

Early Years Special Educational Needs Service Small Steps Profile

Introduction

The first months and years of a child's life set the stage for lifelong learning and development. Most children develop quickly in the early years and parents and practitioners take delight in watching children achieve their milestones. The checkpoints provided by Development Matters in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) are a useful resource for children who are progressing developmentally. The checkpoints can be used to monitor how children are developing and at what rate. Due to the rapid amount of progress that typically developing children make during the early years, the early years outcomes are broad in nature. However, for children who make slower progress, it is often difficult to evidence progress. For example, Personal, Social and Emotional Development the September 2023 update of Development matters provides the following 5 checkpoints between birth to 3 (0-36 months).

Around 7 months, does the baby respond to their name and respond to the emotions in your voice?

Around 12 months, does the baby start to be shy around strangers and show preferences for certain people and toys?

Around 18 months, is the toddler increasingly curious about their world and wanting to explore it and be noticed by you?

Around the age of 2, does the child start to see themselves as a separate person? For example, do they decide what to play with, what to eat, what to wear?

Between the ages of 2 and 3, does the child start to enjoy the company of other children and want to play with them.

A child with significant developmental delay may take months to move from the first checkpoint to the second. With this in mind the EYSENS have created the Derbyshire Celebratory Checkpoints to be used at a targeted level of the Graduated Response (see guidance notes on the Derbyshire Local Offer) and the Derbyshire Small Steps assessment profile to support children at the Specialist Level of the Graduated Response. The profiles have been created by a team of specialists in SEN.

Specific and Prime areas

Within the prime areas and cognition and learning there are ten statements (small steps which are bullet pointed) in each step.

Pathway	Step	Developmental stage in months
Birth -3	Step 1.1	0-4
	Step 1.2	4-8
	Step 1.3	8-12
	Step 2.1	12-16

Pathway	Step	Developmental stage in months
Birth -3	Step 2.2	16-20
	Step 2.3	20-24
	Step 3.1	24-28
	Step 3.2	28-32
	Step 3.3	32-36

Children must achieve all the development small steps in one block of ten before moving onto the next set of ten small steps (unless exceptional circumstances – see later notes). However, the small steps in each block of ten do not appear in a developmental hierarchy and can be achieved in any order which allows children to follow their own particular learning style.

Below is an example of the Small Steps. The statements in blue are taken directly from the Early Years Foundation Stage Development Matters.

The Derbyshire Early Years SEN Service – EYFS Specialist Assessment - Step 1-3								
Name	Initial assessment	1 st review	2 nd review	3 rd review	4 th review	5 th review	6 th review	7 th review
	Physical Development	Personal Social and Emotional Development	Communication and Language	Cognition and Learning				
Step 1.1 (0-4 months)	- Moves head in response to sensory stimuli e.g. sounds, movement, lights, when lying on back or supported in sitting. - When pulled to sit, head initially lags before dropping forward. - Brings hands to midline. - Makes movements with arms and legs which gradually become more controlled. - Holds fingers open most of the time reduced reflex grasp. - Finds own face with hands when lying or in supported sitting. - Holds rattle for a couple of seconds when placed in palm of hand. - Begins to show purposeful movements to reach and touch objects. - Coordinates hand eye movements to reach and hold objects. - Grabs for and scratches clothes or surfaces within easy reach. Does the baby move with ease and enjoyment?	- Turns eyes or head to find speaker and watches speakers face carefully - Smiles in response to touch or sound. - Makes changes in body movements during interactions. - Responds to physical interaction e.g. being rocked or cuddled by changing behaviors. - Reacts differently to unfamiliar people. - Cries to express hunger, pain and upset. - Sucks on hands, clothes, or pacifier to calm self. - Seeks physical and emotional comfort by snuggling in to trusted adults. - Calms from being upset when held, rocked, spoken or sung to with soothing voice. - Begins to cry when adult attention ends.	- Stills or stops crying at sounds of familiar voice, - Turns head to locate speaking adult. - Concentrates intently on faces and enjoys interaction. - Copies exaggerated facial movement and expression. - Shows interest and attention to an adult singing or talking for longer periods. - Shows more interest in 'singsong' speech than typical adult voice. - Sucks or licks lips in response to sounds/visual cues of preparation for feeding. - Chuckles and makes happy sounds and has a special cry for hunger. - Communicate a range of needs and feelings using their voice in a variety of ways e.g. crying, gurgling, babbling and squealing. - Vocalises more when adult uses child directed speech. Is the baby using speech sounds (babbling) to communicate with adults?	- Responds to a range of sensory experiences in the environment. - Shows awareness of people, objects and sounds nearby. - Demonstrates anticipatory responses to familiar actions and routines. - Tracks moving people and objects with eyes and head. - Gives brief attention to faces, objects and activities. - Explores objects through looking, touching and mouthing. - Reacts to changes in the environment such as movement, light or sound. - Shows early understanding of cause and effect through repeated responses. - Begins to imitate simple facial expressions and actions. - Develops early curiosity through sensory exploration and interaction.				
Step 1.2 (4-8 months)	- Attempts to roll over, tummy to back or back to tummy. - When lying on tummy is able to lift first head and then chest, supporting self with forearms and then straight arms. - Rolls over from front to back and from back to front. - Takes weight through legs and bounces up and down when held in a standing position. - Maintains sitting position for two minutes once placed. - Move to sitting from laying on tummy. - Pick up a small toy using both hands in a full hand grasp e.g., small ball. - Manipulates objects, e.g. banging, shaking, turning them around in their hands. - Releases toy from grasp by dropping or pressing against a firm surface but cannot yet place down deliberately. - Tracks with eyes when passing toy from hand to hand. - Can release grasp deliberately to drop toy.	- Maintains eye contact during interactions with a familiar person. - Smiles and makes sound in response to eye contact. - Takes turns in vocal exchanges. - Recognises and is most responsive to main caregivers' voice. - Shows pleasure at being tickled and other physical interactions. - Shows anticipatory behaviour in familiar play such as peek a boo games / being lifted. - Becomes upset if an anticipated event does not happen. - Is affectionate with familiar adults and will give hugs, kisses etc. - Can become distressed if left alone or in presence of unfamiliar person/place. - Takes part in give and take exchanges with an adult. At around 7 months, does the baby respond to their name and respond to the emotion in your voice?	- Listen to an adult talking and responds with vocalisations. - Shows preference for sounds and dislike of others. - Makes distinct response to name being called e.g., turns head, smiles. - Respond differently to different tones of voice e.g., singsong, questions, soothing and playful, as tone of voice helps understanding of the meaning. - Anticipates being picked up when adult gestures (hold arms out) - Initiates vocal conversation and waits for turn by babbling and making sounds. - Uses voice, gestures, and facial expression to make contact with people and keep their attention. - Indicates wants by reaching towards desired object. - Protests at the end of an activity - Starts to play with consonants such as 'mmm' and 'dd' Around 6 months does the baby respond to familiar voices, turn to their own name and take turns in conversation with babbling?	- Maintains attention to preferred people, objects and activities for short periods. - Shows increased interest in exploring the immediate environment. - Observes visual details in people, objects and simple images. - Attempts to and compares two people or objects at once. - Anticipates familiar routines, songs and games when given cues. - Repeats actions to achieve a desired effect. - Explores objects purposefully using hands and mouth. - Demonstrates emerging understanding of turn-taking interactions. - Shows awareness of familiar people, toys and resources. - Uses exploration and repetition to learn about objects and events.				

Small steps of development are only ticked (or highlighted) as achieved when the child has demonstrated the behaviour on several occasions and can generalise the skill in order to achieve it with different adults in different environments. If a child has achieved skills in a more advanced block of small steps, these can also be ticked/highlighted at reviews. If a statement has not been achieved, then there must be a professional decision made as to it is significant as a barrier to learning that should be addressed through learning outcomes before moving on; **or**

- that 1 missing statement is not a barrier to future learning;
- **or** that the statement cannot be observed as the child has already moved on to a higher order skill in that area;
- **or** the child has a physical, visual or hearing impairment which makes it impossible for them to achieve that statement.

In all of these 3 situations the statement can be marked as n/a.

Children can be working on more than one age stage small step profile at any one time. For example, a child may be working at step 1.3 in communication and language but at step 2.2 in physical development.

The profiles are designed to be used as an ongoing assessment tool and to guide practitioners and teachers when they are selecting future targets. When a child has achieved a particular statement, it is ticked or highlighted on the profile. By supporting children to achieve all statements in a particular block of 10 before moving on, practitioners can ensure that there are no significant gaps in development which could have an impact on future learning. Having said this, professional judgement must be applied when using the profiles as sometimes a child cannot complete a particular statement for a particular reason as described previously.