



Understanding  
your child

**Solihull Approach**

Understanding  
your child

Leaflet for  
parents

## Developmental and emotional Milestones

The most important thing to remember about developmental and emotional milestones is that all children are different. These milestones are a general description of what most children can do at certain ages. Your child may reach some milestones earlier and others later. Either way, it may be the right time for your child's individual development.

Developmental and emotional milestones can be useful because they can show that the way your child is behaving, even if it is embarrassing, is how children of that age often behave. For instance, no parent wants to hear their child say 'I hate you' but knowing that this is common behaviour at the age of five years may help you to take it less personally!

If you have any concerns about your child not reaching some of the milestones you may want to contact your health visitor or GP for advice.

As your child reaches their second birthday, knowing that they are more likely to kick and bite other children means that you can be more prepared to help them through that stage so that they can manage their anger. Research shows that children are at their most violent at the age of two to three years old! It is the job of parents, grandparents, carers and childcare staff to support children through this very important stage of their lives. This will build the connections in the child's brain (see the leaflet on *Brain Development* and the YouTube videos) which will help them in the future to control their anger and their impulses.

## Developmental and emotional milestones 0–12 months

### Emotional milestones

#### Birth – 4 weeks

Baby getting used to life outside the womb – often quite disorganised – baby needs to feel calm, safe and have a routine.

#### 4 – 6 weeks

More settled – beginning to settle into regular pattern.

#### 6 weeks to 3 months

May be starting to smile and will smile in response to a positive interaction with another person.

Starting to develop different cries and facial expressions that indicate when hungry, tired, uncomfortable or overwhelmed.

Enjoys looking at human face in particular parents or familiar adults.

Starting to vocalise more.

#### 3 months to 6 months

Smiling usually established.

Temperament becoming clearer.

Gradually becoming more aware of own feelings.

Enjoying the familiar and starting to anticipate regular events, such as sight of bottle prior to being fed.

#### Separation

Gradually able to tolerate small amounts of time from parents.

May be able to comfort self for short time but this is variable and there may be times when baby cannot do this particularly if he is frightened.

Sleeping may change with altered sleeping arrangements e.g. move from parent's room to separate room.

### Developmental milestones

During the first year babies' bodies develop very fast. The nervous system becomes organised – the rate and level of this process seems at least partly related to the quality of the relationship between baby and parent.

In general, babies gain control over their bodies from head to foot and from their centre outwards to arms and legs, and then their fingers and toes.

First control is of eye muscles – focus 6–9 inches. From birth, babies are interested in looking at the faces of their parents.

By 3 months babies respond by smiling.

By 3 months will lift head and upper chest when prone using forearms to support.

Grasps rattle for a short while.

Hands move when distressed/excited at sound of approaching noise.

5–6 months: reaches for object – picks up with raking movement.

By 6–12 months: babies make various sounds – babbling, cooing, gurgling and laughing.

6–9 months: babies copy carers' speech sounds.

At 9–12 months sits unsupported for 10–15 minutes; attempts to crawl.

Recognising others, mother, father, siblings, grandparents aunts, uncles.

By 6 months starting to recognise differences in familiar people. At times may be aware of strangers.

### 6 – 12 months

Increased capacity to recognise feelings such as joy and displeasure.

Becomes more aware of being separate from parents.

Recognising strangers and can react in a distressed way if stranger tries to interact too quickly.

Starting to be able to distract themselves when things go wrong.

More persistent in pursuing their own goals especially in play.

Enjoys sharing games with parents and others.

Laughter occurring more often when engaging in exciting interactions with parents and familiar adults.

## Developmental and emotional milestones 12–18 months

### Emotional milestones

#### 12 months

Toddler begins to learn to separate emotionally from main parent and to develop own identity.

#### 12–18 months

Shows anxiety about separation from parent – tends to feel out of control of the situation and become more nervous and anxious. Not until 18–24 months can toddlers carry a picture of their loved ones in their mind.

### Developmental milestones

Developing fine pincer grasp.

Pulls to stand and by about 1 year most babies walk unaided.

From 1 year becomes very active – gets into everything.

Climbs on chair to reach something – stacks containers, starts to learn simple instructions.

Has 'mama', 'dada' and 2 or 3 other words. Jabbers.

### 18 months

Key words are 'me', 'mine' and 'no' – begin to distinguish between 'you' and 'me'.

- Responds to own name and 'no-no' and 'give it to me'.
- By 18 months has about 10 words – using words to replace or accompany pointing.
- Drinks from cup with help. Chews.
- Holds spoon and tries to use.
- Puts wooden cubes in and out of cup when shown.
- Quickly finds hidden toy.
- Plays pat-a-cake, and waves 'bye-bye'.
- Sits or stands without support while being dressed.

## Developmental and emotional milestones 2 years

### Emotional milestones

Toddlers normally show extremes of behaviour between 2 and 3 years – very dependent/independent, very aggressive/calm, helpful/stubborn.

More independent – gets angry when stopped from moving somewhere, tantrums common (cries desperately, kicks, bites, rough with other children).

Begins to show feelings of pride, pity, sympathy. These feelings connect the child to himself and to others. Two-year-olds are usually aware of praise and smile.

Needs a parent to tell him what is right and what is a 'no-no' – tone of voice important. First step in recognising right from wrong.

Less fear of strangers.

Fear of noises, thunder, trains, flushing toilets.

Plays alone or alongside others but won't share.

### Developmental milestones

- Runs, pushes and pulls large toys.
- Climbs on furniture and up and down stairs holding on to rail.
- Throws small ball overhead.
- Sits on small bike and scoots along with feet.
- Hand preference usually obvious.
- Enjoys picture books and recognises detail.
- Modifies pencil grasp, spontaneously scribbles to and fro and in a circular motion.
- Knows 50+ words and begins to form simple sentences.
- Talks to self.
- Names familiar objects and parts of body.
- Carries out simple instructions. Spoon-feeds well and chews competently.
- Verbalises toilet needs – may be dry in day.
- Enjoys imitating domestic activities.

Short attention span and easily distracted.  
Harsh parenting and smacking gets in the way of a child's emotional development.  
Toddlers like routine and any changes upset them.

## Developmental and emotional milestones 3 years

### Emotional milestones

Play is the work of this age – focus on becoming confident and efficient.  
Quite balanced – normally happy and contented.  
Still self-centred and magical in thinking – believes wishes make things come true.  
Has imaginary friends who can be blamed when things go wrong.  
Bargaining works but reasoning does not.  
Distraction still works.  
Doesn't get so frustrated and gets less angry when stopped.  
Biggest fear is that their parent will abandon them – especially at night.

### Developmental milestones

Enjoys walking/climbing and running.  
Likes drawing/threading/play-dough and simple jigsaws.  
Begins to take turns, as a start to sharing.  
Large vocabulary mainly intelligible to strangers, but many ungrammatical forms persist.  
Able to follow instructions.  
Asks many 'what, where and who' questions.  
Listens eagerly to stories.  
Uses fork and spoon.  
Pulls pants/knickers up/down.

## Developmental and emotional milestones 4 years

### Emotional milestones

4-year-olds enjoy silly games/talk and showing off.  
Through play they continue to seek balance between dependence/independence.  
May see return of some '2-year-old stubbornness'.  
If naughty, may blame others or be naughty on purpose to get a reaction.  
May be aggressive again – biting, kicking,

### Developmental milestones

Up and down stairs with adult following.  
Climbs ladders/trees.  
Rides tricycle expertly.  
Increasing skill in ball games.  
Threads small beads on lace.  
Holds pencil in mature fashion.  
Copies an X.  
Speech grammatically correct and intelligible.

and throwing objects.  
Has a sense of past/future.  
Fear of dark remains.  
Begin to compete with parent of same sex for the attention of parent of opposite sex

Listens to and tells long stories, sometimes getting confused. Repeats nursery rhymes.  
Eats skilfully.  
Washes/dries hands, brushes teeth.

## Developmental and emotional milestones 5 years

### Emotional milestones

More balanced again.  
Quite independent and often serious and realistic.  
Less frustrated and less angry – may bang doors/stamp feet, say 'I hate you' and 'I wish you were dead'.  
Mostly friendly and talkative to strangers.  
Bargaining continues to work. Calming down and time-out chairs help them to regain self-control.  
Fears of being hurt are common.  
May also worry that parents may not be available when needed, e.g. something happening to a parent while child at school.  
Tender and protective towards younger child or pet.

### Developmental milestones

Runs lightly on toes.  
Active and skilful in outdoor play.  
Grips strongly with either hand.  
Good control in writing and drawing and painting.  
Writes a few letters spontaneously.  
Speech fluent – may have some phonetic confusions.  
Recites rhymes and jingles.  
Enjoys jokes – asks meaning of abstract words.  
Uses knife/fork competently.  
Undresses/dresses.  
Appreciates clock time in relation to daily routine.

## Developmental and emotional milestones 6 years

### Emotional milestones

Parents are less central to the child's world.  
More involved in school life and making new relationships. Prefer to keep school and home life separate e.g.:  
'What did you do today?'  
'Nothing!'

### Developmental milestones

Has a sense of competitiveness and rivalry.  
Ability varies widely at this age.  
Attention span still quite short.  
Intellectual skills are developing, but still tends to think in concrete images, e.g.,

Like their work and efforts to be noticed.  
Can be very unsettled by a teacher leaving.  
Teacher is seen as 'theirs' and this threatens security and stability.  
Preoccupied with aspects of life such as life, death, illness, religion. Searching questions such as 'Where do babies come from?'  
Friendships can be intense.  
Will be upset if excluded at times of sadness, e.g., family bereavement.

moving house (will question if building is moving).  
Speech difficulties will be improving. Speech may be fluent, vocabulary still limited.  
Has endless questions, very inquisitive.  
Reading simple stories between ages 6–7.  
More able to control antisocial impulses and develop a sense of what is right and acceptable.  
Plays in single sex groups and may actively dislike the opposite sex.  
Girls may have a best friend, boys are usually in groups but may have a special friend.  
May show interest in bodies of opposite sex.  
Plays 'doctors and nurses'.  
Can sort fact from fiction and believe and not believe at the same time, e.g., Father Christmas.

## Developmental and emotional milestones 7 years

### Emotional milestones

Clear sense of own identity.  
Growing confidence and self-esteem through experience of different situations.  
Understands other people's thoughts, feelings and wishes better.  
Argues with parents when views differ.  
Quarrels with siblings but learning reasoned arguing.  
Feels more secure and able to cope in the 'real' world.  
Can be self critical and sensitive to other people's comments.  
Likes the order and routine of class groups but still happier in small group activities.

### Developmental milestones

More independent; may want to go to school alone.  
Self-control increasing; 'more sensible.'  
Ability to reason develops along with vocabulary.  
Still has a sense of competitiveness and rivalry.  
Sense of time still poor – five minutes could be forever.  
Understands pretend play – knows it is not real but enjoy the fantasy.  
Play tends to be more with other children than parents.  
Friendships may come and go.

Shows a strong attachment to teacher and may compare parents to teacher.  
 There needs to be a strong home/school relationship to leave child free to learn.  
 Can be muddled by complex family relationships as in divorce and stepfamilies.  
 Needs clear explanations and reassurance.  
 Generally accepts a new baby without too much jealousy if included and reassured.  
 May reserve their worst behaviour for those they love best, i.e., family.

Will compare friends.  
 Enjoys pocket money and learning how to use it.  
 Enjoys board and card games with parents – these help to learn about winning and losing safely.  
 Will collect anything: tickets, bottle tops, cards. Like to 'own' them and swap with friends.

## Developmental and emotional milestones 8 years

### Emotional milestones

A lull between dependence of babyhood and independence of adolescence.  
 Absorbing all their life experiences – positive and negative – receptive to good experiences – vulnerable to bad.  
 Strong emotions felt but can be difficult to cope with.  
 May be idealistic, e.g., 'I'll never smoke'.  
 Family very important – assume it is stable.  
 Routine is important.  
 School and class routine are reassuring especially if have moved to Junior school.  
 Teacher and peers build confidence in self.  
 Still needs help with decisions and boundary setting. Need 'grown-ups' to listen to their fears and worries.  
 Makes 'same sex' friendships.  
 Friendships are based on thoughtfulness and consideration as well as mutual activity, rivalry and quarrelling.

### Developmental milestones

Able to participate in competitive and other sports.  
 Speech and ability to count developed further by board games.  
 Enjoys 'lavatory' humour.  
 Co-ordination improves – able to play musical instruments.  
 Enjoys 'facts'.  
 Likes to watch television.  
 Likes 'crazes' and collecting items.

## Developmental and emotional milestones 9 years

### Emotional milestones

Family important – needed for a secure base and also for encouragement to do well.

Aware of family members' strengths, weaknesses and capabilities, and of caregiver's anxieties.

Growing independence but can still act impulsively, with variation in degree of organisation.

Many can express themselves verbally, but may need help to express their thoughts and fears at difficult times, particularly around parental separation, divorce and life events. May benefit from talking to someone outside of family.

Beginning to understand parents and people in power do not always have all the answers.

Perceptive and beginning to understand groups and individuals, and what is important about the opposite sex.

Play is still important with a need for a 'best friend', though there may be more than one 'best friend'.

Curious about death and dying, but beginning to have a more adult understanding of the finality of death and its implications.

Interested in sexual matters and relationships.

Joke about sex but do not necessarily understand the language used and the implications.

Some nine-year-olds experience anxiety about whether they will grow up to be 'normal' – they are aware of the talk, e.g., homosexuality, but do not fully understand and remain anxious.

### Developmental milestones

Steady growth in height; boys generally taller and heavier than girls.

Generally not experienced bodily puberty changes. However, some girls experience early changes and may have started menstruating.

Boys generally do not start bodily changes for some years.

Personal hygiene and the importance of keeping clean becoming increasingly important as sebaceous and sweat glands start to become more active.

Aware of how they fit in – aware of slight physical characteristics – and can be magnified – calling each other names.

Although they may tease about physical and personality defects/differences, also show concern for others.

## Developmental and emotional milestones 10 years

### Emotional milestones

Discovery that the rules of life are increasingly complicated, and that the world seems a much bigger place.

More independence is achieved, and the nature of friendships is changing.

Now able to set and achieve own goals.

There is a mental change that occurs at this time, they discover the wider picture and have to think around subjects.

Increased awareness of where they stand in relation to others, they will know their ranking in class.

Aware of social and cultural differences.

They may feel pressured if they have learning difficulties, or considered very able.

Anxious to please their parents and feel the pressure to succeed, and often seek out a middle position so as to not stand out from their peers.

Friendship provides opportunity to move away, both emotionally and actively from a focus within the family.

Hobbies and pursuits are important, allowing them to make gains.

Increasingly concerned about issues of justice and fairness.

### Developmental milestones

Can master most things to do with the body, intricate co-ordination skills are developed by practising and honing their preferred sporting activities.

There may be a generalised body growth, with a changing of the shape of the body.

Although there are issues that are common to both sexes, the experience of boys and girls is different.

Sexual matters are usually approached in a joking, bantering manner within their separate groups. Knowledgeable joking by boys that conveys they have a wealth of knowledge, means they don't have to worry about girls.

Some girls may have started their periods and be more advanced physically than other girls, and than boys as a group.

**Girls**

Breast buds may start to develop, and may be uneven, one side developing before the other.

Pubic hair may have already started to appear and underarm hair usually appears two years after pubic hair. Sweat glands will start to increase, and the skin may start to become spotty and blackheads appear.

**Boys**

Growth of testes, and pubic hair. Facial and underarm hair growth starts approximately two years after pubic hair growth. Sweat glands will start to increase and this may cause spots and blackheads. The voice may start to deepen but this usually develops at a later age.

## Developmental and emotional milestones 11 years

### Emotional milestones

Increasing independence, becoming more self-aware.

Developing own interests can lead to conflict in family.

Needs parental support to help explore and understand their developing skills and relationships.

Adopted children become increasingly curious about birth parents.

Developing ideas of what it is to be a man or a woman. Parental attitudes will be a big influence.

May join with older children as want to feel more grown-up and be tempted into risky behaviour, e.g., smoking, drinking alcohol.

Friendships – girls: although part of a larger group of friends, a lot of 'best friend' swapping can happen, causing upset.

Friendships – boys: groups are often more activity-based, e.g., football, skateboarding, rather than focused on interpersonal relationships.

### Developmental milestones

Puberty – boys: physical changes often start later than in girls, lack of height may affect self-esteem.

Some boys may start to notice broader shoulders and an enlarged scrotum.

Puberty – girls: a time of rapid physical development, hips widen, breasts developing, getting taller, periods starting for some.

11-year-olds need to be kept informed about the changes that are happening to them so they understand their bodies and feel prepared.

Changing school – some children look forward to the change as a step towards growing up, others find the upheaval difficult.

Developing an independence of mind, having own opinions, thinking and learning in a more logical way.

Hygiene – may need reminding about personal hygiene.

Appetite – usually good, some girls may start to diet.

Sleep – reluctant to go to bed and get up!

## Developmental and emotional milestones 12–14 years

### Emotional milestones

Body changes may evoke a variety of feelings – denial, dread, apprehension, relief, delight, pride, disgust, excitement, worry and self-consciousness.

**Sexuality**

Masturbation – relief of tension, feelings of

### Developmental milestones

Beginnings of puberty

**Girls**

May have periods, develop breasts and grow pubic hair, changing body shape.

Smelling, sweating and unfamiliar cramps and aches.

guilt, fantasies.

Parent's anxiety. Making new relationships – changing relationship with parents.

Homosexuality – sorting out confused desires and urges, experimenting as establishing 'who's me'.

### School life

Making friends – in and out of school and being part of a group.

Social stress, pain and pleasure of being included and excluded.

Very influenced by peers.

Loosing bonds with parents.

### Establishing own identity

Rebelling and conforming – moving between the two.

### Experimenting and testing

Music and clothes may be closely related.

### Testing the limits

Possible difficulties:

Stealing

Eating disorders

Drugs and alcohol

Promiscuity

### Life in the family

Conflicts within and outside the family.

Wanting the responsibilities of being grown up and at the same time wanting things done for them.

Separating from parents.

### Boys

May experience first ejaculations (often as dreams).

Sudden increase in growth, develop body hair, spots and voice changes.

### Sexuality

Masturbation

### School life

Increased exposure to range of thinking, learning and acquiring new technical skills. Extra homework.

## Developmental and emotional milestones 15–18 years

### Emotional milestones

Period of emotional upheaval, change and confusion.

Strong desire to move away from family and authority, develop their own identity and beliefs.

### Developmental milestones

Time of great physical growth and change. Adolescents may become preoccupied with their bodies – too fat, too thin – 'Is it normal'?

Need to have own space and be recognised as individuals.

School and society may be perceived as a threat to establishing their own identity.

This may develop into conflict and arguments rejecting adult advice.

May appear as idealistic, arrogant or self-righteous, provoking discussion and challenging parents' opinions and beliefs in an attempt to show their independence but also to engage parents.

The reverse may also be apparent, withdrawing from family life, avoiding conversation and contact when in reality they are really still in need of parent's attention.

Mood swings occur as the teenager copes with alternate feelings of fearing, then desiring, to be an adult, sometimes needing space and at other times nurturing.

Boundaries may be a source of anguish, the parent concerned with safety and the young person stating, 'It's my life'.

Expectations may be the result of a caregivers wishes rather than the teenager's hopes and dreams and this may lead to unhappiness on both sides.

By this age development of growth and puberty may be well advanced in girls, but in boys may be very active. Feet and hands grow first, making teenagers appear, ungainly and the trunk grows faster than the legs. Shoulder and hips widen as a result of sex hormones but boys develop wider shoulders and more muscle than their female counterparts.

Most girls will already have started their periods but it is not unusual for this to happen between these ages.

Other sexual characteristics may be already apparent or developing, such as pubic hair, breast enlargement in girls and the deepening of voice, facial hair and enlargement of penis and testes in boys.

Sebaceous and sweat glands become more active, giving rise to skin problems such as spots and acne Even eyes grow and change shape and may give rise to changes in vision.

The age at which these changes take place vary immensely to each individual.

However, it is worth mentioning that the age at which maturation occurs may have an effect on the adolescent's development.

Early onset of puberty in girls has been linked to feelings of low self-esteem and late onset in boys has been reported to have the same effect.

### Solihull Approach 'Understanding your child'

*'Kai is learning new spellings. He really wants to do well. He has a new list each week and I have to make time to help him.'*

[www.SolihullApproachParenting.com](http://www.SolihullApproachParenting.com)

Solihull Approach is part of the government's CANparent (Classes and Advice Network) parenting voucher scheme.