



Development matters

FS1 - Nursery

Development matters is non-statutory curriculum guidance for the early years. It offers a top-level view of how children develop and learn for all practitioners. We use this to support our curriculum development, planning and to achieve the early learning goals at the end of Foundation stage 2 – Reception.

Communication and language
3 and 4 year old
Enjoy listening to longer stories and can remember much of what happens.
Can find it difficult to pay attention to more than one thing at a time.
Use a wider range of vocabulary.
Understand a question or instruction that has two parts, such as: “Get your coat and wait at the door”.
Understand ‘why’ questions, like: “Why do you think the caterpillar got so fat?”
Sing a large repertoire of songs.
Know many rhymes, be able to talk about familiar books, and be able to tell a long story.
Develop their communication, but may continue to have problems with irregular tenses and plurals, such as ‘runned’ for ‘ran’, ‘swimmed’ for ‘swam’.
May have problems saying: - some sounds: r, j, th, ch, and sh - multisyllabic words such as ‘pterodactyl’, ‘planetarium’ or ‘hippopotamus’.
Use longer sentences of four to six words.
Be able to express a point of view and to debate when they disagree with an adult or a friend, using words as well as actions.
Can start a conversation with an adult or a friend and continue it for many turns.
Use talk to organise themselves and their play: “Let’s go on a bus... you sit there... I’ll be the driver.”

Observation check point

Around the age of 3, can the child shift from one task to another if you fully obtain their attention, for example, by using their name?

Around the age of 4, is the child using sentences of four to six words – “I want to play with cars” or “What’s that thing called?”?

Can the child use sentences joined up with words like ‘because’, ‘or’, ‘and’? For example: “I like ice cream because it makes my tongue shiver”.

Is the child using the future and past tense: “I am going to the park” and “I went to the shop”?

Can the child answer simple ‘why’ questions?

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

3 and 4 year old

Select and use activities and resources, with help when needed. This helps them to achieve a goal they have chosen, or one which is suggested to them.

Develop their sense of responsibility and membership of a community.

Become more outgoing with unfamiliar people, in the safe context of their setting.

Show more confidence in new social situations.

Play with one or more other children, extending and elaborating play ideas.

Help to find solutions to conflicts and rivalries. For example, accepting that not everyone can be Spider-Man in the game, and suggesting other ideas.

Increasingly follow rules, understanding why they are important.

Do not always need an adult to remind them of a rule.

Develop appropriate ways of being assertive.

Talk with others to solve conflicts.

Talk about their feelings using words like 'happy', 'sad', 'angry' or 'worried'.

Begin to understand how others might be feeling.

Observation check point

Around the age of 3, can the child sometimes manage to share or take turns with others, with adult guidance and understanding 'yours' and 'mine'?

Can the child settle to some activities for a while?

Around the age of 4, does the child play alongside others or do they always want to play alone?

Does the child take part in pretend play (for example, being 'mummy' or 'daddy'?)

Does the child take part in other pretend play with different roles – being the Gruffalo, for example? Can the child generally negotiate solutions to conflicts in their play?

Note: watch out for children who seem worried, sad or angry for much of the time, children who seem to flit from one thing to the next or children who seem to stay for over-long periods doing the same thing, and become distressed if they are encouraged to do something different. You will need to work closely with parents and other agencies to find out more about these developmental difficulties.

Physical Development

3 and 4 year old

Continue to develop their movement, balancing, riding (scooters, trikes and bikes) and ball skills.

Go up steps and stairs, or climb up apparatus, using alternate feet.

Skip, hop, stand on one leg and hold a pose for a game like musical statues.

Use large-muscle movements to wave flags and streamers, paint and make marks.

Start taking part in some group activities which they make up for themselves, or in teams.

Are increasingly able to use and remember sequences and patterns of movements which are related to music and rhythm.

Match their developing physical skills to tasks and activities in the setting. For example, they decide whether to crawl, walk or run across a plank, depending on its length and width.

Choose the right resources to carry out their own plan. For example, choosing a spade to enlarge a small hole they dug with a trowel.

Collaborate with others to manage large items, such as moving a long plank safely, carrying large hollow blocks.

Observation check point

Look out for children who appear to be overweight or to have poor dental health, where this has not been picked up and acted on at an earlier health check. Discuss this sensitively with parents and involve the child's health visitor. Adapt activities to suit their particular needs, so all children feel confident to move and take part in physical play.

Use one-handed tools and equipment, for example, making snips in paper with scissors.

Use a comfortable grip with good control when holding pens and pencils.

Start to eat independently and learning how to use a knife and fork.

Show a preference for a dominant hand.

Be increasingly independent as they get dressed and undressed, for example, putting coats on and doing up zips

Be increasingly independent in meeting their own care needs, e.g. brushing teeth, using the toilet, washing and drying their hands thoroughly.

Make healthy choices about food, drink, activity and toothbrushing.

Observation check point

Most, but not all, children are reliably dry during the day by the age of 4. Support children who are struggling with toilet training, in partnership with their parents. Seek medical advice, if necessary, from a health visitor or GP.

Literacy

3 and 4 year old

Understand the five key concepts about print: - print has meaning - print can have different purposes - we read English text from left to right and from top to bottom - the names of the different parts of a book - page sequencing

Develop their phonological awareness, so that they can: - spot and suggest rhymes - count or clap syllables in a word - recognise words with the same initial sound, such as money and mother

Engage in extended conversations about stories, learning new vocabulary.

Use some of their print and letter knowledge in their early writing. For example: writing a pretend shopping list that starts at the top of the page; write 'm' for mummy.

Write some or all of their name.

Write some letters accurately.

Mathematics

3 and 4 year old

Fast recognition of up to 3 objects, without having to count them individually ('subitising').

Recite numbers past 5.

Say one number for each item in order: 1,2,3,4,5.

Know that the last number reached when counting a small set of objects tells you how many there are in total ('cardinal principle').

Show 'finger numbers' up to 5.

Link numerals and amounts: for example, showing the right number of objects to match the numeral, up to 5.

Experiment with their own symbols and marks as well as numerals.

Solve real world mathematical problems with numbers up to 5.

Compare quantities using language: 'more than', 'fewer than'.

Talk about and explore 2D and 3D shapes (for example, circles, rectangles, triangles and cuboids) using informal and mathematical language: 'sides', 'corners'; 'straight', 'flat', 'round'.

Understand position through words alone – for example, "The bag is under the table," – with no pointing.

Describe a familiar route.

Discuss routes and locations, using words like 'in front of' and 'behind'.

Make comparisons between objects relating to size, length, weight and capacity.

Select shapes appropriately: flat surfaces for building, a triangular prism for a roof etc.

Combine shapes to make new ones - an arch, a bigger triangle etc.

Talk about and identifies the patterns around them. For example: stripes on clothes, designs on rugs and wallpaper. Use informal language like 'pointy', 'spotty', 'blobs' etc.

Extend and create ABAB patterns – stick, leaf, stick, leaf.

Notice and correct an error in a repeating pattern.

Begin to describe a sequence of events, real or fictional, using words such as 'first', 'then...'

Understanding the world

3 and 4 year old

Use all their senses in hands-on exploration of natural materials.

Explore collections of materials with similar and/or different properties.

Talk about what they see, using a wide vocabulary.

Begin to make sense of their own life-story and family's history.

Show interest in different occupations.

Explore how things work

Plant seeds and care for growing plants.

Understand the key features of the life cycle of a plant and an animal.

Begin to understand the need to respect and care for the natural environment and all living things.

Explore and talk about different forces they can feel.

Talk about the differences between materials and changes they notice.

Continue to develop positive attitudes about the differences between people.

Know that there are different countries in the world and talk about the differences they have experienced or seen in photos.

Expressive arts and design

3 and 4 year old

Take part in simple pretend play, using an object to represent something else even though they are not similar.

Begin to develop complex stories using small world equipment like animal sets, dolls and dolls houses etc.

Make imaginative and complex 'small worlds' with blocks and construction kits, such as a city with different buildings and a park.

Explore different materials freely, in order to develop their ideas about how to use them and what to make.

Develop their own ideas and then decide which materials to use to express them.

Join different materials and explore different textures.

Create closed shapes with continuous lines, and begin to use these shapes to represent objects.

Draw with increasing complexity and detail, such as representing a face with a circle and including details.

Use drawing to represent ideas like movement or loud noises.

Show different emotions in their drawings and paintings, like happiness, sadness, fear etc. Explore colour and colour-mixing.

Show different emotions in their drawings – happiness, sadness, fear etc.

Listen with increased attention to sounds.

Respond to what they have heard, expressing their thoughts and feelings.

Remember and sing entire songs.

Sing the pitch of a tone sung by another person ('pitch match').

Sing the melodic shape (moving melody, such as up and down, down and up) of familiar songs.

Create their own songs, or improvise a song around one they know.

Play instruments with increasing control to express their feelings and ideas.