crayons, thick chalk, large paintbrushes, sponge dabbers, chunky stampers.	Triangular crayons, jumbo pencils, felt tips, thinner paintbrushes, simple child scissors (blunt tip).	Standard pencils, coloured pencils, fine felt tips, thin paintbrushes, standard scissors.
Construction & Manipulative Tools 	Large wooden blocks, chunky plastic blocks (e.g., Mega Bloks®), shape sorters, large playdough rollers & cutters, big threading beads.	Duplo®, interlocking blocks, dough tools (rollers, cutters, stampers), child-safe tweezers/tongs, medium threading beads, lacing cards.	LEGO®, nuts & bolts sets, small-scale construction kits, peg boards, fine tweezers, weaving materials, threading with small beads.
Self-Care Tools 	Chunky-handled spoons, small plastic forks, open cups, training toothbrushes, Velcro fastenings.	Child-sized cutlery (fork & spoon), beginner knives (spreaders), small-handled toothbrushes, zips with large pulls, large buttons.	Full cutlery set (knife, fork, spoon), toothbrush with smaller head, zips, small buttons, buckles, shoe fastenings (Velcro, early laces).
Cooking Tools 	Wooden spoons, large mixing bowls, plastic jugs, chunky-handled pastry brushes, large plastic cutters.	Small whisks, child-safe knives, rolling pins, sieves, scoops, small mixing bowls, measuring spoons.	Peelers, graters (child-safe), hand juicers, baking trays, measuring cups, cookie cutters, small tongs.