

Supporting Two Year Old's in Oxfordshire



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Introduction

In recent years, there has been a strong drive to expand early education provision for two-year olds. We know from research that the first three years of a child's life provides a foundation for their later health and development. As increasing numbers of two-year olds spend time in early years settings outside of the home, it is vital that the care and education they receive is of the highest quality whilst working in partnership with parents.

Two-year olds are curious and keen to explore and discover more about their world. They are creative thinkers who have a 'can do' attitude to life. They have a strong drive to do things for themselves whilst at the same time needing consistency of routines and caring adults who understand them. Every child deserves an equal opportunity to lead a healthy and fulfilling life and with the right kind of early intervention, there is every opportunity for secure relationships to be developed. For further information visit <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/business/information-providers/childrens-services-providers/support-early-years-providers/working-children-0-3>

This booklet contains supporting documentation to help providers to further develop quality provision and practice to meet the needs of all two-year olds.

I need close adults who know me and make me feel safe

I am developing rapidly

I learn by imitating you



I am a creative thinker

I am becoming more imaginative

I love discovering what my body can do!

I like to play alongside my friends

I am highly curious

My emotions change rapidly

I am mastering communication

I love exploring the world and devising my own learning

I am becoming more independent

Learning and development

Working with parents and carers

Our image of the child is rich in potential, strong, powerful, competent and, most of all, connected to adults and other children. (Malaguzzi, 1993; quoted in Edwards, Gandini and Forman, 1998, p.42)

Just as a child's needs are individual, parents and carers needs also vary widely. Some parents may come into the setting daily, whereas some parents may only come in occasionally due to other pressures or commitments. It is important to find ways of connecting and building positive relationships with all families. Families are unique in terms of their language used, life experiences and cultural background; all of these factors may influence the way in which the family and setting engage.

Ways of building a strong partnership with parents:

- make sure all parents feel welcome in your setting
- find creative ways of communicating with parents, both face to face and via secure technology
- share relevant information regularly through displays, photographs and literature that is up to date
- maintain professionalism whilst also being supportive and friendly
- get to know parents' skills and talents and encourage them to get involved
- help parents to contact other families where their children have become friends
- promote local community events and fundraisers as a way for families to get to know each other

Further reading, references and websites

- [Whalley, M. \(2010\) *Involving Parents in their Children's Learning*. Sage Publishing](#)
- [Featherstone, F. Beswick, C. \(2010\) *Getting to know you-Simple games to play with your baby*. Featherstone Education](#)
- [PACEY \(2015\) *30 Ways to engage parents in children's learning*. Synergy group publishing](#)
- <https://www.pacey.org.uk/working-in-childcare/spotlight-on/partnerships-with-parents/>
- [Working with Parents to Support Children's Learning | EEF \(educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk\)](#)
- [Development Matters - Non-statutory curriculum guidance for the early years foundation stage \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Birth To 5 Matters – Guidance by the sector, for the sector](#)

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

The EYFS exists to support all professionals working in the EYFS to support children and was developed with a number of early years experts and parents. The EYFS explains how and what your child will be learning to support their healthy development.

The EYFS comprises seven areas of learning and development:

Prime Areas		
Personal, Social and Emotional development	Physical Development	Communication and Language
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • self-regulation • managing self • building relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gross motor skills • Fine motor skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literacy, attention and understanding • Speaking

Specific areas			
Literacy	Mathematics	Understanding the world	Expressive Arts and Design
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehension • Word reading • Writing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number • Numerical patterns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Past and present • People, culture and communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating with materials • Being imaginative and expressive

While practitioners will plan challenging and enjoyable experiences across all seven areas of learning, the **three prime areas** are particularly important for young children from birth to three years. The specific areas of learning rely on a firm foundation in the prime areas.

The three Prime areas that are crucial to support curiosity and enthusiasm are:

- **Communication and language development** – children having the opportunity to experience a rich language environment to develop their confidence and to speak and listen in a wide range of situations
- **Physical development** – providing opportunities for young children to be active and interactive with others; to develop their co-ordination and control throughout movement. This also links to helping children understand the importance of making healthy choices relating to food
- **Personal, social and emotional development** – helping children to develop positive relationships and respect for others. Children will learn how to manage their own feelings and understand appropriate behaviour and have confidence in their own abilities.

Communication and Language development

'A child learns to talk in a setting where adults talk to children and each other' (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 19)

What does a two-year-old need?

- A calm, quiet space with little background noise
- Someone to talk to
- Something to talk about
- Someone to tell me what words mean
- An interesting environment
- A communication-friendly space, indoors and outdoors
- Somewhere where my home language is valued
- Support with pictures or gestures where I struggle to make myself understood

What a two-year-old can do?

- Talk to 'my adult' and friends
- Learn new words when I play
- Experiment with sounds and language and try things out
- Develop my listening skills and sound recognition
- Use pictures and/or signs to support my language
- Identify different sounds
- Communicate my needs effectively
- Learn new songs and rhymes
- Enjoy my favourite stories
- Know that some of my friends use words in a different language

Adult role

- Listen before talking
- Give children space and time to respond
- Be comfortable with silences which allow them time to think
- Show real interest in what the children have to say
- Try to comment on what the children are saying and doing rather than asking too many questions
- Be aware of appropriate questioning techniques
- Keep questioning to a minimum to avoid interrogation
- Let children initiate conversations and do not overwhelm them with too much talk – keep a balance
- Sing familiar nursery rhymes, action songs, popular culture songs and made-up songs
- Share stories throughout the day with individuals or in small groups – 'a sofa full of two-year-olds is enough!'
- Model and expand children's language, and avoid correcting their speech
- Be 'tuned in' to the children's interests in order to support and extend their language
- Get down to the child's level and use eye contact when talking
- Value non-verbal communication
- Work in close partnership with parents, particularly for use of specific words from child's background
- Encourage parents to borrow resources to support language development at home

- Support families and carers by providing labels for resources, dual-language books, made-up books, recordings / CDs, posters, stories, etc. to value a child's home or second language
- Encourage parents whose children are learning English as an additional language to continue to encourage use of the first language at home
- Use signing and picture prompts where needed
- Understand the importance of speech, language and communication development, and how to support it
- Know what to expect at different stages / ages and what to do if there are concerns
- Monitor children's speech, language and communication development on a regular basis

What the adult can provide

- Model clear and correct pronunciation of words (avoid too much dialect)
- Provide comprehensive information and resources to parents and carers.
- Language development at home
- Create a language-rich environment both indoors and outdoors
- Value the child's voice in the setting
- Imaginative play toys, e.g. dressing-up clothes, doll's house, tea set, Playmobil, etc.
- Messy play with sensory exploration, e.g. water play, sand play, chalk boards, finger painting, play dough, etc.
- Inset puzzles – opportunities to develop early vocabulary
- Listening to appropriate CDs – helping to develop listening and attention skills
- Repetitive books, e.g. 'Dear Zoo', 'The Gingerbread Man', 'We're Going on a Bear Hunt', etc.
- Simple lotto boards – helping to develop early vocabulary
- Colour and shape matching, as well as counting games and activities
- Puppets – make up stories and act them out
- Sequencing toys, e.g. coloured bricks, threading beads, etc.
- Rhyming lotto, rhyming books – helping to focus on the differences and similarities between word sounds, building the foundations for reading and writing
- Take a consistent approach to the use of signs, symbols and pictures, where used
- Make use of an effective speech and language monitoring tool

Arrange training and development opportunities for staff, parents and carers

Further reading, references and websites

- [Department for Children, Schools and Families \(2008\) *Letters and Sounds: Principles and Practice of High-Quality Phonics – Phase One Teaching Programme*](#)
- [Jarman, E. \(2007\) *Communication Friendly Spaces: Improving speaking and listening skills in the Early Years Foundation Stage*. The Basic Skills Agency.](#)
- [Baby Talk – Auditory Verbal UK](#)
- www.talkingpoint.org.uk
- www.bookstart.org.uk
- www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk
- www.literacytrust.org.uk
- www.talktoyourbaby.org.uk
- <https://app.croneri.co.uk/feature-articles/supporting-language-development-early-years>
- www.ican.org.uk
- [To Baby and Beyond - Home](#)

Physical development

*'An important aspect of exploration and discovery is movement. What can I do with my body?'
(Hope, 2007, p. 54)*

What does a two-year-old need?

- Space to be active
- Plenty of opportunities to move in order to understand the messages from my body
- Somewhere to run, crawl, climb and jump
- Somewhere to rock, swing, spin and slide
- Activities to help develop my fine motor skills
- Support for me to be healthy and to care for myself
- Unhurried nappy changing in pleasant surroundings, and flexible care routines
- Opportunities to develop my balance and sense of spatial awareness
- Healthy food and drink
- Daily opportunities for outdoor play
- Opportunities to learn about healthy living

What a two-year-old can do?

- Have fun moving my body in different ways
- Enjoy my time running, jumping, spinning, rolling, swinging, twirling, wobbling, bouncing, sliding, crawling and mark making
- Digging, sweeping, washing the windows of the cars, filling the toy trucks and buckets, pushing the wheelbarrow, pulling the trolley, using the pulley and hanging things on the washing line
- Wash my own hands
- Go to the toilet independently, but I may need a bit of help pulling my pants up
- Dress and undress myself, but I may need support with zips, buttons and fasteners
- Learn about healthy food and drink

Enjoy harvesting, cooking and eating my own produce

- Allow time and encourage the children to be as independent as possible with their own care routines
- Support parents with ideas for toilet-training and sleep routines
- Allow some risk-taking and provide appropriate levels of challenge
- Be aware of typical stages of physical development in children
- Focus on the development of gross motor skills (single limb movements, throwing, pushing, pulling, etc.) and muscle strength which in turn will lead to promoting fine manipulative skills (precise use of hands and fingers, development of pincer grips, using cutlery, drawing, writing, etc.)

Share with parents the importance of the stages of physical development

What the adult can provide

- A stimulating and well-resourced outdoor environment
- Opportunities to promote physical development indoors
- Opportunities to support large motor play: milk crates, guttering, logs, planks, bikes and trikes, tunnels, climbing frames, barrels, tyres, large blocks, wheelbarrow, bats and balls, sweeping brushes, parachute, scarves, streamers, construction and building blocks, bags, large paint brushes, mud pit, stirring and whisking in water tray, etc.

- Opportunities to support fine motor development: putting on hats, coats and boots, playdough and other malleable materials, washing line and pegs, chalks, paints, gloop, slime (soap flakes and water), finger paints, small objects for sorting and to develop pincer grip (corks, lids, cones, pebbles, shells, large buttons, cloths, tubes, chains), using tweezers, peg boards, threading, water squirters / plant spray bottles, bubble wrap, crayons, pens, scissors, cooking equipment, small blocks and construction materials, jigsaws, boxes with lids, bags with zips, sponges, chopsticks, etc.
- Low toilets, sinks and towels and taps that can be turned on and off are needed
- Healthy and nutritional food and drink
- Appropriate child-sized cutlery and crockery for mealtimes
- Positive ethos towards healthy lifestyles
- Space to grow own fruit and vegetables appropriate to outdoor area, e.g, raised beds, garden pots, growbags, etc

Further reading, references and websites

- [Community Playthings with Jan White \(2013\) A good place to be two: Developing quality environments indoors and out. Community Playthings.](#)
- [Goddard Blythe, S \(2004\) The Well-Balanced Child: Movement and Early Learning. Hawthorn Press.](#)
- [Hope, S. \(2007\) A Nurturing Environment for Children up to Three. Islington.](#)
- <https://playworld.com/blog/12-indoor-physical-activities-for-toddlers-and-preschoolers/>
- <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/physical-activity-guidelines-children-under-five-years/>
- https://infantandtoddlerforum.org/media/upload/pdf-downloads/4877_Factsheet_3.4_Physical_Activity_and_Play_ITF204_v11.pdf
- [Introduction to physical activity in the early years](#)
- <https://www.activeimagnations.co.uk/public-health-england-guidelines-for-2-4-year-olds/>
- [Physical activity guidelines for children \(under 5 years\) - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

When a child establishes their identity, they are simply becoming aware of how others see them.

Self-esteem is secured as they are valued in different ways by family and the community

(Dowling, 2010, p. 15)

What does a two-year-old need?

- 'My adult' who knows all about me even before I start
- Time to get to know my new environment
- People who understand me and my needs
- A safe base
- Somewhere to put my things
- To see photos of my family, pets and toys
- Enough time for me and my learning
- Someone to talk to my parents about how I can learn at home

- Unhurried and flexible care routines
- Support to dress and undress myself
- To make friends
- My own culture and background to be valued

What a two-year-old can do?

- Go to my adult when I need support
- Be confident about my new environment
- Find my coat and shoes when I want to play outside
- Look at photos of my family when I want to
- May have problems expressing myself - I may become frustrated and impulsive
- Can learn to put on my own coat and shoes
- Begin to learn to play co-operatively with my friends
- Learn how to share the toys
- Be proud of my own culture and background
- Continue my learning at home

Be patient, calm and affectionate

- Build positive relationships with parents and carers during settling-in periods and ongoing
- Gather important information about daily routines, nappy routines, comfort objects, likes and dislikes, and people who are important to them when the children first start
- Listen to and talk with the children
- Be supportive and understand the children's developing emotions and feelings
- Use photographs of the children and their family in discussions
- Be flexible with the children's routines
- Use care times to strengthen the key person bond
- Support young children to dress and undress themselves
- Be understanding about helping young children to share and take turns
- Understand a typical two-year-old perspective of 'I see, I want, I take'
- Work closely with the children's family and carers to continue the learning journey at home
- Model and support positive interactions
- Be sensitive to and embed the different cultures and backgrounds within the setting

What the adult can provide

- An effective key person system
- Flexible settling-in policy and arrangements
- Use of 'All About Me' documentation and regularly updating the details
- A whole staff approach to supporting home learning
- An accessible space for the children to put their belongings
- Low-level access to family photographs (display, baskets, books, etc)
- Unhurried and flexible day to day routines
- Focused one-to-one attention during routine care times
- Give children time to develop their independence skills
- Balance of space and multiple sets of some equipment to help with turn taking and sharing
- Choose equipment that can be used by more than one child as well as individually e.g. double easel.

- Create an environment that reflects diversity, with equipment that reflects the children's homes, and notices in home languages
- Provide mirrors where children can see and talk about themselves

Further reading, references and websites

- [Gerhardt, S. \(2004\) Why Love Matters: How affection shapes a baby's brain. Routledge.](#)
- [Goldschmied, E. and Jackson, S. \(1994\) People Under Three: Young Children in Day Care. Routledge.](#)
- [Hope, S. \(2007\) A Nurturing Environment for Children up to Three.](#)
- [Mathieson, K. \(2013\) I am two! Working effectively with two-year olds and their families. Early Education](#)
- [Dowling, M. \(2014\) Young Children's Personal, Social & Emotional Development.](#)
- [Garnett, H. \(2018\) Developing Empathy in The Early Years.](#)
- [Roberts, R. \(2002\) Self-Esteem and Early Learning.](#)
- <https://fhcappg.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/ReportWellbeingandNurtureFinal140720.pdf>
- <https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/241-24-36-months-social-emotional-development>
- [24–36 Months: Social-Emotional Development • ZERO TO THREE](#)

Characteristics of Effective Learning

Two-year olds have an all-consuming drive to engage in, and explore, the world around them. Young children learn best when they are encouraged to follow their natural curiosity and are supported to appropriately devise their own learning and discoveries (self-regulated learning). Children will be helped in developing skills for lifelong learning when they are nurtured in an environment that promotes the development of the characteristics of learning:

Playing and Exploring	Active Learning	Creative and Critical Thinking
Finding out and exploring <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Showing curiosity about objects, events and people • Using senses to explore the world around them • Engaging in open-ended activity • Showing particular interests 	Being involved and concentrating <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining focus on their activity for a period of time • Showing high levels of energy, fascination • Not easily distracted • Paying attention to details 	Having their own ideas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thinking of ideas • Finding ways to do things
Playing with what they know <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pretending objects are things from their experience 	Keep on trying <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Persisting with activity when challenges occur • Showing a belief that more effort or a 	Making links <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making links and noticing patterns in their experience

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representing their experiences in play • Acting out experiences with other people 	<p>different approach will pay off</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bouncing back after difficulties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making predictions • Testing their ideas • Developing ideas of grouping, sequencing
<p>Being willing to 'have a go'</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiating activities • Seeking challenge • Showing a 'can do' attitude • Taking a risk, engaging in new experiences, and learning by trial and error 	<p>Enjoying achieving what they set out to do</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Showing satisfaction in meeting their own goals • Being proud of how they accomplished something – not just the end result • Enjoying meeting challenges for their own sake rather than external rewards or praise • 	<p>Choosing ways to do things</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning, making decisions about how to approach a task, solve a problem and reach a goal • Checking how well their activities are going • Changing strategy as needed • Reviewing how well the approach worked

Further reading, references and websites

- [Stewart, N \(2011\) *How children learn – The characteristics of effective early learning*. Early Education.](#)
- [Grimmer, T \(2018\) *School Readiness and the Characteristics of Effective Learning: The Essential Guide for Early Years Practitioners*.](#)
- <https://eyfs.info/articles.html/teaching-and-learning/characteristics-of-effective-learning-play-and-exploration-in-action-r160/>
- [Moylett, H \(2014\) *Characteristics Of Effective Early Learning: Helping Young Children Become Learners For Life*](#)

What to expect in the Early Years Foundation Stage: A guide for parents

The purpose of this booklet is to help parents/carers find out more about how their child is learning and developing during their first five years, in relation to the EYFS. Children develop more rapidly during the first five years of their lives than at any other time. This booklet has been written to help parents know what to expect during these vitally important years by focusing on the seven areas of learning and development which are covered in the EYFS.

Further reading, references and websites

[What-to-expect-in-the-EYFS-complete-FINAL-16.09-compressed.pdf \(foundationyears.org.uk\)](#)

Partnership working

Children's learning is enhanced when parents, carers and practitioners share their learning and development together in a joined up, continuous way. Here are some ways that practitioners and families can work together to share this exciting journey:

- celebrating achievements and sharing interests from both home and the setting
- day to day exchange of information between the family and key person, health visitor information, other support information/groups
- sharing the ways that children learn through leaflets, informative displays, photographs and websites

Further reading, references and websites

- [Gasper, M. \(2013\) *Multi-Agency Working in the Early Years: Challenges and Opportunities.*](#)
- [Oxfordshire School Readiness Strategy](#)
- [Oxfordshire Community around the Setting](#)
<http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/file/early-years-childcare/CommunityAroundSetting.pdf>
- [What role does the home learning environment play in supporting good child development in the early years and positive outcomes in later life?](#)

Sensory play and brain development

Everything a toddler hears, sees, tastes, touches and smells influences the way the brain makes its connections. The more stimulating and nurturing the experience provided is, the greater the potential to form positive connections. Whenever adults provide sensory play experiences for children, they are helping to stimulate brain development. Resources should be selected to stimulate as many senses as possible – natural resources have greater texture and smell than manufactured products. Two-year olds need as many first-hand experiences as possible.

What does a two-year-old need?

- Someone to be there for me
- Someone who will let me be me
- A flexible and dependable environment
- Friends and adults to talk to
- Small groups and time for play

What a two-year-old can do?

- Talk to my friends and adults
- Choose my own resources

- Have a rest when I want to
- Move around in active play
- Get messy having fun
- Discover quiet cosy spaces and soft toys
- Learn through my senses
- Explore my environment safely
- Play indoors and outdoors

Experiment in my play – What happens if a do this? What noise does it make? What does this do?

Adult role

- Understand and appreciate the development of two-year-olds
- Be supportive
- Support language development
- Encourage independent and self-help skills
- Offer appropriate challenge
- Produce effective displays
- Be flexible with routines
- Create an emotionally stable environment

What the adult can provide

- Homely environment with calming, natural colours
- Enough space that is uncluttered
- Natural resources indoors and outside
- Accessible, open-ended resources
- Authentic resources, e.g. real pans in home corner
- Resources labelled with words and pictures
- Language enriched environment
- Safe and challenging physical activities
- Space to have a nap, rest or quiet time
- Hidey holes and small sheltered spots
- Multi-sensory approach through messy play
- High quality displays of children's work and photos
- Flexible routines
- Space for the children's personal belongings
- Appropriate areas indoors and outdoors

Further reading, references and websites

- [Warden, C. \(2007\) *Nurture through Nature: Working with children under 3 in outdoor environments*](#)
- [Gascoine, S. \(2011\) *Sensory Play \(Play in the EYFS\)*. Practical Pre – school](#)
- <https://www.parentingforbrain.com/sensory-activities-importance-sensory-play/>
- [BookTrust a review of behavioural brain development](#)
- <https://www.primroseschools.com/blog/stimulate-your-childs-sense-of-touch/>
- [How does sensory play benefit brain development in the early years? \(allofmesensory.co.uk\)](#)

What is a schema?

Schemas are described as patterns of repeated behaviour which allow children to explore and express developing ideas and thoughts through their play and exploration. The repetitive actions of schematic play allow children to construct meaning in what they are doing.

The most common types of schema are:

- ❖ Trajectory - creating lines in space by climbing up and jumping down. Dropping items from up high.
- ❖ Positioning - lining items up and putting them in groups.
- ❖ Enveloping - covering themselves or objects completely. Wrapping items up or placing them in containers.
- ❖ Rotating - enjoys spinning items round and round. Likes to run around in circles or being swung round.
- ❖ Enclosing - adding boundaries to play areas e.g. fences around animals. Adding borders to pictures.
- ❖ Transporting - carrying or moving items from one place to another; carrying items in containers or bags.
- ❖ Connecting - setting out and dismantling tracks, constructing, joining items together with tape or glue
- ❖ Transforming - exploring the changing states of materials, transforming them from a solid to liquid state and back again.
- ❖ Orienteering – an interest in positioning themselves or objects in different places or positions e.g. upside down or on their side.

The role of the adult is to observe children in their play, identify possible schemas, and plan for these in the children's next steps for learning and development. Schemas may not be seen in isolation; young children can often display more than one schema in their play – this is referred to as cluster of schemas.

Ideas for sharing knowledge of schemas with parents and carers:

- Consider creating a display to inform parents about schemas
- Consider planning a workshop on schemas
- Offer the parents handouts or leaflets
- Direct parents to useful websites

Further reading, references and websites

- [Athey, C. \(2007\) *Extending Thought in Young Children: A Parent-Teacher Partnership*. 2nd edn.](#)
- Publications Ltd. Jean Piaget (1896 - 1980) was amongst the first to recognise patterns of behaviours in young children (schemas)
- Lev Vygotsky (1896 - 1934) discussed the symbolic functions of language in more detail
- Louis, S., Beswick, C. and Featherstone, S. (2013) *Understanding Schemas in Young Children: Again! Again!* 2nd edn. Featherstone Education.
- Nutbrown, C (2011) *Threads of Thinking: Schemas and Young Children's Learning*. 4th edn. SAGE Publications Ltd
- <https://www.onehundredtoys.com/blogs/news/understanding-schema-play-in-toddlers>
- <https://www.pengreen.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Pen-Green-Key-Concepts-Schemas.pdf>
- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/grownups/schemas>
- <https://www.pacey.org.uk/working-in-childcare/spotlight-on/schemas/#typesofschema>

Assessment

The EYFS Progress Check at Age Two

[The Early Years Foundation Stage \(2021\)](#) requires that practitioners must review children's progress, and provide parents and/or carers with a short-written summary of their child's development in the prime areas: Communication and Language, Personal, Social and Emotional Development and Physical Development and. In Oxfordshire, practitioners are advised to carry out the progress check when a child is aged between 2½ - 3.

[The EYFS Progress Check at Age Two](#) will help you to make an accurate assessment of children's development, health and wellbeing. This involves working closely with parents and other professionals involved in the child's life. After completing the progress check at age two, parents and practitioners can take appropriate actions in the best interests of the child. It will also reduce unnecessary workload. Practitioners do not need to spend a long time away from the children to complete the check.

The progress check at age two has three main purposes:

1. Partnership with Parents: While practitioners and other professionals can support children's development and wellbeing individually, they can achieve so much more by working together.
2. Action for every child: Writing down observation and sharing reports do not help children. Practitioners need to listen to the child, talk with each other and then plan together. Working together makes a difference.
3. Early identification: Some children need extra help for a while as they grow and develop – for example, with their communication. Other children may have long-term developmental needs. Some families may struggle and need support. Whatever the circumstances, sensitive early intervention can make a big difference. Children develop rapidly between the ages of two and three – practitioners need to be quick to support and identify help where it is needed.

There is no prescribed format for the EYFS progress check at age two summary. Each setting can decide on its own progress check format, but as a minimum it must include a short-written summary of the child's development in the prime areas; the summary must identify the child's strengths and areas for improvement. There is an example format in the [appendices](#).

The DfE have also published a [vodcast](#) to explain the new guidance to early years practitioners and a [blog](#) that highlights why the progress check is important now, more than ever as we support children to bounce back from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Further reading, references and websites

- Harrow Council (2014) [Tuning in to Two Year Olds – Improving Outcomes for Two Year Olds. 4Children](#)
- Islington (2012) [Progress Check at Age Two – Guidance and supporting documents for Islington early years providers.](#) Islington.
- NCB supported by DfE (2012) [A Know How Guide – the EYFS progress check at age two.](#) NCB.
- http://www.foundationyears.org.uk/files/2015/03/IR_Supporting_Material.pdf
- Oxfordshire Health and development two-year-old reviews
<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/business/information-providers/childrens-services-providers/support-early-years-providers/2-year-old-reviews>

Staff, qualifications and training

Working with two-year olds is extremely rewarding and is a highly skilled and demanding job. It requires practitioners who are very well trained, motivated and supported. In order to provide the best possible experiences for young children, it is important that practitioners are well qualified and have up to date knowledge of child development and current research.

Coe et al. (2014) has identified five key drivers of quality in work with under 3's:

- Knowledgeable and capable practitioners, supported by strong leaders
- A stable staff team with a low turnover
- Effective staff deployment (e.g. favourable ratios, staff continuity)
- Secure yet stimulating physical environments
- Engaged and involved families

Some opportunities for continuing professional development may be:

- Accessing training relevant to supporting two-year olds and their families
- Undertaking action research
- Reading relevant publications
- Networking with other settings and providers

Further reading, references and websites

- Tassoni, P. (2014) *Getting it right for Two Year Olds*. Hodder Education
- Terrific Two-Year Olds training course
http://www.ndna.org.uk/NDNA/Training/Terrific_Two_Year_Olds.aspx
- <https://www.pacey.org.uk/working-in-childcare/spotlight-on/2-year-olds/>

- <https://www.pacey.org.uk/working-in-childcare/spotlight-on/2-year-olds/development-in-2-year-olds/>
- Supporting children's development <https://www.open.edu/openlearn/education-development/childhood-youth/supporting-childrens-development/content-section-overview?active-tab=description-tab>
- Attachment in the Early Years <https://www.open.edu/openlearn/education-development/early-years/attachment-the-early-years/content-section-0?active-tab=description-tab>
- Oxfordshire CPD Supporting children's development <https://www.open.edu/openlearn/education-development/childhood-youth/supporting-childrens-development/content-section-overview?active-tab=description-tab>

Key person role and attachment theory

Positive relationships and attachment are vital for young children in order for them to feel secure, loved and supported. Two-year olds need to know that they will be comforted when they are distressed and to have a 'secure base' (parent/carer or key person) to regularly return to as they become more confident to play and explore.

All children are unique and have had different experiences prior to starting at their early year's setting. Therefore, it is important that the settling in period is carefully planned to minimise the possible distress to the child and their family. Practitioners need to take account of individual needs and provide a personalised approach rather than a 'one-size fits all'. A supportive settling in period is like building a bridge between the key person, the child and the family.

How can practitioners help children to settle in?

- make time to find out as much about the child as possible
- be welcoming to families
- talk to the people who know the child best and find out what they like and dislike
- do a visit to the home environment, it can make a child feel special
- allow special people to stay while children get to know you
- let them bring a comforter and show them a safe place to keep them
- if a child has any additional needs, find ways to support them and their family

As the child settles into the setting, their attachment with their key person will be strengthened as they spend time together. Daily care routines such as nappy changing and mealtimes provide significant opportunities for developing communication skills, social interaction and independence.

A key person needs to:

- get to know and understand both the child and the family
- help children to grow emotionally, socially, cognitively and physically

- respect the stage of development and celebrate children’s progress
- have appropriate expectations of what children can do and understand
- identify and respond to interests and way of learning
- value children’s identity and cultural background

A strong bond with their key person is like an emotional safety net, and it is essential that it is strong enough to ‘catch’ the child in the absence of their parents.

Further reading, references and websites

- Elfer, P. Goldschmied, E. Selleck, D. (2003) *Key Persons in the Nursery – Building Relationships for Quality Provision*. David Fulton Publishers.
- McDermott, M. (2016). *The Key Person Approach-Positive Relationships with Children in the Early Years*. Barnardos.
- <https://www.pacey.org.uk/membership/pacey-membership-benefits/a-taste-of-membership/role-of-the-key-person/>
- <https://www.parenta.com/2015/05/07/what-is-the-role-of-a-key-person/>

Managing behaviour

Two-year olds experience a lot of frustration as they often know exactly what they want to do and how they want to do it, but they may not yet be able to do it for themselves or express what they want to do verbally. Practitioners can help to reduce some of a young child’s frustration by giving them vocabulary to express their emotions. Modelling language through simple role play and small world play with figures can support this.

Dealing with conflicts and misunderstandings can be a rich opportunity for helping children to develop their understanding of emotion and their empathy towards others.

Two-year olds are moving on from being a dependent baby and having many things done for them, to being a toddler with a strong desire to express their independence.

This drive for autonomy – whilst still needing the patient support of nurturing adults – can result in the toddler’s emotions coming out in the form of a temper tantrum. When this happens, there are many ways that you can support the child, for example:

- Talk calmly, acknowledging that the child is feeling cross or upset and reflect their feelings back to them for example by saying ‘I can see you are feeling sad’
- Time out is inappropriate as the child cannot automatically change their behaviour in this situation
- Remember that having a tantrum can be frightening for a child so stay nearby, showing your availability until he/she is calm again

- Other children may be upset by the noise and disruption and will be reassured by the practitioner staying calm and acting kindly
- When the tantrum has passed, help the child with a drink of water and some kind, quiet words of reassurance

The NHS has updated it's webpage to share possible reasons for difficult behaviour in toddlers and young children; and gives strategies to help

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/dealing-with-difficult-behaviour/>

Further reading, references and websites

- Mathieson, K. (2013) *I am two! Working effectively with two-year olds and their families*. Early Education.
- Tassoni, P. (2018) *Understanding Children's behaviour – Learning to be with others in the Early Years*. Featherstone Publishing
- Early Support: Information about behaviour <http://www.councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/resources>
- Oxfordshire Early Years SEN Toolkit <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/business/information-providers/childrens-services-providers/sen-support-providers/early-years-sen-toolkit/social-and-emotional-needs>
- <https://www.acesonlinelearning.com>

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

For general enquires about Special Educational Needs and Disabilities in Early Years across Oxfordshire please contact the Early Years SEN Team.

The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, The Special Educational Needs and Disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years (2014) and The Equality Act (2010) provide the legislative requirements in relation to children with Special Education Needs and Disabilities.

The DfE Early Years guide to the 0 to 25 SEND code of practice makes this clear, 'Early years providers must have arrangements in place to support children with SEN or disabilities. These arrangements should include a clear approach to identifying and responding to SEN'. It goes on to state that early years providers are required to have arrangements in place for meeting children's Special Educational Needs. Those in group provision are expected to identify a SENCO.

Childminders are encouraged to identify a person to act as SENCO and childminders who are registered with a childminder agency or who are part of a network may wish to share that role between them.

A key person would be expected to take the lead role in identifying children's individual strengths and areas requiring improvement, and to be the person who builds the partnership with parents throughout the graduated approach – the continuous cycle of assess, plan, do and review.

Sound knowledge and understanding of child development will support a key person to make appropriate, evidence-based judgements of children's progress. It will also provide a key person with the confidence to make distinctions between potential developmental concerns and the behaviours of a typically developing two-year-old, e.g. schematic play and tantrums. It is important to remember that a delay in learning and development for a two-year-old may or may not be an indication that a child has SEN.

Nevertheless, some two-year olds may require a little more support, in which case the key person should gather further information from observations and discussions with the SENCO and parent as well providing SEN support.

If you have concerns about a child, this should not delay your completion of the progress check at age two. To support early identification of possible SEN, a key person can refer to section 4.7 of the National Children's Bureau (NCB) guidance *What should practitioners do if a child appears to be developing at a slower pace in any area?* and gain advice and support from the setting SENCO.

Further reading, references and websites

- Equality and Human Rights Commission (2011) Equality Act
- 2010 Statutory Code of Practice Department for Education (2015)
- 0-25 SEND Code of Practice: Early Years - guide to the 0-25 SEND code of practice
- Department for Education, Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage
- NCB (2012) A Know How Guide – the EYFS progress check at age two
- Islington (2012) Progress Check at Age Two – Guidance and supporting documents for Islington early years providers
- Harrow Council (2014) Tuning in to Two-Year-Olds – Improving Outcomes for Two-Year-Olds
- Early Support <http://www.councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/resources>
- Contact a Family <http://www.cafamily.org.uk/>
- Oxfordshire's Local Offer <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/children-education-and-families/education-and-learning/special-educational-needs-and-disability-local-offer>
- SEND gateway (SEND information 0-25) <http://www.sendgateway.org.uk/>
- SENDirect <https://www.sendirect.org.uk/>

Your premises/environment

The impact of children's surroundings on their development is well-documented. Friedrich Froebel (early 1800s) compared designing an environment for children to planning an organic and ever-changing garden which can inspire and guide children's imagination and behaviour.

There should be a quiet place for children to sleep (not necessarily a separate sleep room):

- The area could have bean bags, armchairs, mats or cushions to make a cosy place for children to rest or sleep.
- This area should be kept as a quiet area even when no children are using it to sleep in.

Two-year olds like routine:

- Two-year-olds need to know what to expect and find security in repeatedly returning to their favourite spaces. They like to enter the room and know where everything is.
- The physical environment to support two-year-old children is a unique stage of development <https://cdn.communityplaythings.co.uk/-/media/files/cpuk/library/training-resource/a-good-place-to-be-two.pdf?d=20200813T135505Z>

Do you have changing facilities?

- Is the changing room area suitable for a 2-year-old?
- Do you have sufficient toilets for the number of children you can take? It would usually be one toilet for 10 children; however, some two-year olds will still be in nappies when they start attending.

For an example of a nappy changing policy see [Oxfordshire Early Years Toolkit](#)

Further reading, references and websites

- Clare, A. (2012) *Creating a Learning Environment for Babies and Toddlers*. SAGE
- <https://www.nurseryworld.co.uk/features/article/two-year-olds-enabling-environments-my-space>
- https://www2.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/sites/default/files/folders/documents/childreducationandfamilies/informationforchildcareproviders/Toolkit/My_Space_Creating_enabling_environments_for_young_children.pdf

The Importance of Play

Play underpins learning and all aspects of children's development. Through play, children develop language skills, their emotions and creativity, social and intellectual skills. For most children their play is natural and spontaneous, although some children may need extra help from adults. Play takes place indoors and outdoors and it is in these different environments that children explore and discover their immediate world.

The [Charter for Children's Play](#) describes play as: 'what children and young people do when they follow their own ideas and interests, in their own way, and for their own reasons.'

Further reading, references and websites

- The benefits of outdoor play for children <https://www.nct.org.uk/baby-toddler/games-and-play/benefits-outdoor-play-for-children>
- The value of outdoor play <https://www.communityplaythings.co.uk/learning-library/articles/the-value-of-outdoor-play>

A mixed age provision

Remember – two-year olds are at a unique stage of development. They are developing their independence and do not want you to do everything for them (this may mean that tasks will take a lot longer!). Children experience many positive advantages by being cared for in mixed aged groups, for instance social interaction and contact with siblings. However, it is important to remember that a two-year-old should not be treated as a mini pre-schooler or be expected to behave in the same way as an older child - their brains and bodies are at a different developmental stage.

Tips for supporting two-year olds in mixed age groups:

- Remember that three and four-year-old children may want to participate in group role play activities in the home corner whereas a two-year-old may be more interested in using the space to embed their understanding of schemas e.g. transporting the resources elsewhere.
- Provide other resources for schema exploration to try to minimise this conflict.
- Expectations of two-year olds during group times need to be realistic. Shorter gathering times in a small group work best.
- A sofa full of two-year olds at story time is enough.
- In mixed age provision, there needs to be flexibility in rules which may need to be relaxed for the younger children. For example, a two-year-old may want to bring a favourite toy to the snack table. With explanation, older children will often understand this.

Having children in a mixed age room for the first time can be daunting and there are lots of things to think about. Once practitioners start seeing the nursery through the eyes of a 2-year-old, it not only becomes easier but also much more fun.

Further reading, references and websites

- Kathy Brodie *Two-Year-Olds in Mixed Age Groups* <http://www.abcdoes.com/abc-does-a-blog/2012/05/two-year-olds-in-a-mixed-age-group-by-kathy-brodie/>

Food and drink

You should aim to offer tasty, nicely presented and well-cooked foods that will be enjoyed by the children and young people. Mealtimes should not be rushed as a relaxed approach to eating can pave the way for healthy attitudes to food. It is important to make eating a pleasurable experience. Food can be an enjoyable, social activity. It is equally significant to recognise the importance of eating well for good health.

<p>What does a two-year-old need?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Someone to talk to • Someone to listen to me • Someone to support me • Someone as a role model • Healthy food and drink <p>Adult role</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sit and eat with the children • Flexible approach to timings • Be patient and a good role model • Engage in conversation by talking and listening to the children • Promote independence • Consider fussy eaters • Introduce new foods gradually 	<p>What a two-year-old can do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help to set the table • Help to prepare snacks • Pour my own drink • Butter my own toast • Serve myself and my friends • Talk to my key person • Talk to my friends • Talk about my day • Taste new foods • Tidy up • Eat healthy food to make me grow big and strong • Learn table manners
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Remember to share information with parents and carers, and promote healthy lunch boxes

Further reading, references and websites

- 'Eat better, start better' - www.childrensfoodtrust.org.uk
- www.nhs.uk/liveWell/goodfood
- www.nhs.uk/start4life
- www.who.int – research by World Health Organisation
- Advice on snacks and menus can be found at <http://www.nhs.uk/change4life/Pages/healthy-snacks-for-kids.aspx>

Free childcare

Free early education for 2-year-olds

Some 2-year-olds are eligible for 15 hours free early education funding a week or 570 hours a year. In order to apply the child's family MUST meet one of the following criteria:

Parents/carers can get free early education and childcare if you live in England and get one of the following benefits:

- Income Support
- income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)
- income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Universal Credit - if you and your partner have a combined income from work of less than £15,400 a year after tax
- tax credits and you have a household annual income of under £16,190 before tax
- the guaranteed element of State Pension Credit
- support through part 6 of the Immigration and Asylum Act
- the Working Tax Credit 4-week run on (the payment you get when you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit)

A child can also get free early education and childcare if any of the following apply:

- they're looked after by a local council
- they have a current statement of [special education needs \(SEN\)](#) or an education, health and care (EHC) plan
- they get [Disability Living Allowance](#)
- they've left care under a special guardianship order, child arrangements order or adoption order

If you're a non-EEA citizen who cannot claim benefits, your 2-year-old may get free childcare if you are getting [support under the Immigration and Asylum Act](#) and have either:

- [claimed asylum](#) in the UK and are waiting for a decision (known as 'part 6')
- been refused asylum in the UK (known as 'section 4')

A 2-year-old you care for may also get free childcare if your household income is £15,400 a year or less after tax, and you have either:

- leave to remain with 'no recourse to public funds' on [family or private life grounds](#)
- the right to live in the UK because you're the main carer of a British citizen (known as a ['Zambrano Carer'](#))

What are the benefits?

High quality childcare can help children to:

- Experience new and exciting activities
- Make new friends
- Support learning for the future
- Build their confidence and social skills
- Improve their speech and language

It can also help parents/carers to:

- Save on childcare costs
- Have time to explore work/training opportunities
- Take on more paid work
- Support your child to play and learn
- Have more time to yourself

For further information about applying for the funding visit

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/children-education-and-families/early-years-education/free-education-2-year-olds>

Post COVID-19 and attendance

Babies born after March 11, 2020 will have only known a world in the grip of a pandemic. They may not have met anyone who isn't their parent, or they may only ever have seen their grandparents from a distance. They certainly will not have had the same opportunities to interact with other children as those born in the years before.

Development takes place at an extraordinary rate during a baby's first year, when the brain doubles in size. This early development depends crucially on experience, and particularly social experience, which stimulates, tunes and hones the brain's unfolding architecture.

A stimulating, varied and responsive environment supports the development of language, cognition and emotional and social competencies. This dependence on environmental input makes the brain exquisitely flexible and capable of adaptation.

It is important that children attend regularly at their Early Years setting where their learning and development is supported and, to make sure that children are kept safe, their wellbeing is promoted, and they do not miss out on their entitlements and opportunities.

Good attendance promotes good outcomes for children.

Absence disrupts a child's learning and development and children who do not attend regularly find it difficult to make and maintain friendships. Children with poor attendance are at a disadvantage in later life and they are less likely to do well at school and gain qualifications.

Further reading, references and websites

- <https://parentinfantfoundation.org.uk/1001-days/>
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-best-start-for-life-a-vision-for-the-1001-critical-days>
- <https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/529-baby-brain-map>
- <https://www.childcare.co.uk/information/baby-brain-development>
- <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/business/information-providers/childrens-services-providers/support-early-years-providers/early-years-toolkit>

Further reading, websites and references

Reading

Clare, A. (2012) *Creating a Learning Environment for Babies and Toddlers*. SAGE.

Coe, R., Aloisi, C., Higgins, S. and Major, L.E. (2014) *What makes great teaching? Review of the underpinning research*. The Sutton Trust

Lindon, J. (2008) *What does it mean to be two? A practical guide to child development in the Early Years Foundation Stage* (2nd edition). Practical Pre-School Books.

Louis, S., Beswick, C. and Featherstone, S. (2013) *Understanding Schemas in Young Children: Again! Again!* 2nd edn. Featherstone Education.

Manning-Morton, J. and Thorpe, M. (2003) *Key Times for Play: the first three years*. OUP.

Soukakou, E., Ereky-Stevens, K., Sylva, K., Eisenstadt, N. and Mathers, S. (2104) *Sound Foundations: A review of the research evidence on quality of early childhood education and care for children under three*. The Sutton Trust.

Riddall-Leech, S. (2009) *Heuristic Play: Play in the EYFS*. Practical Pre-School Books.

Tassoni, P (2012) *Practical EYFS Handbook*. 2nd edn. Pearson.

Warden, C. (2007) *Nurture through Nature*. Mindstretchers.

Additional useful websites, links and blogs

Kathy Brodie *Two Year Olds in Mixed Age Groups*

<http://www.abcdoes.com/abc-does-a-blog/2012/05/two-year-olds-in-a-mixed-age-group-by-kathy-brodie/>

Foundation Years site <http://www.foundationyears.org.uk/>

EYFS forum <http://eyfs.info/home>

Nursery World www.nurseryworld.co.uk

Childcare Choices www.childcarechoices.gov.uk

Childcare Choices Childcare Calculator www.gov.uk/childcare-calculator