

Child Development

for Early Childhood Studies



Sally Neaum



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LearningMatters

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Learning Matters Ltd

33 Southernhay East

Exeter EX1 1NX

Tel: 01392 215560

info@learningmatters.co.uk

www.learningmatters.co.uk

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The author

Dr Sally Neaum BEd (Lancaster), MEd (Nottingham), EdD (Nottingham) is a senior lecturer in education. She is a qualified teacher who has taught in schools across the 3–7 age range both in the United Kingdom and abroad. She has worked as an advisory teacher in early years and inclusion, in initial teacher training, and was an Ofsted inspector of nursery education. Her research interest is Early Years pedagogical practice, particularly with regard to the teaching of literacy.

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Introduction

This book is about children's development and learning. The focus is on understanding both the developmental patterns and sequences in children's development and how the context of this learning impacts on children's progress. Knowing about children and their development underpins all that we do in Early Years. It enables people who live and work with very young children to interact with them in an appropriate way and to provide developmentally appropriate experiences to support their development. Knowing about child development also enables us to identify children who may need additional support to enable them to maintain developmental progress and to learn.

This book is divided into the three sections:

- understanding the context of children's development;
- children's development;
- applying child development in practice.

Part 1 – Understanding the context of children's development

Chapter 1 Children and childhood – a historical perspective

This chapter explores how our understandings of children and childhood have changed over time according to the moral, ethical and political choices that we have made within society. To illustrate this there are examples of the differences in the experience of children across time and cultures. The chapter also explores our current conceptualisation of what it means to be a child in our society. You are asked to consider the complexity of our current understanding of children and childhood by considering how we talk, write and think about children in our society.

Chapter 2 The current policy context of Early Years

This chapter identifies and explains the important policies, practice frameworks and workforce development initiatives in the field of Early Years. The chapter outlines the evidence regarding young children's learning and development that underpins policy, practice, and workforce development.

Part 2 – Understanding children's development

Chapter 3 Holistic development

'Holistic' is a term that is often used in discussions about young children's learning and development. This chapter outlines what is meant by holistic development and gives an example of how the nature of young children's play remains holistic however we as adults choose to deconstruct, label and categorise what young children do. It also addresses how we ensure that at all levels of provision we acknowledge and provide for the holistic nature of young children's learning.

Chapter 4 Children's physical, cognitive, language and emotional and social development

This chapter outlines developmental sequences and progress across all aspects of young children's learning. It starts with the principles of development and then outlines expected developmental parameters, between birth and seven years old, in the areas of physical development, cognitive (intellectual) development, linguistic development and emotional and social development.

Chapter 5 Development in the Early Years Foundation Stage

The EYFS (2007) is the statutory framework that all funded Early Years providers must work within. This chapter outlines the ways in which development is understood in the EYFS and the requirements for practitioners to make assessments of children's developmental progress towards a series of stated learning goals. The role and expectations of practitioners in providing for young children's learning and development are outlined.

Chapter 6 Factors that affect children's learning and development

This chapter identifies and explains the factors that are known to affect children's learning and development. It explores the question of why it is that some children, and some identifiable groups of children, consistently fall outside of expected developmental parameters. The chapter explores the importance of providing for all children's learning and development both as a moral and political choice within our society and as inclusive practice.

Part 3 Child development in practice

Chapter 7 Supporting children's learning and development

If children are to learn and develop well it is important that practitioners, parents and carers understand how children learn and how to interact with children to best support this learning. This chapter outlines learning theory that articulates how young children learn, including the importance of language in learning, and the pedagogical practices that support children's learning. The significance of the home environment in children's learning and development is acknowledged and the initiatives to support parents to enable them to understand their child's development and their role in supporting it are identified.

Chapter 8 Observing children's learning and development

This chapter looks at why we observe and assess young children's learning. It outlines what we can observe and assess, and how to do this. The distinction is made between formative and summative assessment and this is related to Early Years practice. The requirement for observation-based assessment in the EYFS is highlighted.

Chapter 9 Reflective practice

This chapter introduces the idea of reflective practice as an important professional skill. It outlines the process of reflection and explains how reflective practice supports children's learning and development. The importance of the reflective process in developing our own understandings of what constitutes effective Early Years practice is emphasised.

Part 1

Understanding the context of children's development

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1 Children and childhood: a historical perspective

This chapter enables you to understand:

- different concepts of children and childhood through history;
- the nature–nurture debate in child development;
- our current understandings of children and childhood;
- child development as a combination of observable biological development and social experience within a specific social, cultural and historical context;
- the importance of seeing child development in a holistic way;
- how to be critically aware of the conceptualisation of children in literature, reports and frameworks associated with children and childhood.

Introduction

Have you ever thought about what it means when we talk about children or childhood? What is your understanding of what it means to be a child or have a childhood? What is child development? Where have these understandings come from? How do these understandings influence approaches to children? Consideration of these issues will allow Early Years practitioners to engage in critical thinking about current concepts of children and childhood and how they influence our thinking and practice. This chapter will enable you to understand different ways of seeing children and childhood and explore how this informs our current understanding of child development.

Through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries there was a series of changes of focus in our understandings and perceptions of children and childhood. Academic disciplines such as science, medicine, psychology and sociology, and changes in the influence of faith in society, have had a powerful influence over how society is constructed. Concepts of children and childhood are part of these changes and reconceptualisations.

The frameworks that determine understandings of children and childhood are ethical and political choices made within wider ideas, values and rationalities of a society (Moss and Petrie, 2002). These ethical and political choices determine what each society will construct as what it means to be a child and to experience childhood within that society at that point in history. As these ethical and political frameworks develop and change, it is very likely that understandings of children and childhood within each society will also develop and change.

Alan Prout (2005) traces these changes through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He observes that, with regard to children and childhood, there has been a shift in both

intellectual processes and material practices. Prout (2005) highlights the significant shifts in our understandings of children and childhood which have come together to form our current conceptualisation of what it means to be a child in our society.

The concept of childhood: an overview

In medieval times children, once they were weaned, were regarded as little adults. There was no distinct phase of life known or understood as childhood. Hugh Cunningham observes that childhood was not thought to be as important as we now consider it in the formation of personality and character. The predominant social force was the church, whose focus was upon the baptism – to free the child from original sin and receive them into the church. Children were regarded as imperfect and sinful and their upbringing usually reflected these harsh beliefs.

From the seventeenth century, in Western countries, a different concept of childhood began to emerge. This was heavily influenced by the work of the philosopher John Locke (1632–1704), whose ideas about learning and education suggested that there were differences between adults and children. Locke's work is characterised by his opposition to authoritarianism. He wanted individuals to use reason to search after truth rather than unquestionably accept the opinion of authorities, including the church, or rely on superstition. One of Locke's most influential ideas was that we are all born as blank slates (*tabula rasa*), that we have no innate knowledge but we acquire what we know after we are born through sensation and reflection. Similarly, the ideas of philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) were highly influential in encouraging thinking about what it meant to be a child and how children learn and grow and develop. Rousseau proposed that we are all born essentially good and innocent; therefore children should be loved, nurtured and protected. Education, he believed, would support this process by cultivating the good in people. Both philosophers' ideas challenged the notion of original sin and began the process of a different way of thinking about children and childhood. These shifts and changes in our understandings of children and childhood have continued through to the present day.

ACTIVITY 1

What is meant by original sin?

How did this influence the view of children in society?

Find out more about the work of Locke and Rousseau.

How did their ideas challenge existing understandings of childhood?

What impact do you think this had on how children were perceived in society?

Children, childhood and modernity

From the eighteenth century onwards there were profound political, economic, technological, social and cultural changes in societies throughout Europe. Societies were changing from predominantly rural, agricultural-based societies to ones based on industrial capitalism. The move was strongly influenced by advances in science and technology. These advances precipitated a strong belief in the power of the scientific and technological as a way to understand and control the world, including ourselves. Within this context, encouraged by the work of Charles Darwin, emerged the child study movement. Its aim was to highlight the role of the biological processes in human development. Its approach was scientific: the belief in, and use of, testing, observation and experimentation to discover universal laws expressed as theory. The movement demonstrated, and popularised, the view that children's conception and mental processes differed from those of adults. This supported the conceptualisation of childhood as a different and distinct stage of life from adulthood. Children were conceptualised as being in a more primitive stage of development than adults both biologically and socially. The development of children therefore became an area for scientific study and understanding, the outcomes of which, it was hoped, would identify focused interventions that would shape and mould children's lives.

Paediatric medicine and child psychology

Prout (2005) identifies two important disciplines that strongly influenced the child study movement and focused attention on the biological aspects of being a child: the development of the science of paediatric medicine and the child psychology movement.

Paediatric medicine

The development of the discipline of paediatric medicine was an important part of the rise of the scientific study of children. The understanding of childhood disease as a separate branch of medicine became formalised in 1901 by the foundation of the Society for the Study of Diseases of Children. A medical model of children and childhood, in which children's development can be measured, monitored and managed, thus became part of our conceptualisation of children.

Child psychology

Alongside paediatrics, a discipline emerging from the child study movement was the development of child psychology. Prout (2005) argues that there were multiple strands of research and investigation that came together to support the understanding of children and their development, namely: the work of Skinner on behaviourism; Bowlby's work on attachment; Freud and psychoanalysis; the work of Piaget and the cognitive psychology movement; and an emerging understanding of language development.

These psychological understandings came together to create a discipline of child psychology. In this emerging discipline children were examined and tested in order to identify 'normal' ranges of functioning and behaviour that were defined and named. These assertions of what constitutes normal functioning also created the potential for defining abnormal and pathological behaviour (Prout, 2005). This 'abnormal' functioning became

the site for intervention and a range of professions developed around identifying children who would benefit from intervention, for example, educational psychology. These psychological frameworks for understanding child development quickly became part of a general understanding of children and childhood. The language of psychology such as 'stages of development,' 'attachment' and 'bonding' entered everyday talk and practice via the work of child-rearing gurus such as Dr Benjamin Spock (Prout, 2005). At this stage in its development child psychology was predominantly informed by a biological view of child development; children and childhood were viewed as universal constants. The approach was to think about the individual child without consideration of the context of their social world. Within this discipline, development, whether typical or atypical, was regarded as a 'within-child' phenomenon and explanations sought through theories developed within a scientific and/or medical framework.

The emergence of a social model of childhood

Towards the end of the twentieth century there was growing criticism of how child psychology conceptualised childhood (Prout, 2005). The concern centred on an increasing awareness of, and sensitivity to, the social context of behaviour. Prout (2005, page 51) observes that:

at the centre of this critical approach was the notion that children are shaped by their different social contexts and that this cannot be left out of the psychological account.

He cites the work of Bronfenbrenner and Vygotsy as having particular importance in the emergence of a social model of childhood. The work of Bronfenbrenner and Vygotsky, and others, moved the debate about children's development away from the emphasis on child development purely as an inevitable biological unfolding towards an understanding that development occurs through the interplay of biology and social experience.

THEORY FOCUS

Urie Bronfenbrenner (1917–2005)

Bronfenbrenner developed a model that focused on the importance of both biological factors and the social environment in children's development. He proposed that while a child's biological development unfolds there is also a complex pattern of interaction with people and social patterns, institutions, and the environment around the child that similarly influences child development. Bronfenbrenner's work began to reframe the understanding of children, away from the ideas that children and childhood are universal constants that can be observed and defined in a scientific model, and towards a more complex view of children and childhood. This view recognised that childhood was experienced differently by different children in different societies. So, while it could be observed that many biological factors remained similar across different societies, differences in children and the experience of childhood were because of their social experiences.

THEORY FOCUS**Lev Vygotsky (1896–1934)**

Lev Vygotsky's work, similar to that of Bronfenbrenner, emphasised the importance of the social in children's development. He argued that it is through others that we become ourselves. The main premise of his work is the interrelationship between thought and language. Language, he argues, forms the basis of thought. Language development is dependent on the child's social-cultural experience and is also the primary tool by which we learn. In this way rich and effective language, developed in a social context, is vital to children's development and shapes the developing child.

The impact of these changes on the way society and its institutions are constructed was, and continues to be, profound. All of our everyday lives, particularly those of us who work with young children, have been affected by these shifts and changes in our understanding of children and childhood.

The nature–nurture debate

The nature–nurture debate is one about the relative importance of biology and social experience in who we are and who we become. 'Nature' refers to our biology – the genetically programmed process of physical maturation. 'Nurture' refers to all the experiences we have after we are born that influence who we are and what we know.

The medical and scientific view of child development emphasises nature, and a social model of child development emphasises nurture. The current understanding is that both are significant in children's growth and development. This reflects the historical shifts and changes in our views of children and childhood. What is now understood is that child development, in all areas of learning, is a complex combination of children's biological maturational processes and their social experiences. For example, children are born with the potential for developing language. It is innate (nature). However, other aspects of language development, such as the rate of development, the sophistication of a child's language skill and his or her individual accent and vocabulary are determined by interactive experiences after birth (nurture). This interplay between nature and nurture is different in different areas of development; for example, biological maturation plays a greater part in physical development than in social and emotional development. Beaver (1994; see Figure 6.1, page 74) shows the relative influences of nature and nurture across the areas of child development. It is important to remember that these are relative influences; there is no definitive understanding of the relative impact of nature and nurture in the different areas of child development.

CASE STUDY

Esme is a talented flautist. Her mother is also an excellent flautist. Esme's mum used to play her flute to her as a baby and toddler. Esme loved listening to the flute and they would enjoy times together. As she got older, Esme was taken to 'music makers', a music group for toddlers where she developed a wider awareness of music. Esme's mum taught her the basics of flute playing while she was still very young and when she was old enough she began lessons with a teacher. Esme and her mum practise most evenings and really enjoy playing together.

ACTIVITY 2

- *How much of Esme's ability is innate talent?*
- *What, if anything, do you think she inherited from her mother?*
- *How much of her talent comes from her experiences, for example, exposure to music at home, at music groups and lessons, regular focused practice, modelled behaviour and encouragement from her family and teacher?*
- *What does this tell you about the interplay of nature and nurture in what we know and can do?*

Contemporary views of children and childhood

The impact of historical shifts and changes in what we know about children's development and how it is viewed within the social and cultural context has resulted in a complex pattern of contemporary understandings of children and childhood. Both a biological and a social model of children and childhood are evident in contemporary understandings.

The biological child of child development

Work in the disciplines of science, psychology, sociology and education has enabled us to have a good understanding of development, including developmental sequences. Clearly this knowledge has application in understanding children's development, including atypical development, and in informing aspects of intervention.

Child development patterns and charts are used throughout childhood to inform the work of professionals who work with children. For example, babies are offered a series of developmental checks in which their progress is mapped against typical development. This enables babies to be screened for possible congenital abnormalities, emerging behavioural difficulties and developmental delays.

This, in its purest form, is a view of children and childhood as a series of unfolding biological states. The focus is on the individual child who follows a predetermined series of developmental stages that are biologically determined. Child development is thus

regarded as observable, measurable and quantifiable (Moss and Petrie, 2002). Where development is assessed as atypical, interventions can be applied with the aim of supporting children's development, and, where possible, bringing it back within the parameters of developmental expectations.

Childhood development as a social construction

Childhood does not exist – we create it as a society.

(Rinaldi, 1999)

This is a different understanding of children and childhood. This understanding regards childhood as being socially constructed. That is, that our understandings of what it means to be a child are created within society. What childhood means will therefore be different in different societies and at different times in history. This view does not challenge the notion that there are some observable stages of development in childhood but recognises the limitation of a biological approach to development in exploring what childhood means within each society and how children experience it.

Childhoods within their historical social and cultural contexts

These case studies show how different children's experiences of childhood can be because of when and where they were born. These understandings and expectations of young children are created within each society's historical and cultural context. They are different because different societies' expectations about what constitutes childhood are different.

Victorian children

In Victorian times many poor children worked in mills, mines, as servants and on the streets. Tony Ross (2005), in his book entitled *The Worst Children's Jobs in History*, describes their lives. The jobs that came out of the Industrial Revolution made Britain one of the richest nations in the world. Men invented machines that made complicated work so easy even a child could do it – and tens of thousands of them did just that.

CASE STUDY

Elizabeth is six years old and works in a cotton mill. Her day starts at 5.30 a.m. and she works until 8 p.m. The cotton mill is a very scary place. Huge machines made of wood and metal clatter, rattle, swish, bang, whirr, thud and clunk away all day. They make some people very rich but not Elizabeth and the other children who work there ... for them they are hellish places.

continued

CASE STUDY *continued*

Elizabeth works on the spinning mule. The spinning mule spins cotton thread much faster than a spinning wheel could. Elizabeth works as a piecer. She sticks any broken bits of cotton together while the mule is moving. In order to do this she has to spit on the ends and twist them backwards and forwards, which makes her fingers bleed. She isn't allowed to sit down while she is working. The machine moves right across the room and back as it winds the thread on the bobbins and Elizabeth has to walk alongside it without stopping. Each day at work she walks about 20 miles.

While the mule is spinning and Elizabeth is piecing, bits of cotton fluff drift under the machines. These have to be cleared because they could start a fire. The easiest way to do this is for one of the smallest children to crawl under the machine with a brush. This has to be done while the machine is working. These children are called scavengers and Elizabeth has seen many get their heads, arms, legs, hands and toes crushed by the moving machinery.

Adapted from Ross (2005)

Yanomamo people

Napoleon Chagnon spent 19 months living with, and completing an anthropological study of, the Yanomamo people. The Yanomamos lived in a remote part of Venezuela and northern Brazil. When Chagnon completed the study between 1964 and 1966, most of the villages had never had any contact with outsiders. Criticisms have been levelled at Chagnon's study. However, these were for interpretive and ethical reasons (Borofsky, 2005), not his descriptions of the lives of the people. Chagnon (1968) describes below what he observed about the daily activities of Yanomamo children.

CASE STUDY

Kaobawa spends a great deal of time exploring the wonders of the plant and animal life around him and is an accomplished botanist. At 12 years of age he can name 20 species of bees and give the anatomical or behavioural reasons for their distinctions. Bahimi, an eight-year-old girl, brought me a tiny egg-like structure on one occasion and asked me to watch it with her. Presently it cracked open and numerous baby cockroaches poured out, while she described the intimate details of the reproductive process to me.

The younger children stay close to their mothers but the older ones have considerable freedom to wander about the garden (the planted areas around the village centre) at play. Ariwari and his friends hunt for lizards with miniature bows and feathers. If they catch one alive they bring it back to the village and tie a string around it. The string is anchored to a stick in the village clearing and Ariwari and his friends chase it gleefully, shooting scores of tiny arrows at it. Since lizards are quick and the boys poor shots the target practice can last for hours.

CASE STUDY continued

The young girls' experience is different. Bahimi and her friends soon learn that it is a man's world for they must assume much of the responsibility for tending their younger siblings, hauling water and firewood, and in general helping their busy mothers.

Adapted from Chagnon (1968)

Considering contemporary childhood

Understandings of children and childhood that inform current discussion and debate, are based on a wide range of social, cultural and biological understandings of children and childhood. These understandings are not necessarily cohesive because they have been formed and patterned over time from a variety of influences. These understandings come together to form complex, sometimes competing, views of children and childhood in contemporary society (Dahlberg, Moss and Pence, 1999; Moss and Petrie, 2002).

Representations of what we believe about children in contemporary society are evident in what we read and the frameworks we use for children. These representations can reveal the complex understandings that we have built about children and childhood.

Read these different conceptualisations of children and childhood that are evident in literature, reports and frameworks associated with children. Consider what they reveal about contemporary understandings of children and childhood.

1. A good childhood (Layard and Dunn, 2009)

In many ways our children have never lived so well. Materially they have more possessions, better homes, more holidays away. They enjoy a whole world of technology which brings them music, information, entertainment and an unprecedented ability to communicate. Our children are also more educated and less often sick than before. They are more open and honest about themselves and more tolerant of human diversity in all its forms. And they are more concerned about the environment. And yet there is also widespread unease about our children's experience – that somehow their lives are becoming more difficult. The report showed how children are faring in all 21 of the world's richest countries. It began with an overall ranking of the 21 countries ... Britain came bottom of the class.

2. Child growth

See Figure 1.1 (page 14).

3. Reggio Emilia

The work of the Reggio Emilia schools in Italy has been highly influential in shaping Early Years education in Britain. Pre-school provision in Reggio Emilia is based upon an understanding of children who are active authors of their own lives, influential in others' lives and in shaping society. The child is understood as being *rich in potential, strong, powerful, competent, and most of all, connected to adults and other children* (Malaguzzi, 1993, page 75).

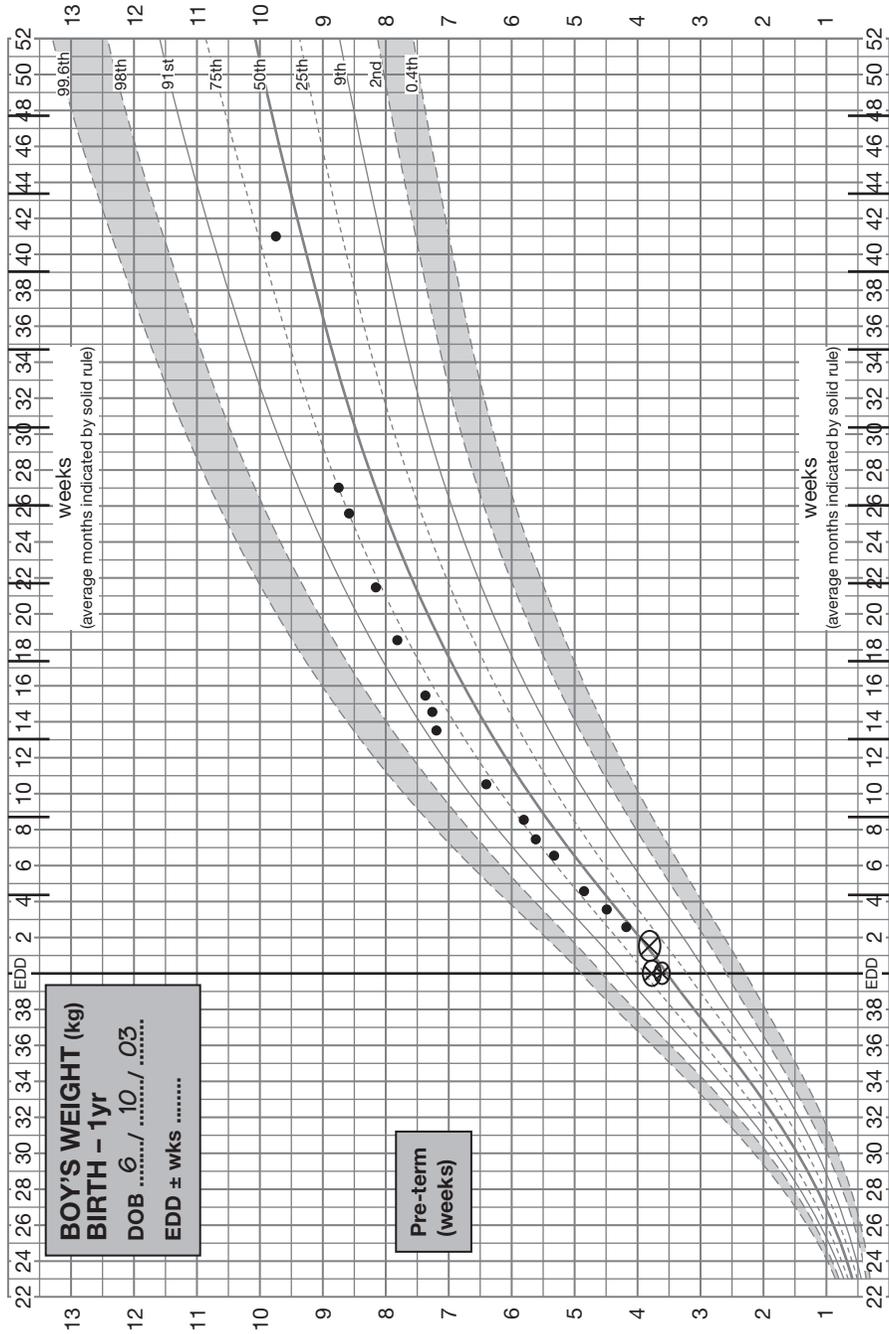


Figure 1.1 A sample child growth chart

4. How could any child do this to another?

By Claire Lewis
Crime reporter

Two violent young brothers aged 10 and 12 could be locked up for life after admitting 'one of the most serious' and shocking crimes South Yorkshire has ever suffered.

The pair lured two little boys – an uncle and nephew aged 11 and nine, who were cycling to a pond to go fishing – to wasteland where they promised to show them a strange animal they had found. Instead they attacked them. Ian Wright, aged 40, who found the older victim face-down and left for dead at the foot of a ravine, branded the torturers 'animals'. *They're animals, absolute animals*, he said. *How any child could do this to another child I don't know.*

www.thestar.co.uk/news/39How-any-child-could-do.5618181.jp?CommentPage=2&CommentPageLength=10#comments

5. Declaration of the Rights of the Child

Proclaimed by General Assembly resolution 1386(XIV) of 20 November 1959

Principle 2

The child shall enjoy *special protection*, and shall be given opportunities and facilities, by law and by other means, to enable him to develop physically, mentally, morally, spiritually and socially in a healthy and normal manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity.

6. DfES (2007) Early Years Foundation Stage. DfES publications

Foundation Stage Principles – A unique child. Every child is a competent learner from birth who can be resilient, capable, confident and self assured.

7. Diagnostic criteria for Rett's disorder

(A)

All of the following:

1. apparently normal prenatal and perinatal development;
2. apparently normal psychomotor development through the first 5 months after birth;
3. normal head circumference at birth.

(B)

Onset of all of the following after the period of normal development:

1. deceleration of head growth between ages 5 and 48 months;
2. loss of previously acquired purposeful hand skills between ages 5 and 30 months with the subsequent development of stereotyped hand movements (e.g., hand-wringing or hand washing);

3. loss of social engagement early in the course (although often social interaction develops later);
4. appearance of poorly coordinated gait or trunk movements;
5. severely impaired expressive and receptive language development with severe psychomotor retardation.

Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders: DSM IV published by the American Psychiatric Society

ACTIVITY 3

- *What is the understanding of a child and/or childhood in each example?*
- *Think about the interplay of the biological and the social in child development. Which is emphasised in each example? Why do you think that this is?*
- *Taken together, what do they tell you about the current conceptualisation of children and childhood?*
- *What are the implications of this for Early Years practitioners?*

It is important that Early Years practitioners working with children and families are aware of all the different ways in which society constructs children and childhood and how this is reflected in the ways in which we think about, talk and write about, and assess children. We need to ensure that we are careful to see children in a holistic way recognising that children's development is a complex combination of observable patterns of development and that the quality and context of their social and cultural environment, and their experiences within that context, will be highly influential in who they are and what they can do.

C H A P T E R S U M M A R Y

In this chapter we have considered the historical concepts of children and childhood and how these inform contemporary understandings. Through the case studies we can see that different children experience childhood differently because of the social, cultural and historical context of their childhood. We have seen how current understandings of child development have been patterned over time to include both biological and social aspects of development and how this is reflected in the nature–nurture debate in child development. By looking at some different ways in which children are written about and assessed we can see how our current understandings of children and childhood are complex. From this we have concluded that it is important to see children and child development holistically; that child development is both a biological maturational unfolding and a consequence of the context in which the child grows up.

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2 The current policy context of Early Years

This chapter enables you to understand:

- the political context of Early Years policy;
- the important policies, legislation, practice frameworks and workforce development in Early Years;
- how these policies and frameworks are informed by research into the best ways to support children's early development;
- Sure Start and Sure Start local programmes;
- Every Child Matters framework;
- children's centres;
- how the Early Years Professional Status has been developed to support children's early learning and development.

Introduction

From the late 1990s onwards there has been an unprecedented political focus on education; this included education and care for pre-school-aged children. The Labour Party, which came to power in 1997, made it one of their priorities to increase support for young children and their families.

To achieve this there were significant changes in the way that Early Years was funded, organised delivered and monitored. Government policy and legislation, supported by practice guidance and workforce development, reshaped Early Years provision. The government's aim was:

- to meet the early educational needs of young children;
- to meet families' needs for childcare;
- to provide wide-ranging support for parents and families.

Policy and legislation, frameworks for practice and workforce development

Governmental policy needs to be supported by policy statements. Policy statements say what the government intends to do. These are sometimes published as, and called, Green Papers or White Papers. Green Papers are documents in which the government sets out

their ideas for discussion or consultation. A White Paper contains policy proposals. Policy becomes law through the passing of legislation in Parliament. Once the legislation has passed through Parliament it is called an 'act', for example, the Disability Discrimination Act. One part of policy and legislation is to ensure that workforce training and qualifications are sufficient to put the policy into practice. Therefore, both policy and legislation often establish routes for training and qualifications within a sector. Both policy and legislation are often supported by guidance and frameworks that may state the legal requirements and offer advice on how to enact the requirements in practice and provision.

Since the 1990s there have been a large number of policies, legislation and practice guidance in Early Years. Detailed in Figure 2.1 is a timeline of the most influential policies and guidance between 1998 and 2008.

	Policy and legislation	Practice reports and guidance	Workforce development
1998	Children Act		
1992	Education Act <ul style="list-style-type: none"> established Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education) 		First degree level-course in childhood studies – Suffolk College and the University of Bristol
1995	Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), this applied to all providers of Early Years services from 2002		
1996	Nursery Education and Grant Maintained Schools Act <ul style="list-style-type: none"> introduces Ofsted inspections for nurseries puts in place new system for funding Early Years – the nursery voucher scheme – initially for 4-year-olds 	Desirable Outcomes for children's learning on entering compulsory education published. The basis for inspection in early childhood education and care	
1997	Labour manifesto – focuses on reduction of child poverty and expansion of childcare and other services for children and families	Effective Provision of Pre-school Education (EPPE) study started at the Institute of Education, London	15 Early Childhood degree courses available in October 1997
1999	SureStart trailblazers set up in 60 disadvantaged areas SureStart local programmes introduced		
2000		Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage replaced the Desirable Outcomes framework	
2001		Special Educational Needs Code of Practice	Early Years sector endorsed Foundation Degree
2002	Education Act <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nursery education to be inspected by Ofsted Foundation Stage profile to be completed at end of FS 	Birth to Three Matters	

continued

2004	Every Child Matters: Change for Children. Five outcomes established. Choice for Children: the best start for children. A ten-year strategy for childcare Children Act: takes forward proposals in Every Child Matters	Effective Provision of Pre-school Education (EPPE) Report published	
2006	Childcare Act <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishes Early Years Foundation Stage Choice for parents. The best start for children. Making it happen. Action plan for the ten-year strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Free nursery entitlement (12.5 hours per week) extended from 33 to 38 weeks Plan to extend this to 15 hours for 38 weeks by 2010 and eventually to 20 hours		Early Years Professional Status Standards and Prospectus published
2007	The Children's Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ten-year vision to improve schools and support children and families 		
2008		Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory from September 2008 Replaces Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage and Birth to Three Matters	Pilot of Early Years Professional Status (EYPS)
2009	The UN Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities ratified by the UK		

Figure 2.1 Timeline of influential Early Years policies and guidelines

Adapted from Early Years Timeline (National Children's Bureau)

Creating policy to support children's development

In 1997 the incoming Labour government pledged to use research evidence to guide policy and inform changes in early education. They wanted to create an Early Learning sector based on what was known about effective early learning. This approach, of using evidence to inform what you do, is called 'evidence-based practice'. The government wanted to use research to identify what was the most effective way of supporting young children's development and to use this information to create policies, supported by legislation that enhanced practice and provision.

Using evidence to inform policy

At the outset of this process there was existing evidence about the benefits of early learning. For example, the Head Start programme in the USA had shown that early support and

intervention for children and families had positive effects on children's development. This was supported by research which emphasised the importance of early learning on brain development and evidence from developmental psychology which focused on the importance of early diagnosis and intervention for children with learning and developmental needs (Anning and Ball, 2008).

Head Start

Head Start was started in the USA by President Lyndon Johnson in the early 1960s as part of the 'war on poverty'. It continues today as a countrywide comprehensive education, health, nutrition and parent involvement service for children and families with low incomes.

Studies have shown that there were a number of benefits for the children who attended the pre-school programme. All of the studies that collected data on children's cognitive development found that the cognitive development of children who had participated in the programmes performed significantly better than children who hadn't attended programmes. One study that looked at 50 other Head Start studies found evidence of immediate improvements, for children attending programmes, in their cognitive and social and emotional development and health.

One of the most influential Head Start programmes was the Highscope/Perry Pre-school programme. This programme was designed for and tracked the lives of 123 African Americans born in poverty and at high risk of failing in school. Participants in this programme have been monitored until the age of 40. It was found that those participants who attended the pre-school programme had higher earnings, were more likely to hold a job, had committed fewer crimes, and were more likely to have graduated from high school than adults who did not have pre-school training.

Taking into account what was already known about the importance of early development, and in response to ongoing concerns and recognised failures in the existing systems, a range of reforms were implemented across services for children and families. This included the establishment of Sure Start and the development of the *Every Child Matters* framework.

Sure Start and Sure Start local programmes

Sure Start emerged from increasing concern about the effects of social exclusion on children's life chances. Evidence shows that between the age of 22 months and 48 months the cognitive and physical development of children from different socioeconomic backgrounds begins to drift apart so that by the age of six children from the most deprived backgrounds are often already caught in a cycle of low achievement (Anning and Ball, 2008) – see definitions, overleaf. Sure Start was a radical attempt to change the life chances of these children by supporting their early development.

Definitions

Social exclusion: The process whereby certain groups are pushed to the margins of society and prevented from participating fully by virtue of their poverty, low education or inadequate lifeskills. This distances them from job, income and education opportunities as well as social and community networks. They have little access to power and decision-making bodies and little chance of influencing decisions or policies that affect them, and little chance of bettering their standard of living www.cpa.ie/povertyinireland/glossary.htm#S

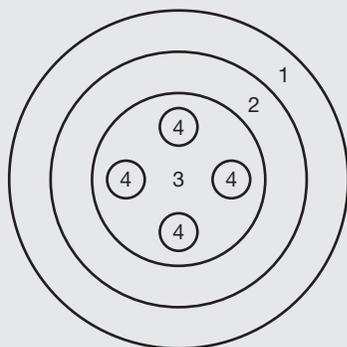
Socioeconomic group: A way of classifying people that groups them with others of similar social and economic status. The classifications are used by the Office for National Statistics.

The Sure Start initiative adopted a holistic approach. The approach was based on the understanding that the best outcomes for children happen when families, communities and local services for children work together to support children’s early growth and development. The

THEORY FOCUS

Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model of child development

Bronfenbrenner’s model (Figure 2.2) shows how children’s development is nested within the context of the family, community, settings and services, and wider social and historical influences.



4 Micro-system: for example, the playgroup, pre-school education, childcare or childminder setting where the child actively experiences a particular pattern of events, roles and interpersonal relationships.

3 Meso-system: interrelations between two or more settings in which the child actively participates – for example, home and nursery, childminder and playgroup.

2 Exo-system: settings that do not involve the child as an active participant but in which events occur that affect, or are affected by, what happens in the micro-systems – for example, local authority systems or inspection structures.

1 Macro-system: historical/social/cultural/ecological environments at national policy level.

Figure 2.2 Historical/cultural influences on services for the developing child (Anning and Ball, 2008)

aim therefore was to involve all the people around a child to work together to support their early learning and development. The theoretical model that informed this approach was Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of child development (Anning and Ball, 2008).

Sure Start local programmes were set up in specifically-targeted areas of deprivation. They were required to provide a range of services in the home and community to encourage parents to understand and support the development of their children. The programmes were given significant freedoms to design what they would offer. A key feature of the initiative was that local communities were involved in decision-making, management and delivery of the services in partnership with other stakeholders such as education, health and social services.

This was a new way of working. For the first time, providers of services for children were required to work together in partnership, and alongside families and communities, to meet the needs of children and their families. This multi-agency approach was reflected in the 'core services' that the early Sure Start programmes had to offer (Anning and Ball, 2008). These included:

- outreach and home visiting;
- support for families and parents;
- good quality play, early learning experiences and childcare;
- healthcare and support for children and their families;
- support for children with additional needs and their families.

It was anticipated that these programmes and services would provide well-targeted support and guidance for parents and communities and in doing so enhance the life chances of children. The National Evaluation of Sure Start (NESS) assesses the work of Sure Start services. The work includes an assessment of how services support developmental outcomes for children. Overall, outcomes have been mixed. Some benefits have been identified but they have often been disappointing in terms of child development. The reasons identified for this apparent lack of progress are quite complex and wide-ranging. However, evaluation and research are continuing to try to understand the processes, services and interventions for children and families that best support early development.

ACTIVITY 1

- Look at the list of core services provided in Sure Start programmes.
- How do these reflect the aspiration for services for children working together to support children's development?
- In what ways do you think services working together will better support children's learning and development?

Every Child Matters

In 2003 the government published a Green Paper called *Every Child Matters*. This was published in response to a report about the death of a young girl named Victoria Climbié. Lord Laming was appointed to investigate the circumstances leading to and surrounding her death. He was asked to make recommendations as to how such an event might be

avoided in the future. The report concluded that there were gross failings of the system in place to protect and safeguard children. The inquiry made 108 recommendations which resulted in fundamental changes to services for children in England.

The *Every Child Matters* Green Paper aimed to address the recommendations in the report and the government consulted widely on their ideas for reform. Following consultation the necessary legislation was passed in the Children Act in 2004 and the framework *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* was published in November 2004.

The *Every Child Matters* framework adopted an integrated approach to supporting the development and well-being of children and young people. The framework sets out the aspirations for all children. They are called the five outcomes (see Figure 2.3). These are:

- be healthy;
- stay safe;
- enjoy and achieve;
- make a positive contribution;
- achieve economic well-being.

What the outcomes mean	
Be healthy	Physically healthy Mentally and emotionally healthy Sexually healthy Healthy lifestyles Choose not to take illegal drugs <i>Parents, carers and families promote healthy choices</i>
Stay safe	Safe from maltreatment, violence, neglect and sexual exploitation Safe from accidental injury and death Safe from bullying and discrimination Safe from crime and anti-social behaviour in and out of school Have security, stability and are cared for <i>Parents, carers and families provide safe homes and stability</i>
Enjoy and achieve	Ready for school Attend and enjoy school Achieve stretching national educational standards at primary school Achieve personal and social development and enjoy recreation Achieve stretching national educational standards at secondary school <i>Parents, carers and families support learning</i>
Make a positive contribution	Engage in decision-making and support the community and environment Engage in law-abiding and positive behaviour in and out of school Develop positive relationships and choose not to bully and discriminate Develop self-confidence and successfully deal with significant life changes and challenges Develop enterprising behaviour <i>Parents, carers and families promote positive behaviour</i>
Achieve economic well-being	Engage in further education, employment or training on leaving school Ready for employment Live in decent homes and sustainable communities Access to transport and material goods Live in households free from low income <i>Parents carers and families are supported to be economically active</i>

Figure 2.3 The five outcomes

Every Child Matters: Change for Children DfES (2004) www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters

All organisations that work with children and young people, aged from birth to 19, are required to work together to achieve these outcomes for children and their families. This is important. The services that had previously worked in different and separate ways now had to develop ways to work together to respond to the needs of children and their families. This included health, education and social services as well as the police and criminal justice system. Early Years settings are therefore expected to support children in achieving the five outcomes. The quality of provision in Early Years settings, and how it contributes to children's learning and development, is monitored and assessed by Ofsted in their Framework for Inspection of Early Years Settings.

Creating evidence to inform policy

In addition to existing evidence on the impact of early learning on children's development, the Labour government commissioned their own research to investigate the effects of pre-school education and explore the characteristics of effective practice. It is called the EPPE study (the Effective Provision of Pre-school Education). The initial study ran from 1997 to 2003 and found that attending pre-school had many beneficial effects on children's development, particularly for children who came from disadvantaged backgrounds. The study also found that integrated settings, those that provided education and care, were most effective in supporting development and achieving good outcomes for children. A follow-up study published in 2009 found that the quality of pre-school provision can moderate the impact of risks to a child's cognitive development. The outcomes from the study have been very influential in shaping governmental Early Years policy.

THEORY FOCUS

The Effective Provision of Pre-school Education (EPPE) study

Key findings on the effects of pre-school at age five and also at age seven

- *Impact of attending a pre-school – lasting effects*
 - Pre-school experience, compared to none, enhances all-round development in children.
 - The duration of attendance is important, with an earlier start being related to better intellectual development.
 - Disadvantaged children in particular can benefit significantly from quality pre-school experiences.
- *Does type of pre-school matter?*
 - Taking account of a child's background and prior intellectual skills, the type of pre-school a child attends has an important effect on developmental progress. EPPE found that integrated centres (these are centres that fully combine education with care and have a high proportion of trained teachers) and nursery schools (which also have trained teachers) tend to promote the strongest intellectual outcomes for children.
 - Similarly, fully integrated settings and nursery classes (in school) tend to promote better social development even after taking account of children's backgrounds and prior social development.

THEORY FOCUS *continued*

- *Effects of quality*
 - Pre-school quality was significantly related to children's scores on standardised tests of reading and mathematics at age six
 - Settings that have staff with higher qualifications have higher-quality scores and their children make more progress.
- *The importance of home learning*
 - The quality of the home learning environment promotes more intellectual and social development than parental occupation or qualification.

Sylva and Pugh (2005)

Creating policy from evidence

The policy of providing services and frameworks to support children's early learning and development is evident in a range of initiatives in Early Years. These include the development of children's centres, the establishment of the Early Years Professional Status (EYPS), and a range of frameworks to support practice and monitor the quality of provision, including the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and Ofsted frameworks for inspection.

Children's centres

Children's centres emerged from the Sure Start model of providing targeted local services for children and families. Before the initial planned ten years of Sure Start local programmes had come to an end, government policy changed. The new policy was to establish a children's centre in every community. These centres bring together all services for young children and families at one point of contact. This includes pre-school education, health and social care services and training, employment and job advice. This bringing together of services supports the integrated aims of the Every Child Matters outcomes. The centres were initially situated in areas with high indices of deprivation (see definition below). By 2010 it is anticipated that all communities will have a children's centre. The aims behind the children's centres are the same as the Sure Start local programmes: to provide support and advice to families to enable them to support their child's early development and so offer them a good start in life.

Definition

Indices of deprivation: The Index of Multiple Deprivation combines a number of indicators, chosen to cover a range of economic, social and housing issues, into a single deprivation score for each small area in England. This allows each area to be ranked relative to one another according to their level of deprivation.

Early Years Professional Status (EYPS) and the graduate lead

The changing pattern of provision in Early Years has involved a reconfiguration of the workforce. Children's services require a range of different roles to fulfil the aim of supporting children and families effectively and improving outcomes for children. The Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) is responsible for developing the workforce in Early Years to match the requirements in the sector. The Early Years professional and the graduate lead are part of this workforce development.

The EPPE study concluded that outcomes for children were best in settings led by a graduate. The aim is therefore to create a graduate-led Early Years workforce. Early Childhood Studies degrees are designed to offer the breadth of understanding required to work in children's services and to support the Every Child Matters outcomes.

Early Years Professional Status is a postgraduate qualification. It is competency-based, with candidates demonstrating their own understanding of effective Early Years practice and their ability to lead and manage the practice of others and the setting. There are a number of pathways to achieving EYPS depending on experience and relevance of degree to working in an Early Years setting within a multi-agency team. The aim is to have a graduate with Early Years Professional Status leading practice in all children's centres by 2010 and in all daycare by 2015.

Frameworks for practice

The Early Years Foundation Stage

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is the statutory framework for the Foundation Stage. It became a requirement from September 2008 in all Ofsted-registered settings. The framework replaced the Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage, Birth to Three Matters and the National Standards for Under-8s Daycare and childminding with a single framework for children from birth to five. The framework sets out the legal requirements relating to learning and development and the welfare of children.

The welfare standards cover five areas, namely:

- safeguarding and promoting children's welfare;
- suitable people;
- suitable premises, environment and equipment;
- organisation;
- documentation.

Learning and development in the EYFS is structured around six areas of learning, which are:

- personal, social and emotional development;
- communication, language and literacy;
- problem-solving, reasoning and numeracy;
- knowledge and understanding of the world;

- creative development;
- physical development.

The EYFS provides a framework for practitioners that outlines typical developmental progress towards a series of Early Learning Goals. The framework offers advice on how to provide opportunities to support children's development towards these goals. Early Years practitioners are required to use play as the vehicle for learning in their settings, and to use observation of children for assessing their learning and development. The overall aim of the EYFS is to support children's learning and development as part of achieving the Every Child Matters (ECM) outcomes.

Ofsted

The Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) is an independent organisation that regulates and inspects services for children and young people, and for adult learners. It publishes the outcomes of its inspections as reports that are publically available. All Early Years settings in the private voluntary and independent sector (PVI sector) and all childminders must register with Ofsted. Ofsted inspects these registered Early Years settings and makes judgements on the quality of the provision. These judgements are published in its reports.

ACTIVITY 2

Read through the EPPE research outcomes and the sections on Children's Centres, Early Years Foundation Stage and Early Years Professional Status.

- *In what ways has the EPPE research influenced Early Years policy?*
- *How might these initiatives enhance children's early development?*
- *How may positive early development enhance the life chances of children?*

C H A P T E R S U M M A R Y

In this chapter we have considered the policy context of Early Years; how governmental focus on Early Years has resulted in a wide range of policy, guidance and workforce development initiatives. It is clear that these initiatives have been developed from a commitment to evidence that identifies the best ways in which to support young children and their families. The main initiatives have been identified and explained: Sure Start local programmes and children's centres, Every Child Matters, the Early Years Foundation Stage, Ofsted and Early Years Professional Status.

FURTHER READING



Anning, A and Ball, M (2008) *Improving Services for Young Children. From Sure Start to Children's Centres.* Sage: London

Barker, R (2009) *Making Sense of Every Child Matters.* Bristol: Polity Press

James, H, Sylva, K, Melhuish, E, Sammons, P, Siraj-Blatchford, I and Taggart, B (2009) The Role of Pre-school Quality in Promoting Resilience in the Cognitive Development of Young Children. *Oxford Review of Education*, 35(3): 331–52

Sylva, K and Pugh, G (2005) Transforming the Early Years in England. *Oxford Review of Education*, 31(9): 11–27

WEBSITES



www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters Every Child Matters: Change for Children DfES (2004)

www.ness.bbk.ac.uk National Evaluation of Sure Start

www.ncb.org.uk National Children's Bureau

www.eppe.ioe.ac.uk Effective Provision of Pre-school Education

www.highscope.org Perry pre-school programme

www.ofsted.gov.uk Office for Standards in Education

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Part 2

Understanding children's development

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3 Holistic development

This chapter enables you to:

- understand what we mean by holistic development;
- see how a holistic approach is evident in the systems and structures in Early Years;
- recognise that children's play is holistic;
- identify the different aspects of children's development that are evident in their play;
- ensure that the language you use to describe children accurately reflects each child's whole self.

Introduction

This chapter will enable you to understand what is meant by holistic development and why this is important in understanding how children grow and learn. Understanding that children's development is holistic is one of the principles underpinning the use of developmental assessments in Early Years practice. The chapter will also help you to understand how the language we use to talk about children should acknowledge that each aspect of their learning and development is only one part of the totality of who they are.

What is holistic development?

Holistic development means recognising that children's physical, cognitive, linguistic, emotional and social development are interrelated, inseparable and interdependent. All aspects of young children's development occur simultaneously and each area of their development is affected by the others. Children grow and develop through a complex interplay of all aspects of their development. Holistic development is a way of understanding the lived reality of young children's learning and development.

The categories that are used to describe children's growth and development, such as cognitive development or, as in the Early Years Foundation Stage, creative development, may be useful for adults to understand and describe what is happening but are false divisions in terms of what actually happens as children grow and learn.

An understanding of holistic development needs to be embedded at all levels in Early Years to ensure the best outcomes for children: in the systems and structures that support practice, the learning environment and in practitioners' professional knowledge and understanding.

- The systems and structures in Early Years, education, health and social care, need to work together to support children's all-round development.

- The learning environment needs to be meaningful for the child and offer opportunities for open-ended play and exploration. Curriculum divisions, such as literacy and history, may be useful divisions for adults but have no meaning for young children.
- Early Years practitioners need to recognise the interrelatedness of development in what they provide; this needs to be reflected in how they interact and how they observe and assess children's development as they play.

A holistic approach in Early Years

Systems and structures

To ensure the best outcomes for young children's development the systems and structures in Early Years need to acknowledge the holistic nature of children's learning and development: that each aspect of development has to be nurtured because each area has an impact on others. A good example of this is the Every Child Matters outcomes. The outcomes are based on health, education and social care. All aspects of young children's learning and development are regarded as interrelated and interdependent and all agencies and services that work with children are expected to work together to support these integrated outcomes for children, which are:

- be healthy;
- stay safe;
- enjoy and achieve;
- make a positive contribution;
- achieve economic well-being.

Similarly, children's centres services are designed to support all aspects of children's development. They work within a multi-agency framework that supports the Every Child Matters outcomes. The children's centres approach can be described as holistic in that the provision recognises the interdependence of health, education and social services in supporting young children's growth and development.

The learning environment

Learning environments in early childhood settings need to reflect the holistic way children learn and grow. Provision needs to support all aspects of development in a fluid and child-centred way. Children need opportunities, activities and experiences that integrate all aspects of their development. A holistic learning environment should include:

- activities and experiences that have meanings for the child;
- opportunities for child-initiated, open-ended play and exploration;
- care routines that are an integral part of each day and support children's well-being and independence;

- warm, consistent relationships with staff;
- staff who have a good understanding of child development, including the holistic nature of children's learning, and who know how to support this development through their interaction with children.

Children's play – noticing the holistic nature of children's development in their play

Look at the following case study. Notice how the children experience the activity as a complete, integrated experience: a holistic experience. Look at the case study analysis. Notice how all aspects of Ria and Joshua's development are evident in this play experience. Notice how this play experience offers evidence towards a range of developmental steps. The developmental statements (Figure 3.1 on page 36) are taken from the Early Years Foundation Stage (DfES, 2007).

CASE STUDY

Two children are playing together outdoors. In the play area there is a willow tunnel with a den at the end. The den has a crawl hole to get into it. Inside there are rugs on the floor and some soft toys and books left in the den by other children.

Ria, aged 4, and Joshua, aged 3, run up and down the tunnel laughing. Joshua follows Ria, encouraged to do so by Ria shouting come on ... up ... down ... up ... down. After a few times up and down Ria drops to her knees and crawls up and down the tunnel once and then disappears inside the den. Joshua follows.

Ria sits on the carpet for a short time looking around her then picks up the soft toys and spends some time sitting them in a line making sure that they are all upright. Once they are all sitting in a line she begins talking to them,

now ... you have to sit still cos I'm reading this story to you.

Ria turns to Joshua.

I'm reading this book ... do you want to listen?

Ria holds the book so the toys can see the pictures and begins to tell the story to the toys. Occasionally she traces her finger from left to right underneath the writing as she speaks:

there were three owls ... they had feathers and leaves and twigs ... their mummy was gone! ... I want my mummy said Bill ... it was dark and they went outside ... but their mummy came ... and they were all happy.

Joshua stands and watches and listens attentively for a short time and then disappears from the den for a while, reappearing with a box of pretend food. He comes into the den and announces:

Snack time.

continued

CASE STUDY continued

He sits on the floor next to Ria and together they start to give each of the toys a piece of food. When the box is empty Joshua says:

We need some more – they haven't got any.

He jumps up, then flops to his knees and crawls out of the den.

When he has gone, Ria quietly counts the toys without food. She points at each one as she counts:

1 ... 2 ... 3 ... 4.

Then she begins to count the ones with food.

Joshua returns with a handful of food. He gives the remaining four toys a piece each and leaves the rest on the floor. He sits down next to Ria.

Observable aspects of development evident in Ria and Joshua's play	
Personal Social and Emotional Development (PSED)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Display high levels of involvement in activities • Form friendships with other children
Communication Language and Literacy (CLL)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use vocabulary and forms of speech that are increasingly influenced by their experience of books • Use language for an increasing range of purposes • Enjoy using spoken language and readily turn to it in their play and learning • Use language to recreate roles and experiences • Hold books the correct way up and turn the pages • Retell narratives in the correct sequence • Understand that print carries meaning and that, in English, is read from top to bottom and left to right
Problem Solving Reasoning and Numeracy (PSRN)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show awareness of one to one correspondence • Use number language such as 'more' • Count up to three or four objects by saying one number name for each item
Creative Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notice what adults do, imitating what is observed, then doing it spontaneously when the adult is not there • Use available resources to create props to support role play • Engage in imaginative and role-play based on own first-hand experiences
Knowledge and Understanding of the World (KUW)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoy imaginative and role play with peers
Physical Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Judge body space in relation to spaces available when negotiating openings and boundaries • Move with control and coordination • Show awareness of space, of themselves and others

Figure 3.1 Developmental statement taken from EYFS

(DFES, 2007)

ACTIVITY 1

Read the case study and development statements.

Identify the evidence in the case study for each of the developmental statements. Look at each child separately.

Explain why the children's experiences can be described as holistic.

Why is the analysis completed in the six areas of learning?

How can Early Years practitioners ensure that the children's experiences remain holistic while also making sure that they are know about each child's development?

Holistic development and inclusive language

It is important that a holistic approach to young children is reflected in the language that we use to describe children and their development. Language is a powerful tool that is central to the way that we understand the world. The words that we have create our worlds.

ACTIVITY 2

Words create worlds

Imagine a tree. Think about how you would respond, what you would do, if it was described with the following words:

1. Shelter
2. Fuel
3. Food
4. Recreation
5. A home
6. Building materials

The words we use to describe the function of the tree change our orientation towards it. They change what we do and how we behave. In this example they determine whether we nurture the tree or kill it. This shows that the language we use can change our approach to things and people. This is a fairly straightforward example of words defining our responses, but the same principle applies in more complex human interactions; the words that we use have a profound effect on the ways in which we perceive and respond to people and phenomena. This can happen in both negative and positive ways.

THEORY FOCUS

Words create worlds

Ken Gergen (1999) highlights the importance of the language that we use. He observes that, if language is the central means by which we carry on our lives together – in the past, the present and the future – then our ways of talking and writing become areas for consideration. Our future, he argues, is fashioned from mundane exchanges in families, friendships and organisations, in the informal comments, and stories of daily life. The challenge therefore is to step outside of the realities that we have created by the language that we use and ask significant questions – what are the repercussions of different ways of talking, who gains, who is hurt, who is silenced, which traditions are sustained and which are undermined?

Inclusive language

A child's gender, their socioeconomic status, their learning needs, their race or their culture is one part of the totality of who they are. If we are to recognise and adopt a holistic view of children and their learning, this needs to be reflected in the language we use in how we speak about children and to children. We need to be aware that the ways in which we use language are powerful in shaping children's perceptions of themselves.

CASE STUDY

In the Reception class the children are greeted each morning by the staff. Helen arrives one morning and eagerly comes over to the Mrs Parker, who is at the door, and, pointing to her feet, says

Look ... I've got new shoes.

Mrs Parker looks at the shoes and responds:

They are lovely shiny shoes Helen; you'll have to look after them so they stay nice and shiny.

Helen smiles and goes in to the classroom.

At group time Mrs Parker points out Helen's new shoes to the other children and asks Helen to tell them all about her new shoes, where she bought them and why she liked those particular shoes. Another child in the group excitedly points to his shoes:

I've got new shoes as well.

says Mark, pointing at his feet.

Wow, *says Mrs Parker,* another shiny pair of new shoes. I bet they won't stay shiny for very long!

Mark looks carefully at his shoes:

No, they've already got a bit dirty outside today.

ACTIVITY 3

Read through the case study and notice the different ways in which Mrs Parker responds to Helen and Mark. Think carefully about how the language used subtly implies certain underlying attitudes to Helen and to Mark.

1. *What is the underlying attitude to Helen? What does it imply about the role of girls?*
2. *What is the underlying attitude to Mark? What does it imply about the role of boys?*
3. *How is this difference reflected in the language used?*
4. *Look back at the theory focus, 'Words create worlds'. In what ways does this exchange reflect Gergen's observation that our everyday mundane exchanges fashion our future? What kind of world are these words creating?*
5. *What are the implications of this for children's all-round growth and development?*

As Gergen (1999) points out the mundane exchanges that we engage in in our everyday lives create and maintain a particular view of people and society. It is important therefore that we consider the language we use and ensure that it opens up possibilities for children and recognises all that they are in a holistic way. This is particularly important with our most vulnerable children.

Consider these different ways of referring to a child.

Yes I know him, the Down's child.

Yes I know him, Daniel, the child with Down's syndrome.

In the first example the emphasis is placed on Daniel having Down's syndrome because the condition is referred to first. The effect of referring to a child in this way highlights, labels and categorises the child predominantly as the condition. In the second example the emphasis is different. The child is emphasised by using his name and by referring to the fact that he is a child before referring to the syndrome. By using language in this way we emphasise the humanity and complexity of this person; a person who will have many attributes alongside having Down's syndrome.

ACTIVITY 4

Consider some of the other labels that we use for children who have additional needs.

How could you change the way that you refer to these children to ensure that you reflect the whole person?

What impact may this have on the following?

- *How you perceive these children.*
- *How the children perceive themselves.*
- *How society perceives these children.*

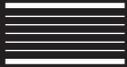
How does this use of language reflect a holistic approach to young children?

Some people argue for a completely different approach. They say that it is important to call people with disabilities 'disabled people', to reflect the fact that society disables some people through its attitudes and provision. Investigate this viewpoint. What is your considered view?

C H A P T E R S U M M A R Y

In this chapter we have considered what is meant by holistic development. We have seen how children's development is best supported if the systems and structures in Early Years, the learning environment and Early Years practitioners adopt a holistic approach. Through the case study we can see how children's play is holistic and how curriculum area divisions are used to describe development in each area. It is important to realise that the divisions are an adult tool for describing development which have no meaning for very young children. The importance of language in building our understandings of the world is explained. Words create worlds. The importance of using inclusive language is demonstrated and you have been asked to consider your own use of language and how that reflects a holistic approach to young children and their development.

FURTHER READING



Casey, T (2010) *Inclusive Play*. London: Sage

Gergen, K (1999) *An Introduction to Social Constructionism*. London: Sage

Kahn, T and Young, N (2007) *Embracing Equality. Promoting Equality and Inclusion in the Early Years*. Pre-school Learning Alliance.

Lindon, J (2006) *Equality in Early Childhood. Linking Theory and Practice*. London: Hodder Arnold

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4 Children's physical, cognitive, language and emotional and social development

This chapter enables you to understand:

- the principles that underpin our understanding of children's development;
- what we mean when we refer to physical, cognitive, linguistic or emotional and social development;
- the established patterns and sequences in children's learning and development in the areas of physical, cognitive (intellectual), linguistic, emotional and social development.

Introduction

This chapter outlines the developmental sequences that children go through as they grow and change. The charts identify expected developmental parameters in physical, intellectual, linguistic, emotional and social development. Categorising and describing development within these areas is a way of understanding and managing information about the expected pace, progress and sequences of children's learning and development and, when necessary, to enable focus on an individual area of development where there are concerns. Underpinning these developmental sequences and norms are a set of very important principles that should inform the use of developmental assessment in Early Years practice.

Principles of child development

Children's development is holistic

All aspects of children's learning and development are interrelated, inseparable and interdependent. Development, in different areas, occurs simultaneously and each area is affected by development in the other areas.

Children's development has multi-determinants

Children learn and develop through a complex interplay of biological and social factors. Children's learning and development occur as a result of who they are and what

they experience. The pace and progress of children's development are determined both by genetic imperative and social experiences.

Children's development also occurs within a context of culture of their lives. This context is determined by culture, community and family and it is influenced by the children themselves. Children are part of the context in which they are conceived, born and develop, and, because social processes are dynamic two-way processes, children will necessarily have an impact on the context in which they grow and learn. The context in which children grow and learn has a significant impact on many aspects of their development.

Children's development occurs in a predictable sequence and direction

The sequence of development in all areas of development usually remains predictable regardless of the pace of progress; for example, walking comes before running, single words come before sentences.

There are, of course, exceptions to these sequences, and as Bruce and Meggit (1999) point out, it may be useful to see developmental patterns as similar rather than the same. They suggest that development may be viewed as a web or network of knowledge, skills and aptitudes rather than always a linear progression. This may be particularly important for children who have special educational needs.

Children's development also follows several directional sequences.

- *From simple to complex* – babbling to single words to combination of words.
- *From general to specific* – showing pleasure through whole body movement as a baby to smiling and laughing to the use of words or gesture.
- *From head to toe* – physical development starts with control of the head to sitting to crawling to walking.
- *From inner to outer* – from the control of shoulder movement to arms to hands to fingers.

Children's development is cumulative

Children's development begins before birth and continues after they are born. Each stage of development builds on a previous stage; for example, babbling is an important precursor to speech. This means that children need to go through stages of development with sufficient time and experience at each stage to learn, and to consolidate their learning, to ensure that they have a secure basis for the next stage. Therefore, there should be no urge to move children through developmental stages and sequences quickly. Careful consideration, through observation and assessment of learning, needs to be given at each stage of development to ensure that children have had sufficient time and experience to learn, and consolidate their learning, before moving on to the next stage of development. Within a free play environment this will happen quite naturally for many children across different areas of learning. As children engage with the activities and experiences, the development of their learning will be determined by this interaction. As the need and desire to

know and do more motivates children they will determine when and how their learning develops. A well-planned, rich and stimulating learning environment will provide these opportunities for children.

Children's development is characterised by individual variation

Within any group of children there will be a variation in the pace of individual progress within and between developmental areas, and there will be variation in comparative progress between children. There tends to be greater variation in the development of psychological skills than physical skills and variation increases as children get older (Empson, Nabuzoka and Hamilton, 2004). This is to be expected because children's development has multi-determinants. Developmental charts therefore need to be understood in terms of ranges of age and developmental norms rather than fixed ages linked to stages. It is when children fall significantly outside of these developmental parameters, or there is a significant discrepancy between areas of development, that there should be concern.

Areas of development

These principles of child development understand children's development as holistic, individual and multidimensional; it is a complex patterning of interdependent factors. However, for ease of understanding and articulating developmental patterns, children's development can be divided into areas.

Developmental patterns are observable in:

- physical development;
- cognitive (or intellectual) development;
- language development;
- emotional development;
- social development.

Using developmental charts in these different areas can be very useful in describing and understanding children's growth and development. It enables parents and practitioners to provide experiences that are sensitive to children's needs because they are developmentally appropriate. Tracking children's development through the use of charts and sequences enables assessment of children's progress, and, when appropriate, enables assessments to be made about children about whom professionals have concerns.

However, it is also important to be aware that as well as recognising that developmental charts are useful in a number of ways, there is also a risk of using them in ways that restrict understandings, provision and interaction. If, in Early Years, developmental charts are used as rigid checklists there is a risk that practitioners' understanding of children's development will rely too heavily on external expectations rather than seeing individuals growing and learning within a particular context; they will lose the holistic view of children, childhood and learning. It is a careful balancing act; having the professional knowledge and skill

to know what developmental expectations are and using this information to inform assessment, interaction and provision while also acknowledging children's individuality.

Physical development

Physical development describes the progress of children's control over their body. Progress is characterised by an increase in skill and complexity of performance. The process of muscular movement is called motor development. Motor movement is divided into gross motor skills and fine motor skills (see definitions, below).

Definitions

Gross motor skill: Whole-body movements. Rolling, sitting, crawling, standing, walking, running, skipping, jumping, etc. They all require strength, stamina and suppleness to increase co-ordination, balance and judgement.

Fine motor skill: The use of hands in co-ordination with they eyes to perform precise finger and hand movement.

The direction of development

Children's physical development follows a particular sequence (Figure 4.1).

- From head to toe (cephal-caudal). Head and neck control is acquired initially, then control of the spinal muscles then rolling, shuffling and crawling before walking
- From inner to outer (proximodistal). Brain, spinal column before shoulders, arms, hands, and lastly fine motor control of fingers.

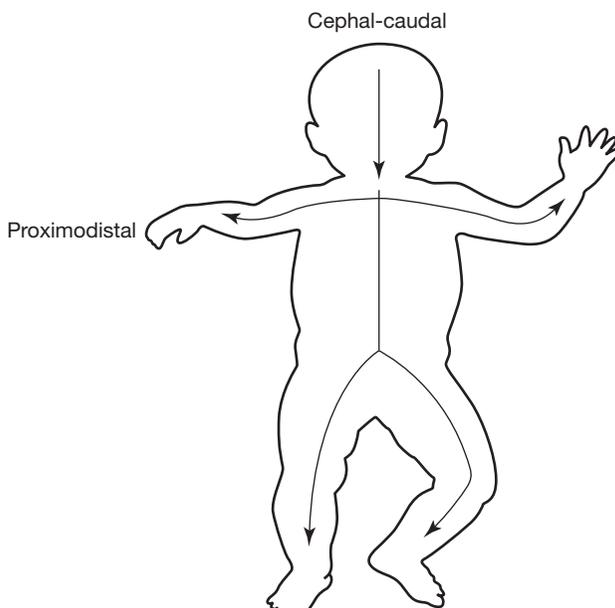


Figure 4.1 Children's physical development

Physical development. The neonate (newborn)

The neonate (newborn)			
Gross motor development	Fine motor development	Vision	Reflexes
<p>Prone (<i>lying face down</i>)</p> <p>The baby lies with her head turned to one side resting on the cheek</p> <p>Her body is in a frog-like posture with her bottom up and her knees curled under her tummy</p> <p>Her arms are bent at the elbows and tucked under her chest with fists clenched</p> <p>Supine (<i>lying on her back</i>)</p> <p>The baby lies with head to one side</p> <p>Her knees are bent towards the body with the soles of her feet touching</p> <p>Her arms are bent inwards towards her body</p> <p>Jerky, asymmetric kicking movements can be seen</p> <p>Ventral suspension (<i>when the baby is held in the air face down</i>)</p> <p>The head and legs fall below the level of the back</p> <p>Sitting</p> <p>When the baby is pulled up into a sitting position there is complete head lag. The head falls backwards as the body comes up and then flops forward onto the chest</p> <p>If the baby is held in a sitting position, her back is completely curved and her head is on the chest</p>	<p>The fists are clenched</p> <p>The baby can focus 15–25cm and stares at brightly-coloured objects within visual range</p> <p>She concentrates on the carer's face when feeding</p>	<p>Neonates can focus on faces close to their own</p> <p>Research shows that they show preference for the human face</p> <p>They can imitate and may try to copy facial expressions and movements, like sticking the tongue out, but these are not voluntary movements yet</p> <p>Eye contact with parents and carers helps to establish interaction</p> <p>Babies respond to contrasting colours and three-dimensional objects, such as mobiles and baby gyms</p>	<p>A reflex is an automatic involuntary movement made in response to a particular stimulus.</p> <p>Babies have a range of survival reflexes called <i>primitive reflexes</i>.</p> <p>Testing the reflexes of babies helps to assess the health of the central nervous system</p> <p>This should be done by a trained doctor, or other health professional.</p> <p>Primitive reflexes</p> <p><i>Rooting reflex</i> Stimulus: brushing the cheek with a finger or nipple Response: the baby turns to face the stimulus</p> <p><i>Sucking reflex</i> Stimulus: placing nipple or teat in the mouth Response: the baby sucks</p> <p><i>Grasping reflex</i> Stimulus: placing object in baby's palm Response: the fingers close tightly round the object</p> <p><i>Placing reflex</i> Stimulus: brushing top of foot against table top Response: the baby lifts its foot and places it on the hard surface</p> <p><i>Walking reflex</i> Stimulus: held standing, feet touching a hard surface Response: the baby moves her legs forward alternately and walks</p> <p><i>Moro (startle) reflex</i> Stimulus: insecure handling or sudden loud noise Response: the baby throws her head back and the fingers fan out; the arms then return to the embrace posture and the baby cries</p>

Figure 4.2 Physical development: The neonate

Physical development. One month to seven years

Age	Gross motor skills	Fine motor skills
1 month	<p><i>Prone (lying face down)</i> The baby lies with her head to one side but can now lift his head to change position. The legs are bent, no longer tucked under the body</p> <p><i>Supine (lying on the back)</i> The head is on one side. The arm and leg on the side that the head is facing will stretch out</p> <p><i>Sitting</i> The back is a complete curve when the baby is held in sitting position</p>	<p>The baby gazes attentively at carer's face while being fed, spoken to or during any caring routines</p> <p>The baby grasps a finger or other object placed in the hand</p> <p>The hands are usually closed</p>
3 months	<p>The baby can now lift up the head and chest supported on elbows, forearms and hands</p> <p>The baby usually lies with the head in a central position. There are smooth, continuous movements of the arms and legs. The baby waves the arms symmetrically and brings hands together over the body</p> <p>There should be little or no head lag. When held in a sitting position the back should be straight, except for a curve in the base of the spine</p> <p>The baby will sag at the knee when held in a standing position. The placing and walking reflexes should have disappeared</p>	<p>Finger play – the baby has discovered her hands and moves them around in the front of the face, watching the movements and the pattern they make in the light</p> <p>The baby holds a rattle or similar object for a short time if placed in the hand. Frequently hits herself in the face before dropping it</p> <p>The baby is now very alert and aware of what is going on around</p> <p>The baby moves her head to look around and follows adult movements</p>
6 months	<p>Lifts the head and chest well clear of the floor by supporting on outstretched arms. The hands are flat on the floor. The baby can roll over from front to back</p> <p>The baby will lift her head to look at her feet. She may lift her arms, requesting to be lifted. She may roll over from back to front</p> <p>If pulled to sit, the baby can now grab the adult's hands and pull herself into a sitting position; the head is now fully controlled with the strong neck and muscles. She can sit for long periods with support. The back is straight</p> <p>Held standing she will enjoy weight bearing and bouncing up and down</p>	<p>Bright and alert, looking around constantly to absorb all the visual information on offer</p> <p>Fascinated with small toys within reaching distance, grabbing them with the whole hand, using a palmar grasp.</p> <p>Transfers toys from hand to hand</p> <p>Things are often explored by putting them in her mouth</p>
9 months	<p>The baby may be able to support her body on knees and outstretched arms. She may rock backwards and forwards and try to crawl</p> <p>The baby rolls from back to front and may crawl away</p> <p>The baby is now a secure and stable sitter – she may sit unsupported for 15 minutes or more</p> <p>The baby can pull herself to a standing position When supported by an adults she will step forward on alternate feet</p> <p>She supports her body in the standing position by holding on to a firm object. She may begin to side-step around furniture</p>	<p>Uses the inferior pincer grasp with index finger and thumb</p> <p>Looks for fallen objects out of sight – she is now beginning to realise that they have not disappeared for ever</p> <p>Grasps objects usually with one hand, inspects with the eyes and transfers to the other hand</p> <p>May hold one object in each hand and bang them together</p> <p>Uses the index finger to poke and point</p> <p>Can clasp hands and may imitate others' actions</p>

12 months	<p>Can sit alone indefinitely. Can get into a position from lying down</p> <p>Pulls herself to stand and walks around the furniture. Returns to sitting without falling. May stand alone for a short period</p>	<p>Looks for objects hidden and out of sight</p> <p>Uses a mature pincer grasp and releases objects</p> <p>Throws toys deliberately and watches them fall</p> <p>Likes to look at picture books and points at familiar objects</p> <p>Pincer grasp is used; the thumb and first two fingers</p>
15 months	<p>Walks alone, feet wide apart</p> <p>Sits from standing</p> <p>Crawls upstairs</p>	<p>Points at pictures and familiar objects</p> <p>Builds with two bricks</p> <p>Enjoys books; turns several pages at once</p>
18 months	<p>Walks confidently and is able to stop without falling</p> <p>Can kneel, squat, climb and carry things around</p> <p>Tries to kick a ball</p> <p>Walks upstairs with hand held</p>	<p>Uses delicate pincer grasp</p> <p>Scribbles on paper</p> <p>Builds a tower with three bricks</p>
2 years	<p>Runs safely</p> <p>Walks up and downstairs holding on – usually two feet on each step</p> <p>Rides a trike, pushing it along with the feet</p>	<p>Holds a pencil and attempts to draw circles, lines and dots</p> <p>Uses fine pincer grasp with both hands to do complicated tasks</p> <p>Builds a tower of bricks</p> <p>Can turn the pages of a book singly</p>
3 years	<p>Can stand, walk and run on tiptoe</p> <p>Can walk backwards and sideways</p> <p>Has good spatial awareness</p> <p>Walks upstairs, one foot on each step</p> <p>Rides a tricycle and uses the pedals</p>	<p>Can thread large wooden beads onto a lace</p> <p>Controls a pencil in the preferred hand</p> <p>Can use scissors to cut paper</p> <p>Can copy straightforward shapes such as a circle</p> <p>Builds a tower of nine bricks</p>
4 years	<p>A sense of balance is developing</p> <p>Climbs play equipment</p> <p>Walks up and downstairs, one foot on each step</p> <p>Can stand, walk and run on tiptoe</p> <p>Can catch, throw, bounce and kick a ball</p>	<p>Builds a tall tower of bricks</p> <p>Can build other constructions also</p> <p>Grasps a pencil maturely</p> <p>Beginning to do up buttons and fasten zips</p> <p>Can thread small beads on a lace</p>
5 years	<p>Can hop</p> <p>Can use a variety of play equipment – swings, climbing frames, slides</p> <p>Plays ball games well</p> <p>Can walk along on balancing beam</p>	<p>Can draw a person with head, trunk, legs and eyes, nose and mouth</p> <p>Can sew large stitches</p> <p>Good control of pencils and paintbrushes</p>
6 years	<p>Has increased agility, muscle co-ordination and balance across all activities</p> <p>Rides a two-wheeled bicycle</p> <p>Kicks a football well</p> <p>Makes running jumps</p>	<p>Can catch a ball with one hand</p> <p>Writing hold is similar to the adult's</p> <p>Can draw a person in increasing detail, for example, with hairstyle and eyebrows</p>
7 years	<p>Can climb and balance well on the apparatus.</p> <p>Hops easily on either foot, keeping well balanced.</p>	<p>Writes well.</p> <p>Can sew neatly with a large needle.</p>

Figure 4.3 Physical development: One month to seven years

Cognitive development

Cognitive development is concerned with the construction of thought processes. It is concerned with how we acquire, organise and use what we learn. It involves the development of conceptual and conscious thought, memory, problem-solving, imagination and creativity.

Cognitive development. Birth to seven years

Age	Cognitive development
Birth	Are able to explore using the senses Are beginning to develop basic concepts such as hunger, cold, wet
1 month	Will begin to recognise main carer and respond with movement, cooing Will repeat pleasurable movements, thumb-sucking, wriggling
3–4 months	Are more interested in their surroundings Begin to show an interest in playthings Begin to understand cause and effect – if you move a rattle, it will make a sound
5–6 months	Expect things to behave in certain ways, – the jack-in-the-box will pop up, but is unlikely to play a tune Will reach for things with growing co-ordination Will recognise familiar everyday things, e.g cot, changing mat
9 months	Recognise pictures of familiar things Watch a toy being hidden and then looks for it (object permanence established) Memory develops – children can remember, anticipate and respond to regular daily patterns, e.g. feeding and sleeping routines, waving
12–15 months	Explore objects using trial-and-error methods Begin to point and follow when others point Begin to treat objects in appropriate ways – cuddle a doll, talk into a telephone Seek out hidden objects
18 months – 2 years	Refer to themselves by name Begin to understand the consequences of their own actions; for example, pouring the juice makes a wet patch Develop the ability to symbolise – use one thing to represent another
3 years	Can match primary colours Can sort objects into categories, but usually by only one criterion at a time; for example, all the cars from a selection of vehicles, but not the cars that are red Further develop their capacity to symbolise through the use of language (anticipating later literacy skills of reading and writing)
4 years	Can sort with more categories Can solve simple problems, usually by trial and error, but begin to understand 'why' Adding to their knowledge by continually asking questions Memory skills developing, particularly around significant events (such as holidays and birthdays), and familiar songs and stories Include representative detail in drawings, often based on observation Will confuse fantasy and reality – <i>I had a tiger come to tea at my house too</i> Understand that writing carries meaning and use writing in play Social and cultural conventions increasingly influence their drawing and writing

5 years	<p>Have a good sense of past, present and future</p> <p>Are becoming literate – most will recognise own name and write it, respond to books and are interested in reading</p> <p>Demonstrate good observational skills in their drawings</p> <p>Understand the one-to-one principle and can count reliably to 10</p> <p>Concentration is developing – can concentrate without being distracted for about 10 minutes at an appropriate task</p> <p>Thinking becomes increasingly co-ordinated and children become able to hold more than one point of view in mind</p>
6 years	<p>Begin to understand the mathematical concept of measuring – time, weight, length, capacity, volume</p> <p>Are interested in why things happen and hypotheses; for example, that seeds need water to grow</p> <p>Begin to use symbols in their drawing and painting – the radial sun and the strip sky appear now</p> <p>Many children will begin to read independently, but there is a wide individual variation in this</p> <p>Can concentrate for longer periods of time</p>
7 years	<p>Are able to conserve number reliably; that is, recognise that a number of objects remains constant however they are presented</p> <p>May be able to conserve mass and capacity</p> <p>Begin to deal with number abstractly; can perform calculations involving simple addition and subtraction mentally</p> <p>May be able to tell the time from a watch or clock</p> <p>Are developing an ability to reason and an understanding of cause and effect</p>

Figure 4.4 Cognitive development: Birth to seven years

ACTIVITY 1

Children's cognitive development needs to be supported by adults through interaction and the provision of appropriate activities and experiences.

- *Choose an age range and suggest a range of appropriate activities and experiences to support children's cognitive development.*
- *Look at the next stage of development from the one you have chosen. How could you extend and adapt the activities and experiences that you have identified to encourage the next stage of development?*

Remember that daily routines such as shopping or sorting washing provide excellent opportunities for supporting children's learning and development.

Language development

Language is the main way in which we think and communicate. We are the only species that has the ability to use language. Other species communicate, but in ways that specifically meet their needs, for example by making their fur stand on end to communicate danger, by spraying their territory to mark it out, or growling to deter attackers. They tend to respond instinctively rather than thinking sophisticated thoughts.

We live in a complex world that requires a sophisticated process to enable us to think and to communicate. Language is that process. Language is learned through social interaction within the society in which we each grow and learn.

Children's language develops through a series of identifiable sequential stages. The pace of children's progress depends partly upon their chronological age, i.e. maturational development of sound-producing physiology, but it is also profoundly influenced by their experience of language in the home, community and setting in which they grow and learn. It is important to take into account the impact of these factors when assessing children's developmental progress.

Language development. Birth to five years

Approximate age	Developmental level
Birth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involuntary cry
2–3 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signs of intentional communication: eye contact
6 weeks onward	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children may smile when spoken to • Cooing and gurgling begin in response to parent or carer's presence and voice, also to show contentment
1–2 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children may move their eyes or head towards the direction of the sound • Children begin to discriminate between consonant sounds
3 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children will raise their head when sounds attract their attention
4–5 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Playful sounds appear; most are in response to the human voice and to show contentment • Cooing and laughing appear • Children respond to familiar sounds by turning their head, kicking or stopping crying • Shout to attract attention
6 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The beginning of babbling regular repeated sounds and playing around with these sounds. This is important for practising sound-producing mechanisms necessary for later speech • Babbling is 'reduplicated babbling' at this stage – consonants (C) and vowels (V) together in repeated CV syllables: <i>ba ba ba ba</i> • Cooing, laughing and gurgling become stronger • Children begin to understand emotion in the parent or carer's voice • Children begin to enjoy music and rhymes, particularly if accompanied by actions
9 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Babbling continues and the repertoire increases. • Babbling is now 'variegated' – children produce strings of different sounds: <i>ba-ma</i> • Babbling takes on the stresses and intonation of the language (or languages) that they are hearing • Children begin to recognise their own name • The range of vowel sounds produced starts to resemble the language that the child is hearing – they are 'tuning in' to the language around them • May understand simple, single words like 'No' or 'Bye-Bye' • Children continue to enjoy music and rhymes and will now attempt to join in with the actions, e.g. Pat-a-cake
9–12 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Babbling reflects the intonation of speech • Consonants begin to reflect the language that they are hearing • Children may imitate simple words. This is usually an extension of babbling, e.g. <i>dada</i> • Pointing begins. This is often accompanied by a sound or the beginnings of a word. This demonstrates an increasing awareness that words are associated with people and objects
12 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children's vocabulary starts to develop but often remains quite limited as children concentrate on achieving mobility • Passive vocabulary increases rapidly • Pointing accompanied by a single word is the basis of communication

<p>15 months</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Children's active vocabulary increases: this tends to be names of familiar things and people ● Children use their language to name belongings and point out named objects ● Children overextend words, e.g. 'Dog' for all furry animals with four legs ● Less frequently they underextend words, e.g. 'Cat' only for their cat, not the one next door ● One word and intonation is used to indicate meaning, e.g. 'Cup', may mean 'I want a drink'/'I have lost my cup', etc. The intonations and possibly the situation would indicate the meaning to people who are familiar with the child. This is called the holophrastic stage ● Children will repeat words or sentences
<p>21 months</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Both passive and active vocabularies rapidly increase; the passive vocabulary, however, remains larger than the active ● Children begin to name objects and people that are not there; this shows the development of language for thinking ● Sentences begin. Initially as two-word phrases, e.g. <i>Mummy gone</i> ● Gesture is still a fundamental part of communication ● Children begin asking questions usually, <i>What?</i>, <i>Who?</i> etc.
<p>2 years</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Both active and passive vocabularies continue to increase ● Children can generalise words but this sometimes means they over-generalise, e.g. all men are 'daddy' ● Personal pronouns (words instead of actual names) are used, e.g. he, she, etc. They are not always used correctly ● Sentences become longer although they tend to be in telegraphic speech, i.e. only the main sense-conveying words are used like <i>Mummy gone work</i> ● Questions are asked frequently, <i>What? Why?</i> ● The plural form of words is often over-generalised, children may refer to 'mouses' or 'sheeps' ● Irregular verb forms may be used, i.e. <i>seed</i> (for saw) and <i>comed</i> (for came) ● In speech final consonants and unstressed syllables often omitted, i.e. <i>ca</i> for 'cat' and <i>gin</i> for 'begin' ● Consonant sounds that are similar to the ear are often confused, t/k/p d/g/b b/v
<p>2 years 6 months</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Vocabulary increases rapidly; there is less imbalance between passive and active vocabularies ● Word use is more specific so there are fewer over- and under-generalisations ● Sentences get longer and more precise, although they are still usually abbreviated versions of adult sentences ● Word order in sentences is sometimes incorrect ● Children can use language to protect their rights and interests and to maintain their own comfort and pleasure, e.g. <i>It's mine</i>, <i>Get off</i> ● Children can listen to stories and are interested in them
<p>3 years</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Vocabulary develops rapidly; is picked up quickly ● Sentences continue to become longer and longer and more like adult speech ● Children talk to themselves while playing to plan and order their play, which is evidence of children using language to think ● Stylistic variation (speaking differently in different contexts) is usually well developed ● Language can now be used to report on what is happening, direct their own and others' actions, to express ideas and to initiate and maintain friendships ● Antonyms are often confused (early/late, today/yesterday) as children begin to engage with the meaning of more abstract words ● Pronouns are usually used correctly ● Questions are used frequently ● Rhymes and melody are attractive to children

continued

4 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Children's vocabulary is now extensive; new words are added regularly ● Longer and more complex sentences are used; sentences may be joined with 'because', which demonstrates an awareness of causes and relationships ● Children are able to narrate long stories, including the sequence of events ● Play involves running commentaries ● The boundaries between fact and fiction are blurred and this is reflected in speech ● Speech is fully intelligible with few, minor, incorrect uses ● Questioning is at its peak ● Children can usually use language to: share, take turns, collaborate, argue, predict what may happen, compare possible alternatives, anticipate, give explanations, justify behaviour, create situations in imaginative play, reflect upon their own feelings and begin to describe how other people feel
5 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Children have a wide range of vocabulary and can use it appropriately ● Vocabulary can include colours, shapes, numbers and common opposites ● Sentences are usually correctly structured, although incorrect grammar may still be used ● Pronunciation may still be childish ● Language continues to be used and developed, as described in the section on 4-year-olds: this may now include phrases heard on the television and associated with children's toys ● Questions and discussions are for enquiry and information; questions become more precise as children's cognitive skills develop ● Children will offer opinions in discussion ● Children are still learning to understand ambiguities and subtleties in language, e.g. irony and metaphor

Figure 4.5 Language development: Birth to five years

ACTIVITY 2

Look back through the chart on children's language development.

- *Outline the development of children's use of questioning in their language development.*
- *Suggest why questioning develops and changes in this way between the ages of 21 months and five years.*

Think about children's overall proficiency in language and their cognitive capabilities. How does their questioning reflect this development?

Language development. Five to seven years

Joan Tough's seven uses of language

Between the ages of five and seven years children use, practise, adapt and refine their language knowledge and skills. Children now use language for a wide range of purposes. Joan Tough (1976) identifies seven different uses of language. They provide a useful way of understanding and describing the ways in which children use language. Tough (1976) argues that the uses of language are hierarchical; children progress through the seven uses in the stated order. The early stages will be observed in most children's language by the age of five years.

Use	Using language to
1. Self-maintaining	1.1 Protect oneself: <i>Stop it</i> <i>Go away</i> <i>You're hurting me</i> 1.2 Meet psychological and physical needs: <i>I'm thirsty</i> <i>You're hurting me</i>
2. Directing	Directing actions of self and others: <i>You push the lorry round the track</i> <i>I just need to put this brick here then I've finished</i>
3. Reporting	3.1 Label the component parts of a scene: <i>There is a car, a lorry and a bus</i> 3.2 Refer to detail, the colour and the shape, size or position of an object 3.3 Talk about an incident 3.4 Refer to a sequence of events: <i>We walked to the bus stop and then caught the bus to school</i> 3.5 Reflect on the meanings of experiences, including feelings: <i>I like playing in the shop, especially with Sarah</i>
4. Towards logical reasoning	4.1 Explain a process 4.2 Recognise causal and dependent relationships: <i>You have to put sugar in this tea or it's not very nice</i> 4.3 Recognise problems and their causes 4.4 Justify judgements and actions: <i>I didn't want to go out because I hadn't finished my drawing</i>
5. Predicting	5.1 Anticipate or forecast: <i>We're going to have a hamster and a cage with a wheel</i> 5.2 Predict the consequences of actions or events: <i>That propeller will fall off if you don't stick it on properly</i>
6. Projecting	6.1 Project into the experiences, feelings and reactions of others: <i>He was stuck in there and couldn't get out and was frightened</i> 6.2 Project into a situation never experienced: <i>I wouldn't like to be a rabbit and live in a cage, would you?</i>
7. Imagining	In an imagined context: <i>Hello, this is Hot Scissors hairdressers. Would you like to make an appointment?</i>

Figure 4.6 Language development: Five to seven years (seven uses of language)

Definitions

Consonant: In common usage it refers to the letter of the alphabet that denotes a consonant sound. In English these are b c d f g h j k l m n p q r s t v w x z and in some instances y (for example in yoke)

Consonants are produced with the lips (p), front of the tongue (t), back of the throat (k), in the throat (h), and with air through the nose (m, n)

More precisely, in linguistics, it is recognised that there are more consonant sounds than letters. For example, in English we have consonant sounds of 'th' 'sh' 'ch' and 'zh'. The International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) uses a unique symbol to represent each consonant

Vowel: The sounds a e i o u and, in English, in some instances y.
For example, in the word 'myth' the y denotes the vowel sound i.
Vowels are produced with an open vocal tract

Consonant acquisition

Between the ages of 18 months and six years children gradually acquire, use, practise and refine their use of consonants. There is a pattern and developmental sequence to the acquisition of consonants.

Average age of consonant acquisition	
18 months	p b m h n w
2 years	k g d t 'ng'
2.5 years	f y
3 years	r l s
3.5 years	'ch' 'sh'
4 years	z j
4.5 years	'th' (as in thin)
5 years	'th' (as in the)
6 years	'zh' as in treasure

Figure 4.7 Consonant acquisition

Emotional and social development

Emotional development is the growth of a child's ability to feel and express an increasing range of emotions appropriately. It includes the development of emotional responses to oneself, to other people and to what we say and do. Development is the progression towards the capability to feel and express emotions in ways that contribute to our own and others' well-being.

Social development is the growth of a child's ability to relate to others appropriately within the social context of their life. It includes the development of social skills and skills of independence. As children learn and develop social skills, this has an impact on their ability to engage in social play alongside and with other children in a group. Social play

also follows a developmental pattern. This pattern is described in this chapter but is not aligned with an age as the development of social play depends very strongly upon a child's opportunities to play with other children.

An important strand in emotional and social development is the development of self-concept and self-image. This is the view we have of ourselves and our beliefs about how other people see us.

Within the context of their emotional and social development children also learn expected patterns of behaviour. The development of children's understanding of these expectations and their ability to manage and control themselves in accordance with these expectations is closely linked to their emotional and social development. This chapter outlines typical developmental aspects of children's behaviour as they become aware of and engage with society's expectations.

Children's development in each of these areas is detailed in charts below. You will notice that the charts detail similar developmental patterns. This is to be expected as children's behaviour, their development of self-image and their social play are very closely linked to their emotional and social development.

General principles of emotional and social development

There are important understandings about the context of children's development that must be taken into consideration when studying or assessing children's emotional and social development.

- Development is a holistic process; all areas of development are interdependent. This is particularly evident in the development of emotional and social skills which, when disordered, can have a profound impact on other areas of development.
- Development often occurs in periods of rapid growth followed by a period of relative stability. During the period of stability children consolidate what they have learned.
- The path of development moves from complete immaturity and dependence towards emotional and social maturity and independence.
- Children develop emotionally and socially within a context. Children grow and learn within family systems. Families exist within a larger social and cultural context. Both family and cultural context have a profound effect upon children's emotional and social development, including their behaviour and their sense of self.

Emotional and social development. Birth to seven years

Age	Emotional and social development
Birth At this age babies...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are utterly dependent on others • Have rooting, sucking and swallowing reflexes • Sleep most of the time • Prefer to be left undisturbed • Startle to noise, and turn to the light, providing it is not bright • Cry when hungry, in pain, or unattended to • Are usually content in close contact with carer • Are not aware of themselves as separate beings

continued

<p>1 month Around this age babies...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sleep most of the time when not being handled or fed ● Cry for their needs to be attended to (different cry for different need) ● Will turn to the breast ● Look briefly at a human face ● Will quieten in response to human voice and smile in response to the main carer's voice ● Develop a social smile and respond with vocalisation to the sight and sound of a person (at around 6 weeks); the baby's response to a person separate from themselves ● Grasp a finger if the baby's hand is open and palm is touched ● Gradually learn to recognise themselves as separate individuals
<p>2 months Around this age babies usually...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Stop crying when they are picked up ● Sleep less during the day and more during the night ● Explore, using their five different senses ● Differentiate between objects, and begin to tell one face from another ● Follow a human face when it moves ● Smile and become more responsive to others
<p>3 months Around this age infants usually...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Respond to friendly handling and smile at most people ● Use sounds to interact socially and reach out to the human face ● Become more orientated to their mothers and other main carers, and look at their carer's face when feeding ● Begin to connect what they hear with what they see ● Are able to show an increasingly wide range of feelings and responses ● Have some awareness of the feelings and emotions of others ● Still react to the world as if they alone make things exist or disappear
<p>6 months Around this age infants...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Become more aware of themselves in relation to other people and things ● Show a marked preference for their main carer(s) ● Reach out for familiar people and show a desire to be picked up and held ● Begin to be more reserved with, or afraid of, strangers ● Smile at their own image in the mirror ● May like to play hide and seek or peek-a-boo ● Show eagerness, anger and pleasure by body movement, facial expression, and vocally ● Play alone with contentment ● Stop crying when communicated with
<p>9 months Around this age infants usually...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Clearly distinguish familiar people and show a marked preference for them ● Show a fear of strangers and need reassurance when in their company, often clinging to the main adult and hiding their face in them ● Play peek-a-boo, copy hand-clapping and pat a mirror image ● Still cry for attention to their needs, but also use their voice to attract people to themselves ● Show some signs of willingness to wait for attention ● Show pleasure and interest at familiar words. Understand 'No' ● Try to copy sounds ● Offer objects to others but do not release them
<p>12 months Around this age infants usually...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Enjoy looking at themselves and things around them in a mirror ● Know their name and respond to it ● Like to be within sight and hearing of a familiar adult ● Can distinguish between different members of the family and act socially with them ● Will wave goodbye ● Appreciate an audience, repeating something that produced a laugh before ● Begin to imitate actions they have seen others do ● Respond affectionately to certain people ● May be shy with strangers ● Are capable of a variety of emotional responses ● Show rage when thwarted ● Actively seek attention by vocalising rather than by crying ● Will obey simple instructions ● Recognise other people's emotions and moods and express their own ● Learn to show love to others, if they have been shown love themselves

<p>15 months Around this age children...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use their main carer as a safe base from which to explore the world and are anxious and apprehensive about being physically separated from carers ● Are very curious about their environment and their exploration can lead to conflict with their carers ● Have a sense of 'me' and 'mine', begin to express themselves defiantly ● Begin to distinguish between 'you' and 'me' ● Can point to members of the family in answer to questions ● Tend to show off ● Are not dissuaded from undesirable behaviour by verbal reasoning and react poorly to the sound of sharp discipline (the best way to manage behaviour at this stage is to distract the child and change the environment) ● Have an interest in strangers but may be fearful and wary of them ● Show jealousy of the attention of adults that is given to other children ● Throw toys when angry ● Are emotionally changeable ● Resist change in routines or sudden transitions ● Swing from dependence to wanting to be independent ● May hold a cup and drink without assistance, hold a spoon and bring it to the mouth, help with dressing and undressing
<p>18 months At this age children usually...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Tend to follow their carers around, be sociable and imitate them by helping with small household tasks ● Respond by stopping doing something when the word 'no' is used but this usually needs reinforcement ● Imitate and mimic others during their play ● Engage in solitary or parallel play but like to do this near a familiar adult or sibling ● Show some social emotions, for example, sympathy for someone who is hurt ● Cannot tolerate frustration ● Show intense curiosity ● Have intense mood swings, from dependence to independence, eagerness to irritation, and co-operation to resistance ● Try to establish themselves as members of the social group ● Begin to internalise the values of the people around them ● Are conscious of their family group ● Are still very dependent on familiar carers and often return to a fear of strangers ● Can use a cup and spoon well, and successfully get food into their mouth ● Take off some clothing and help with dressing themselves ● Although still in nappies, can make their carers aware of their toileting needs – through words or restless behaviour
<p>2 years Around this age children...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Can be sensitive to the feelings of others ● Display emotions such as sympathy ● Are capable of being loving and responsive ● Demand their carer's attention and want their needs to be met immediately ● Sometimes have tantrums if crossed or frustrated or if they have to wait for attention or for the satisfaction of their needs ● Will ask for food ● Can sometimes respond to being asked to wait, are possessive of their own toys and objects, have little idea of sharing ● Tend to be easily distracted by an adult if they are frustrated or angry ● Join in when an adult sings or tells a simple story, can point to parts of the body and other things when asked ● Are sometimes self-contained and independent, other times very dependent

continued

<p>2 years 6 months Around this age children...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Develop their sense of self-identity; they know their name, their position in the family and their gender ● Play with other children – this begins to reinforce their gender role – they learn that different toys may be intended for girls and boys ● Engage in 'pretend' play including make-believe and role play ● Behave impulsively, wanting to have anything that they see, and do anything that occurs to them ● Throw tantrums when thwarted and are less easily distracted ● Are often in conflict with their carers ● May be aware of and avoid certain hazards like hot ovens and stairs ● Are able to use a spoon well ● Are able to pour from one container to another therefore able to get themselves a drink ● Dress with supervision – unzip zips, buckle and unbuckle, button up and undo buttons ● Are toilet-trained during the day and may be at night especially if lifted (taken to the toilet during the night)
<p>3 years Around this age children...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Can feel secure when in a strange place away from their carers, as long as they are with people with whom they became familiar with when with their carer ● Can wait for their needs to be met ● Are less rebellious and use language rather than physical outbursts to express themselves ● Still respond to distraction as a method of controlling their behaviour, but are ready to respond to reasoning and bargaining ● Are beginning to learn the appropriate behaviour for a range of different social settings – for example, they are aware when they need to be quiet and when they can be noisy ● Adopt the attitudes and moods of adults ● Want the approval of loved adults ● Can show affection for younger siblings ● Can share things and take turns ● Enjoy make-believe play ● Use dolls and toys to act out their experiences. May have imaginary fears and anxieties ● Towards the end of this year may show some insecurity expressed as shyness, irritability and self-consciousness ● May have the ability to use implements to eat with ● Toilet themselves during the day, may be dry at night ● Will wash their hands but may have difficulty drying them ● Are learning to dress without supervision
<p>4 years By this age children...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Can be very sociable and talkative to adults and children, enjoy 'silly' talk ● May have one particular friend ● Can be confident and self-assured ● May be afraid of the dark and have other fears. Have taken the standards of behaviour of the adults to whom they are closest ● Turn to adults for comfort when overtired, ill or hurt ● Play with groups of children – groups tend to centre round an activity, then disperse and reform ● Can take turns but not consistently ● Are often very dramatic in their play – engage in elaborate and prolonged imaginative play ● Are developing a strong sense of past and future ● Are able to cope with delay in having their needs met ● Show purpose and persistence and some control over their emotions ● Can be dogmatic and argumentative, and may blame others when they misbehave including provoking others in order to arouse a reaction ● May swear and use bad language ● May be able to feed themselves well, dress and undress, but may have difficulty with back buttons, ties and laces ● May be able to wash and dry hands and face and clean teeth

<p>5 years By this age children usually...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Enjoy brief separations from home and carers. Show good overall control of emotions but may argue with parents when they request something ● Still respond to discipline based on bargaining, are not so easily distracted from their own anger as when they were younger ● Want the approval of adults, show sensitivity to the needs of others and a desire for acceptance by other children ● Are developing internalised social rules, an inner conscience and a sense of shame (an important development that affects the adult's impact when disciplining the child) ● Often show the stress of conflict by being overactive, but may regain their balance by having 'time-out' ● Prefer games of rivalry to team games ● Enjoy co-operative group play but often need an adult to sort out conflicts ● May boast, show off and threaten ● Are able to see a task through to the end ● Have developed a stable picture of themselves, are increasingly aware of differences between themselves and other people, including gender and status and want the approval of adults. They show sensitivity to the needs of others and a desire for acceptance by other children, and are developing internal social rules and inner conscience ● May use a knife and fork well, dress and undress, lace shoes and tie ties, wash and dry face and hands but may need supervision to complete other washing
<p>6 years By this age children...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Have greater independence and maturity ● Have developed a wide range of appropriate emotional responses ● Are able to behave appropriately in a variety of social situations ● Have all the basic skills for independence in eating, hygiene and toileting ● Can be irritable and possessive about their own things ● Have spells of being rebellious and aggressive
<p>7 years By this age children...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Can be very self-critical about their work ● May be miserable and sulky, and give up trying for short periods, or be so enthusiastic for life that carers have to guard against them becoming overtired ● Are more aware of their gender group ● Are more influenced by the peer group

Figure 4.8 Emotional and social development: Birth to seven years

The development of children's self-image

Age	Developmental pattern
Birth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● New-born babies do not realise that people and things exist apart and separate from them
1 month	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Children begin to learn to differentiate between themselves and other people through interaction with their carers and by exploration of the world through their senses. Through this they gradually come to a realisation of who they are and what they think and feel about themselves – their self-image and self-concept. This process begins around this age and continues right through childhood
2 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Babies learn that touching and seeing things around them feels completely different to touching their own hand. In feeling the difference they learn that moving things they see are somehow a part of them ● When they are held during feeding, changing and cuddling, babies learn that there are different kinds of feeling: one that comes from outside of them; and another, when they touch their own hand or chew their toes, does not ● These exploratory experiences begin the process of differentiation between themselves and other people and things

continued

3 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Once children have distinguished themselves as separate, they will start to build a picture or image of themselves. Gradually they discover what kind of person they are and what they can do Children measure their worth by the responses of adults and other children who are significant to them. They need to experience the approval and acceptance of these people to develop feelings of self-approval and self-acceptance At this stage infants still react to the world as if they alone make things exist or disappear: if they are looking at something it exists; if they don't see it, it doesn't exist; if someone disappears, babies will keep looking for them in the place they were before they disappeared, as if waiting for them to come back. If they don't return, the baby will probably not remember them unless it is a person who is important to them, in which case they will probably cry
6 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This period may see the beginnings of stranger anxiety and separation distress. This implies that the baby recognises their separateness and feels vulnerable without the support of the attachment relationship. If carers meet babies' needs at this stage they will reinforce the babies' view of themselves as separate but safe and worthwhile
9 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By this stage infants have become aware of themselves as separate from others and have formed a definite image of other people who are significant to them
12 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By this stage infants are aware of themselves as persons in relation to other people Infants learn to feel about themselves what they see in the responses of others. This applies both to themselves and their activities and efforts. Children begin to feel positive about themselves if: adults are patient with their attempts to do things for themselves; they are allowed to explore and make new discoveries for themselves; they are allowed to attempt new physical skills without sensing fear from those around them Infants' self-image is still fragile at this stage. Even if adults are generally encouraging and approving, their moods can swing dramatically: powerful one moment, needy the next moment
18–24 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By this age some children have become sensitive to the feelings of others and display social emotions such as sympathy if a person is hurt. This implies that children understand how experiences make them feel and can recognise this in others (empathy); this is an indication of their growing self-awareness
2–3 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children at this stage are developing personal independence and taking important steps towards self-reliance; with improved motor development children learn self-help skills. They will respond well if adults encourage this Their developing competence confirms their self-worth Adults can confirm children's separateness and individuality by, for example, setting things apart that belong to the child, a place to hang their coat or a cup that's theirs Children need tasks that present manageable challenge and offer them opportunities for success and consequent enhancement of their self-esteem Too much frustration and consequence at this stage can lead to a child feeling quite negative about themselves It is particularly important to support children who have disabilities or learning difficulties at this stage to enable them to develop their sense of self-competence
3–4 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Between the ages of three and five the foundation of a child's self-concept is established By three most children call themselves 'I' Most children have a set of feelings about themselves Their self-concept at this stage will influence how they respond to relationships and experiences now and in the future Their view of themselves is still affected by the attitudes and behaviour of the people around them Children see themselves as they think others see them
4–5 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most children will have developed a stable self-concept This will be based on their own inner understanding and knowledge about who they are Children who at this stage see themselves as likeable will not change this view of themselves when, from time to time, other children say that they don't like them
6–7 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Much of the child's personality and sense of self is established by the end of this period. By the time they are eight, children's experiences in their families and in their social and cultural environments will have led to the establishment of their personal identity, social and cultural identity, gender role, attitudes to life, and skills for independence

Figure 4.9 The development of children's self image

The development of social play

Solitary play	This is an early stage of play. Children play alone and take no notice of other children who are around
Parallel play	A child plays side-by-side with other children but without interacting. They may share space and possibly equipment but their play remains independent of one another
Associative play	Children begin to play with other children, they make intermittent interactions and/or are involved in the same activity but their play remains predominantly personal
Co-operative play	At this stage children are able to play together co-operatively. They are able to adopt a role within a group and take account of others' needs and actions. Children understand and are able to keep to simple rules in their play

Figure 4.10 The development of social play

ACTIVITY 3

How would you encourage the development of children's social play from:

- *solitary to parallel;*
- *parallel to associative;*
- *associative to co-operative?*

Think about:

- *the activities and experiences that you could provide;*
- *how you would interact – including modelling play behaviour.*

Children's behaviour

Children's patterns of behaviour change as they grow and learn. Young children change dramatically in the first few years of their lives and this is reflected in their behaviour; this is an integral part of their ongoing emotional and social development. Throughout childhood children develop:

- an increasing range of emotions and behavioural responses to different situations;
- a greater degree of independence and control over their feelings and behaviour;
- a deeper understanding of feelings and behaviours of themselves and others, and therefore less need for external constraints on their behaviour.

Early Years practitioners need a thorough understanding of the behaviour to expect at each age and stage so that they can respond in an appropriate way; for example, a two-year-old throwing bricks down in frustration should be responded to differently from that same behaviour in a seven-year-old. When assessing children's behaviour Early Years practitioners need to consider whether the behaviour that they are observing is age-appropriate, and develop strategies to manage each child's behaviour appropriately.

Children's behaviour	
Age	Developmental pattern
At 1 year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Children do not have a clear picture of themselves as individuals ● They have a close attachment, and are sociable with, the adults that they know and anxious if they are separated from familiar adults and shy with strangers ● They are capable of varying emotional responses ● They seek attention verbally ● They will obey simple verbal instructions
At 15 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Children are more aware of themselves as individuals ● They still do not see others as separate from themselves ● They explore their environment indiscriminately (they are into everything) ● They are possessive of people and things that they are attached to ● They respond better to distraction than to verbal reasoning or sharp discipline ● They may 'show off' their new-found skills and knowledge ● Their mood can swing dramatically, from anger to laughter in seconds ● They are easily frustrated and may react by shouting and throwing things
At 18 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Children can respond to the word 'no', but will usually need the command repeated ● They are more aware of themselves as separate individuals ● They are very self-centred or egocentric – in their awareness and behaviour ● They are very curious about everything ● They cannot tolerate frustration ● They can be defiant and resistant to adults in order to protect their developing individuality
At 2 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Children have a clear understanding of self but are not yet fully aware of their carers as separate individuals ● They are able to be self-contained for short periods of time ● They are possessive of toys and have little idea of sharing ● They want their demands to be met quickly ● They may have tantrums if frustrated but can be distracted ● They have a wide range of feelings and can be loving and responsive ● They are aware of and are able to respond to the feelings of others
By the age of 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Children have developed a strong self-identity and a growing level of independence ● They show less anxiety about separation and strangers ● They often resist efforts by carers to limit their behaviour ● They are ready to respond to reasoning and bargaining ● They can wait for their needs to be met ● They are less rebellious and use language rather than physical outbursts to express themselves ● They have mood swings and extremes of behaviour ● They are impulsive and less easily distracted from what they want ● They are beginning to learn appropriate behaviour for a range of different social settings ● They can adopt the attitudes and moods of adults ● They want approval from loved adults
By the age of 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Children have more physical and emotional self-control ● They have more settled feelings and are more balanced in their expression of them ● They are more independent of their main carers ● They are more outwardly friendly and helpful ● They can respond to reasoning and bargaining as well as distraction ● They are less rebellious and can learn the appropriate behaviour for a range of settings ● They are capable of playing with groups of children, tending to centre round an activity, then dissolve and reform ● They can take turns but are not consistent at this ● They can engage in elaborate and prolonged imaginary play ● They are developing a sense of past and future ● They can be dogmatic and argumentative ● They may blame others when they misbehave ● They may behave badly in order to get a reaction ● They may swear and use bad language

Between 4 and 5 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children are constantly trying to make sense of the world • They can be very sociable, talkative, confident, purposeful, persistent and self-assured • They can take turns and wait for their needs to be met • They may be stubborn and sometimes aggressive and argumentative • They still turn to adults for comfort, especially when tired, hurt, or ill
At 5 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children have achieved a greater level of independence and self-containment • They generally show a well-developed level of control over their emotions • They show a desire to do well and to gain the approval of adults • They are developing a sense of shame if their behaviour is unacceptable to an adult • They can also be argumentative, show off, boast and be over-reactive at times • They will argue with parents when they request something • They will still respond to discipline based on bargaining • They are not so easily distracted from their own anger as when they were younger • They may regain control by having 'time out' • They may prefer games of rivalry rather than team games • They enjoy co-operative group play but will often need an adult to arbitrate • They may boast, show off and threaten • They can show a desire to excel and be purposeful and persistent
Between 6 and 7 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children become increasingly mature and independent • They develop a wide range of appropriate emotional and behavioural responses to different situations • They are able to behave appropriately in a variety of social settings • They can be self-confident, friendly and co-operative • They may have spells of being irritable, rebellious and sulky

Figure 4.11 Children's behaviour

C H A P T E R S U M M A R Y

This chapter identifies the principles underpinning children's development and learning. A series of detailed charts is provided detailing children's learning and development from birth to seven in the areas of physical development, cognitive (or intellectual) development, language development, and emotional and social development.

FURTHER READING



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5 Development in the Early Years Foundation Stage

This chapter enables you to understand:

- the background to the Early Years Foundation Stage;
- the structure of the Early Years Foundation Stage;
- the Welfare Standards;
- the way in which development is understood in the Early Years Foundation Stage;
- the way in which development is assessed in the Early Years Foundation Stage;
- expectations of Early Years practitioners in supporting Foundation Stage children's development;
- the ways in which development in the EYFS sits within a wider context of young children's learning and development.

Introduction

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) became statutory in September 2008 for all Ofsted-registered Early Years providers. The framework brings together previous statutory care standards and curriculum guidance in one document.

The Early Years Foundation Stage forms part of the Every Child Matters agenda that seeks to integrate services for children. It is an important part of the ten-year strategy for childcare: *Choice for parents, the best start for children*. The aim in developing the Early Years Foundation Stage was to provide a single integrated framework for the care and education of children from birth to five years of age. The framework adopts a principled, play-based approach to young children's learning and development.

Definition

Statutory: Required by law

The structure of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The Early Years Foundation Stage is a framework that is built on a series of principles. These principles must guide the work of Early Years practitioners. This principled approach is designed to support the aim of improving outcomes for children in line with the five tenets of the Every Child Matters agenda.

The principles are grouped into four themes, each with a principle and a series of commitments (Figure 5.1). The principles state the underpinning belief of each theme. The commitments outline the areas of practice that contribute towards implementation of the principle. The themes are colour-coded throughout the EYFS documentation.

Theme	Principle	Commitments
A Unique Child	Every child is a competent learner from birth who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Child development ● Inclusive practice ● Keeping safe ● Health and well-being
Positive Relationships	Children learn to be strong and independent from a base of loving and secure relationships with parents and/or a key person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Respecting each other ● Parents as partners ● Supporting learning ● Key person
Enabling Environments	The environment plays a key role in supporting and extending children's development and learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Observation, assessment and planning ● Supporting every child ● The learning environment ● The wider context
Learning and Development	Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates and all areas of learning and development are equally important and interconnected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Play and exploration ● Active learning ● Creativity and critical thinking ● Areas of learning and development

Figure 5.1 EYFS: Four themes and principles

DfES (2007)

The aim of these principles is to emphasise the holistic nature of children's development. The principles recognise that each child learns and develops in a unique context, and that that context includes the child themselves, the people with whom the child has relationships, and the physical environment in which the child develops. These contexts are interdependent and will therefore have an important impact on each child's learning and development.

The first principle offers a really hopeful view of children. It recognises that all children, offered an appropriate context in which to grow and learn, can fulfil their potential. The principle emphasises the importance of practitioners understanding child development, including how to promote children's health and well-being and ensure that they are safe. The principle also recognises the importance of inclusive practice to enable all children to achieve their potential.

The second principle recognises the importance of the social context in which children learn and grow. The importance of attachment is evident in the statement that children grow and learn from a base of loving and secure relationships. This recognises the importance of strong, warm relationships within the home and within settings to enable children to fulfil their potential.

An effective learning environment is emphasised in the third principle. This principle recognises that access to a high-quality learning environment, both indoors and out, will be important for a child's learning and development. It is important therefore that Early Years practitioners are knowledgeable about how young children grow and learn in order to

provide an effective, enabling environment. The principle also highlights the importance of practitioners' ability to observe and assess children's learning and development in order to understand what children know and can do and so to plan and provide a learning environment that supports and challenges their learning and is rich in experiences and enjoyable.

The final principle emphasises the uniqueness of individual children and that their individual experiences will mean that they learn and develop in different ways and at different rates. This is in accordance with developmental psychology, which also emphasises the impact of children's experiences on their learning and development. The holistic nature of young children's learning is emphasised in the assertion that all areas of learning are equally important and interdependent. Play and active learning are identified as the most appropriate ways for young children to grow and learn.

These principles are supported with theories of how children develop and learn; they embed the work of Piaget, Vygotsky and Bowlby, and are supported by research that elucidates effective ways for children to learn, for example, the EPPE and REPEY projects.

Early Years Foundation Stage documentation

Documentation is provided for practitioners by the government to enable them to meet the aims and requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The statutory framework

The Statutory Framework is the legal framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage. It sets out the legal requirements relating to children's learning and development. These are as follows.

- **The Early Learning Goals:** these are a series of statements of achievement in six areas of learning. The details of the Early Learning Goals and other developmental steps are in the Practice Guidance document.
- **The education programme:** this is an overview of the skills and processes required to be taught in each area of learning. For example, in the area of learning called 'Knowledge and Understanding of the world' the education programme states:

Children must be supported in developing the knowledge, skills and understanding that help them to make sense of the world. Their learning must be supported through offering opportunities for them to use a range of tools safely; encounter creatures, people, plants and objects in their natural environment and in real-life situations; undertake practical 'experiments'; and work with a range of materials.

DfES (2008, page 14)

- **The assessment arrangements:** this tells practitioners how children's learning should be assessed and monitored.
- **The Welfare Standards:** these are a series of legal requirements that state what practitioners must do to support young children's welfare.

This framework guides practice within settings. It gives an overview of the necessary systems and structures that need to be in place to support children's well-being and

outlines what practitioners' need to know and understand across the six areas of learning. Settings need to ensure that they comply with the framework in order to meet the legal requirements of running a setting. This means ensuring that the setting has the necessary policies and procedures in place and that staff are sufficiently well trained to understand, teach, plan and assess children's learning in each area of learning.

Practice guidance

This practice guidance offers guidance on how to meet the requirements in the statutory framework. This includes the development charts in the six areas of learning.

These charts detail developmental parameters in each area of learning from birth to the end of the Foundation Stage. It is expected that they will be used to support practitioners' understanding of their observations of children's learning and to identify possible lines of direction for children's next steps in learning.

There is also advice on:

- meeting the diverse needs of children;
- working in partnership with parents;
- play;
- transition;
- observation, assessment and planning.

These aspects of practice support the principles of the EYFS and should underpin all provision and interaction in a setting. Each setting will need to demonstrate how they meet these requirements through their systems and structures and through staff's understanding of effective practice in these areas.

'Principles into Practice' cards

There is a 'Principles into Practice' card for each of the commitments. The cards offer advice and areas for reflection to support practice.

Further information, documentation and research evidence are provided on the CD-ROM as part of the EYFS package. As mentioned, each setting is required to set up effective systems to support children's learning and development and to meet statutory requirements. There is no single way of achieving this; therefore, each setting will need to devise their own ways of achieving this, taking into account the context in which they work. The CD offers a range of ideas about practice, about documentation and offers evidence to support ways of working.

The Welfare Standards

The Statutory Framework sets out the legal requirements relating to children's welfare. These are called the Welfare Standards. The standards state what providers must do to ensure that children in their care are safe and that they promote children's health and well-being. There are five Welfare Standards (Figure 5.2).



The Welfare Standards	
Safeguarding and promoting children's welfare	Providers must safeguard and promote the welfare of children. They must promote the good health of the children. Children's behaviour must be managed effectively
Suitable person	Providers must ensure that adults looking after children, or having unsupervised access to them, are suitable to do so. Checks to ensure suitability include an enhanced Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) check. Adults looking after children must have appropriate qualifications, training, skills and knowledge. Staffing must be organised to ensure children's safety and meet their needs
Suitable premises, environment and equipment	Outdoor and indoor spaces, furniture, equipment and toys must be safe and suitable for their purposes
Organisation	Systems must be planned and organised to ensure that every child receives enjoyable and challenging learning and development experiences that meet their individual needs
Documentation	Providers must maintain records, policies and procedures required for the safe and efficient management of the setting and to meet the needs of the children

Figure 5.2 Five Welfare Standards

It is important that all Early Years practitioners know what the welfare standards are, how they are embedded in policy and how they are implemented in practice. It is the responsibility of individual staff members as well as the management in a setting to ensure that all practitioners know what the policies and procedures are that enable a setting to fulfil their legal responsibilities. There are many day-to-day procedures in a setting that you will need to be aware of and to follow when required. For example, as a member of staff you will need to know the procedures for reporting any safeguarding concerns that you may have; the rules on administering medicine to children; what to do if a child is not collected at the end of a session; and how to maintain the necessary documentation to record these events.

Development in the Early Years Foundation Stage

The Early Years Foundation Stage outlines developmental sequences against which children's learning can be mapped and the next stage in learning identified. Each area of learning identifies developmental progress towards stated Early Learning Goals against which children's learning is assessed at the end of the Foundation Stage. It is a requirement of the EYFS that children's development towards the Early Learning Goals is tracked and parents informed of their child's progress. However, the guidance is not a curriculum that has to be followed. It is a framework for understanding the developmental sequences of knowledge, skills and aptitudes that are likely to enable a child to reach the early learning goals by the time that they reach the end of the Foundation Stage.

It is important to be aware that stating learning requirements and outcomes for our youngest children, linked to ages and stages, is a controversial issue. It is only in recent years that there have been stated outcomes for our youngest children. Many people believe that the

way in which very young children grow and learn doesn't fit with the idea of formalising the patterns and aims of their learning at such a young age, and that education for young children should be constructed very differently to later school-based learning.

ACTIVITY 1

Investigate the controversy around the idea of stated learning outcomes for very young children.

- *What are the reasons for having stated learning goals for young children?*
- *What are the arguments against this?*
- *What is your view?*

Each child's learning and development during the Foundation Stage can be tracked using 'development matters' progress charts in the Practice Guidance booklet. The Development Matters charts are from birth to five years old and are organised in six different age ranges within six areas of learning.

Development matters: The six areas of learning

The development matters charts are divided into six areas of learning: personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, problem-solving, reasoning and numeracy, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical development and creative development. Each area of learning has a series of subsections (Figure 5.3).

Area of learning	Subsections
Personal, social and emotional development	Dispositions and attitudes Self-confidence and self-esteem Making relationships Behaviour and self-control Self-care Sense of community
Communication, language and literacy	Language for communication Language for thinking Linking sounds and letters Reading Writing Handwriting
Problem-solving, reasoning and literacy	Numbers as labels and for counting Calculating Space, shape and measures
Knowledge and understanding of the world	Exploration and investigation Designing and making ICT Time Place Communities

continued

Physical development	Movement and space Health and bodily awareness Using equipment and materials
Creative development	Being creative – responding to experiences, expressing and communicating ideas Exploring media and materials Creating music and dance Developing imagination and imaginative play

Figure 5.3 Six areas of learning

These developmental charts are intended to support practitioners' interpretation of their observations and help them to define children's next steps in learning. This is important. The charts are not a series of learning outcomes to be taught. They should be used as a reference to assist in the assessment of what children know and can do. Once this is established the charts can then be used to inform 'What next?' as a basis for further play-based provision to enhance learning and development.

The development matters charts list developmental steps towards the Early Learning Goals in each of the areas of learning subsections. The Early Learning Goals establish expectations for most children to reach by the end of the Foundation Stage. The goals are highlighted in bold in the document.

ACTIVITY 2

Refer back to Chapter 3, 'Holistic development'.

- What are the inconsistencies between a holistic view of children's learning and dividing learning into areas of learning, development charts and learning outcomes?
- In what ways can practitioners provide for this in their settings, recognising that young children's learning is holistic while meeting the requirements of the EYFS?

The age ranges

There are six stated age ranges in the development matters charts.

- Birth–11 months
- 8–20 months
- 16–26 months
- 22–36 months
- 30–50 months
- 40–60+ months

You will notice that the age ranges overlap. This reflects the emphasis on tracking developmental progress in the EYFS rather than focusing on age-related milestones. Each child should be regarded as an individual who is likely to have slightly different patterns of development across the areas of learning.

Further support for provision

The developmental charts also offer ways to understand what the requirements of the EYFS look like in practice. These charts identify ways in which practitioners can provide, observe and assess children's learning at each stage in the developmental matters progress charts.

ACTIVITY 3

Reflect on the three aspects of the Early Years Foundation Stage outlined below.

1. The EYFS learning and development principle states: children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates.
2. There is an expectation that most children will achieve the Early Learning Goals by the time they reach the end of the Foundation Stage.
3. The developmental charts are written linked to ages and stages.

What are the implications of this for Early Years practice?

The development matters progress charts are the first column on each page. The second column offers advice on what to look for as evidence that the child is at the development level. This is called *Look, listen and note*. Column three offers advice on what *effective practice* looks like in this area. Column four outlines the effective use of *planning and resourcing* to support children's development in this area of learning. This advice is intended to support practitioners' knowledge and understanding of each of the developmental statements and how to notice and interpret children's play as evidence of what they know and can do.

Assessment and reporting of development in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Assessment of children's learning at Foundation Stage must be based on practitioners' observations of what children do when engaged in day-to-day play activities. This is called *observation-based assessment*. All adults who interact with the child should contribute to this process; this includes parents. Settings and childminders need to involve, and take note of, parents' contributions to the assessment of their child's learning.

All providers must report progress and achievements to parents throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage. At the end of the Foundation Stage providers must ensure that children's learning and development are assessed against the scales in the Early Years Profile. These scales are based on the Early Learning Goals in the Practice Guidance. Each child's progress towards the Early Learning Goals is monitored by the local authority and this information must also be given to parents.

ACTIVITY 4

- List other things that practitioners and parents may want to know or find out about their children in addition to their developmental progress as outlined in the EYFS.
- What are the benefits of knowing these other things about the child for:
 - the child;
 - the practitioner;
 - the parents/carers.
- In what ways does this reflect a holistic understanding of young children's learning and development?

Expectations of EYFS practitioners

The Early Years Foundation Stage has a series of expectations about practice during the Foundation Stage. It is expected that learning and development will be facilitated through play. This should be a balance of child-initiated and adult-led activities and experiences. It is expected that practitioners will work in partnership with parents. This recognises the important role that parents have in supporting their child's learning and development. Also, it is expected that practitioners will work, where appropriate, with other professionals who are involved in supporting children's development, for example, speech and language therapists or educational psychologists. Practice at Foundation Stage should also promote equality of opportunity. The EYFS identifies this as removing barriers where they exist; being alert to the signs of needs and responding quickly and appropriately; respecting all children irrespective of background; and stretching and challenging all children to achieve their potential.

C H A P T E R S U M M A R Y

In this chapter we have seen how the Early Years Foundation Stage is part of the government's agenda to integrate childcare and education from birth to five years. This is in line with the aims of Every Child Matters and forms part of the ten-year childcare strategy. It has been shown that the EYFS is a principle-based framework, and the principles have been outlined. The structure of the framework has been explained, including an overview of the Welfare Standards. We have seen that the development matters charts are a tool for tracking children's development towards the Early Learning Goals. This is important to understand. They are not intended as a series of learning outcomes to be taught but a reference to understand each child's developmental progress. Observation-based assessment has been identified as the way in which Early Years practitioners must assess children's developmental progress. It is an important aspect of the framework that parents contribute to the assessment of their child and that they are kept informed about their child's progress towards the Early Learning Goals. It has been seen that there are expectations that practitioners will provide play-based learning, that they will work in partnership with parents, and that practitioners will ensure equality of opportunity through an inclusive approach to practice in which they work closely with parents and other professionals to provide the best chances for young children to achieve their potential. Throughout the chapter you have been asked to consider the ways in which development, as understood in the EYFS, sits within a wider context of understandings of children's learning and development.

FURTHER READING



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6 Factors that affect children's learning and development

This chapter enables you to understand:

- the different factors that affect children's development;
- why it is important that society supports all children's learning and development;
- how inclusive practices can support the development of all children.

Introduction

Children's development occurs through a complex patterning of biological unfolding and the social context in which they then grow and learn. For most children this process results in development progress being within established developmental parameters. However, for some children there are factors in their lives that mean that their development is affected. For some children the social context of their lives affects their development. For some children their development is atypical because of a biological condition. For others, a combination of biological and social factors affect their development.

Definition

Established developmental parameters: Agreed and established expectations of physical, intellectual, linguistic, emotional and social development at a given chronological age

Children's developmental progress requires additional consideration when their development falls outside of expectations. For some children this will be that their development exceeds established developmental expectations. Within settings these children must be identified and their needs met through additional or enhanced provision. Other children's development will fall below established expectations. Again, these children's needs should be identified and met if they are to fulfil their potential.

Factors affecting development

Look carefully at Figure 6.1. It shows the relative impact of genetic (biological) and environmental (social) factors on physical, linguistic, cognitive (intellectual) social and emotional development. It is important to understand that these are only relative to one

another. There is, as yet, no definitive understanding of the actual relative impact of the biological imperative and social learning on children's development. The diagram shows the general principle that both biology (potentials that we are born with) and social experiences (the sum of our experiences after we are born) influence our development, and that the balance of this is different in different areas of development.

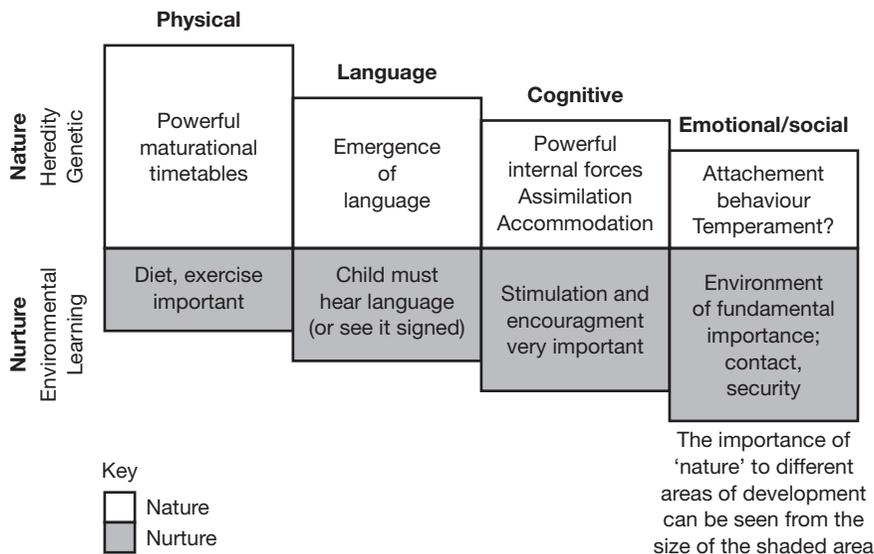


Figure 6.1 Chart showing the relative influence of nature and nurture on different developmental areas

ACTIVITY 1

Look at the diagram (Figure 6.1).

What does it tell you about the impact of biological unfolding and social learning in each area of development?

How might this offer an explanation as to why some children's development falls outside of expected developmental parameters?

The impact of social and emotional factors on learning and development

When children's emotional needs are not met within the social context of their lives, this has been shown to impact on their development. The impact is likely to be greatest initially in the areas of social and emotional development and this is then likely to have an impact on other aspects of their development.

The impact of children's needs not being met within the social context of their lives is borne out by the evidence. It is known that many children who have difficult life circumstances – for example, children in care, children who suffer abuse and neglect (safeguarding issues), children who suffer from discrimination – all suffer distress that is, in turn, likely to have an impact on their development.

The human givens approach

The human givens approach offers a way of understanding why, when children's needs are not met, it can affect their development. The approach holds that we are born with a range of needs, both physical and emotional. These needs, it is argued, are innate, they have evolved over millions of years and exist whatever our cultural background. They are a common human biological inheritance – hence 'human givens'. When most of these physical and emotional needs are met we survive and develop as individuals and as a species. In contrast, when too many of these needs are not met we suffer distress. This distress is an indication that our needs are not being met. This has an impact on ourselves and the people around us.

THEORY FOCUS

Human givens

Given physical needs: As animals we are born into a world where we need air to breathe, water, nutritious food and sufficient sleep. These are the paramount physical needs. Without them, we quickly die. We also need to be able to stimulate our senses and exercise our muscles. These physical needs are intimately bound up with our emotional needs, which are the main focus of human givens psychology.

Given emotional needs: Emotions create distinctive psychological and biological states within us and drive us to take action. The emotional needs that are programmed within us are there to connect us to the world and to other people, and to survive in it. These needs seek fulfilment through the way we interact in the world. Consequently, when these needs are not met, nature ensures that we suffer considerable distress as an indication that our needs are not being met. This results in behaviour that impacts upon ourselves and the people around us.

There is widespread agreement as to the nature of our emotional needs. The main ones are listed below.

Emotional needs include:

- security – a safe environment which allows us to develop fully;
- attention – to give and receive it;
- sense of autonomy and control;
- emotional intimacy – knowing that at least one other person accepts us totally for who we are;
- feeling part of a wider community;
- privacy;
- sense of status within social groupings;
- sense of competence and achievement;
- meaning and purpose – which come from being stretched in what we do and think.

Adapted from www.hgi.org.uk

The human givens approach offers a way of understanding what children's emotional needs are and therefore, a way of understanding why, when these needs are not met, children are adversely affected. The approach offers a framework for understanding and interpreting children's distress.

The approach also offers a framework for working with children adversely affected by their life experiences. An understanding of human givens provides a framework for understanding children's needs and, therefore, possible interventions to meet these needs and support children's social and emotional development.

ACTIVITY 2

Read through the list of emotional needs in the human givens approach.

- *In what ways can these needs be met in children's families?*
- *How can they be met within an Early Years setting?*
- *How might this understanding help you to understand the needs of children whose development is affected by their life experiences?*
- *How may an understanding of the human givens approach contribute to Early Years practitioners' knowledge and skills?*

It is apparent, from research and data, that there are a number of different social and cultural factors that affect children's learning and development. It can be observed that there are patterns of underachievement for children from certain identifiable groups. The development of many of these children, in different ways, falls outside of expected parameters. The reasons for this are many and complex but undoubtedly social and cultural factors have an impact on children's learning and development. This can be both a positive and a negative effect. Nutbrown and Clough (2006) identify a range of areas which are known to have an impact on issues of inclusion and exclusion within education and society (Figure 6.2).

Areas of inclusion/exclusion

- Challenging behaviour
- Disability
- Emotional and behavioural difficulty
- Employment status
- Gender
- Housing
- Language
- Mental health
- Physical impairment
- Poverty
- Race/ethnicity
- Religion
- Sexual orientation
- Social class
- Special educational needs

Figure 6.2 Areas of inclusion/exclusion within education and society

There is ongoing debate and concern about the disparity in school attainment, and the associated benefits, between certain identifiable groups within society. This is often cause for sensational headlines both in the political world and the media. However, the reality is more complex. It is true that at a very generalised level we can comment on the overall attainment of children from particular societal groups, and this is perhaps necessary when making strategic decisions about provision and funding. However, equally important is the realisation that these are quite unsubtle categories and, when we compare like with like, a different picture emerges: for example, there is currently concern about the apparent underachievement of boys in the education system. However, Skelton, Francis and Valkanova (2007) found that social class is a stronger factor in achievement than gender, regardless of ethnic group. This doesn't mean that there aren't specific groups that will require targeted support but we should recognise that the headlines may not always be supported by the subtleties in the facts.

ACTIVITY 3

Find out about one of the areas of inclusion/exclusion listed above.

- *What is the impact on children's learning and development?*
- *What are the suggested social and/or cultural reasons for this impact on learning and development?*
- *How can Early Years provision ameliorate the impact on children whose learning and development is affected by social and cultural factors in their lives? Think about:*
 - *work with individual children;*
 - *work with parents;*
 - *developing practice to promote attitudes of equality and social cohesion.*

Children living in poverty

One of the most significant factors affecting children's learning and development is growing up in an area of social deprivation. Evidence also shows that many children who grow up in poverty are adversely affected by their life experiences. The relationship between deprivation and education is well documented and affects a significant number of children in our society. Deprivation has a negative impact on educational attainment. In the long term children who grow up in poverty leave school with fewer qualifications and skills, which in turn affects jobs and employment. Poverty is linked to poorer health and has been shown to have a negative impact on engagement with society; for example, an increased likelihood that an individual will engage in criminal activity (DCSF, 2009). The disparity in attainment is described as substantial and pervasive from an early age (DCSF, 2009). Studies on young children's development show that there were differences in cognitive development of children from different socioeconomic groups as young as 22 months. Other studies have shown that even when the development of children from lower socioeconomic groups met developmental expectations at 22 months, by the time they entered primary school they had been overtaken by others (Feinstein, 2003). Foundation Stage Profile scores completed at the end of Reception year in school consistently confirm this disparity in attainment as children reach

compulsory school age. Evidence shows that this disparity continues throughout schooling for children living in poverty. It is difficult to explain exactly why this happens but there is a range of social factors that can be identified as being significant in the association between deprivation and poor educational outcomes (DCSF, 2009).

Income and material deprivation

A low income has been shown to mean a lack of access to books, computers and other reading materials and space to study quietly. It affects the quality of the home environment and neighbourhood as low income restricts where families can live. There may be no quiet spaces in which to work or sleep and this has an impact on emotional well-being. Children's diets may be inadequate because of lack of money, and poor nutrition can lead to physical changes that affect cognitive ability and performance of the brain (DCSF, 2009).

Health

Low birth weight is more likely in children from lower socioeconomic groups and this is associated with risks to cognitive and physical development throughout childhood. Poorer children are likely to suffer poorer health throughout their childhood, including chronic illness (CPAG, 2009).

Family stress

Poverty and deprivation have an indirect impact on children's outcomes because of family stress and parenting practices. Low income leads to economic hardship, which tends to have a negative impact on parents' well-being and this means that they are less likely to be able to provide warm, supportive parenting. This can lead to problems with children's emotional and social development and thus their educational achievement.

Parental education

The level of parents' achievement is strongly associated with children's outcomes (Hobbs, 2003). Higher levels of parental education have been shown to have a positive effect on factors such as income, health, levels of familial stress and resilience and on the interactions within the family that support children's development.

Parental involvement in their children's education

Parental involvement takes many forms and has been shown to have a positive impact on children's development: provision of a stable and secure environment, intellectual stimulation, parent-child discussion, good models of valuing education, high aspirations, contact with, and participation in the work and life of the school. Families with low incomes are more likely to have had negative experiences of school themselves and may be reluctant to become involved. These experiences may also result in them not having the knowledge and skills to help and support their children's learning.

Cultural and social capital, and the experience of schooling

Some research has suggested that a lack of social and cultural capital leads to low attainment for children living in poverty (see definitions, page 79). It is suggested that children from lower socioeconomic groups have different background knowledge skills and interests that aren't reflected in the school curriculum. These differences in cultural capital mean that the curriculum is more difficult for these children to access. The Social

Exclusion Task Force (SETF) (2008) reported that young people in deprived communities often lack social capital: access to sources of inspiration, role models, support and opportunity and even those children with high aspirations were found to lack the understanding about what to do to achieve their goals.

Children from deprived backgrounds were also found to have a particular negative perception of schools as controlling and coercive (Hirsch, 2007). They are reported as feeling under pressure to perform tasks in which they lacked confidence and as experiencing a sense of worthlessness (Reay, 2006).

Definition

Cultural capital: The capacity for individuals to understand the dominant culture within society and use the language and behaviours associated with it

Social capital: Having contacts and being part of social groups and networks that enable access to support and resources

Low aspiration

Children from deprived backgrounds are less likely than their peers to hold high aspirations for their future. The strongest factors affecting levels of children's aspiration are: the value they attach to school, belief in their ability, attainment, mother's aspiration for the child to go to university, and socioeconomic status (SETF, 2008).

Exposure to multiple risk factors

Living in a low-income household or a deprived area makes it more likely that children will be exposed to one or more risk factors that affect their life chances. Risk factors include: depression, illness, smoking during pregnancy, alcohol abuse, domestic violence, financial stress, worklessness, teenage parenthood, lack of basic skills, and overcrowding.

Literacy

Children from the poorest backgrounds typically have the poorest literacy skills from an early age and fewer opportunities outside school to develop their literacy. Levels of literacy have a direct impact on learning and development. They are a prerequisite for accessing the curriculum at all levels.

THEORY FOCUS

32 million fewer words

Why will some children arrive in kindergarten having heard 32 million fewer words than their classmates?

(Hart and Risley, 1995)

Hart and Risley (1995) sought to understand why some children, even when they learn to say their first words at the same age as other children, were much slower to develop their language and their development was forever in the shadow of other children's.

continued

THEORY FOCUS *continued*

Their research drew three important conclusions.

- There were significant differences in the amount of talking that goes on in families. In an average hour some adults spent more than 40 minutes interacting with their children, others less than 15 minutes. Some parents responded more than 250 times to their children, others less than 15. Some parents expressed approval and encouragement of their child's actions more than 40 times an hour, other less than four times. Some parents said more than 3000 words per hour to their child in an average hour, others fewer than 500 words. The data showed that the amount of talk was so consistent over time that the differences in the child's language experience mounted up month by month, so, by the age of three years old, the differences were immense.
- These differences in language experiences were closely linked to significant differences in outcomes for the child.
- The quality and type of interaction in the home were also significant in outcomes for the child. All parents used a similar number of imperatives (*come here*) and prohibitions (*stop that*) and questions (*what are you doing?*). However, the data showed that when parents engaged children in more talk than was necessary to communicate these imperatives, prohibitions and questions the quality of the talk changed considerably. Parents moved into discussing feelings, plans, present activities, past events and the vocabulary became more varied and the descriptions richer and more nuanced. Their talk also became more positive and responsive to their child (Hart and Risley, 1995).

By as early as the age of three the children's talk had come to match the adults'. By three, children were talking as much – but only as much – as their parents were. Furthermore, the children's talk was as varied – but only as varied as their parents' (Hart and Risley, 1995).

Hart and Risley (1995) conclude that the most important aspect of a child's language development is the amount of language that children hear. This, they argue, holds important lessons for early language intervention programmes.

It is important to be aware that not all children who live in deprived areas will be affected. Children must be regarded as individuals, not as representative of groups to which they belong. Similarly, there will be children who live in more affluent areas whose development falls below established expectations. As Sylva *et al.* (2004) concluded, for all children the home learning environment is more important for intellectual and social development than parental occupation, education or income. What parents do is more important than who they are.

However, despite this assertion, the evidence shows that many children and their families who live in poverty are likely to need focused support in their early years and during schooling if their development is to remain within established developmental parameters (Washbrook and Waldfogel, 2010).

ACTIVITY 4

The impact of living in poverty on educational attainment and children's life chances is well established, and, because of this, there are a range of initiatives in Early Years intended to support children and families living in deprived areas and ameliorate the effects of poverty.

- *Read through the list of social factors that are known to have an impact on children's educational attainment.*
- *Investigate the initiatives in Early Years that have been established to support young children and their families. The first section of this book, Understanding the Context of Children's Development, outlines some of the initiatives.*
- *Find out what the impact of these initiatives has been.*
- *Why do you think that it is important that, as a society, we support these young children and their families?*

Other factors that affect children's learning and development; children who have special educational needs

The development of children who are regarded as having special education needs is likely to be atypical. That means that a child's development does not follow expected patterns and/or profiles. Individual children's development will be affected in different ways depending upon the nature of their abilities and needs. There will be a wide range of needs among children. Some children's needs will be pervasive and lifelong, other children may require time-limited interventions to support their development and learning.

The aim of all Early Years practitioners who work with children who have special educational needs must be to understand each child as an individual and to support their development as necessary. This must begin with what the child knows and can do as the basis for support and intervention. As Bissex (1980) observes, it is an inescapable fact that the only place to start to work out how we can best support children's learning is to start from the child. Starting from the child is particularly important when working with children who have special educational needs. Each one of these children will have a different profile of abilities and needs and, in order to best support their learning and development, these abilities and needs must be understood and appropriate provision made to enable them to fulfil their potential.

Why is it important that society supports all children's learning and development?

Supporting the learning and development of all children according to need is a cornerstone of our care and education systems. It is an issue of rights; the right of all children to be treated with equal value and respect and offered the opportunity to flourish and make a contribution to society. However, within our society it is recognised that not all children start from an equal position and so they don't have the same access to opportunities within society. It is a reality that, within our society, some groups and individuals

are advantaged while others are disadvantaged and/or discriminated against (Kahn and Young, 2007). Therefore, it is important that as a society we aim to recognise, understand, remove obstacles and help children overcome barriers to reaching their potential. These decisions are underpinned by a number of moral, ethical and political choices that determine what kind of society it is that we want to build.

The issue of supporting all children's learning and development within Early Years settings, schools and the wider society is referred to as inclusion. Inclusion began as an issue specifically related to children who have special education needs, and their right to be educated in mainstream schools alongside their siblings and peers. However, the current interpretation of inclusion has been extended to include all children who are potentially disenfranchised within society (Nutbrown and Clough, 2006).

Inclusion is not about treating everyone in the same way. It is about recognising that there are barriers to some children's learning and development and, in different ways, supporting these children to reach their potential. Inclusion is about putting into practice the moral and political choices that have been made to create a society which values every child and offers every child the opportunity to flourish.

Supporting the development of all children – inclusion for children with special educational needs

Historically, many children whose development was considered to be outside of expected developmental parameters were segregated into schools for children regarded as having learning difficulties. From the early 1990s onwards the appropriateness of having this separate system for children with special educational needs was challenged, predominantly as a human rights issue (Farrell and Ainscow, 2002). The opening up of this debate had a powerful effect on the processes and thinking in society around disability and children who have special educational needs. It resulted in the development of new ideas and approaches to the education of all children: a commitment to inclusive education which is now embedded in legislation and guidance.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by the UK government in 1991, affords children a series of rights. The convention is built around four guiding principles; non-discrimination, the best interests of the child, optimal development, and the voice of the child. Each one of these principles can provide a powerful argument for the inclusion of children with special educational needs in mainstream schools.

ACTIVITY 5

Investigate the principles and stated rights of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In what way can these rights be used to argue for the inclusion of most children in their local school?

In what situations might this not be possible? In these cases, what else could be done to ensure that children are not discriminated against, that their best interests are taken into account, and that their development is optimised?

In June 1994 the World Conference on Special Needs Education held in Salamanca in Spain called for inclusive education to be the norm. The guiding principle of this was that children should go to local schools regardless of their physical, intellectual, linguistic, social or emotional needs. The statement asked that governments give high financial and political priority to improving educational services so that all children could be included in local schools, regardless of difference or difficulty. The Salamanca framework begins with a statement outlining the benefits of a commitment to education for all.

Regular schools with this inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all; moreover, they provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire education system.

UNESCO Salamanca Agreement

In 1997 the government published a paper, *Excellence for all Children*, in which they outlined their commitment to promoting the inclusion of children with special educational needs in mainstream, local schools alongside their peers. They argued that there are strong reasons for educating all children together wherever possible. They state that this issue is one of civil rights for disabled people: that our nation's aspirations must be for all people.

The right to an inclusive education is now embedded the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which was ratified by the UK in 2009.

Article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities states the following:

Governments must ensure an inclusive education system at all levels directed to:

- the full development of human potential and sense of dignity and self-worth, and the strengthening of respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and human diversity;
- the development by persons with disabilities of their personality, talents and creativity, as well as their mental and physical abilities, to their fullest potential;
- enabling persons with disabilities to participate effectively in a free society.

To achieve this governments must ensure that:

- persons with disabilities are not excluded from the general education system on the basis of disability, and that children with disabilities are not excluded from free and compulsory primary education, or from secondary education, on the basis of disability;
- persons with disabilities can access an inclusive, quality and free primary education and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live.

A social model of disability

Another powerful argument for an inclusive approach to children who have special educational needs is one based upon a social model of disability. The social model of disability turns conventional reasoning on its head. It argues that the reason that some people are unable to participate fully in society is not because of their own individual needs but because processes within society, attitudes and provision, make their full participation impossible. It is argued that discriminatory attitudes in society towards difference lead to exclusion. Similarly, provision that means that people cannot gain access to public spaces or services because of their needs automatically excludes some people from full participation. Therefore, the way in which society is currently constructed disables some people. The social model of disability argues that addressing issues of disability must start with the barriers in attitudes and provision being removed so as to enable all people to participate fully in society.

An inclusive approach to the care and education of young children is part of the approach. Inclusive practice can build communities where all people are accepted, where difference is an everyday part of life, and where provision is organised and constructed to enable all children and their families to participate. So, what is inclusive practice? What does it mean for practice in Early Years? How does it support the learning and development of all children in our society?

ACTIVITY 6

Picture a cartoon. In it a man is clearing snow from the steps of a school building. A wheelchair user asks if the man can clear the snow from the ramp next to the steps. The man replies that the children are waiting, and he'll clear the ramp once he's finished the steps. The wheelchair user points out that if the man shovels snow from the ramp, then everyone can use the ramp to get inside. In this example:

- *What is the barrier to everyone's full participation?*
- *In what ways does it prevent everyone participating fully?*
- *How can this barrier be overcome?*
- *What can we learn from this example about building an inclusive society where everyone is able to participate fully?*
- *Can you think of more examples like this?*

Inclusive practice

What is inclusive practice?

Having an inclusive approach is about attitudes and practices. In Early Years this means that all practitioners must be committed to ensuring that their provision does not exclude anyone, and that each child's learning and development is supported according to need.

- Practitioners' attitudes towards others must be without prejudice.
- As far as possible practitioners must ensure that provision can be accessed by all children and families.
- Practice must anticipate and take account of differences in need, and provide for this.
- This approach should inform all that practitioners do.

There are two main aspects of inclusive provision.

- That overall, daily provision should be as accessible as possible to all children and families.
- That additional support should be provided for children who need it.

Definitions

- Makaton:** A communication technique that uses speech, facial expressions, gestures, signs and symbols to communicate. It can be used as a multidimensional way of learning to communicate *and* as a way of communicating for people who have communication needs
- Story sacks:** A bag containing a book with games and props linked to the story. The aim is to engage children and their families in story reading, story-telling and playing together
- Symbols:** Pictures/graphics used to represent a word. They offer a visual support to understanding
- Mark making:** The marks children make to graphically represent their ideas, thoughts and feelings. Through these representations children communicate their ideas, express their feelings and develop their ideas; they record and make their understanding and thinking visible to other people.

CASE STUDY

Phoebe had taken over the leadership of Butts Lane playgroup. She had recently started working towards becoming an Early Years Professional and, as part of the process, was become increasingly aware of the need to ensure that the provision in the playgroup was inclusive. She decided to start by focusing on the continuous provision. Alongside staff, Phoebe looked closely at the provision in the group and found many aspects of practice and provision that worked well.

- *The books reflected the diversity in society and they had a good range of fact and fiction books.*
- *Visual timetables were used to support routines for all children and enhance provision for children who needed additional support.*
- *They organised the room well each day with a wide range of activities provided in different ways and with sufficient space to move around the room.*
- *The role-play area and equipment reflected diverse traditions in family life. The staff were sensitive towards how the equipment was used and had been observed modelling this with the children.*

continued

CASE STUDY *continued*

- Staff used Makaton signs alongside speaking as a support to communication during child-initiated and adult-led activities and group times.
- They provided story sacks and a toy library for the children to borrow books and toys so that families could enjoy playing and reading together at home.
- Staff had agreed how to respond to instances of children and/or parents using inappropriate language.

The staff agreed that they could make their provision even better.

- Symbols were used as visual prompts at group times more consistently. This would support all children's understanding of the behavioural expectations at group times. See Figure 6.3.
- Provision and interaction actively encouraged children to engage with activities that they didn't readily choose. They decided to start with encouraging the boys to do more mark making. They had noticed that they enjoyed playing at police and arresting one another. So the staff decided to join in the play and encourage the boys to record what had happened in notebooks.

The staff implemented these changes and agreed to review them six weeks later to evaluate whether these changes had been effective in developing inclusive practice in the playgroup.

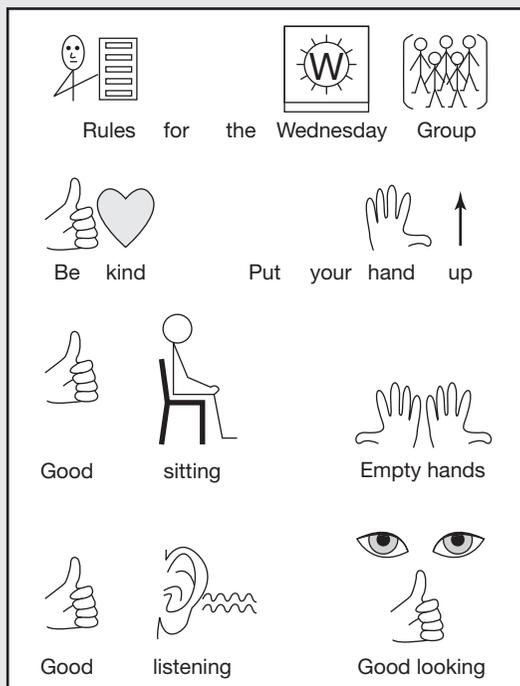


Figure 6.3 Symbols used to support behavioural expectations at group time

ACTIVITY 7*Making continuous provision inclusive*

1. Why is it important that the books on offer to children represent the diversity in society? In what ways can this be considered inclusive practice?
2. In what ways is having a toy and story sack library inclusive practice?
3. Investigate how the use of Makaton signs alongside speech supports children's language and communication development. Consider all children: children who are making the expected progress with their language and communication and children who need support. Why is it important to have these systems in place?
4. Why is it important to organise space in settings to ensure everyone can move round easily and that there are opportunities for activities in different places and spaces, for example, on table tops, on the floor, indoors and outdoors?

Providing additional support to children

It is a legal requirement for Ofsted registered settings and schools to ensure that they meet the needs of children who require additional support with their learning and development. The Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (2001) provides advice and guidance on how to carry out statutory duties to identify, assess and make provision for children who have special educational needs.

The Code of Practice defines Special Educational Needs as follows:

Children have special educational needs if they have a *learning difficulty* which calls for *special educational provision* to be made for them.

Children have a *learning difficulty* if they:

- have significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of the same age;
- have a disability that prevents or hinders them from making use of educational facilities of a kind generally provided for children of the same age in schools within the area of the local authority;
- are under compulsory school age and fall within the definition above or would do so if special provision were not made for them.

Children must not be regarded as having a learning difficulty solely because the language or form of language of their home is different from the language in which they will be taught.

Special educational provision means:

- for children of two or over, educational provision which is additional to, or otherwise different from, the educational provision made generally for children of their age in schools maintained by the local authority;
- for children under two, educational provision of any kind.

For most children it is expected that their needs will be met within their local childcare setting and their local school. This process is often referred to as inclusion; the expectation that all local children will attend their local school or Early Years setting. Schools and Early Years settings are expected, within reason and legal requirements, to organise their provision and resources in ways that enable all children and families to access the provision. This includes a commitment by staff to develop their knowledge and professional skills to understand the ways in which provision can be made inclusive and, when appropriate, how to meet the needs of children in their setting who have additional or special educational needs.

Clearly for some children who have very complex needs and require expert care and specialist teaching, their needs may have to be met in specialist units, schools or settings. These schools and settings often have expertise in supporting the learning and development of children with complex needs. For many children with complex needs, provision is set up so that they spend time in specialist schools or units and time in mainstream schools and settings with staff from the specialist provision working with staff in the mainstream setting to develop their knowledge and skills to support the inclusion of individual children. This specialist provision is necessary to ensure appropriate provision for some children with complex needs. However, for most children the fundamental principle is that their needs should be met within local provision alongside their peers and siblings.

CASE STUDY

Michael is four years old and has a diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder. He attends a mainstream school. He has some spoken language although his pronunciation is not always clear. He is helped by photo and/or symbolic representation. To support Michael's transition into school the staff put in place a number of things before he started.

- *They made a book of photographs (with symbols) of all the places in the nursery that Michael would use in a day, for example, where he would put his coat, the toilets and indoor and outdoor play areas.*
- *They made a book of photographs (with symbols) of the daily routine in the nursery.*
- *They made a chart of photographs of all the staff that Michael would come across at nursery.*
- *The SENCO and his keyworker visited Michael at home to find out about the ways that Michael's family meet his needs and to share the books and charts with Michael and his family. They left the books and charts at Michael's home so that he could look at them with his mum.*

Together Michael's mum, his keyworker, the SENCO and the specialist teacher from the local authority agreed how they would support Michael in the setting.

- *Michael took his favourite soft toy into nursery each day to ease the transition between home and nursery.*
- *The staff created a fan of photographs (with symbols) of the places he would be going and the people he would meet in nursery so that they could carry this with them as a visual aid to support Michael's understanding of what was happening.*

CASE STUDY *continued*

- *The staff also used objects of reference to support Michael's understanding of expectations and routines, for example, a book to show him that it was storytime, a cup to show him that it was snack time, a bag to show him it was time to go home.*
- *They taught Michael some phrases that he could learn and use, for example to ask for help or ask someone to play.*
- *The staff agreed to use clear, unambiguous language when interacting with Michael.*

The staff were able to create the photograph charts, books and fan and understood the need to use objects of reference to support Michael's understanding of routines and expectations. However, they were unsure about what the use of clear, unambiguous language meant in their daily interactions, and how best to teach Michael phrases that he could use when in nursery. They sought advice from the specialist teacher who was working with Michael. She came into the nursery and worked alongside the staff, modelling the best way to interact with Michael and how to encourage him to use words and phrases to meet his needs.

This support enabled Michael to settle into nursery well. His progress and well-being and the support offered are monitored carefully by the staff to ensure that his needs continue to be met in the nursery.

Meeting children's needs in mainstream provision – assessing children's needs and providing support

When there are concerns about a child's developmental progress, procedures for observing and assessing their needs must be followed as set down in the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (2001). Each setting is required to have a SENCO. This person is responsible for ensuring that children who require additional support are identified and the appropriate steps are taken to meet their needs.

Some children will come into settings with their needs already identified and support services in place. This might be speech therapists, paediatricians, social workers, or teachers of the deaf – depending upon the child's needs. The setting will be expected to work alongside these professionals to support the child's needs.

Other children will be identified within settings. It is the responsibility of all Early Years practitioners to be aware of children's learning and development and to identify children about whom they have concerns. Settings are required to have a keyworker system in place and it is expected that one of the roles of the key worker is to observe, assess and monitor each of their children's developmental progress. If they have concerns about a child they must let the SENCO know. At this stage parents must be notified that the setting has concerns about their child. There is a requirement to inform parents at each stage of any assessment process unless there are safeguarding concerns, in which case there are other procedures. The SENCO can then work with the parents and practitioners to identify what the child's needs are. Once the child's needs have been identified, the staff and SENCO must put in place additional support to meet these needs in the setting. This may

be enhancing existing provision, it may be additional activities, or it may be more individual focused time with a staff member. The agreed plan for support is often written down as an Individual Education Plan (IEP). This identifies clear targets for the child which everyone can work towards. The most effective practice is when settings and parents work together and the additional support is put in place at home and in the setting. This stage of support is called Early Years Action in pre-school settings and School Action in schools.

If, after additional support has been put in place, staff and parents continue to have concerns about a child's development, the next stage is to involve outside agencies. These are other professionals who can further support the child's learning and development according to need. A range of services for children are available through the local authority, health services and voluntary sector. This stage is called Early Years Action Plus or School Action Plus.

If it is then agreed that the child's needs are still not being met, there is a formal assessment process which can result in the child having a statement of special educational needs. This statement places a legal duty upon the local authority to make the necessary provision for meeting the child's needs. These stages are called Statutory Assessment and Statementing. See Figure 6.4.

This approach to identifying and meeting children's needs is called a graduated approach, as each step gradually increases the level and breadth of support until the child's needs are met.

Meeting children's needs: A graduated approach	
Early Years Action	The SENCO, in consultation with keyworker and parents, includes the child's name on the SEN register and records this in the child's file, assesses the child's needs, ensures provision is appropriately differentiated to meet the child's needs, prepares an IEP if appropriate and reviews progress regularly
Early Years Action Plus	The SENCO requests external and specialist input, requests specialist assessments and advice, develops new strategies in partnerships with other agencies, informs parents of this process and reviews progress regularly
Statutory Assessment	The local authority makes a multidisciplinary assessment of the child's needs
Statement of Special Educational Needs	A statement of special educational needs is written indicating the child's needs and the recommended provision to meet these needs

Figure 6.4 Meeting children's needs: A graduated approach

Meeting all children's learning and development needs within The Early Years Foundation Stage

The approach within the EYFS recognises the impact that external factors can have on children's learning and development, and the role that an inclusive approach to provision has in challenging disadvantage and discrimination. The issue of provision for all children is a thread running through the EYFS.

- Inclusive practice is one of the commitments within *A Unique Child*. It states that inclusive practice is evident when the diversity of individuals and communities is valued and respected and no child or family is discriminated against.
- The statutory framework also states that in providing for equality of opportunity Early Years providers have a responsibility to ensure positive attitudes to diversity and difference – not only so that every child is included and not disadvantaged, but also that they learn from the earliest age to value diversity in others and grow up making a positive contribution to society.
- The EYFS practitioners must focus on individual children's learning, development and care needs by:
 - removing or helping to overcome barriers for children where these already exist;
 - being alert to the early signs of needs that could lead to later difficulties and responding quickly and appropriately, involving other agencies as necessary;
 - stretching and challenging all children.
- Additionally the welfare standard organisation states that providers must promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice and must ensure that every child is included and not disadvantaged because of ethnicity, culture or religion, home language, family background, learning difficulties or disabilities, gender or ability.

It is, therefore, important that Early Years practitioners are well informed about the factors that can affect children's learning and development, and know how to work with children, and with other agencies, to, as far as possible, ameliorate these effects, and to promote positive attitudes towards others and towards difference.

C H A P T E R S U M M A R Y

In this chapter we have explored the different factors that affect children's learning and development. We have seen that the impact of different factors causes some children's development to fall outside of expected developmental parameters. This may mean that a child's development falls below or exceeds developmental expectations, or that their profile of development is atypical. The importance of supporting all children's learning and development needs is explored as a human and disability rights issue. The history of inclusion for children with special educational needs is briefly described and the development and processes of the current, inclusive approach is explored, including the statutory graduated response to identifying and responding to children's needs. The role of the Early Years practitioners in providing an inclusive learning environment, that meets the learning and development needs of all children, is outlined.

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www.cpag.org.uk – Child Poverty Action Group

www.cls.ioe.ac.uk Centre for longitudinal studies. Houses three renown cohort studies: National Child Development Study; British Cohort Study; Millennium Cohort Study

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Part 3

Child development in practice

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7 Supporting children's learning and development

This chapter enables you to understand:

- how young children learn and develop;
- why the development of language is vital to young children's learning;
- the pedagogical practices that best support young children's learning and development;
- why working in partnership with parents is the best way to support young children's learning.

Introduction

It is important that Early Years practitioners know how young children learn and develop and how to support this effectively. Alongside an understanding of expected development progress, practitioners need to know how best to create an environment that supports learning and be skilled in the pedagogical practices that support children's learning. Practitioners need to be able to sensitively adapt what they do and what they provide to meet the needs of the children.

How do young children learn?

Young children learn and develop through being active in the world around them. They explore, investigate, observe and experience their world through all their senses. Children learn through talk and through listening. Talk and listening enable children to develop language that gives them a powerful tool for understanding, thinking and communicating. Children learn best in a context of warm, secure and safe relationships.

This need for active, exploratory, experiential, interactive learning is best met through play. It is widely acknowledged that play is a vital medium for young children's learning (Moyle, 2005). This is recognised in the Early Years Foundation Stage (DfES, 2007a, page 7) which states that *play underpins all development and learning for young children*. Play allows young children to learn actively. Play:

- is enjoyable;
- is engaging and motivating;
- is interactive and experiential;
- allows children to explore and consolidate their current learning;

- provides challenge to move children's learning forward;
- cannot be wrong; it enables children to explore and investigate their world in a safe and secure way;
- allows for a creative and playful approach to learning and development;
- enables children to transform their knowledge and understanding through active direct experience in their world;
- enables children to engage in concrete experiences that support the early stages of symbolic representation and later abstract thought.

Our understanding of how young children learn and develop is underpinned by developmental theory. There are a number of influential theorists in Early Years whose work articulates why an active, play-based, exploratory and interactive learning environment will best support the learning and development needs of young children. Early Years practitioners need to be well informed about learning theory to enable them to select, integrate and apply this knowledge in their provision and interaction to best support children's learning and development.

Jean Piaget (1896–1980)

The work of Jean Piaget is widely recognised as having a significant impact on our current understanding of how children learn. He developed the hypothesis that children think in different ways to adults. His research showed that children gather and process information in ways that are unique to childhood. Some of his findings have been questioned but the basis of his research, that children are not just 'little adults' in the way they think, remains a fundamental part of our understandings of early childhood development.

Piaget outlined a series of stages that, among other things, describe how children gather and process information. These stages form the basis of Piaget's understanding of how young children think and learn.

THEORY FOCUS

Piaget's stages of development

Sensory motor stage 0–2 years

- Children gather information predominantly through their senses of sight and touch.
- Children process information imagistically (as images).
- Children have a tendency to be egocentric – to see the world from their own viewpoint.
- Children tend to use trial and error as their main tool of discovery.

Children in this age range have limited language ability, therefore senses other than hearing are predominant in their learning. Sight and touch are vital senses in enabling a child to gather information in their environment. This learning is then processed as

THEORY FOCUS *continued*

images, similar to but more sophisticated than pictures or photographs. This processing system is inflexible and has limited use. For example, how would you store the concept of freedom in this way? Children therefore need to develop language. It is immediately obvious that there is an important relationship between language, thinking and learning.

Pre-operational stage 2–7 years

This stage is divided into:

- pre-conceptual stage 2–4;
- intuitive stage 5–7.

Throughout this stage children develop language and increasingly use it to think and communicate. Language is a complex system of representation for both thinking and communicating. Again, the link between language and thinking and communicating is clear; language is vital in children's learning.

Pre-conceptual stage 2–4

- Children continue to gather information predominantly through sight and touch but language becomes increasingly important.
- Initially children process information imagistically (through images). However, it gradually becomes mediated by thought processes as children's language develops. Thoughts are still quite straightforward and dependent upon immediate perceptions of their environment.
- Children still tend to be egocentric.
- Children believe that everything has consciousness, for example, dolls have feelings, tables are naughty. Piaget terms this 'animism'.
- Children begin to play symbolically, to use one object to represent another, for example, bricks as food, a doll as a baby, a stick as a sword.

Intuitive stage 5–7

- Hearing/listening gradually becomes the predominant sense for taking in information.
- Thought processes are increasingly mediated by language as it develops.
- Symbolic play continues and becomes more sophisticated as language develops.
- Children are still dependent upon immediate perceptions of their environment and find abstract thought more difficult.

Piaget and the development of concepts

Once a child has developed sufficient language skills, learning can be processed as concepts. Concepts are the way in which learning is organised cognitively, for example, a range of meanings can be recalled by the words 'high', 'love', 'strong' or 'achievement'. Concepts range from the straightforward, such as 'colour' or 'wet,' to the more complex and abstract such as 'freedom' or 'justice'. Young children are at the stage of developing, adapting and refining concepts. Concepts are developed through meaningful interaction with the environment and with others, adults and children.

THEORY FOCUS

The development of concepts

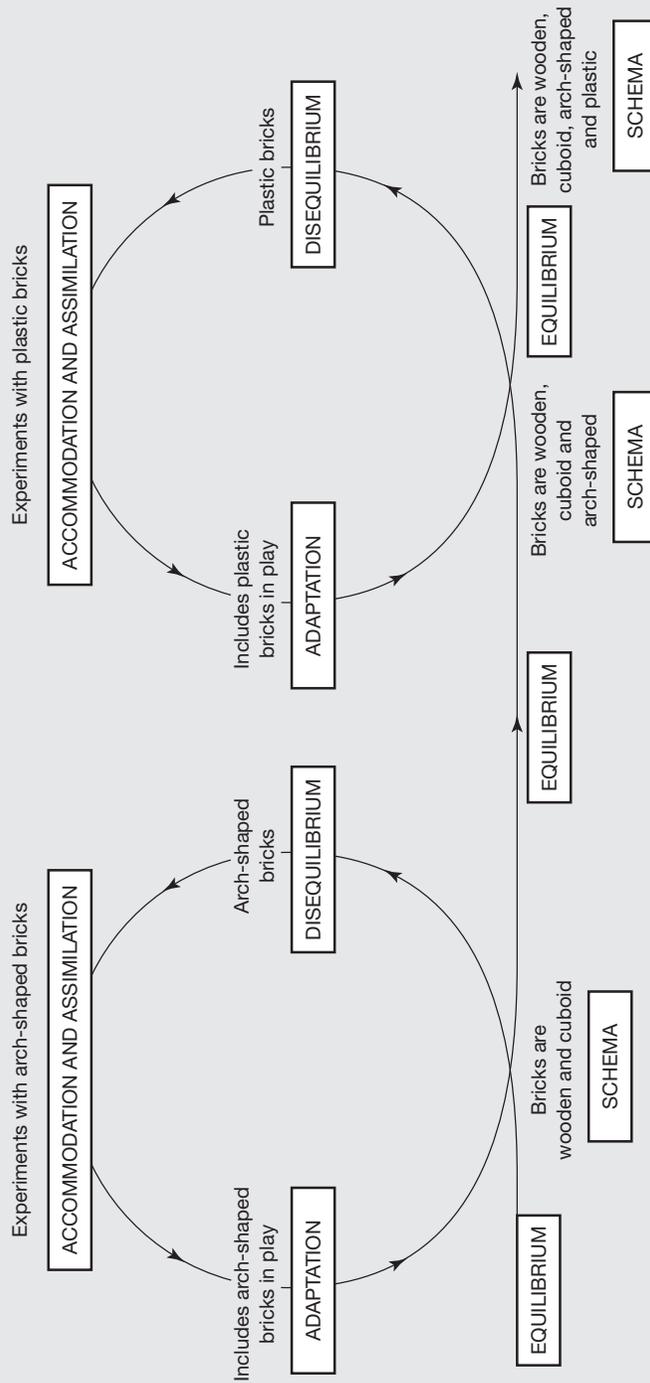


Figure 7.1 Example of a child developing a schema for bricks
Adapted from Neaum and Tallack (1997)

Piaget describes how children acquire concepts – Piaget uses the term 'schemas' – through the processes of assimilation and accommodation, equilibrium and disequilibrium.

- Assimilation – the way in which children take in information through their experiences.
- Accommodation – the way in which children adapt existing information to accommodate new experiences into existing concepts or schemas.
- Disequilibrium – when a child comes across a new experience that requires assimilation or accommodation.
- Equilibrium – when a child has successfully assimilated and accommodated new learning into a concept and has reached a position of stasis.

ACTIVITY 1

Think of your understanding of the concept of love.

- *Create a mind map of your concept of love.*
- *Look carefully at your mind map. Notice all the different connections and interpretations and meanings you have within that concept.*
- *Consider how you developed these understandings. Who and what have been significant in the development of this concept?*
- *Compare your mind map with another person's mind map.*
- *What are the similarities?*
- *What are the differences?*
- *Why do you think that your concepts of love have similarities and differences?*

Piaget's work can be seen to provide a rationale for play as an effective way for children to learn and develop. Play allows children to learn in a multisensory way. It provides the opportunity for children to explore their world in a way that is meaningful for them to adapt and refine concepts. Play allows children to engage in concrete experiences and to use these experiences in concert with their developing language to move towards more abstract thinking. Repetition and differentiation within activities are possible so there is scope for developing more complex concepts through the processes of assimilation and accommodation.

Critiques of Piaget's work

Piaget's work has remained important in Early Years. However, further research has questioned some of the tenets of Piaget's work. In the 1970s Margaret Donaldson challenged a number of Piaget's findings. She based this on a critique of the ways in which Piaget asked questions in experimental conditions. She contended that there was a tendency to try to catch children out rather than try to offer opportunities for them to show what they were capable of. Donaldson (1978) argued that if children were questioned in a naturalistic, rather than experimental, setting they would be able to better articulate what they knew and could do. Therefore, some of the assumptions within Piaget's work were a reflection of the ways

in which he worked rather than a reflection of children's abilities. Donaldson's work was followed up by a number of researchers and other studies were done to challenge Piaget's conclusions. For example, Martin Hughes (1978) challenged the view that children were necessarily egocentric. Piaget said that young children were not capable of seeing another person's point of view. Hughes demonstrated experimentally that, after some instruction about the experimental task, children aged between three and five were able to see things from other than their own viewpoint. What emerged from this work, and other similar research, was the idea that it is necessary to give children optimal help in understanding a task if they are to demonstrate what they are capable of. This means presenting the task in as meaningful a way as possible and using language and concepts that young children are likely to understand. This has led some people to adopt a modified view of Piaget's work; others do not accept the criticisms. These are ongoing academic debates.

However, despite these challenges and criticisms Piaget's work remains central to our understanding of young children's learning and development. Piaget outlined a theory that, in practice, understands learning and development as requiring direct concrete experiences with a wide range of materials and activities and progression towards a linguistic representation of the world.

Lev Vygotsky (1896–1934)

Vygotsky's ideas have had a profound effect on our understanding of how young children learn. The main theme of his work is that social interaction plays a fundamental role in the development of cognition (see definition). Vygotsky argued that learning takes place alongside others through collaborative interaction and dialogue. Effective, engaged social interaction is therefore vital in the development of cognitive skill.

Definition

Cognition: The mental processes involved in gaining knowledge and comprehension, including thinking, knowing, remembering, judging, and problem solving. These are higher-level functions of the brain and involve language, imagination, perception, and planning.

Vygotsky's theory clearly has implications for the ways in which we understand how children learn. It requires a learning context in which children and adults are active and involved in social interaction. This marked a significant shift in our understanding of learning, away from the traditional view of learning as a transmission of knowledge from one person to another, to an understanding of learning as a collaborative and reciprocal social process. In Vygotsky's theory learning takes place when the interaction is purposeful and meaningful for the learner. This means that interaction needs to be based on a good understanding of both the learner's current level of understanding and their next steps in learning. Vygotsky developed the idea of a 'zone of proximal development' to explain this process. He suggested that a child has two stages of development: their present level of development; and the next step that can, as yet, only be achieved with a more knowledgeable other's help. The more knowledgeable other (often an adult) needs to support the child's learning until they can achieve the next step alone.

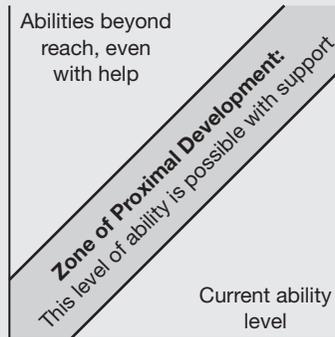
THEORY FOCUS**Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (ZPD)**

Figure 7.2 Graph to show Vygotsky's zone of proximal development

This understanding of learning and development is well established within Early Years pedagogical practice. Vygotskian theory supports dynamic interaction during play, and focuses on the importance of knowing what a child can do as the starting point for focused interaction to support the next stage of their learning and development. This way of understanding children's learning necessitates a very good understanding of children's development and of effective interactive processes that support learning and development.

John Bowlby (1907–1990)

Attachment theory

The work of John Bowlby, and later with Mary Ainsworth, on attachment theory offers an understanding of why children learn best within the context of warm, safe and secure relationships.

Attachment is an emotional bond to another person. It emerges from the special emotional relationship that involves an exchange of comfort, care and pleasure between a young child and their parent or another significant carer. Attachment theory was developed by John Bowlby. Bowlby held the view that early experiences in childhood have an important influence on later development. Our early attachment style, he argues, is established in childhood through our earliest relationships and has an impact throughout our lives. The central tenet of attachment theory is that mothers who are available and responsive to their baby's needs establish a sense of security. The baby learns that the mother is dependable, which creates a secure base for the child to explore the world. It is through this warm, responsive care that children create an internal working model of security and support that enables them to develop a positive self-image and an expectation of positive responses from others. Although Bowlby's initial research stressed the role of mothers, there is evidence to suggest that a bond of attachment can be formed with other carers who fulfil the role of offering warm, consistent, responsive care.

When children receive warm, responsive care they are said to be securely attached. Other children, whose early care isn't responsive to their needs, can find that these experiences

result in insecure attachments which, it is believed, can have an impact on their social and emotional development throughout life.

THEORY FOCUS

Understanding the characteristics of attachment

During the 1970s, psychologist Mary Ainsworth expanded Bowlby's work with her 'strange situation' study. Ainsworth wanted to investigate the security of attachment. The aim was to determine the nature of attachment behaviours and types of attachment. The study involved observing children between the ages of 12 to 18 months responding to a situation in which they were briefly left alone and then reunited with their mother.

The study was conducted by observing the behaviour of parents/carers and children in a sequence of seven three-minute events.

1. Parent/carer and child are alone.
2. Stranger joins the parent and child.
3. Parent leaves the child and stranger alone.
4. Parent returns and the stranger leaves.
5. Parent leaves – the child is left on their own.
6. Stranger returns.
7. Parent returns and the stranger leaves.

The team were interested in observing the following aspects of the child's behaviour.

- Separation anxiety when separated from the parent/carer.
- Stranger anxiety when with the stranger.
- Reaction when reunited with parent.

These observations revealed three distinct types of attachment: secure, insecure ambivalent and insecure avoidant.

Secure attachment

- Securely attached children exhibit minimal distress when separated from parent/carer. These children feel secure and able to depend on their adult carers. When the adult leaves, the child feels assured that the parent or carer will return.
- When frightened, securely attached children will seek comfort from carers. These children know their parent or carer will provide comfort and reassurance, so they are comfortable seeking them out in times of need.

Insecure resistant/ambivalent attachment

- Ambivalently attached children usually become very distressed when a parent leaves. Research suggests that ambivalent attachment is a result of poor maternal availability.

THEORY FOCUS *continued*

These children cannot depend on their mother (or carer) to be there when the child is in need.

Insecure avoidant attachment

- Children with an avoidant attachment tend to avoid parents or carers. When offered a choice, these children will show no preference between a known carer and a complete stranger. Research has suggested that this attachment style might be a result of abusive or neglectful carers.

The methods used by Ainsworth and Bell have been criticised for a number of reasons. For example; the study only deals with the relationship with the mother and not other significant familial relationships; the children were put in an artificial experimental situation which may have influenced their responses; putting children in stressful situations for research purposes is unethical; a child may be displaying behaviours that are because of the current context of their lives: perhaps their mother had been ill, rather than an ongoing relational issue. Some of these criticisms have challenged some of the claims made regarding attachment.

However, despite these criticisms, the idea of secure and insecure attachments has had a profound effect upon our understanding of the importance of children's need for warm responsive parenting/care in their early life, and, has offered a way of understanding and interpreting the difficult behaviour of children who have suffered distress in their early life.

The importance of attachment

Having a secure bond of attachment to another person is regarded as a foundation for successful social and emotional development. It has been observed that children with secure attachments are more socially competent than those with insecure attachment. Social competence is associated with high self-esteem and empathy towards others. These traits make it easier for children to be liked and therefore to form and maintain familial relationships and friendships.

It is probable that social competence and good self-esteem flow from securely attached children's early exploratory impulses. Their secure attachments enable them to engage with the world with a sense of confidence, curiosity and enthusiasm precisely because they have a secure base to leave and return to, confident in the knowledge that it will be there when they return. The sense of security and support engendered by responsive care enables the child to develop a positive sense of self and positive expectations of their relationships with others. In contrast, children who have insecure attachments are more likely to display clingy, anxious behaviours in social situations which limit their interaction and engagement with the world.

Children with secure attachments are also known to show more co-operative behaviours with their parents. This may be as a result of their greater social competency. This behaviour has many beneficial effects. Children who are more co-operative towards their parents are more likely to listen and interact in a positive way, therefore enhancing their opportunities for further developing their social skills and other aspects of their learning.

This creates a positive upward spiral; children are socially competent, therefore, they interact effectively in different situations and with different people. This means that they have opportunities to learn and develop their skills and knowledge in all areas of development, which means that they then have greater skill and knowledge in their interactions, and so it goes on. Unfortunately the opposite is often true for children who lack social skills and competencies. Their chances for interacting appropriately and developing interactive skills that support learning and development are often very limited by their lack of social competency. Children can then get trapped in patterns of interaction, both at home and in settings and at school, that do not support their learning and development.

There is a growing amount of research that suggests that children who have experienced distress in early life that has resulted in insecure attachments can be helped through interventions with the child and/or the family. Interventions can be preventative and therapeutic (Broberg, 2000). This is skilled work. It requires assessment and intervention from professionals who understand the issues and the processes involved. These services can be accessed through a school or setting SENCO, through health services, and through children's services in children's centres.

In line with the aims of Every Child Matters, the best approach with children who are regarded as being at risk is a proactive one. See Figure 7.3. In this approach people who work with children and families are alert to the possibilities of relational difficulties in families and offer support and guidance to parents. The aim is to enable parents to respond to their children in warm and responsive ways that are likely to lead to the creation of secure bonds of attachment. It is from a starting point of these warm, safe and secure relationships that children develop and learn best.

The role of the adult in promoting positive emotional and social development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● From the earliest age demonstrate love and offer affection as well as meeting their developmental needs ● Give appropriate praise for effort, more than achievement ● Demonstrate that you value what they do and produce ● Explain why rules exist and why children should do what you are asking them to do. Where possible use 'do' rather than 'don't' and emphasise what you want the child to do rather than what is not acceptable. When children misbehave, explain to them why it is wrong ● Stay on the child's side – assume that they mean to do right, not wrong ● Provide babies with opportunities to explore the world through all five senses ● Give children activities that are a manageable challenge. Remember that children need time alone as well as being with others and involved in activities ● Provide opportunities for role play – to explore other roles and experiences ● Encourage children to use language to express their own feelings and thoughts, and how they think others feel ● Be interested in what the child is saying – give the child attention and listen to what they say. Do not laugh at a child's response when it is not intended to be funny ● Don't use put-downs or sarcasm – they have a negative impact on children's sense of self ● Encourage children to be self-dependent and responsible ● Encourage children to follow through activities and tasks to completion ● Provide children with their own things which they know belong to them ● Provide good flexible role models with regard to gender, disability and ethnicity ● Encourage children to value their own cultural background

Figure 7.3 Promoting positive emotional and social development

The importance of language in young children's learning

The development and use of speech, language and communication are at the heart of young children's learning (DCSF, 2008, page 8). Learning theory supports this view that the development of language is fundamental to learning. Language is a learned skill that we require to think and to communicate. Therefore, the more effective children's language learning, the more effective children's language for communication and language for thinking are likely to be. This in turn will support their learning and development across all areas of development throughout their lives.

ACTIVITY 2

As you work through this activity be aware of your thought processes.

1. *Imagine a car, imagine a table, imagine a shoe.*

How did you recall these things? What was 'in your head'?

2. *Imagine a home, imagine friendship, imagine beauty.*

How did you recall these things? How much was imagistically? How much language-based?

3. *Imagine justice, imagine tolerance, imagine freedom.*

How did you recall these things? How much was imagistically? How much language-based?

- *Look carefully at these three sections. What is the difference between the use of images and language as a tool for thinking in these three instances?*
- *What are the implications of this for children's development of language for learning?*
- *What does this suggest about how the quality of a child's language affects their learning?*

There is evidence to suggest that we are born with the potential to develop language; for example, Noam Chomsky's work on the language acquisition device, but we need to be exposed to language and have opportunities to use language in meaningful contexts to learn and develop effective language and communication skills. This is important. Language is a learned skill. Early Years practitioners therefore need to know how to best support children's language development to enable them to develop and learn.

THEORY FOCUS

Noam Chomsky – Language Acquisition Device (LAD)

Noam Chomsky (in Aitchison, 2008) worked in the field of psycholinguistics. He opposed the traditional learning theory understanding of language learning as stimulus–response and instead proposed that linguistic knowledge and understanding were the result of a universal innate ability termed a 'language acquisition device' – that we are born with the building blocks of language.

THEORY FOCUS *continued*

One of the important underpinning reasons for this proposition is the ease with which we all learn our first language. He observed two important facets of young children's language learning.

1. Young children learn to understand grammatically correct language despite the fact that the spoken language they hear is often not grammatically correct. For example, we use half-sentences, incorrect words, incorrect grammatical formulations, interrupt and change what we are saying, and use interjections. Children acquire language much quicker than other abilities, and almost all children acquire and can correctly use very complex language.

Read these two sentences. One of them 'makes sense' – we hear it as 'correct' – even though it is nonsense.

Colourless green ideas sleep furiously.

Ideas furiously green colourless sheep.

Not many of us could explain the grammatical process in these sentences but we can distinguish between them quite easily. Chomsky argues that we have an inherent ability to recognise underlying syntactical relationships in a sentence.

2. Children do not just copy the language that they hear. They appear to understand the underlying rules and apply them, despite never having heard that form of the language. This most noticeable in mistakes that young children make.

Read these two sentences that young children may say.

I runned across the road.

I taked a picture of you.

- What mistake is being made?
- What grammatical structure are they applying incorrectly?

Chomsky argues that to make these apparent mistakes of applying regular grammatical rules to exceptions demonstrates the child's implicit understanding of the deep logical structure of language. They are never likely to hear anyone using this form of the verb but some children apply the regular rule and generate this form of the language. This idea of generating new language is important. Children don't just learn phrases that they hear, they are able to generate an infinite number and variety of new sentences.

Jerome Bruner (1915–) extended the work of Chomsky with his idea of a language acquisition support system (LASS) (Bruner, 1984). Bruner suggested that alongside the LAD there must be a LASS if a child is going to learn language effectively. The LASS consists of all the people around the child who engage in interaction that enables the child to acquire language knowledge and skill. For children who attend a nursery, Early Years practitioners are part of this language acquisition support system.

Creating spaces in settings to develop speaking and listening

Elizabeth Jarman (2007) has developed some interesting work on creating 'communication-friendly spaces' in settings. It flows from observation of learning spaces for young children in countries such as Denmark and Sweden. She argues that the space in a setting can be organised in ways that encourage children to talk and to listen and so support the development of their language and communication. Speaking and listening, she argues, are encouraged by creating communication-friendly spaces (Jarman, 2007) within settings. There are a number of features of these spaces.

- Lack of extraneous stimulus. Practitioners are encouraged to create a calm environment through the use of muted natural colours for displays and resources, uncluttered wall and tabletop displays and well-organised, readily available resources.
- As much natural light as possible.
- Gentle lighting where lighting is needed, such as the use of fairy lights.
- Low levels of background noise,
- Creating enclosed 'den-like' areas inside and outside that provide spaces for children to go and talk and read and play.
- Creating spaces that are specifically for talking and listening, such as a story-telling chair.

ACTIVITY 3

Look at the list of features of communication-friendly spaces.

- *Compare these features with your experience of play spaces for young children, for example, in nurseries, playgroups, in the home.*
- *What changes need to be made to these spaces to create places that encourage children to use and develop their language skills?*
- *Think about your own work and home environment. Which spaces are most conducive to being calm, interacting well and working effectively?*
- *How does this map to what Jarman is suggesting for spaces for children's learning?*
- *What is your view about Jarman's ideas?*

These spaces are one way of encouraging children to engage in speaking and listening in the setting. However, communication-friendly spaces won't support children's language development in themselves; they will only have an impact on children's language development if children are engaged in play and talk with their peers and the practitioners. Children's language development requires that they have opportunities to use, practise, adapt and refine their language knowledge and skills.

Because the development of children's language and communication skills is closely linked to the quality of the interaction that they are involved in, it is important that all Early Years practitioners know the most effective ways in which to interact with children to encourage the development of language for communication and language for thinking.

Pedagogical practices that best support young children's learning and development

Pedagogy and pedagogical practice is the art or method of teaching. It is a term that is used to encompass the whole range of interactive practices that support young children's learning. Early Years has a strong recognisable pedagogical tradition that is different to teaching in schools. It is easily recognisable if you go into Early Years settings. Early Years pedagogical practice involves supporting children's learning through play in ways that are responsive to children's interests and motivations. It involves a fluidity in the pace and timing of the experiences and interactions, and a commitment to being predominantly child-led. So what exactly is happening in the interactions? How is children's learning best supported in this learning environment? What are the most effective ways to interact with young children?

The EPEY study is a study of the most effective pedagogical strategies used at Foundation Stage level to support the development of young children's skills, knowledge and attitudes (Siraj-Blatchford *et al.* 2002). They found that there were a number of observable pedagogical practices evident in effective settings. This included: adult-child interactions; the way learning was monitored and how staff used this information; and how settings engaged in partnerships with parents.

The best learning takes place when children are motivated and involved (Siraj-Blatchford *et al.*, 2002). It is assumed that the same is true of adults and so the most effective combination for learning is when:

- both the adult and the child are motivated and involved in the learning;
- interaction is collaborative and instructive;
- sustained shared thinking takes place (see definition).

Definition

Sustained shared thinking: An episode in which two individuals work together in an intellectual way to solve a problem, clarify a concept, evaluate activities, extend a narrative, etc. Both parties must contribute to the thinking and it must develop and extend (Siraj-Blatchford, 2002, page 8)

Children also learn best when practitioners' interactions are at an appropriate developmental level. This means that practitioners need to monitor exactly what the children know and can do, and be aware of what comes next in children's learning and development so that they can match their interaction and teaching to the child's developmental needs. Effective pedagogical practice is to use observation to evaluate what learning is happening in order to understand what a child knows and can do, and to inform what happens next. This process of observation enables practitioners to offer formative feedback during activities. Formative feedback is feedback that is carried out during an activity and offers an evaluation of what learning is taking place, and support and guidance on ways to develop the activity or experience to enhance the child's learning and development.

Finally, good developmental outcomes are best supported when parents or carers provide a rich home learning environment. The role of settings is important in this. The REPEY study (Siraj-Blatchford *et al.*, 2002) found that the best outcomes for children happen when settings support the ability of parents to provide a good home learning environment and don't just focus on meeting the adults' needs. This supports the view that what is important for young children's learning and development is not who parents/carers are, but what they do.

Interaction to support children's learning and development

Other research that looked at the interactive processes of staff in a successful nursery school found similar patterns of interaction that best supported children's learning and development (Neaum, 2005). One of the defining characteristics of positive interaction is playfulness: interaction in which practitioners clearly enjoy the processes of being engaged with the children in their learning. During activities practitioners need to be alive and sensitive to children's interests and engagement so that the direction, the pace and the timing of the activity are worked out together. This means that both the practitioners and children contribute to the understanding of the activity or experience; they construct their understandings together.

Positive interaction requires a range of interactive strategies that are used appropriately to support children's learning and development. There are many that can be used and are developmentally appropriate with young children, for example:

- discussion;
- pondering;
- questioning;
- modelling;
- direct teaching;
- the introduction of new vocabulary, as appropriate and in context.

Two other ways of interacting that have been shown to successfully support children's learning and development (Neaum, 2005) are the following.

- **Teachable moments.** These are moments when a child is particularly disposed to learn something. These moments arise during play and these opportunities can be used to move the child's learning forward. This teaching is done in a play-based context and requires a good understanding of children's learning and development, and of individual children, to judge the child's present level of understanding and what to teach next.
- **Commentary.** This is when a practitioner provides a verbal commentary on what is happening. Commentary offers the child a framework for their activity. It models use of language for communicating and language for thinking in a clear, direct context.

Commentary can be done in a number of ways, including:

- providing a running commentary on what the child is doing – articulating the observable processes within the activity or experience;

- reflecting back the child's learning and making links between what the child is learning now and prior learning;
- practitioners providing a commentary of their own thoughts, ideas and questions as they engage in the activity alongside the child.

These ways of interaction between practitioners and children have many benefits for children's learning and development. It enables them to engage in sustained shared thinking. It is creative, enjoyable and intellectually challenging. The interaction is individually focused and so starts from each child's needs and abilities. It supports language for communication and language for thinking, and it achieves all of this in a learning context that is fluid, open-ended and experiential.

Partnerships with parents

All the evidence suggests that a child's learning and development are enhanced when settings, Early Years practitioners and parents work together. Working with parents as partners is one of the commitments within the theme of positive relationships in the Early Years Foundation Stage (DfES, 2007b). The commitment recognises that *parents are children's first and most enduring educators. When parents and practitioners work together in Early Years settings, the results have a positive impact on children's development and learning* (DfES, 2007b).

The EPPE study (Sylva *et al.*, 2003) concluded that what parents and carers do at home can make a big difference to their child's learning and development. In their assessments of the home learning environment they concluded that activities such as reading to children, teaching songs and nursery rhymes, painting and drawing, teaching them letters and numbers, taking them on visits and creating regular opportunities for them to play in the home with friends were all associated with higher intellectual and social/behavioural scores. This means that schools and settings need to support all parents in acquiring these skills. This is often achieved through the provision of programmes or individual support which aim to equip parents with the knowledge and skills to support their children's learning at home. This is usually organised through children's centres for children under the age of five. Schools and settings also need to foster parents' knowledge and skill by ensuring that there is good communication between home and school. This communication enables parents to be aware of their child's progress in the setting, and ensures that parents can share their knowledge of the child's learning and development at home. Schools and settings also need to provide opportunities for parents to continue to develop necessary knowledge and skills to support their child's learning and development at home.

Questions and controversies

While there clearly is evidence of the positive effects of engaged and interested parenting on children's learning and development, and so working in partnership with parents is an important aspect of our current system, it is not without controversy. Within the context of the necessity of working with parents it is worth considering what partnership with parents really means. Partnership suggests a two-way, dynamic relationship in which both partners bring a range of knowledge and skills to a situation in order to understand an

issue or solve a problem. Clearly, at times, this will be achieved. However, it is argued that there is often a gap between the expectations of partnership and the lived reality. Within the context of services for children questions are asked about the exact nature of parental support and partnership working; whether working in partnership with parents really is working in partnership. The concern flows from the perception that there is an inbuilt imbalance in the relationship between professionals and parents as parenting has increasingly become an area of professionalisation and intervention. This is particularly acute where parents are perceived to be in need of support. It is argued that the interventions are not, in practice, a partnership approach but are in fact based on a particular understanding of what it means to be a 'good parent' and the aim is to encourage parents to adopt this style of parenting. So while this approach is part of the partnership-with-parents initiative it isn't, in practice, a partnership relationship and to call it such can be seen as disingenuous.

ACTIVITY 4

Collect some prospectuses for nurseries and schools.

- *Read through the information provided about teaching and learning and partnerships with parents in the setting.*
- *How does this information help parents to support their child's learning at home?*
- *In what ways can the parents/carers share their knowledge about the child's learning and development at home with the school or setting?*

Find out about parenting programmes, both national programmes (for example, PEAL, The Incredible years – Webster-Stratton, Positive Parenting) and local programmes in your area.

- *What are their reasons for the provision of parenting programmes?*
- *How do these programmes aim to support parents in understanding and fostering learning at home?*
- *What are the known benefits of providing parenting programmes?*
- *What questions still remain about the efficacy of such programmes?*
- *What questions arise from programmes that are based on a particular understanding of parenting and aim to encourage parents to adopt this pattern of parenting?*

C H A P T E R S U M M A R Y

In this chapter we have looked at how play is vital for young children's learning. The learning theories of Piaget and Vygotsky are outlined to support this pedagogical approach. The significance of a secure bond of attachment to learning and development is explored through the work of Bowlby and Ainsworth. The important link between language and learning is explained and effective strategies for interacting with children are described. The home learning environment and working in partnership with parents is highlighted as being significant in supporting children's learning and development.



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8 Observing children's learning and development

This chapter enables you to understand:

- why we observe and assess children's learning;
- what we can observe and assess ;
- different techniques for observing and assessing children's leaning and development;
- the requirement for observation-based assessment in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Introduction

Assessment is the way in which in our everyday practice, we observe children's learning, strive to understand it, and then put our understanding to good use.

(Drummond, 1993)

When we watch children, watch them carefully and sensitively, we see them learning. When we approach observation of children with an open mind we can observe the richness of their play and interaction.

Through observation and assessment we can become aware of what children know and can do and use this information to ensure that what we provide and how we interact are closely linked to their abilities and needs.

Observing and assessing children's learning can also enhance our own knowledge and understanding of how children develop and learn. Detailed, careful, attentive observation, followed by well-informed assessment, can show us how children make meaning in their world, how they use and develop their language to enable them to communicate with others and to think. We can learn how they develop and maintain relationships, and how they develop emotionally and morally. This dynamic approach to observation and assessment enables us to go beyond the idea of normative developmental expectations and outcomes measures and enables us to really see, and celebrate, children as individuals.

Why is it important to observe and assess children's learning and development?

We use observation all the time in our personal and professional lives. We are constantly aware of what is happening around us and, through assessments that we make of situations, we adjust and refine our behaviour accordingly. For example, in settings,

practitioners will notice when children have fallen over, they will notice that children have run out of glue, they will observe and monitor what needs doing as children tidy up. These informal observations are vital to the smooth running of the setting. Practitioners will also observe and notice the professional practice of colleagues to enhance their own practice. This might be informally: you notice that a colleague is working with children in an effective way and you observe her work as a model of how to do things well. It can also be done formally as professional development. For example, when areas for professional development are identified through appraisal, practitioners can use focused observation of colleagues' practice, alongside analytical discussion, to learn and develop their own knowledge and skill.

ACTIVITY 1

Think of some examples from your personal and/or professional life when you have observed another person with interest and the intention to understand what is happening.

- *What did you do as you made your observation?*
- *What were you thinking as you made your observation?*
- *How did you come to a conclusion about what was happening and why?*
- *What were your thoughts about how you could change as a result of what you observed?*
- *How did you change?*
- *Did it work? What changes did you make that are now embedded in who you are?*
- *How did observation and assessment help you understand what was happening and what change(s) you could make?*

Observation and assessment are effective ways to understand children's learning and development. Using observation in this way is good practice. Young children's learning is evident in their play and interaction. It is through our observation and analysis of what we observe that we begin to understand the ways in which children make meaning in their world, and we come to know what they know and can do.

Why observe?

We observe children's play for a number of reasons.

- To understand what individual children know and can do.
- To understand what individual children are interested in and how they learn best so that we can support their learning and development effectively.
- To support overall planning and provision.
- To match our approaches and interactive strategies to children's needs to best support their learning and development.
- To further develop our understanding of how children learn, linking theory with practice.

The very best starting point for teaching children is to start with what they know and can do. Practitioners can establish this through attentive observation of children during their play. Careful observation and assessment will demonstrate to us what knowledge, skills and aptitudes children currently have and therefore, what further is needed to support their learning and development.

An important part of understanding children's learning is to observe what they are interested in. Where do they play? What do they play? Who do they play with? Which activities or experiences or themes engage them? Interest is an excellent motivator for children. When children are engaged in an activity or experience that is absorbing, they are more likely to learn. We can use the information we gather through observation to inform what we do and what we provide. This ensures that we reflect children's interests in what we provide. Another important question to ask is: how do children learn best? This will be different for different children. Children will have a preferred way to explore their world: it might be alongside other children or alongside an adult; it might be in group work or on their own; it might be by returning over and over again to an activity; it might be singularly focused on an activity; it might be working with the same schema through a variety of different activities and experiences. Through observation practitioners need to become aware of individual children's preferences and, as with all other aspects of observation, ensure that provision caters for the children's ways of learning.

Observation and assessment of children and their learning also inform overall provision. The best way to support children's learning and development is to ensure that provision for both planned and child-initiated learning is closely matched to the needs of the children; both to meet their current needs and interests and provision that enables them to engage in activities and experiences that extend their learning. Observation should inform this process through careful analysis of the children's needs and interests reflected in the provision.

Observation and assessment should also inform pedagogical approaches within settings and schools. When practitioners have a good understanding of what children know and can do and of their needs, practitioners can adapt their interactive strategies to best support children's learning and development.

CASE STUDY

Alex had been attending nursery for about six months. At the nursery, practitioner observations of children are discussed at team meetings with the aim of adapting and matching their provision to the needs of the children. Alex's keyworker went through her observations of Alex highlighting what she had observed, saying what her assessments of Alex were and asking the other practitioners for their views on Alex. Overall both informal and formal observations showed that Alex had settled well and appeared to engage with and enjoy most activities. He appeared to particularly enjoy painting and spend some time at this activity each day. However, Alex's keyworker highlighted the fact that a number of the observations showed that although Alex appeared to be part of the group and engage in many activities, for much of the time he was watching others play or playing on his own or choosing activities, like painting, that he could do on his own. The staff

continued

CASE STUDY *continued*

discussed these observations and agreed that Alex needed more opportunities to engage in play with other children, either as one-to-one or within a group. They agreed to adapt their pedagogical approach to support Alex's learning. Over the next week Alex's key-worker would play alongside Alex and encourage and model playing with other children. At the following week's meeting they would review what had happened and, if necessary, continue to adapt their approach to meet Alex's needs.

- *How did the observation inform the practitioners' pedagogical approach?*
- *In this situation what professional knowledge and understanding did the practitioners have to enable them to understand what they had observed?*
- *What did staff have to know about Early Years pedagogy to enable them to adapt their approach?*

Observing children's play and learning is an excellent way of enhancing professional knowledge. Children are endlessly surprising. If we limit our observation to collecting information to assess children against developmental norms and prescribed criteria, we will miss so much of the richness of their play. Drummond (1993) articulates this well: *if we choose to see only those aspects of learning of which we approve, we will lose the opportunity to see more of the picture, to learn more about learning ... there is always more to learn and more to see.* By being attentive and open to actually seeing what children know and can do, we can learn from them. We may make clearer connections between theory and practice; we may observe things that we need to think about and reflect upon in order to understand exactly what was happening; we may see things that confound our expectations about individual children and/or expected developmental progress and stages. All of this enhances our professional knowledge and skill and enables us to develop a more sophisticated understanding of young children's learning and development.

Assessing children's learning

There are different ways of approaching the assessment of children's learning. At times you will need to make focused and purposeful observations so that you can assess a particular area of a child's learning. At other times your observation will be open and fluid and you will assess what emerges from the observation. Both are valid ways of assessing children's learning. Some examples of what you may find out from observation are:

- what a child/children enjoy and are interested in;
- friendships;
- identifying specific learning needs;
- following up something that you have noticed informally and want to find out more about;

- well-being;
- what a child is capable of within a particular area of development – physical, intellectual, language, emotional, social;
- which schemas the child/children are developing;
- starting points for intervention;
- what a child knows and can do, to establish a child's developmental progress/level;
- to get to know a child better – open-ended.

THEORY FOCUS

Schemas

Athey (1990) describes schemas as *patterns of behaviour and thinking in children that exist under the surface features of various contents, contexts and specific experiences.*

She goes on to discuss what this looks like in practice:

you may have noticed children who seem to enjoy carrying out similar actions in a variety of ways, for example, a child who insists putting things in boxes, covering things up with scarves and hiding in dens. All of these may be an enclosure schema. Or, a child who enjoys playing with things that go round and round – wheels cars and cogs – and whose paintings have a circular energy to them. This may be a child with a rotation schema. (See Figure 8.1).

Observing, identifying and working with children's schemas is one way of starting from the child. Schemas that are evident in children's play are, according to Athey (1990), a reflection of children's learning preferences and intrinsic brain patterns.

The notion of schemas as a way of understanding the development of children's thinking arose from the Froebel Early Education Project. The project aimed, through close observation of young children, to:

- *identify developments in each child's thinking;*
- *describe the development of symbolic representation;*
- *identify curriculum content relevant to developing forms of thought.*

The most significant finding of the project was the ideas of schemas as a way of understanding children's thinking and learning.

Cathy Nutbrown has continued and extended Athey's work. In her text *Threads of Thinking*, Nutbrown (1999) highlights that Athey discusses children's development (schemas) and argues that they can be identified in children's drawings and are represented in children's play, their thinking and their language.

Examples of schemas observable in young children's activities/interests	
Schema	Observable activity/interest
Trajectory – vertical and horizontal	Bouncing balls Throwing and kicking Climbing and jumping Water play with pipes and gutters Playing with running water from a tap Marble runs Climbing steps
Rotation	Fascination with spinning machines, i.e. washing machine Play with toys with wheels Fascination with keys Rolling and spinning Painting with large circular motion Circle games
Transporting	Filling and moving objects in trucks and bags Pushing other children in pushchairs and prams
Enveloping and containing space	Climbing into boxes Filling containers Covering themselves up Wrapping dollies and teddies Building dens Painting whole sheets of paper one colour Wrapping or covering items in craft activities
Connecting	Train tracks and trains Construction Junk modelling

Figure 8.1 Observable children's schemas

Clearly, not all areas of children's learning and development can be assessed through observation. What is important is that you approach both observation and assessment with the intention of finding something out. It is all too easy to find ourselves using observation and assessment to prove what we think that we already know rather than really focusing on what we have seen and analysing it with an open mind.

Assessment of observations requires a good understanding of child development and learning theory. It is this knowledge that will be applied to the observation as you analyse and interpret what you have seen and heard. It also requires that you have a good understanding of different observation techniques and when and how to use them to best effect.

Observation techniques

Different observation techniques need to be used to elicit different information. It is important that the information that you gather in your observation is appropriate and sufficiently detailed to enable you to make accurate assessments of children's learning. Selecting an appropriate observation technique to gather your information is an important part of this process.

Different techniques include:

- time sampling;
- tracking;
- checklists;
- target child;
- learning stories;
- documenting.

Time sampling involves completing a short narrative observation of a child at 10–15 minute intervals. This gives you quite a broad overview of the child in the setting. Assessment of the observation can be focused across many areas, as appropriate. The same technique can be used for activities. An activity is observed every 10–15 minutes. Again, this offers a broad range of possibilities for assessment.

Tracking observations follow children's choices within the setting. These choices (including time children spent between activities and any time they spent observing others) and the time that the child spends there are recorded. You may also record who else was at the activity and briefly how the child engaged with the activity/experience. Again, this offers a broad view of the child in the setting and assessment can be focused on what you need to know.

Checklists are predetermined lists that identify knowledge, skills or aptitudes. The purpose of observation is to ascertain whether a child can meet these criteria. These can be useful if you need to find out something particular and precise. However, generally checklists are not a sufficiently sophisticated way of capturing the richness of young children's learning.

Target child observations are ones in which you identify a particular child to observe. You may be looking at something in particular or completing an open-ended observation. In this observation the child is observed within the learning environment alongside other children. This gives the child the opportunity to demonstrate what they know and can do within their familiar environment alongside their peers. The activity that the child is involved in is briefly recorded narratively and then language and social interactions are recorded and coded to give an accurate account of what happened during the observation for analysis and interpretation.

Learning stories are a way of recording and presenting observations of children over time; building a narrative about their learning. They emerged from the work of Margaret Carr which is based in sociocultural theory. Carr (2001) articulates a way of recording children's learning that acknowledges the context of that learning. She called these learning stories. The idea is to create a narrative, a story, recorded as a series of episodes linked together that record what the child knows and can do, and records what comes next. This is important. The purpose of recording children's learning in learning stories is to enhance their learning, to foreground what they can do as the starting point for providing for their ongoing development, and to recognise the complexity of the context and process of learning. The idea of a learning story is interpreted in a number of ways in practice. Some settings have formatted their observation sheets to create narrative threads linked to next

steps in learning. Others have adopted a portfolio approach, in which observations and examples of children's work are kept together to create a narrative of their progress in the setting. Assessment of children's learning takes place at each stage of recording of the learning story in the analysis of the observation to define the next steps.

THEORY FOCUS

Sociocultural theory

Sociocultural theory is a belief that higher-order functions, such as learning, grow out of social interaction. It advocates that our learning processes are products of our society and our culture. Different cultures have different systems, such as beliefs, values, behaviours and practices which provide a context for learning. Therefore, to fully understand someone we must examine the external social world in which that person has developed.

Vygotsky was highly influential in sociocultural theory. He described learning as being embedded within social events and that learning takes place as a child interacts with the people, objects and events in that environment. Learning is therefore socially and culturally defined.

Documenting children's learning is another way of creating a narrative about what a child has done and achieved. Providing documentary evidence of children's learning recorded through observations and examples of children's work, usually kept as a portfolio or folder to which children and staff and parents can all contribute, is well established in Early Years. Assessments of children's learning can be completed through careful analysis and interpretation of the documented evidence.

The approach in the Reggio Emilia schools has been highly influential in developing this practice. The way in which the Reggio Emilia schools document their children's learning focuses intensively on children's experience, memories, thoughts and ideas as they work. Documentation in Reggio Emilia typically includes samples of a child's work at several different stages of completion; photographs showing work in progress; comments written by the practitioners working with the children; transcriptions of children's discussions, comments, and explanations about the activity; and comments made by parents. Observations, transcriptions of tape-recordings, and photographs of children engaged in discussions are also included. Examples of the children's work and written reflections on the processes in which the children engaged are displayed in classrooms and corridors. This documentation reveals how the children planned, carried out and completed the displayed work (Katz and Chard, 1996).

It is important that in using different observational techniques to record and assess young children's learning, practitioners are clear about the purpose of what they are doing and that the observational and recording processes are matched to this aim. Also, that the processes enable practitioners to have a good understanding of what children know and can do, and, through analysis and interpretation of observation and/or documentation, they are able to adapt and refine their provision and pedagogical processes to best meet the needs of the children.

ACTIVITY 2

Read through the different observational techniques outlined.

- *Which observation technique, or combination of techniques, do you think would be best to learn about the aspects of children's learning and development listed below?*
- *What about timing? Which of these aspects of children's learning and development do you think will need to be assessed over a period of time to ensure a valid assessment of their abilities and needs is made?*
 - *A child's friendship group.*
 - *Which schemas a child is developing.*
 - *A child's creative development.*
 - *A child's well-being.*
 - *The development of a child's language for thinking.*
 - *A child's interests and preferences.*
 - *A child's physical development.*
- *Give reasons for your decisions.*
- *Are there any other ways of observing and recording children's learning that you are aware of that would be better suited to finding out about these aspects of children's learning and development?*

Observation-based assessment in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Think about how your learning was assessed in senior school. For most subjects it would have been through writing, perhaps essays or assignments or producing portfolios or written exams. This recording of what you knew enabled your teachers to assess your learning. Young children do not have the skills to record their learning in this way. Young children's learning is evident through what they do, what they say, and when they record their learning it is likely to be in idiosyncratic ways. Therefore, we need to match how we find out about what children know and can do to the ways in which they represent their knowledge, skills and aptitudes. Observation-based assessment provides this opportunity. In observation-based assessment practitioners observe children and then, based on what they have observed, make an assessment of the child's learning and development. Observation allows practitioners to watch and make sense of children's learning in a naturalistic and fluid way. When being observed, children are able to demonstrate how they make sense and meaning in their world through exploration and interaction in a situation that is familiar, developmentally appropriate and predominantly child-initiated. This enables the assessment of learning to be sensitively constructed around individual children. At best, this model of assessment is child-centred and focused on what happens next to support the child's learning and development.

ACTIVITY 3

1. Think back to the way that your learning was assessed in senior schools. How did teachers assess what you knew and could do?
2. What are your views on this way of assessing learning?
3. Describe what is meant by observation-based assessment.
4. Why is this the way that young children's learning is assessed?
5. Compare the two approaches.
6. Who do you think benefits most within each approach? Give reasons for your response.

When observation and assessment of children's play are done effectively, they are done with compassion, recognising that the aim of observing children's learning is to see a child as an individual with strengths and needs. All children will come into settings with different experiences. These experiences will have had a direct impact on their learning and development. For some children their experiences will have supported their learning and development and they will have knowledge, skills and aptitudes that are within expected developmental parameters. Other children's experiences will mean that they need time and opportunity to develop and learn within the setting before their development sits within expected developmental parameters. The purpose of observation-based assessment is to establish what children know and can do, and to identify their needs so that provision and interaction can be matched to these needs. This makes observation-based assessment useful and appropriate. Assessment of children for the sole purpose of levelling and labelling is neither appropriate nor useful in Early Years settings. Ascribing levels and labels does only that: ascribe levels and labels. It is a poor indicator of what to do next to support children's learning and development. This is important. Assessment in Early Years settings needs to be predominantly formative not summative (see definitions).

Definitions

- Formative assessment:** Assessment focused on producing information that is used to adapt provision to meet a child's needs. This is often referred to as *assessment for learning*
- Summative assessment:** Assessment focused on summarising a child's learning and development at a particular point in time. This is often referred to as *assessment of learning*

It is also important to be aware that, as practitioners, we make choices about what we observe and what we assess and realise that these choices indicate what we value in children and children's play. It is almost always practitioners who select what to observe, when to observe and where to observe children's learning, and we bring to that situation many assumptions about what is worthwhile observing. It is important therefore that we are aware of what assumptions and prejudices we hold about what constitutes worthwhile play and worthwhile activities and how this impacts on what, and how, and when

we observe children. Where necessary we need to challenge these assumptions within ourselves and others to ensure that our observations of children reflect all of who they are.

We may also find ourselves only observing the easily observable, i.e. what children say and do. This is clearly an important part of observation but other aspects of who children are are equally important: their feelings, thoughts, attitudes and dispositions. How do we observe this? How do we ensure that our assessment of who children are and what they can do is holistic? To achieve this observation and assessment need to be multi-dimensional, in both content and perspective. In this way we ensure that our assessments of children have breadth as well as depth and reflect the complexity of a young child's learning and development. For example, practitioners may use the Mosaic approach (Clark and Moss, 2001) alongside a more traditional pattern of observation in order to include the child's perspective on themselves, their world, and their learning. These combined approaches enable us to have a more holistic understanding of who children are and what they can do.

The Mosaic approach to observing children's learning

The Mosaic approach (Clark and Moss, 2001) is a multi-method approach to bringing together children's own views of their lives and their pre-setting. It aims for children to be participatory in constructing an understanding of their lives.

The approach uses a range of ways of 'listening' to children to construct this understanding of their lives:

- Observation. Children are listened to through observation based upon two questions: *What is it like to be here?* and *Do you listen to me?*
- Discussion (child conferencing) with the child. This is based on a framework of 14 questions around the key themes of why children came to nursery; the role of adults; favourite and worst activities and people.
- Use of cameras. Children take photographs of things that are important to them in the setting;
- Tours. A tour of the setting led by the child, again highlighting the things that are important to the child.
- Mapping. In discussion with the staff, children use their photographs and aspects of the tour to record their views of the setting.

Assessment requirements in the Early Years Foundation Stage

The Early Years Foundation Stage (DfES, 2007) requires that assessment of children abilities and needs is achieved predominantly through observation-based assessment. The EYFS (DfES, 2007: 3.1) states that:

Babies and young children are individuals first, each with a unique profile of abilities. Schedules and routines should flow with the child's needs. All planning starts with observing children in order to understand and consider their current interests, development and learning.

It is expected that practitioners establish systems to ensure that children are observed regularly and assessments made of this learning are clearly used to support planning and provision. Assessments are described as *the decisions that you make using what you have observed about a child's development and/or learning* (DfES, 2007: 3.1). This information must then inform planning, provision and pedagogical practice. It is expected that systems for observation-based assessment set up by practitioners will enable parents to be involved and to contribute to observations and assessments of their child's learning. This process is identified in the EYFS as formative assessment or assessment for learning.

ACTIVITY 4

The Early Years Foundation Stage (DfES, 2007: 3.1) identifies a number of challenges and dilemmas in developing an effective system for observation-based assessment.

- *Planning time for practitioners to complete regular observations of children. This is particularly difficult in settings when children attend on an irregular basis.*
- *Involving parents in contributing to the observation and assessment.*
- *Creating records that are clear and accessible to everyone who needs to see them.*

How could settings overcome these challenges?

1. *What have you seen in settings and schools that works?*
2. *What other ideas do you have?*

Summative assessment, or assessment of learning, is also required within the EYFS. At the end of the Foundation Stage settings and schools are required to make a summative assessment of each child's learning. This is recorded within the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile. It is a requirement that all settings, including those in the private, voluntary and independent sectors, who have received funding for pre-school education from the government, complete these summative assessments for children who are in their school/setting at the end of the Foundation Stage. For the vast majority of children the summative assessment will be completed in school at the end of their Reception year, the point at which they move into Year 1 and the National Curriculum replaces the Early Years Foundation Stage. A very small number of children may not do a Reception year in school and remain in their nursery or playgroup until the end of the Foundation Stage. Where this happens the pre-school setting is responsible for completing the summative assessment. These data must be sent to the relevant local government authority. This information provides a data set used by schools, local authorities and government to track children's learning and development through their time in the education system.

Settings may also be required to complete summative assessments of children's learning to inform processes of assessment where there is concern about a child or family. This is usually part of a broader assessment of the child's needs involving other agencies. This could be necessary at any point in a child's time in a setting or school.

C H A P T E R S U M M A R Y

In this chapter we have explored why and how we observe and assess young children's learning. The importance of finding ways to observe, assess and record what children know and can do as starting points to adapt and modify provision and pedagogical practice is emphasised. Different techniques for observing, assessing and recording children's learning have been described and the importance of matching techniques to purpose highlighted. The observation and assessment requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage are outlined.

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9 Reflective practice

This chapter enables you to understand:

- what reflection is;
- what reflective learning is;
- what reflective practice is;
- what a reflective practitioner is;
- different models of reflective practice;
- how reflection supports an understanding of children's learning and development;
- the importance of reflective learning for emancipatory professional development.

Introduction

This chapter is concerned with reflection. Reflection is a way of learning. It is a process of actively considering what we do, and why and how we do it, in order to better understand children's learning, and to further develop our professional knowledge and skill. Being reflective is an essential professional skill. It requires practitioners to engage in developing a deeper understanding of their work. This is important: not only do practitioners need to be skilled at what they do but this skill needs to be based on a good understanding of children and their learning. This understanding will not only support their practice but will enable practitioners to consider, to question and, at times, to challenge demands that are made of them. This can be done from a position of strength when practitioners' knowledge and understanding of young children's learning have been carefully considered so practice is soundly based in active, considered and well-informed choices.

Reflection, reflective learning and reflective practice

What is reflection?

Reflection is a process of becoming aware of what you are doing and why you are doing it. It is a process of learning from your experiences. It is about being critically aware of yourself, your thoughts, actions, language and interactions. It is about carefully and knowledgeably analysing these processes and drawing evaluative conclusions about the what, how and why of what you practice.

Reflection is an in-depth consideration of events or situations by oneself or with critical support. The reflector aims to work out what has happened, what they thought or felt about it, why, who was involved and when. It is looking at whole scenarios from

as many angles as possible: people, relationships, situations, place, timing, chronology, causality, and so on, to make situations and people more comprehensible. This involves reviewing or reliving the experience to bring it into focus.

(Bolton, 2005, page 9)

The process of reflection involves metacognition. Metacognition is the ability to be aware of and to think about and consider our own thinking. Metacognitive thinking often follows cognitive activity. Cognitive activity occurs as we observe and notice what is happening within an activity or experience, and metacognitive activity occurs as we reflect on our thoughts feelings and responses within what we noticed. Metacognition is a higher-order thinking process that has been shown to be associated with successful learning (see Livingstone, 1997).

What is reflective learning?

Reflective learning is the process of learning from reflecting. It is a process of learning through internally examining and exploring an issue triggered by an experience. This exploration leads to clarification in meaning followed by a change in understanding (Boud, Keogh and Walker, 1985).

The purpose of reflective learning is to clarify your understanding of an activity or experience and your role in it. This professional knowledge can then inform your practice.

As well as this pragmatic approach to practice, reflective learning can involve consideration of wider ethical and political choices within Early Years practice. Moss (2008) reminds us that all that we do in Early Years practice is underpinned by choice. For example, we can choose what image of the child we engage with, and we can aim to construct our own understanding of Early Years practice through questioning and interrupting the dominant discourse (see definition). Reflection and reflective learning can underpin a questioning approach to our work. By developing active, lively, questioning minds we give ourselves permission to develop our own understanding of Early Years practice and, in doing this, go beyond being technicians and become well-informed, thoughtful and self-defined practitioners.

Definition

Dominant discourse: The expected ways of thinking, talking and understanding that we take for granted and that shape our ways of living and working. These ways of being are almost always determined by dominant, decision-making groups in a society

What is reflective practice?

Reflective practice is the practice that flows from reflective learning. It is practice that is informed by a richer understanding of what you do because of your analysis of the context of Early Learning and of your own practice. In reflective practice changes flow from conscious thought and learning. Changes in practice are made through purposeful noticing, thinking, analysing and evaluating.

Being a reflective practitioner

Reflection, reflective learning and reflective practice are all stages in the process of being a reflective practitioner. The requirement to be a reflective practitioner is threaded through current Early Years discourse. Reed and Canning (2010, page 8) observe that *reflective practice is seen as having the potential to make a difference for children and families, as being significant for the way in which we respond to children and their needs*. They point out that the ability to apply knowledge to experience in order to reflect upon and improve practice (see Figure 9.1) is embedded in a range of Early Years practice documentation, namely, *the Common Core of Skills and Knowledge* (DfES, 2005), *The Early Years Foundation Stage* (DfES, 2007) and *Standards for Early Years Professional Status* (EYPS) (CWDC, 2008).

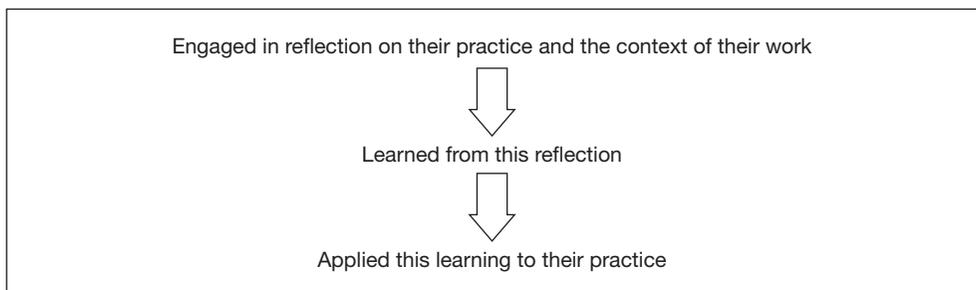


Figure 9.1 A reflective practitioner

THEORY FOCUS

An adaptation of the Johari window

A useful way of understanding the process of bringing action into conscious awareness in order to reflect upon it is an adaptation of the Johari window, sometimes called a conscious competence matrix (Figure 9.2). In this model reflective learning would be a process of becoming conscious-competent at what you do to inform changes in practice.

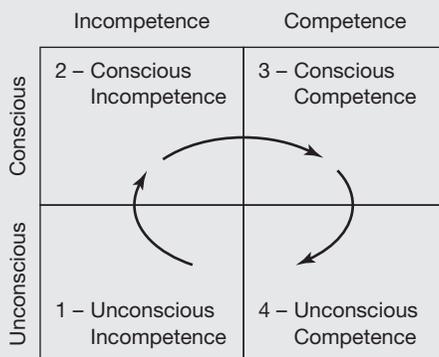


Figure 9.2 Conscious competence learning matrix

THEORY FOCUS *continued*

Applying this model to an aspect of practice.

1. **Unconscious incompetence** At this stage practitioners are unaware of the need for changes in an aspect of their practice.
2. **Conscious incompetence** At this stage practitioners become aware of the need for changes in their practice.
3. **Conscious competence** At this stage people are aware of what they are doing and aim to change and improve their practice through conscious noticing and reflecting upon what they do.
4. **Unconscious competence** At this stage practitioners have reflected on their practice, developed their understanding and made changes to what they do. These changes then become embedded in their practice so practitioners no longer need to consciously focus on this aspect of their practice.

CASE STUDY

Georgia had just started a new job in a Foundation unit in a school. Part of her role was to have a group of children for storytime. This was something that she had done in her previous job. However, over the first few weeks Georgia began to realise that the children in her group became quickly restless during storytime and that the strategies that she was using weren't successful in calming the group down. Georgia became increasingly aware that she needed to develop other strategies to engage the children at storytime so that the session was a useful learning experience. She discussed this with the teacher. Together they decided that they would do three things: Georgia would observe the other staffs' storytimes to see which strategies they were using; she would look for training opportunities that offered an understanding of and strategies for managing behaviour positively and effectively; she would read up about how young children learn and about effective practice in reading to young children. Once Georgia had considered what she had seen and read, and had a better understanding of the issue, they agreed that she would try some different strategies that she felt would work. The teacher would observe and support her in implementing them effectively. For a while Georgia had to think carefully about each session and actively plan which strategies she was going to use. However, as time passed the group became easier to engage and storytimes became calmer. Georgia could now respond effectively 'in the moment' to any issues that arose.

Identify each of the four stages of learning in this case study.

- *How did Georgia become aware of her need to change her practice?*
- *What strategies did Georgia use to reflect on her practice?*
- *How did Georgia ensure that her reflective learning informed her practice?*
- *How did Georgia know that she had moved towards embedding her learning in her practice?*

ACTIVITY 1

Models of practice are best understood when applied to experiences, so think of an event or experience in your own life to explore this model.

- 1. How did you become aware of your need to learn more about an aspect of your life to enable you to become more competent?*
- 2. What processes did you use to become more competent?*
- 3. How much of this was a conscious cognitive process?*
- 4. How did this process affect your ongoing competence in this area of your life?*

Models of reflective practice

Engaging in reflective practice, and becoming a reflective practitioner, can be supported by models that explain and describe the process of reflection. Reflection is often divided into two distinct types: reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action (Schön, 1983). The distinction can be seen as one of timing and expertise.

Reflection-in-action

Reflection-in-action is the process of reflecting on practice *during* practice, and changing and adapting action and interaction in the moment according to need. This often happens at a subconscious level. At a basic level it is the rapid practical decision-making that we do as we practice. For example: how to present activities and resources; which book to choose to read to a particular group of children; what to do when there is a dispute between children. For skilled and experienced practitioners these rapid decisions can be at a very sophisticated level. For example: during an activity moving between different interactive strategies to ensure that children remain engaged; knowing exactly when to change, alter or adapt provision to ensure children continue to be engaged and learning; responding to parents each day and adapting the tone of these interactions 'in the moment' to meet their needs; judging whether to encourage a child to persist with an activity or not. These are quite complex judgements to make in the moment and require an excellent understanding of children, their learning and development and of pedagogical practice.

Reflection-on-action

Reflection-on-action involves consciously thinking about and considering practice after it has happened. This is done to understand what happened and to analyse and interpret what this means so that we can change future practice. Reflection-on-action is done retrospectively and allows time and space to engage with the processes of theory and practice. This implies that there are cognitive processes involved; cognitive processes of professional meaning-making that have an impact on how we perceive our role and what we do.

The process of reflection

The process of reflection on professional practice can be understood as a staged process. Jasper (2003) describes a five-stage approach.

1. Select an experience or activity to reflect upon.
2. Observe and describe what happens.
3. Analyse what happened.
4. Interpret what happened.
5. Explore alternatives.
6. Frame future action.

Select an experience

In practice the starting point for reflection is an event, experience of activity. There are a number of ways of selecting the area of practice for reflection.

- It could be in an area of your practice that you know that you want to understand better. You would then choose when to engage in this area of practice with the intention of observing, reflecting and analysing your practice.
- It might occur to you during practice that this activity/event/experience is something that you want to explore further. This might be because it has gone very well and you want to understand why this was. It may occur to you as you are engaged in practice that this is an aspect of your practice that you need to develop.
- The starting point may be a critical incident. Brookfield (1995) describes critical incidents as situations or events that are vividly remembered and hold special significance for the person taking part. These incidents can be both positive and negative. What is important is that they feel significant for the individual – a moment in time from which to learn. The word ‘critical’, in this instance, means important or significant, a decisive moment or turning point. Critical incidents are also sometimes referred to as critical moments. Critical incidents/moments can act as excellent stimuli for reflection and learning.

ACTIVITY 2

I can still recall the conversation with a friend, Rebecca, at school who said that she was going to be an infant school teacher. As she said it, it occurred to me, in that moment, that that was what I wanted to do. That, for me, was a critical moment on my career path.

- *Draw a simple timeline about how you came to be reading about/studying early childhood development. What were the significant critical moments (conversations, events, experiences) that were important in your choice?*

continued

ACTIVITY continued

- *Analyse how these moments influenced your choice. Keep focused on the analysis. In what ways did these critical moments influence your decision to read about/study child development? What decisions did you take following these critical moments? How did they influence what you did next?*
- *What action flowed from those critical moments? What did you do that was different from before?*

Observe and describe what happens

The purpose of this stage of the process is to record, in as much detail as is necessary, what happened. This recording of what happened will be the material that you work from, and return to, in your reflection. Jasper (2003) recommends asking six questions of the event/experience as a framework for recording the detail of what happened; who, what, when, where, why, how.

This recording can be done in many ways, including:

- a formal observation;
- an informal observation;
- as a conversation;
- tape-recorded;
- photographs;
- as a video recording;
- as a journal – written or pictorial or an electronic journal such as a blog;
- as a graphic (pictorial representation).

You will need to make sure that the way in which you record your work complies with the rules and permissions that govern working with children.

The important aspect of recording is that it provides sufficient content and stimulus to enable you analyse accurately and in depth what happened. How you record will depend upon the context in which you are undertaking reflection, and your preferred way of conceptualising and recording what you have seen and experienced. For some people this will be through the written word; others will prefer to represent things visually and use pictorial representation. Some people are more comfortable with electronic recording and representation. It is, of course, possible to use a range of methods to record what has happened. What is important is that this is shaped into something that has meaning for you and offers a stimulus to thought.

Analysing what happened

At this stage in the reflective process you start to explore what happened in order to understand what happened. This is what analysis means: to study something in detail in order to discover more about it. The process of analysis requires that you think deeply and systematically about what happened. It also requires that you make links between what

you know about Early Years practice and the situation that you are analysing. This may involve you in finding out more to inform your analysis, as you need to have sufficient knowledge and understanding to support your analysis.

Interpreting what happened

What should emerge at this stage of the reflective process is a clear understanding of the event, experience or activity – an interpretation based on your analysis. Your aim is now to construct an understanding that has meaning for you and your professional practice. Your interpretation of what happened needs to be cohesive as this will be a starting point for exploring what to do next. This can be achieved alone through thinking and reflecting on what you have learned, or it may be useful at this stage to work alongside someone else to discuss and interpret your understanding of what happened and apply this to your professional role.

Exploring alternatives

You now have an understanding and interpretation of a particular aspect of your practice. The next stage in the reflective process is to open this knowledge up and explore the possibilities that it offers. Jasper (2003) talks about this process in terms of refocusing in order to see things in a different way, consciously seeking to see the features of our experience differently in order to learn and make changes. This exploration offers a range of possibilities for changes to perspective or practice, or building upon and developing successful practice, and acts as a precursor to deciding exactly what change(s) to make.

Framing future action

This stage of the reflective process involves a conscious process of seeking to apply what you have learned in the reflective process, both in terms of how you think and what you do. You may find that you have articulated a number of possibilities for change and you will need to consider these in terms of what is possible. These don't have to be big changes: small changes are often as effective as dramatic ones. Once you have made your choice about the way forward, you need to commit to this particular change and consider how it can be integrated into your practice.

THEORY FOCUS

Changing practice

A useful model for understanding the process of and embedding change in your practice is the AFGAM model – a model from learning theory. Acquiring new skills and embedding them in practice takes time. It is not a case of either having skill or not having skill. This model offers a way of understanding the developmental progression of change.

Accuracy – this is the process of learning and developing accuracy in what you want to achieve.

Fluency – practising and becoming fluent in the skill.

continued

THEORY FOCUS *continued*

Generalisation – being able to use the skill fluently in different contexts.

Automatisation – the skill becomes automatic – learning the skill is over and it is embedded in practice.

Maintainance – maintaining the skill by doing it regularly.

ACTIVITY 3

Look at the AFGAM model.

1. *Consider learning to drive. How does learning to drive fit into the model?*
2. *Consider learning to skate. How does learning to skate fit into the model?*
3. *Consider learning to read a story to a group of children. Map this to the model.*
4. *Consider another skill that you have acquired. Map your learning to the model. Which stage was the most challenging? Why do you think this was?*

The reflective process is most effective when it is an ongoing process. This means that once you have framed your action and changed your practice, this change then becomes the subject for further reflection. In this way we continue to learn and deepen our understanding of our professional practice and develop our understanding of Early Years.

Reflecting on issues

The process of reflecting upon an issue, rather than an aspect of practice, will be similar in terms of the processes of analysis, interpretation and exploration of alternatives. However, when dealing with an issue rather than an aspect of practice, the second stage of observation and description is likely to be replaced by reading and discussion to enable you to be well informed before undertaking analysis and interpretation of the issue. Similarly, stage five, framing the future, is likely to be in terms of perspective, understanding and approach rather than a concrete example of changed practice. This is also an ongoing process of developing a questioning and well-informed response to the context of our professional practice.

ACTIVITY 4

At what age should children start statutory school?

This is an issue that invokes lively debate in Early Years. The starting age of five years was established in the 1876 Elementary Education Act. It is not made clear in the act why the age of five was chosen. The age for leaving school has been altered and changed many times, but not the starting age. Many other European countries have later starting ages and there is no evidence to suggest that this has negative impact on their educational attainment. Should we reconsider statutory school age?

ACTIVITY continued

- Use the reflective learning process to consider this issue.

You will need to analyse and interpret the available evidence and be aware of possible alternatives before drawing conclusions about what you consider to be an appropriate age at which children should start statutory school.

Clearly this reflective approach can be used in many different ways and in different situations: in our professional and personal lives; individually or within groups and teams of people; in relation to personal practice, practice across a team; or wider political policy and practice issues. In all situations the process and the aim will be the same: to notice, analyse and interpret something that has happened, or an issue that has arisen, and then explore alternative ways of responding to this which lead to changes in perspective and/or behaviour.

How does reflection support our understanding of children's learning and development?

The knowledge and skill of practitioners have been shown to be linked to the outcomes of children. The Effective Provision of Pre-school Education (EPPE) study (Sylva *et al.*, 2003) and the Effective Pedagogy in the Early Years (EPEY) study (Siraj-Blatchford *et al.*, 2002) are clear that the quality of staffing in a setting (measured by level of qualification) is associated with the quality of provision and better cognitive outcomes for children. The importance of this in the reflective process is that as reflective learning has an impact on the knowledge and skill of staff it will, in turn, have an impact on the quality of provision. The quality of provision is likely to be enhanced as effective reflective learning makes explicit links between ideas, theories and expertise, provision and pedagogical approaches which, in turn, means that practitioners have a better understanding of provision and pedagogy and, importantly, how this is manifest in provision. This will enhance the quality of provision in a setting.

The reflective process can also be used directly to better understand individual children's learning. A practitioner may choose to focus the reflective process on a particular child's learning and development within an area of learning, or focus on better understanding how a child learns best. The resulting analysis, interpretation and action are likely to lead to provision and pedagogical strategies that are closely aligned to the child's needs.

CASE STUDY

As keyworker to Sam, Jean decided to complete a time sample of observations with the intention of finding out which activities and experiences Sam was choosing during a session. She undertook a number of observations over a period of two weeks, recording where Sam was playing, who he was playing with and how he engaged in play. Jean used the reflective process to consider Sam's learning.

continued

CASE STUDY *continued*

Jean's analysis of the observations showed that:

- *Sam played with a range of activities;*
- *he often played alongside Alex;*
- *he chose to play outside for part of each session;*
- *he seemed to enjoy small-world play and would become engrossed in his play, appearing to be acting out narratives with the toys;*
- *his learning and development were appropriate for his age and experience;*
- *he played predominantly alone for most of each session – he rarely interacted with the other children and seemed content not to do so.*

Jean's interpretation of the evidence was that Sam was settled and happy at nursery. He appeared to be learning and developing well and had made progress since starting at nursery school. Sam was content with his own company and his level of engagement in play was high. She had some concern that the observation evidence showed that Sam was spending a lot of time playing alone and wondered whether this was the best way for him to learn. She recalled Vygotsky's work on the importance of social interaction and peer support in learning and considered whether Sam might be missing out on one important way of learning. She also considered the work of Piaget and noted that Sam became deeply engaged in his play and it was evident that he was thinking and working things out in the scenarios that he created. Also that he accessed a range of activities that offered him opportunities to be explore and engage with learning in a dynamic and multisensory way.

In discussion with her colleagues Jean explored several possibilities of how to respond to what she had observed. One option was not to intervene at this point; to leave Sam playing predominantly alone as he appeared content and was learning, but to be aware that this was something that she needed to keep in mind in later observation and reflection. Another possibility was to alter the provision to provide more opportunities for Sam, and the other children, to select more interactive activities. This might encourage Sam to choose activities that supported his learning through interaction. Thirdly, she considered joining in Sam's play and encouraging him to interact during his play both with herself and other children. Lastly, she considered planning adult-led activities that she would engage Sam and Alex in, as he was the child Sam appeared to be most often playing alongside.

Jean decided to do two things: first, to alter provision to provide more opportunities for Sam and the other children to engage in interactive play, and to monitor Sam's response to this, and, second, to make some observations on Sam's language and social development, and speak with his parents, to make sure that there were no concerns about his development that might affect his social interaction. She decided on this course of action because, on reflection, she was aware that children learn in different ways and her observations showed that Sam appeared to be highly engaged in his play and was learning and developing well. Sam was happy and settled in the nursery and appeared to enjoy his time there. She surmised that perhaps this was Sam's preferred way to learn.

Reflective learning and emancipatory professional development

Reflective learning is a useful and effective way to enhance professional practice. However, there is an inherent danger in reflective learning: that it becomes a tool for us to turn ourselves into excellent technicians, able to deliver prescribed practices and procedures in the most effective way. Moss (2008) highlights this danger and offers us a choice, of choosing to become technicians or to determine our own ways of understanding and being in our professional roles. The inherent danger is that unless we offer ourselves the permission to articulate our own understandings and define how we practise, the power of external forces, outlined in policy and guidance, and embedded in much professional development training, will determine this for us. Clearly, there is much to commend in policy, guidance and training but our orientation towards it is vital. We can choose whether to accept all that is demanded of us and aim to deliver it well, or we can choose to develop our own understanding of effective practice and use this as a starting point to develop our own practice and, at times, therefore, to question and filter demands that are made of us. Emancipatory professional practice flows from the construction of our own practice relatively free from demands and restrictions. Practice, in this model, emerges from a strong and detailed understanding of how children learn and of effective pedagogical practice. Practice developed in this way can then be highly contextualised and, therefore, made relevant for each particular group of children.

The process of reflection is important in understanding and constructing effective Early Years practice. If we offer ourselves permission to use reflection to consider our practice then we have an effective tool to develop and construct our professional practice within a community of Early Years practitioners.

C H A P T E R S U M M A R Y

In this chapter we have considered reflection as an important way of developing professional practice and of understanding how children develop and learn. We have explored what is meant by reflection, reflective learning and reflective practice, and the importance of becoming a reflective practitioner. A staged model of the reflective process has been detailed. The inherent danger of using reflection to become effective Early Years technicians rather than Early Years practitioners has been discussed.

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