

The Development of Personal, Social and Emotional Development

0 – 6 yrs

This article focuses on the development of Personal, Social and Emotional development across the birth to six age range. The children attend a variety of early years settings and are supported in their learning by a range of practitioners.

Meet the Children

Thomas – 13 months

Thomas has attended a Day Nursery, close to mum's workplace for 3 days a week since he was three months old. On the other two days he is at home with mum and sister Sophie. Sophie also attends the nursery and is currently in the pre-school room. Thomas's key person, Teresa, supports him in the baby room.



Bradley – 4 years

Bradley attends a Foundation Stage unit in a Children's Centre. He currently attends five morning sessions a week. Teachers, nursery nurses and teaching assistants staff the unit. His key person, Marie, supports Bradley in group sessions.



Keeley – 2 years

Keeley is cared for on a full time basis by her childminder Sarah. Her older brother, Jake, is at school. Keeley and Sarah collect him at the end of the day. During the week they attend two sessions of the local Stay and Play at the Children's Centre and also use the local environment.



Saba – 5 years

Saba attends a large reception unit within a primary school in an urban area. Three teachers and three teaching assistants staff the unit. Saba is bilingual. Before starting school she attended a local playgroup for three sessions a week.



Sophie – 3 years

Sophie has been attending the morning sessions at the local pre-school in the church hall for the past two months. Twenty-three children attend pre school with Sophie. Her key person, Sue, supports eight children. In the afternoon she stays at home with mum or granddad. Sophie has a new baby brother called Tom.



Miles – 6 years

Miles attends a rural village school where he is in a mixed reception and Yr 1 class. One full time teacher and one full time teaching assistant staff the class. Before starting school, Miles attended the pre-school situated on the school site.



Personal, social and emotional development permeates all areas of learning. A 'strong child' is one who demonstrates qualities of self-assurance; she/he is keen to become involved in new experiences and often engages in play with deep concentration. This deeper level of involvement contributes to the building of knowledge, skills and understanding essential for independence in the world around them.

“Successful personal, social and emotional development is critical for very young children in all aspects of their lives and gives them the best opportunity for success in all other areas of learning and development.”

(The Early Years Foundation Stage consultation document, DfES 2006)

The adult's role is key; children learn most effectively when they feel safe and secure and when they are with familiar adults who give consistent messages.

“ For young children, being special to someone and cared for is vital for their physical, social and emotional health and well-being.”

(The Early Years Foundation Stage consultation document, DfES 2006)

Practitioners working with children across the birth to six age range must have the knowledge and skills to both recognise and respond sensitively to individual children's needs. They must recognise different types of body language and both verbal and non-verbal communication in order to support children to develop the skills they need for appropriate social interactions. For example, they need to help children articulate their feelings in situations where they feel sad or angry, model appropriate ways to ask for a toy rather than snatching it, and help them to develop the skills needed to join a group.



Context for learning:
Care Routines - Time for a rest
Thomas: 13 months

What did Thomas do?

Thomas arrived at Nursery for an early morning start. Mum talked with Teresa and explained that Thomas had an unsettled night and may be tired during the day. She also passed Teresa his special rabbit, a comforter from home, which travels with him every day. Later that morning Teresa noticed that Thomas was quieter than usual and seemed reluctant to explore the environment. When it was time to go outside Nikki collected the children's coats. Thomas immediately looked for Teresa and stretched his arms out towards her. Teresa noticed Thomas's non-verbal communication and she picked him up, smiled and said "*Come on Thomas, up you come, would you like to go outside?*" Thomas usually enjoys going outside but on this occasion he snuggled into Teresa's neck and began to twizzle his hair. "*Shall we find your rabbit and then you can have a sleep,*" asked Teresa, who had recognised that this was a familiar routine Thomas repeats before falling asleep. Thomas pointed towards the sleep area. Teresa settled Thomas in his cot, letting him hold her finger, which provided a comforting presence until he fell asleep.

Links to Early Years Foundation Stage

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Emotional Development: Self-confidence and self-esteem.

- Feel safe and secure within healthy relationships with key people
- Sustain healthy emotional attachments through familiar, trusting, safe and secure relationships

Communication, Language and Literacy

Language for Communication and Thinking: Language for Thinking

- Understand and respond to the different things said to them when in a familiar context with a special person

How did the adult support Thomas's learning / individual needs?

- Through an open dialogue with Mum as a part of the key person role
- By using her observation skills and knowledge of Thomas's individual preferences
- By responding flexibly to Thomas's needs within the routines of the setting.

Next Steps: What does the adult do next:

- Makes regular checks on Thomas as he sleeps
- Feeds back to colleagues within the room, as she will not be there at the end of the day
- Updates the home / setting link book.



Context for learning: Care Routines - Potty training Keeley: 2 years

What did Keeley do?

Dad has recently discussed Keeley's reluctance to engage in using the potty. Although Keeley occasionally indicates that her nappy is soiled, she shows little interest in her parent's efforts, which includes using a sticker chart. Her parents are concerned because family members of a similar age are already "dry". Sarah is keen to support the family but reminds Dad that all children are individuals. She suggests that she also uses a sticker chart to reinforce messages from home. In addition to this she collects a range of resources to add to role-play, including: a wet/dry baby doll, nappies, a sticker chart, wipes, and related books from the library. During the next month Sarah engages in role-play with Keeley and models experiences using these resources. Keeley is fascinated with the wet/dry doll and plays with it frequently. Sarah continues to communicate daily with Mum and Dad, sharing progress and achievements. As time passes Sarah observes that Keeley is showing more interest in the process and will sit on her own potty for short periods of time.

Links to Early Years Foundation Stage

Physical Development

Health and Bodily Awareness

- Show some awareness of bladder and bowel urges

Creative Development

Developing Imagination and Imaginative play

- Begin to make believe by pretending

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Dispositions and Attitudes: Self-care

- Seek to do things for themselves, knowing that the adult is close by to support and help if needed

How did the adult support Keeley's learning / development?

- By working closely with parents
- By adding appropriate resources to support Keeley's development
- By using sensitive observation and intervention and working through a play-based approach.

Next steps

- Discuss the next steps with parents to support Keeley through this important stage of development
- Encourage Keeley to verbalise her needs
- Provide a calm, consistent approach, offering praise and encouragement.

Context for learning:
Building relationships
Sophie: 3 years



What did Sophie do?

A mature student, Sam, has joined the pre-school for an eight-week placement. She is keen to interact with the children and has begun to plan activities for small groups.

Sam has planned an activity in the role-play café and most children are excited about participating and readily join in. Sophie's friend Amy happily joins the activity.

Sophie stands at a distance and watches but seems reluctant to move any closer or participate. Kay, Sophie's key worker, notices that Sophie is standing at the edge of the activity and asks her "*Do you want to have a turn?*" Sophie is usually confident so Kay suggests, "*Why don't you go and join Amy?*" Sophie whispers, "*I don't know that lady's name.*" Kay sits down with Sophie and explains again who Sam is and that she is here to help. Kay and Sophie watch the activity together and after a few minutes Kay takes Sophie over to meet Sam. Sam says "*Hello, Sophie, have you come to play?*" but she is careful not to overwhelm Sophie. Kay settles Sophie at the activity beside her friend, Amy. Another child needs Kay but before she leaves she explains where she is going and ensures that Sophie is happy to remain. Sam acknowledges Sophie with a smile and quietly moves nearer to where she is playing.

How did the adult support Sophie's learning / development?

- By noticing Sophie's discomfort and making time to discuss this with her
- By supporting Sophie's introduction to a new member of the team
- By explaining what she is doing before leaving Sophie.

Links to Early Years Foundation Stage

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Dispositions and Attitudes: Making Relationships

- Learn social skills, and enjoy being with and talking to adults and other children

Emotional Development: Self-confidence and self-esteem.

- Feel safe and secure within healthy relationships with key people
- Explore from the security of a close relationship with a caring and responsive adult

Next steps

- Observe Sophie's response to new adults in the setting
- Encourage Sophie to join in activities led by new members of staff until she is happy to do so spontaneously
- Provide a supportive induction programme as Sophie transfers to the local school nursery class.



Context for learning:
Independent snack time
Bradley: 4 years

What did Bradley do?

An area of the learning environment is set up for independent snack time. The children have to wash their hands before finding their name and picture in a basket and placing it on the snack board. Next they choose a piece of fruit and pour themselves a drink of milk or water. A new child, Rose, has joined the setting and Bradley has been given the responsibility of showing her how to use the snack area. Bradley approaches Rose, smiles and shows her to the bathroom, where they both wash their hands. *"We have to wash our hands first."* he says. *"Come on."* says Bradley and he takes her to the snack area. Bradley finds his picture and name in the basket, picks it out and puts it on the snack board. He then looks in the basket until he sees Rose's photo. *"You put your photo on here when you have your snack."* he says. Rose copies Bradley, placing her name on the board. Bradley then takes two bowls and passes one to Rose. *"Do you want a banana or an orange?"* he asks. Bradley and Rose choose their fruit and a drink before sitting at the snack table.

Links to Early Years Foundation Stage

Personal, social and emotional development

Dispositions and Attitudes: Self-care

- Select and use activities and resources independently

Social Development: Making Relationships

- Form friendships with other children

Emotional Development: Behaviour and self-control

- Show care and concern for others

How did the adult support Bradley's learning/development?

- The snack area is well organised, including photo cards and names, which allows Bradley to be independent
- By explaining that a new child needs some support and giving Bradley the encouragement and responsibility to do this.

Next Steps

- Encourage Bradley to select, use and return resources by himself in all areas of the learning environment
- Consider and then plan for additional experiences through which Bradley can extend his independence and self-confidence.



Context for learning:
Collaborative tidying up
Saba: 5 years

What did Saba do?

Children help to look after their learning environment by taking on responsibility for different jobs at tidy up time. With adult support and encouragement the children have just decided upon new jobs for the week. Saba has chosen to help keep the water toys tidy. She makes a sign in the graphics area and places it above the water toys on the outdoor storage rack. It says, 'Pls put the ts bac in the rit box.' (Please put the toys back in the right box).

When the tidy up music is played, Saba goes over to the water tray. She notices that the other child with responsibility for keeping the water toys tidy has not come over, so she goes and fetches him. She then explains patiently where the toys belong, pointing to the pictures to indicate this. She smiles, gives her partner a large bottle and walks over with him to show him how to stand the bottle on the silhouette. As they continue with their job, her partner independently takes the smaller bottle over and stands it on the matching silhouette. Saba immediately goes over and says, "*Well done! That's in the right place.*" They then empty the aqua play tray together.

How did the adult support Saba's learning / development?

- Through making shared decisions with the children about how to store learning resources and encouraging them to take ownership of their learning environment
- By modelling positive encouragement, which is reflected in Saba's response to her work partner.

Links to Early Years Foundation Stage

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Emotional Development: Self-confidence and self-esteem

- Have a sense of self as a member of different communities

Social Development: Making Relationships

- Work as part of a group or class, taking turns and sharing fairly
- Form relationships with adults and peers

Next steps

- Involve the children in deciding on and drawing up classroom rules
- Provide opportunities for discussion about how the rules are working and whether they could be improved.



**Context for learning: Circle time activity following a falling out.
Miles: 6 years**

What did Miles do?

The dinner lady has brought Miles in from the playground. He is feeling very upset and angry after a falling out with his friends during the lunch time period. After talking with Miles the teacher decides to remind all the children how to make up with a friend when they have fallen out. The whole school is working on the 'Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning Scheme' (SEAL materials DfES); this term's focus is 'Getting on and Falling out'. She chooses to read a story from these materials to the whole class.

Miles listens to the story and listens as the teacher explains that it is OK to have angry feelings but it is how we behave that matters. The children work with talk partners to discuss how they should behave when they are feeling angry. The teacher joins Miles's group and helps Miles to talk about how he is feeling and suggests ways in which he can calm down.

Together with the whole class, the teacher and Miles suggest two ways to calm down, breathing more slowly and standing with an adult. The children go on to practise breathing slowly and feeling calm before they move on to other activities.

Links to Early Years Foundation Stage

Personal, social and emotional development

Emotional Development: Behaviour and self-control

- Understand what is right and wrong and why
- Consider the consequences of their words and actions for themselves and others

Social Development: Making Relationships

- Value and contribute to own well-being and self-control

How did the adult support Miles's learning/development?

- By listening to Miles and his problem from the playground
- By giving Miles two suggestions for calming down after they have talked about his anger.

Next steps

- Talk to the children about resolving conflict using the 'Ready, Steady, Go' techniques. Ready, both 'sides' should be calm, Steady, take it in turns to say what you are feeling, Go, pick a solution that everyone is happy about.