

Birth to three

Examples to support learning

When settling a baby or toddler into nursery, the top priority is for the key person to develop a strong and loving relationship with the young child.

Learn from the family about what they do to soothe their child and what to look out for – for example, a baby who scratches at their head when they are getting tired.

Make sure babies and toddlers can get hold of their comfort object when they need it.



Support children as they find their own different ways to manage feelings of sadness when their parents leave them. Some children might need to hold onto a special object from home to feel strong and confident in the setting. Some might need to snuggle in and be comforted by their key person. Some might get busy straight away in their favourite play or with another child they feel close to.

Young children need to feel secure as they manage difficult emotions. Provide consistent and predictable routines, with flexibility when needed.

Respond and build on babies' expressions and gestures, playfully exploring the idea of self/other. Suggestion: point to your own nose/eyes/mouth, point to the baby's.

Find out what calms a baby – rocking, cuddling or singing.



Personal, Social and Emotional Development 1

Explain to parents that once babies establish 'object permanence', they become more aware of the presence or absence of their parents. Object permanence means knowing that something continues to exist even when out of sight. This can make separations much more distressing and difficult between 6–24 months.



Be positive and interested in what babies do as they develop their confidence in trying new things.

Model useful phrases like "Can I have a turn?" or "My turn next."

Help toddlers and young children to make informed choices from a limited range of options. Suggestion: enable children to choose which song to sing from a set of four song cards, by pointing. Enable children to choose whether they want milk or water at snack time.

Acknowledge babies' and toddlers' brief need for reassurance as they move away from their key person. Encourage babies and toddlers to explore, indoors and outside. Help them to become more independent by smiling and looking encouraging, for example when a baby keeps crawling towards a rattle.

Recognise, talk about and expand on children's emotions. For example, you might say: "Sara is smiling. She really wanted a turn with the truck."

Provide consistent, warm and responsive care. At first, centre this on the key person. In time, children can develop positive relationships with other adults.

Store resources so that children can access them freely, without needing help.

Babies develop a sense of self by interacting with others, and by exploring their bodies and objects around them, inside and outdoors.

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Examples to support learning

Arrange resources inside and outdoors to encourage children's independence and growing self-confidence. Suggestion: Treasure Basket play allows babies who can sit up to choose what to play with.

Show warmth and affection, combined with clear and appropriate boundaries and routines. Develop a spirit of friendly co-operation amongst children and adults.

Be open to what children say about differences and answer their questions straightforwardly. Help children develop positive attitudes towards diversity and inclusion.

You cannot force a child to use the potty or toilet. You need to establish friendly co-operation with the child. That will help them take this important step. Children can generally control their bowels before their bladder.

Be open to what children say about differences and answer their questions straightforwardly. Help children develop positive attitudes towards diversity and inclusion.

When the key person is not available, make sure that someone familiar provides comfort and support, and carries out intimate care routines.

When appropriate, notice and talk about children's feelings. For example: "I can see it's hard to wait, just a minute and then it's your turn to go down the slide."

Personal, Social and Emotional Development 2

Model useful phrases like "Can I have a turn?" or "My turn next."

Help all children to feel that they are valued, and they belong.

Story times with props can engage children in a range of emotions. They can feel the family's fear as the bear chases them at the end of 'We're Going on a Bear Hunt'. They can feel relief when the Gruffalo is scared away by the mouse.

Offer supervision or work discussion sessions to staff. Staff will need to talk about the strong feelings that children may express. How are practitioners feeling about these and developing their understanding of the children's feelings?

Encourage children to express their feelings through words like 'sad', 'upset' or 'angry'. Toddlers and young children may have periods of time when their favourite word is 'no' and when they want to carry out their wishes straight away. Maintain sensible routines and boundaries for children during these testing times. Negative or harsh responses can cause children to feel unduly anxious and emotionally vulnerable.



Support children to find ways into the play and friendship groups of others. For example, encourage them to stand and watch from the side with you. Talk about what you see, and suggest ways for the child to join in.

Notice when young children are ready to begin toilet training and discuss this with their parents:

- they know when they have got a wet or dirty nappy
- they get to know when they are peeing and may tell you they are doing it
- the gap between wetting is at least an hour
- they show they need to pee by fidgeting or going somewhere quiet or hidden
- they know when they need to pee and may say so in advance

Potty training is fastest if you start it when the child is at the last stage. By the age of 3, 9 out of 10 children are dry most days. All children will have the occasional 'accident', though, especially when excited, busy or upset.

Help children to feel emotionally safe with a key person and, gradually, with other members of staff.

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