



The Bright Horizons
Parent Guide to:

Early Childhood Development

Ages 0-2 years



“Every child has an inner timetable for growth; a pattern unique to them. Growth is not a steady forward, upward progression. It is instead, a switchback trail, three steps forward, two back, one around the bushes and a few simply standing still, before another forward leap”

Dorothy Corkville Briggs

Introduction

0-2 years

The Bright Beginnings Curriculum is designed to provide today's children with the core emotional foundations - as well as the practical skills - to learn and thrive as they progress through their early years and beyond.

Children develop best by having access to a wide range of stimulating opportunities and experiences, through exploring, creating and being active.

With the guidance of our skilled, caring practitioners in the nursery and your love and support at home, we look forward to sharing your child's learning journey and partnering together in their early development and education.

Our Parent Guide to Early Child Development has been created to provide you with examples of how children develop and the outlines of what they might be learning at each stage.*

Your child's first five years are rich in learning and development, so we've designed our parent guides into three parts, one for each of the key development stages 0-2 years, 2-3 years and 3-5 years. All three guides are based on our Bright Beginnings Curriculum and aligned to the government's 'What to Expect in the Early Years Foundation Stage: A Guide for Parents' (Department for Education 2021)

*Please remember that this is a "guide" and not a set of rigid definitions, since every child is unique and individual, and will grow and develop at their own pace. If you are unsure about anything in this guide, or if you have concerns about your child's development, please speak to your child's Key Person or nursery manager, and we will be happy to support you further.



What does the Bright Beginnings Curriculum look like?

Opportunities and Experiences for Learning and Aspects

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- 1.2 Independence and Self-Regulation
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Exploring and Learning about My World

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- 5.4 Role Play
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- 5.7 Understanding the Wider World

Select an area to go to that section!

A close-up photograph of a baby sleeping peacefully. The baby is wearing a blue and white striped onesie and has a clear pacifier in their mouth. A green and orange striped caterpillar toy is on the left, and a yellow lion toy is on the right. The baby is lying on a dark grey surface.

Feelings and Friendships

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Confidence

1.1

- I am beginning to explore and feel safe and secure within familiar surroundings and form attachments with key people around me. I am becoming confident to explore the environment independently although sometimes need reassurance to feel secure in cosy spaces when necessary.
- I am beginning to explore independently and be curious when sensitively supported in my efforts.
- I seek connections with the key people around me by expressing interest with facial expressions, gazing intently, my movement and the sounds and noises I make.
- I respond when key people understand my interests and support me, for example I point to things just out of reach or express what I want with facial expressions
- I am beginning to grow in confidence and curiosity within the world around me and like to be supported to try things out and see what happens.
- My vocabulary is growing as I begin to verbalise my thoughts and actions with the support of a key person, asking me encouraging questions.

Independence and Self-Regulation

1.2

- I am beginning to become more active and explore my surroundings by kicking, bouncing, rolling around and exploring with my whole body.
- I am beginning to express my thoughts and feelings through single words or gestures. I sometimes become frustrated and express myself through impulsive actions.
- I can engage in some daily care tasks by myself. For example, I might reach or point for a tissue if my own or another person's nose needs wiping. I may begin to recognise my own bodily functions
- I know when I am becoming tired and seek out ways to communicate this to key people in my life. For example, I may reach for my comforter, point to the sleep room or crawl into a safe place to rest
- I am starting to understand my emotions and the environment supports me to make choices around when I need to be by myself and regulate my own actions

Understanding and Respecting Others

1.3

- I am beginning to respect others by exploring, observing and hearing what is happening around me. I respond when another child is upset or in distress.
- I am able to demonstrate to others, what I have observed and experienced from key people, like kind voices and cuddles.
- I am building positive relationships with others by learning from you how to be kind, calm and caring. I am curious about how others respond through words, expressions and tone of voice.

Making Relationships

1.4

- I enjoy the company of others from birth, through physical contact and close attachments
- I am beginning to build relationships with others taking cues from your facial expressions, eye contact and making noises.
- I am beginning to try out new experiences and situations with your support. I may need you to remain close by me, so that I can keep 'checking in' with you for reassurance
- I am beginning to play alone and sometimes alongside other children. I am learning about being sociable and initiate interactions
- I am sometimes able to play on an individual basis with key people - I am becoming more confident with activities such as, rolling a ball back and forth

Managing Behaviour

1.5

- I respond to your voice, cuddles and songs when I am upset. I sometimes need you close to help me to be calm
- I can regulate my emotions in different situations with your support.
- I am beginning to learn about some boundaries and what is acceptable. You may need to support me to remember these boundaries
- I may need to bring my favourite comfort item or toy to nursery. This will help me to feel safe and secure and remind me of home. Keep this where I can find it.
- Sometimes I may need to be on my own to sooth myself in quiet, cosy spaces. I may need you to stay close by in case I need reassurance.

Dispositions for Learning

1.6

- I am beginning to develop a sense of self through sharing experiences with people around me who praise my efforts and acknowledge my attempts at communication.
- I seek opportunities to share songs with key people where I can develop a sense of my uniqueness and individuality by pointing to my body parts
- I am developing a strong exploratory impulse through a range of carefully planned opportunities and natural resources that are appropriate for my age and stage of development
- I demonstrate that I feel valued and included for my uniqueness, proud of who I am and acknowledged for my individuality, my culture and ethnicity.

Mindfulness

1.7

- I need to feel connections with the key people around me by being held close, and spending time together on an individual basis.
- I like to hear calming environmental sounds such as wind blowing and trees rustling so that I become aware of my surroundings and my body, in the moment and feel calm.
- I need you to nurture me in a non-judgemental way, rocking me in your arms so I can feel comfortable with my own body and feelings.
- I need key people who respond to my tears and frustrations with kindness and understanding, sensitively attuning to my needs.



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Self-Expression

2.1

- I like to listen to songs and lullabies while you rock me. This way I learn about linking feelings with music and movement
- I like to explore new sounds with you, like musical instruments or loose parts banging together. I can copy your actions to express my feelings through actions
- I like to explore and be creative with different mediums like paint, sand and dough. I need to explore these in any way that I choose, so that I can express myself through movement and sensory play
- I learn from you that my wishes and feelings are sensitively respected with compassion and understanding when you respond to my cues and body language.

Reading

2.2

- I enjoy it when you read simple stories to me and let me point to the illustrations for example "Can you find the dog?"
- I take an interest in chunky board books and cloth books, handling them, opening flaps, press for sounds and learn to turn the pages independently
- I am learning that print conveys meaning through photographs of real things and a range of environmental print, for example my name card at mealtimes.
- I like to sing songs and rhymes so that I can join in with the actions and anticipate what comes next, when I am developmentally ready

Writing and Drawing

2.3

- I am able to explore different sensory mediums such as gloop, sand or food I spill on the table, using my whole body. I am learning that my marks have meaning
- I feel valued when I am praised for my efforts and you give positive attention to my early mark making attempts.
- I am learning that text conveys meaning when you role model writing for a purpose with me.

Speaking, Listening and Understanding

2.4

- I am beginning to communicate and make my needs known in a variety of different ways such as smiling, crying, gurgling and babbling. I am learning to respond when you interpret my verbal and non-verbal cues
- I am learning to 'take turns' in conversations. I respond to you listening to the sounds and noises I make and copying my facial expressions and attempts at communication.
- I am beginning to copy some of the words and vocabulary that you model for me, developing my communication skills.
- I respond when you read books with me and ask me to find items from the story for example "Can you point to the frog?". I am developing my listening and understanding skills
- I am beginning to find words to express my thoughts and feelings, sometimes with your help, but often my emotions are expressed through impulsive actions and gestures.



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ICT

3.1

- I am beginning to take an interest in learning how objects work. I enjoy and seek out toys where I can lift flaps and press buttons, supporting my understanding of 'cause and effect'
- I am learning that technology is an important part of how things work and everyday life by watching you use simple ICT equipment such as calculators and iPads

Numbers and Measure

3.2

- I engage in opportunities to count and explore and understand the concept of 'more than one'.
- I am becoming confident to use the language of size in my everyday language such as 'big' and 'small'.
- I am beginning to learn about measurements in different contexts.
- I take part in singing songs that support my awareness of numbers for example 'Five Little Monkeys'
- I fill and empty receptacles confidently and learn about capacity.
- I am beginning to explore resources that differ in weight and I understand what is heavy and light, sometimes with your support

Calculation

3.3

- I am beginning to develop an understanding that things exist, even when out of sight, for example hiding objects under a blanket or playing peek-a-boo with me.
- I confidently hold resources in both of my hands, as I am beginning to learn about the quantity of 2 in real-life contexts such as counting my shoes, socks and gloves as I put them on.
- I am beginning to demonstrate that I am gaining confidence in learning the sequence of familiar, daily routines and events, sometimes with your help
- I demonstrate that I am learning about sorting and categorising, especially Heuristic play resources, when putting things back where they belong.
- I am confident using pictures or symbols to help me categorise and sort resources.

Using Tools

3.4

- I can use my hands to my hands to explore different textures and mediums
- I can reach out and grasp objects and pass them from one hand to the other
- I can hold an object in each hand and bring them together in the middle, for example, banging two blocks together
- I am beginning to learn about different sounds and forces as I explore making noise with different types of objects and resources
- I am beginning to show an interest in feeding myself, using a spoon or my hands to explore food
- I can use my whole hand grip (palmar) to hold mark making tools such as crayons and pencils

People and Places

3.5

- I am developing an awareness of my uniqueness through stories and photographs of people that are different from me
- I am becoming aware that I am different from others and value those differences when you read stories to me that reflect other cultures, race and ways of life
- Looking at photographs of me and my family help me feel valued
- I am able to spend time with my older peers in another room or the outdoor area for short periods. This helps me learn new skills when I engage with children older and more able than myself

Caring for Self and Others

3.6

- I am learning from you how to be kind, calm and caring by observing and responding to your voice, words and expressions.
- With your help I am beginning to communicate and find my words when you model empathy.
- I am able to feed myself at mealtimes with your support if I need some help
- I am learning to care for myself and develop my confidence and self-esteem by beginning to dress myself for example, putting on my socks, shoes or hat, sometimes with support
- I am developing my understanding of the wider world, how I can move my body in different ways and experience fresh air and exercise through being outdoors daily.

Relaxation

3.7

- I demonstrate calmness and relaxation when you speak to me in a soft, tranquil and nurturing voice. I feel safe and secure when you are holding me close
- I can relax and settle when provided with calming sounds at sleep time for example, raindrops, dolphins or whale sounds
- I am able to settle off to sleep when supported to relax, for example being patted softly or have my back or face stroked.
- I am able to self-soothe when provided with cosy spaces where I am able to feel snug and secure. I may still need my personal comfort item such as my special blanket nearby, or something that smells of home



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Heuristic Play and Loose Parts

4.1

- I am beginning to access resources that encourage open-ended experimentation.
- My fine and gross motor skills are becoming more purposeful as I reach, hold, stretch, crawl and move to access materials that interest me.
- I am curious to reach out and explore treasure baskets containing a range of interesting every-day objects.
- I am beginning sit up and explore, to shake, feel, rattle and mouth different items, using all my senses. Sometimes I need your support to do this and I may be able to engage independently.
- I am starting to freely choose how I play with the loose parts items. I am able to experiment, problem solve and explore with confidence.

Shapes and Space

4.2

- I am beginning to move around freely to investigate my surroundings and find out how my body works within my environment
- I can explore treasure baskets and loose parts items and am learning about different textures, shapes, weight and volume.
- I can transport and combine materials and use my environmental space to extend my learning
- I enjoy listening to and joining in with stories and songs for example 'The Wheels on the Bus go round and round' or lift the flap books
- I can explore a variety of interesting spaces, both indoors and outdoors, filled with open-ended opportunities for me to be inquisitive. For example, exploring the properties of sand, water and clay
- I am beginning to learn new vocabulary associated with shapes for example I point to the shape when adults use the names of simple shapes in different contexts
- I am able complete simple tray puzzles with knobs or large pieces where I can fit the shapes into the spaces, sometimes with your help

Dance

4.3

- I participate and express myself through music and movement experiences, by swaying, clapping, singing and bouncing in time to different kinds of music.
- I am beginning to sing songs and rhymes and clap, march or stamp to the beat for example 'The Grand Old Duke of York' or 'If you're happy and you know it clap your hands'
- I like to choose my favourite tune so that we can dance together.
- I enjoy it when you copy my movements and expressions.
- I am beginning to develop my sense of independence and choice

Gardening

4.4

- I like to go outdoors in all weathers, showing an interest in all that is around me
- I engage in everyday activities such as splashing in puddles, chasing in the wind, digging holes, making a collection of stones or natural objects, or items that are special to me
- I am beginning to use all of my senses- not just my sense of taste - to explore soil, mud and grass outdoors using my hands and feet and sense of smell. I may still need you to stay close to keep me safe.

Cooking

4.5

- I like to mix and combine messy materials such as gloop or dough,
- I explore the texture of food and engage in the sensory experience by rubbing food that I spill on the table or feeding with my hands.
- I like to feel and combine ingredients, add water and squash and squish using my hands when making dough or playing with gloop.

Music

4.6

- I enjoy an increasing range of music, for example I become calm or relax when soft music is played, or I become excited and move my body to pop music.
- I explore and experiment with a range of open-ended objects that make different sounds.
- I am curious to find out about different sounds and frequencies, shaking rattles, banging the table or a cup, rattling a car on the radiator.
- I show increasing interest in joining in and listening to familiar nursery rhymes.
- I clap my hands or bounce/move my body to the beat or stamp my feet to the rhythm in music, rhymes and favourite songs
- I am beginning to experience different feelings and emotions when I hear certain music. I feel special and safe when I play a playlist of my favourite songs and tunes from home.

Movement

4.7

- I am reaching out and using my hands to grasp, kick and move my legs and turn my head.
- I use my mouth to explore objects and can bring objects to my mouth
- I am starting to roll from my back to my front
- I am pushing my upper body up from the floor so that I can see better during 'tummy time'.
- I enjoy exploring my body when I'm lying on my back or sitting – feeling my feet, pulling my legs up etc.
- I can sway, rock and clap whilst moving to music.
- I am curious when watching others play with toys and watching them roll over. I am processing how I can do that. I am starting to stretch out for items out of my reach.
- I can take some steps on my own before falling onto my bottom, with control.
- I am able to pass toys and objects from one hand to another
- I can pick up small objects using my thumb and fingers
- I use a 'palmar' grasp (whole hand) to hold mark making tools
- I can walk upstairs with the help of an adult

Art and Craft

4.8

- I am curious and experiment with different mediums such as paint, gloop and dough using my hands and other parts of my body
- I am beginning to use my whole body to make marks. I can make marks on a large scale such as a big 'canvas' or on the floor.
- I love finding ways to make marks, enjoying the feel and the experience of using my body and experimenting with tools that I choose for myself, such as car wheels, dinosaur feet etc
- I actively exploring different textures, smells such as mud, grass, soil and water outdoors

A young child with blonde hair and a pacifier is the central focus of the image. The child is wearing a teal shirt and is positioned in front of a wooden desk. On the desk, there are several colored pencils in a holder, a small white container, and some papers. The background is slightly blurred, showing a classroom or playroom setting with other children and adults. An orange box with white text is overlaid on the bottom left of the image.

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Problem Solving

5.1

- With your support I am beginning to sit to watch others play with toys or roll over. With your encouragement I will stretch out for items just out of my reach
- I am becoming more curious and inquiring about the world around me. With your encouragement I am trying new experiences and taking risks independently with you close by to support me
- I am exploring objects and toys that stack, roll and rattle that I can grasp, hold, drop and

move. I am discovering how things work through trial and error

- I enjoy treasure baskets, bags and boxes filled with sensory, real and natural materials to touch and explore. I am using my exploratory impulses to discover their different properties, textures, smells and tastes
- I am discovering how things work, for example, how objects can be moved or transported around; how similar things can be grouped together, how things balance

Critical Thinking

5.2

- I can explore and test out my own theories through a range of open-ended resources and movements. I enjoy challenges such as when you hide things so that I can find them
- With your encouragement and patience, I will keep on trying and I am finding new ways to do things independently

- I am exploring and enjoy investigating new resources that support my thinking and encourage ideas
- When you think out loud or use language to explore other possibilities to help me, I can solve simple tasks such as "I wonder where that teddy is?, he was behind the box earlier"

Story Telling

5.3

- I enjoy looking at simple picture books with you and listening to you make up stories
- I am interested and excited when you change your tone of voice and intonation to make the stories and rhymes interesting or funny

- I enjoy books that have good rhythm or rhyming strings for example 'Dear Zoo'. I will sometimes try and repeat the words or phrases from my favourite stories, songs, rhymes or poems
- I show interest in the pictures in books, pointing at and naming familiar objects and items

Role-Play

5.4

- I get excited when you speak to me in a silly voice and wear dress-up clothes to create different characters.
- I use a range of open-ended materials such as tulle, net, silk scarfs, hats and feather bowers to copy your lead in my play

- I use dolls and cuddly toys to copy and act out real-life situations that I am familiar with. I am beginning to dress and undress my baby and take care of my pets

Outdoor Play

5.5

- I enjoy experiencing all the different types of weather using all my senses; feeling the wind blow and hearing the leaves rustling, feeling the rain, all catch my attention.
- I am beginning to move my body in different ways outdoors, stretching, rolling, running, climbing, crawling, pulling myself to stand and walking in the open space
- Being outside helps me to understand my wider world
- I am taking notice of features in the world around me. I look at the trees and leaves and the birds flying in the sky

Forest School

5.6

- I am beginning to use my senses to explore the natural environment around me. I may smell the leaves and flowers, feel the textures of soil with my fingers, enjoy the grass tickling my feet and the wind blowing on my face. I may need your help to keep me safe whilst exploring my natural surroundings
- I enjoy being outside whatever the weather and am starting to understand about what clothes I should wear for example, wellies for rain and sunhats for sunny days
- I will reach, grasp, sit, crawl and walk in natural surroundings where I have space to develop my physical skills. I may need your support to sit up, for example between logs
- I am beginning to be able to self-regulate and develop holistically. Being at one with nature helps me to build essential neural pathways in my brain because of the abundance of stimuli.
- I am beginning to use the natural environment to feel calm if I am frustrated or upset. Being outdoors in the natural environment can help me to feel relaxed and more able to self-regulate

Understanding the Wider World

5.7

- My knowledge of the world around me is beginning to develop and I am interested in and recognise the people that are important to me like my parents or carers, immediate family and the key person at nursery. I like to look at photographs on the 'Family board' and will point to and smile at the people I recognise
- I may become upset and need your support and reassurance to cope with changes to my usual routine, for example, if I am separated from familiar people or if I move to a new space.
- I will concentrate when I explore and investigate treasure baskets and open-ended resources. I may show a preference for certain objects by choosing it often to touch, taste and hold.
- I feel comfortable and secure in familiar surroundings. I will recognise and enjoy small changes, for example, when the teddies are dressed up in the book area

Developmental Checkpoints

This section contains some suggested questions for you to reflect on regarding your child's development and progress. Please bear in mind that these examples are guidelines only since every child is a unique individual, and will grow and develop at their own pace.

Communication and Language checkpoints

- Do I like to babble to communicate with you and other familiar adults?
- Around 6 months old, do I respond to my name and 'take turns' in conversations with babbling?
- Around 12 months do I 'take turns' by babbling and using single words? Do I point and use gestures to show you things that I am interested in?
- Around 12 months old, am I beginning to use single words like 'mummm', 'dada' and 'tete' ('teddy')?
- Around 12 months, can I choose between 2 objects: "Do you want the ball or the car?"
- Around 15 months can I say around 10 words? These may not all be clear yet.
- Around 18 months, can I listen and respond when you give me a simple instruction like: "Adam, put on your shoes?"
- Around 18 months, can I use a range of speech sounds and at least 20 clear words?
- Around 18 months, do I understand lots of different single words and some two -word phrases, such as "Give me." or "Shoes on."?
- Around two years, am I starting to show an interest in other children's play? Do I sometimes join in?

Personal, Social and Emotional Development checkpoints

- Around 7 months, do I respond to my name? Do respond to the emotions in your voice?
- Around 12 months, do I start to be shy around strangers and show preferences for certain people and toys?
- Around 18 months, am I increasingly curious about my world? Do I want to explore the world and be noticed by you?
- Around the age of 2, am I starting to see myself as a separate person? E.g. do I decide what to play with, what to eat, what to wear?

Physical Development checkpoints

- As a baby, can I move around with ease and enjoyment?
- At around 12 months, can I pull myself upright from a sitting position and sit down?
- Can I use my first finger and thumb to pick something up?
- Around my second birthday, can I run, kick a ball and jump with both feet off the ground at the same time