

1.1 **Child Development**

Babies and children develop in **individual ways** and at **varying rates**. **Every area of development** – physical, cognitive, linguistic, spiritual, social and emotional, **is equally important**.



### Child development

- Every child is a unique individual with their own characteristics and temperament.
- Development is a continuous, complex interaction of environmental and genetic factors in which the body, brain and behaviour become more complex.
- Babies and children mature at different rates and at different times in their lives.
- Babies and children are vulnerable and become resilient and confident if they have support from others.
- Early relationships strongly influence how children develop and having close relationships with carers is very important.

### A skilful communicator

- Babies are especially interested in other people and in communicating with them using eye contact, crying, cooing and gurgling to have 'conversations'.
- Babies and children are sociable and curious, and they explore the world through relationships with others and through all their senses.
- Babies and children develop their competence in communicating through having frequent, enjoyable interactions with other people, in contexts that they understand.
- Children learn to communicate in many ways, not just by talking, but also in non-verbal ways such as gestures, facial expressions and gaze direction, in drawing, writing and singing, and through dance, music and drama.

### A competent learner

- Babies come into the world ready to learn and are especially tuned to learn from other people and the cultural and material environment.
- Play and other imaginative and creative activities help children to make sense of their experience and 'transform' their knowledge, fostering cognitive development.
- Language, thinking and learning are interlinked; they depend on and promote each other's development.
- What children *can* do is the starting point for learning.
- Children learn better by doing, and by doing things with other people who are more competent, rather than just by being told.



## Effective practice

- Understand the processes involved in babies' and children's growth, development and learning.
- Support babies and children to develop a positive sense of their own identity and culture, this helps them to develop a positive self-image.
- Encourage, listen and respond to babies' and children's communications, both non-verbal and verbal.
- Acknowledge the different ways in which babies and children learn, and be aware that learning is a process that cannot be rushed.
- Recognise that babies' and children's attitudes and dispositions to learning are influenced by feedback from others.



## Challenges and dilemmas

- How to meet the differing and competing needs of every child, while being 'fair' about time spent with individual children.
- Listening carefully and waiting for a child who gets excited or pauses a lot when they are trying to communicate, so that they can complete what they wanted to say.
- Recognising and praising effort as well as achievement so that all children develop positive attitudes to themselves as learners.



## Reflecting on practice

Think about each child in the group. Consider their:

- unique development;
- individual interests;
- communication style;
- learning style.

How is each child's individual development supported through all the experiences in the setting?

## What do I do next?

- **Welfare requirements** are explained in full in the *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage* booklet.
- **Areas of Learning and Development** including effective practice, planning and resourcing at different stages are detailed in the *Practice Guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage* booklet and on the CD-ROM.
- **Early Support** information is available on the CD-ROM under areas of Learning and Development.
- **Research and resources** are available on the CD-ROM.

