

# 2.1 Child and young person development

---

## Key points in this unit:

- The principles of child and young person development
- The basic patterns of child and young person development
- The sequences of development 0 to 16 years
- The importance of observing children's development
- The purpose of observation
- The basic principles of child observation
- Confidentiality
- Report findings
- Observation methods
- Planning provision to promote development
- The planning cycle
- Implementing and evaluating plans to promote development
- Understanding physical development
- Observing and planning to promote physical development
- Understanding social and emotional development
- Observing and planning to promote social and emotional development
- Understanding communication and intellectual development
- Observing and planning to promote communication and intellectual development.

---

## The principles of child and young person development

Children and young people's development is [holistic](#) with each area being interconnected. Remember to always look at the 'whole' child or young person. You need to look at all areas of their development in relation to the particular aspect of development or learning you are focusing on. For example, when observing a pupil's writing skills as well as looking at their intellectual development you will need to consider the pupil's:

- Physical development (fine motor skills when using a pencil or pen)
- Language development and communication skills (vocabulary and structure of language)

used during their writing)

- Social and emotional development (interaction with others and behaviour during the writing activity).

## The basic patterns of child and young person development

It is more accurate to think in terms of **sequences** of children and young people's development rather than **stages** of development. This is because stages refer to development that occurs at *fixed ages* while sequences indicates development that follows the same basic pattern *but not necessarily at fixed ages*. You should really use the term 'sequences' when referring to all aspects of development. However, the work of people such as Mary Sheridan provides a useful guide to the **milestones** of *expected* development, that is, the usual patterns of development or **norm**. As well as their chronological age, children and young people's development is affected by many other factors e.g. maturation, social interaction, play opportunities, early learning experiences, special needs. The developmental charts below *do* indicate specific ages, but only to provide a framework to help you understand the basic patterns of development. ***Always remember that all children and young people are unique individuals and develop at their own rate.***



### key words

**Holistic:** looking at the 'whole' child or young person e.g. all aspects of the child or young person's development.



### key words

**Sequences:** development following the same basic patterns but not necessarily at fixed ages.

**Stages:** development which occurs at fixed ages.

**Milestones:** significant skills which are developed in and around certain ages as part of the usual or expected pattern of development.

**Norm:** the usual pattern or expected level of development/behaviour.



### Activity!

- What are the principles of child and young person development?
- Describe the basic patterns of development.

## The sequences of development 0 to 16 years

The sequence of children's development for each age range is divided into five different aspects:

\* **S**ocial \* **P**hysical \* **I**ntellectual \* **C**ommunication and language \* **E**motional.

### The Sequence of Children's Development: 0 to 3 Months

#### Social Development

- Cries to communicate needs to others; stops crying to listen to others
- Responds to smiles from others; responds positively to others e.g. family members and even friendly strangers unless very upset (when only main caregiver will do!)
- Considers others only in relation to satisfying own needs for food, drink, warmth, sleep, comfort and reassurance.

### Physical Development

- Sleeps much of the time and grows fast
- Tries to lift head
- Starts to kick legs with movements gradually becoming smoother
- Starts to wave arms about
- Begins to hold objects when placed in hand e.g. an appropriate size/shaped rattle
- Grasp reflex diminishes as hand and eye co-ordination begins to develop
- Enjoys finger play e.g. simple finger rhymes
- Becomes more alert when awake
- Learns to roll from side on to back
- Sees best at distance of 25cms then gradually starts watching objects further away
- Needs opportunities to play and exercise e.g. soft toys, cloth books and play-mat with different textures and sounds.

### Intellectual Development

- Recognises parents; concentrates on familiar voices rather than unfamiliar ones
- Aware of different smells
- Explores by putting objects in mouth
- Observes objects that move; responds to bright colours and bold images
- Stores and recalls information through images
- Sees everything in relation to self (is **egocentric**).

### Communication and Language Development

- Recognises familiar voices; stops crying when hears them
- Aware of other sounds; turns head towards sounds
- Responds to smiles; moves whole body in response to sound/to attract attention
- Pauses to listen to others; makes noises as well as crying e.g. *burbling*.

### Emotional Development

- Becomes very attached to parent/carer (usually the mother)
- Experiences extreme emotions e.g. very scared, very happy or very angry; these moods change in an instant
- Requires the security and reassurance of familiar routines
- May be upset by unfamiliar methods of handling and care.

## The Sequence of Children's Development: 3 to 9 Months

### Social Development

- Responds positively to others, especially to familiar people such as family members; by 9 months is very wary of strangers
- Communicates with others by making noises and participating in 'conversation-like' exchanges; responds to own name
- Begins to see self as separate from others.

### Physical Development

- Establishes head control; moves head round to follow people and objects
- Begins to sit with support; from about 6 months sits unsupported
- May begin to crawl, stand and cruise while holding on to furniture (from about 6 months)
- Learns to pull self up to sitting position
- Begins to use palmar grasp and transfers objects from one hand to the other
- Develops pincer grasp using thumb and index finger from about 6 months
- Continues to enjoy finger rhymes
- Puts objects into containers and takes them out
- Enjoys water play in the bath
- Needs opportunities for play and exercise including soft toys, board books, bricks, containers, activity centres, etc.

### Intellectual Development

- Knows individuals and recognises familiar faces
- Recognises certain sounds and objects
- Shows interest in everything especially toys and books
- Concentrates on well-defined objects and follows direction of moving object
- Anticipates familiar actions and enjoys games such as 'peep-po'
- Searches for hidden or dropped objects (from about 8 months)
- Observes what happens at home and when out and about
- Explores immediate environment once mobile
- Processes information through images
- Enjoys water play in the bath
- Sees everything in relation to self (is still egocentric).

### Communication and Language Development

- Responds with smiles
- Recognises family names, but cannot say them
- Enjoys looking at pictures and books
- Even more responsive to voices and music
- Participates in simple games e.g. 'peep-po'; tries to imitate sounds e.g. during rhymes
- Starts *babbling*, uses single syllable sounds e.g. 'daa', 'baa' and 'maa'
- From about 7 months uses two syllable sounds e.g. 'daada', 'baaba', 'maama'
- Shouts to attract attention.

### Emotional Development

- Has strong attachment to parent/carer (usually the mother)
- Develops other attachments to people seen regularly
- By 6 or 7 months shows clear preferences for familiar adults as can differentiate between individuals
- Demonstrates strong emotions through body language, gestures and facial expressions
- Dislikes anger in others and becomes distressed by it
- Has clear likes and dislikes e.g. will push away food, drink or toys does not want.





## Activity!

- Describe the different aspects of development (e.g. SPICE).
- Outline the sequences of development for the age group you currently work with.



## key words

**Egocentric:** pre-occupied with own needs; unable to see another person's viewpoint.

You will usually be observing activities which are part of the pupil's usual routine. You can observe pupils' development, learning and behaviour in a variety of situations. For example, you might observe the following situations:

- A child talking with another child or adult
- An adult working with a small group of children or young people
- A child or a small group of children playing indoors or outdoors, or participating in a small or large group discussion e.g. circle time
- An adult reading/telling a story to a child or group of children
- A child or group of children participating in a creative, literacy, mathematics or science activity, e.g. doing painting, writing, numeracy work or carrying out an experiment.

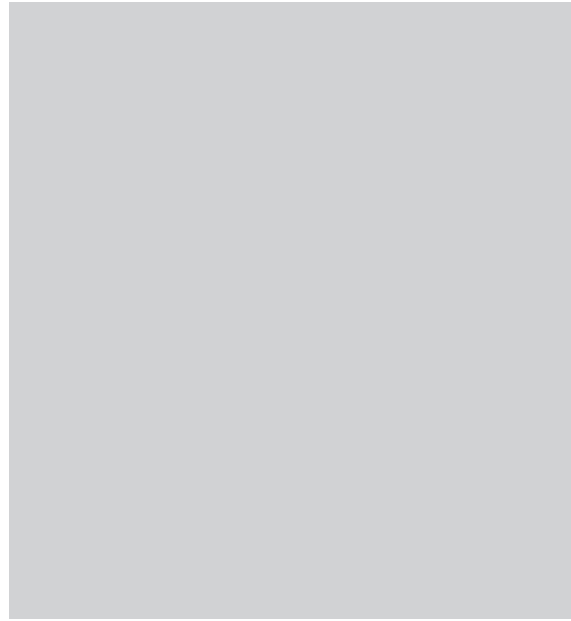


Figure 1.1: Thinking about observing by Jackie Harding and Liz Meldon-Smith



## Activity!

Write a short account explaining the importance and purpose of observing and assessing pupils' development.

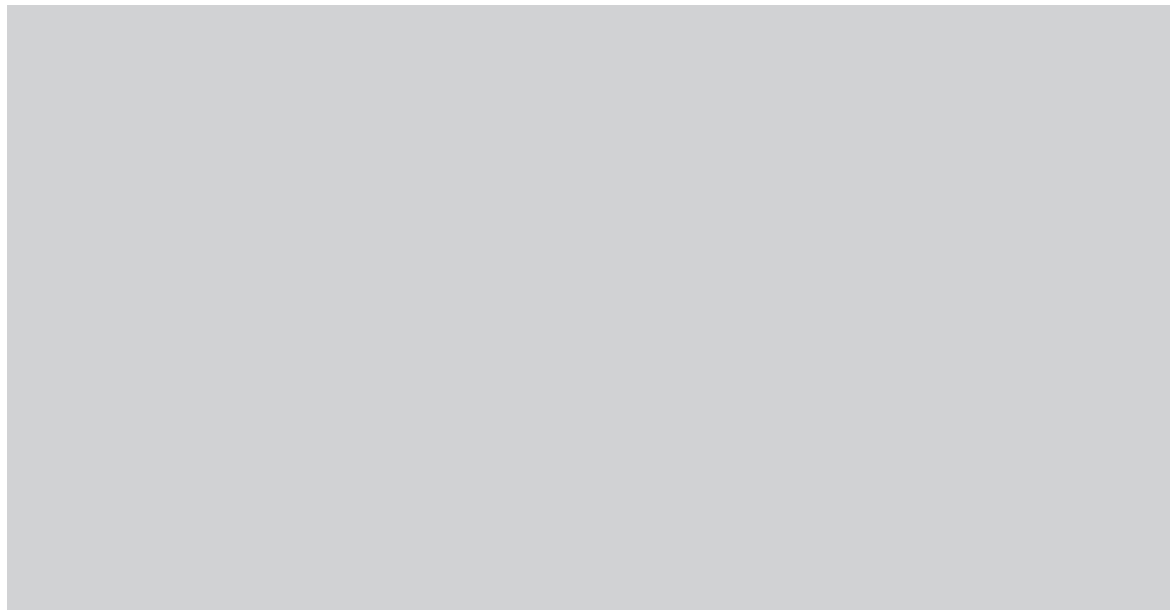
## The basic principles of child observation

Some important points have already been mentioned with regard to observing children's development, learning and behaviour. You also need to consider the following:

1. **Confidentiality** must be kept at all times. You must have the senior practitioner's and/or the parents' permission before making formal observations of children. (See details below.)
2. **Be objective.** You should not jump to premature conclusions. Only record what you actually see or hear not what you think or feel. For example, the statement "The child cried" is objective, but to say "The child is sad" is subjective, as you do not know what the child is feeling; children can cry for a variety of reasons e.g. to draw attention to themselves or to show discomfort.
3. **Remember equal opportunities.** Consider children's cultural backgrounds e.g. children may be very competent at communicating in their community language, but may have

more difficulty in expressing themselves in English; this does not mean they are behind in their language development. Consider how any special needs may affect children's development, learning and/or behaviour.

4. **Be positive!** Focus on the children's strengths not just on any learning or behavioural difficulties they may have. Look at what children can do in terms of their development and/or learning and use this as the foundation for providing future activities.
5. Use a **holistic** approach. Remember to look at the 'whole' child. You need to look at all areas of children's development in relation to the particular aspect of development or learning you are focusing on.
6. **Consider the children's feelings.** Depending on the children's ages, needs and abilities, you should discuss the observation with the children to be observed and respond appropriately to their views.
10. **Minimise distractions.** Observe children without intruding or causing unnecessary stress. Try to keep your distance where possible, but be close enough to hear the children's language. Try not to interact with the children (unless it is a participant observation - see below), but if they do address you be polite and respond positively e.g. explain to the children simply what you are doing and keep your answers short.
22. **Practise!** The best way to develop your skills at observing children's development, learning and behaviour is to do observations on a regular basis.



### Confidentiality

The teacher and your college tutor/assessor will give you guidelines for the methods most appropriate to your role in your particular school. Your observations and assessments must be in line with the school's policy for record keeping and relevant to the routines and activities of the pupils you work with. You must follow the school's policy regarding confidentiality at all times and be able to implement data protection procedures as appropriate to your role and responsibilities. (See section on confidentiality matters in 2.3 *Communication and professional relationships with children, young people and adults*)

The school should obtain permission from the parents or carers of the pupils being observed e.g. a letter requesting permission to do regular observations and assessments could be sent out for the parents to sign giving their consent. If you are a student, before doing any tasks for your assessment involving observations of children you **MUST** negotiate with the class teacher when it will be possible for you to carry out your observations and have written permission to do so.

## Reporting findings

You need to refer findings and concerns appropriately e.g. according to the needs of the school. There should be very close teamwork in the school and all staff should know all the pupils. There should be continual liaison between members of staff. You should liaise with others who will use your assessment information to inform planning for the pupils concerned. Some reporting to colleagues may be verbal and all records should be passed on to the relevant member of staff e.g. the pupil's next teacher. Working with the teacher, you will need to ensure that full and complete records are provided for the new setting when pupils transfer to another school. You may need to share information about pupil progress with other professionals e.g. when working with children with special educational needs or when reporting concerns about a child's welfare. You must follow your school's policies and procedures for sharing information including any confidentiality and data protection requirements. (See section on confidentiality matters in 2.3 *Communication and professional relationships with children, young people and adults*)



### Case Study

Jamie is working as a teaching assistant with pupils aged 6 to 7 years. During a learning activity Jamie observes that one of the pupils is very quiet and withdrawn which is unusual behaviour for this particular child.

- What would you do in this situation?
- Who would you report your concerns to?

## Observation methods

When observing pupils you need to use an appropriate method of observation as directed by the teacher. When assisting the teacher in observing and reporting on a pupil's development ensure that you consider all relevant aspects of development, for example: Social; Physical; Intellectual; Communication; Emotional. These can easily be remembered using the mnemonic **SPICE**.

You may observe an individual pupil or group of pupils on several occasions on different days of the week and at different times of the day. Use developmental charts for the pupil's age group to identify areas of development where the pupil is making progress, as well as those where the pupil is underachieving. For example, a pupil with limited speech may still be developing positive social relationships with other children by using non-verbal communication during play activities.

Methods of recording observations include:

- **The written account:** Observing a child using free description e.g. writing in the present tense to record everything the child does and/or says during a particular activity or event.

- **Naturalistic:** Observing a child during play activities e.g. playing with toys or playing a game.
- **Structured:** Observing a child during a particular activity set up to gain specific information about the child's learning or behaviour e.g. child's comprehension skills.
- **Snapshot:** Observing a child at a specific time e.g. behaviour during outdoor play.
- **Longitudinal study:** Observing a child over a long period of time e.g. observing child's developmental progress over a year.
- **Time sampling:** Observing a child's behaviour at regular intervals during a set period of time e.g. every ten minutes during a session/lesson.
- **Event sampling:** Observing particular events by recording the number of times the event occurs, when it occurs and how long it lasts e.g. child's emotional outbursts
- **Participant:** Observation where the observer is also involved in the child's activity

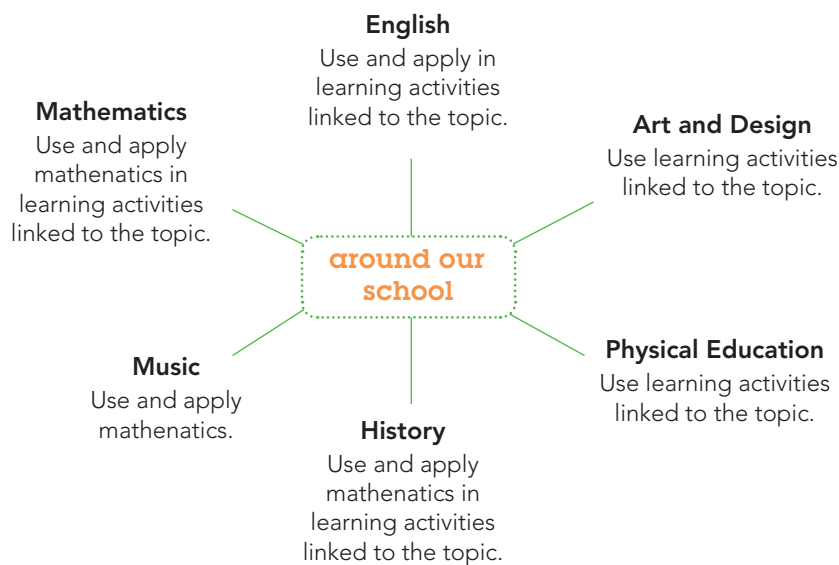


Figure 1.2 Diagram: Tick chart: group observation of pupils at snack/meal time

Observations and assessments should cover all relevant aspects of development including: physical skills; language and communication skills; social and emotional behaviour during different activities. You may be able to assist the teacher to compile a portfolio of relevant information about each pupil. A portfolio could include: observations; examples of the children's work; checklists of the children's progress. Assessment of this information can help highlight and celebrate the pupil's strengths as well as identify any gaps in their learning. This information can form the basis for the ongoing planning of appropriate learning activities and be a useful starting point for future learning goals/objectives. (Information about formative and summative assessments is in 3.17 *Support assessment for learning*)

## Recording observations and assessments

You should record your observations and assessments using an agreed format. This might be a: written descriptive account; structured profile (with specified headings for each section); pre-

coded system of recording. Once you have recorded your observation of the pupil (or group of pupils), you need to make an **assessment** of this information in relation to:

- The aims of the observation e.g. why you were doing this observation
- What you observed about the pupil's development, learning and/or behaviour in this particular activity
- How this compares to the expected level of development for a pupil of this age
- Any factors which may have affected the pupil's ability to learn and/or behave e.g. the immediate environment, significant events, illness, pupil's cultural background, special needs.

Your assessment may include charts, diagrams and other representations of the data you collected from your observation (see examples of observation charts above). Your college tutor or assessor should give you guidelines on how to present your observations. Otherwise you might find this suggested format useful:

### Suggested format for recording observations

<b>Number/title of observation:</b>
<b>Date of observation:</b>
<b>Method:</b> e.g. naturalistic, structured, snapshot, longitudinal, time sample, event sample, participant, non-participant, target child, trail or movement, checklist, coded observation or diary.
<b>Start time:</b>
<b>Finish time:</b>
<b>Number of pupils/staff:</b>
<b>Permission for observation:</b> e.g. teacher
<b>Type of setting and age range:</b> e.g. primary school, secondary school, special school.
<b>Immediate context/background information:</b> including the activity and its location.
<b>Description of pupil(s):</b> including age(s) in years and months.
<b>Aims:</b> why are you doing this particular observation?
<b>Observation:</b> the actual observation e.g. free description, pie chart, bar graph or tick chart.
<b>Assessment:</b> include the following Did you achieve your aims? Comparison of the pupil's development with the expected development of a pupil of this age, looking at all aspects of the pupil's development but with particular emphasis on the focus area (e.g. physical, social and emotional or communication and intellectual skills) References to support your comments.
<b>Personal learning:</b> what you gained from doing this observation e.g. what you have learned about this aspect of development and using this particular method of observing pupils e.g. was this the most appropriate method of observation for this type of activity?

### → Recommendations:

On how to encourage/ extend the pupil's development, learning and/or behaviour in the focus area e.g. suggestions for activities to develop the pupil's literacy or numeracy skills.

For any aspect of the pupil's development, learning and/or behaviour which you think requires further observation and assessment.

**References/bibliography:** list details of all the books used to complete your assessment.



### Activity!

Find out what your school's policies are regarding pupil observations and assessments, confidentiality and record keeping and data protection procedures.

Keep this information in mind when doing your own observations of pupils.

## Planning provision to promote development

As directed by the teacher you may be involved in planning provision for the pupils you work based on assessments of their developmental progress. You should recognise that developmental progress depends on each pupil's level of maturation and their prior experiences. You should take these into account and have realistic expectations when planning activities to promote pupils' development. This includes regularly reviewing and updating plans for individual pupils and ensuring that plans balance the needs of individual pupils and the group as appropriate to your school. You should know and understand that pupils develop at widely different rates but in broadly the same sequence. When planning provision to promote pupils' development you need to recognise that children's development is holistic even though it is divided into different areas e.g. **Social**; **Physical**; **Intellectual**; **Communication and language**; **Emotional**. Remember to look at the 'whole' child e.g. you need to look at *all* areas of children's development in relation to the particular aspect of development or learning you are focusing on when planning provision to promote pupils' development.

## The planning cycle

Following observations and assessments of a pupil's development, learning and/or behaviour, the recommendations can provide the basis for planning appropriate activities to encourage and extend the pupil's skills in specific areas. Effective planning is based on individual needs, abilities and interests, hence the importance of accurate and reliable child observations and assessments. You will also support the teacher in planning provision based on the requirements for the relevant curriculum frameworks.

When planning learning activities, your overall aims should be to: support the development and learning of *all* the pupils you work with; ensure every pupil has full access to the appropriate curriculum; meet pupils' individual developmental and learning needs; build on each pupil's existing knowledge, understanding and skills. (For detailed information on planning learning activities see 2.7 *Support learning activities*)

## Implementing and evaluating plans to promote development

Good preparation and organisation are essential when implementing plans to promote pupils' development including: having any instructions and/or questions for the pupil or group of pupils ready e.g. prompt cards, worksheet, work card or written on the board; ensuring sufficient materials and equipment including any specialist equipment; setting out the materials and equipment on the table ready or letting the pupils get the resources out for themselves depending on their ages and abilities. Implementing an activity may involve: giving out any instructions to the pupils; showing pupils what to do e.g. demonstrate a new technique; keeping an individual pupil and/or group of pupils on task; clarifying meaning and/or ideas; explaining any difficult words to the pupils; assisting pupils with any special equipment e.g. hearing aid or a Dictaphone; providing any other appropriate assistance; encouraging the pupils to tidy up afterwards as appropriate to the ages and abilities; remembering to maintain the pupil safety at all times.

After you have planned and/or implemented an activity you will need to evaluate it. Some evaluation also occurs during the activity, providing continuous assessment of a pupil's performance. It is important to evaluate the activity so that you can: assess whether the activity has been successful e.g. the aims and objectives have been met; identify possible ways in which the activity might be modified/adapted to meet the individual needs of the pupil or pupils; provide accurate information for the teacher, SENCO or other professionals about the successfulness of a particular activity. The teacher or your college tutor/assessor should give you guidelines on how to present your activity plans. If not, you might find this suggested format useful:



### Key Task

1. Observe a pupil involved in a physical activity e.g. using play equipment or PE apparatus. Focus on the physical skills demonstrated by the pupil.
2. In your assessment comment on: the pupil's gross motor skills; the pupil's fine motor skills; the pupil's co-ordination skills; the role of the adult in promoting the pupil's physical development; suggestions for further activities to encourage or extend the pupil's physical development.

**NOS links:**

**Level 2:** STL2.1 STL2.2 STL2.3 STL2.4 STL 9.1 STL9.2



### Key Task

- Plan an activity which encourages or extends a pupil's physical skills such as gross motor skills, fine motor skills and/or co-ordination skills. Use the assessment information from your observation of a pupil's physical development from page 000 as the basis for your planning.
- If possible, ask the class teacher for permission to implement the activity. Evaluate the activity afterwards.

**NOS links:**

**Level 2:** STL2.1 STL2.2 STL2.3 STL2.4 STL 9.1 STL9.2



## Activity!

- Find out more about children and young people's emotional development. For example, why are secure attachments important for young children? Or why are self-image and identity so important to young people?
- Think about how you could help to promote emotional development.
- List examples to promote each of the following: develop as unique individuals; express feelings; develop positive self-esteem; develop positive self-image/identity; relate positively to others. Give examples from your own experiences of promoting children's development. Find out what your school's policies are regarding pupil observations and assessments, confidentiality and record keeping and data protection procedures.
- Keep this information in mind when doing your own observations of pupils.

You should provide opportunities for children to develop the necessary communication skills to become competent at using these different modes of language. Opportunities for talk are especially helpful in promoting language development and the use of communication skills. When working with children you must be aware of and provide for appropriate play and learning activities to enable the children to develop effective communication skills. Remember that some children may be limited in their ability to use some modes of language due to sensory impairment or other special needs.

**Intellectual development** involves the processes of gaining, storing, recalling and using information. To develop as healthy, considerate and intelligent human beings, all children require intellectual stimulation as well as physical care and emotional security. Children are constantly thinking and learning, gathering new information and formulating new ideas about themselves, other people and the world around them.

The inter-related components of intellectual development are:

- Perception
- Thinking
- Language
- Problem-solving
- Concepts
- Memory
- Concentration
- Creativity.

**Perception** involves the ability to identify the differences between objects or sounds. There are two types of perception: *auditory* - differentiating between sounds; *visual* - differentiating between objects or the distance between objects. Children use their senses to explore the objects and sounds in the world around them.

**Thinking** can be defined as the intellectual process of using information to find solutions. We cannot see a person's thoughts because the thinking process is internal. We can see the process and progress of a person's thinking through their actions and communications. Children can develop their thinking skills through a wide range of learning activities including: problem-solving in mathematics; investigating and hypothesising in science; identifying and solving design needs in technology.

**Language** is an essential component of intellectual development as it enables children to: make sense of the world around them; access new experiences and store new information; make better connections between existing and new information; develop understanding of concepts (see below); communicate more effectively with others e.g. ask appropriate questions; verbalise their thoughts; express their opinions and ideas.

**Problem-solving** involves: using the intellectual processes of logic and reasoning to make personal judgements; making connections between existing information and new information. Children use their existing knowledge and past experiences to solve problems. Children often supplement their lack of knowledge or experience by experimenting i.e. using a process of trial and error. Making mistakes is part of the learning process. By using logic, children can make reasonable assumptions or predictions about what might happen in a particular situation or to a particular object. Logical thinking and problem-solving skills are essential to making mathematical calculations and scientific discoveries.

### Further Reading

---

Harding, J. and Meldon-Smith, L. (2000) *Helping Young Children to Develop*. Hodder & Stoughton.

Harding, J. and Meldon-Smith, L. (2001) *How to make observations and assessments* 2nd edition. Hodder Arnold.

Hobart, C. and Frankel, J. (2009) *A Practical Guide to Activities for Young Children*. 4th edition. Nelson Thornes.

Lindon, J. (2001) *Growing Up: 8 Years to Young Adulthood*. National Children's Bureau.

Lindon, J. (2007) *Understanding children and young people: development from 5 – 18 years*. Hodder Arnold.

Meggitt, C. (2006) *Child Development: An Illustrated Guide*. 2nd edition. Heinemann Educational Publishers.

Sharman, C, Cross, W and Vennis, D. (2004) *Observing Children: A Practical Guide*. Continuum.

Sheridan, M. (2007) *From birth to five years: children's developmental progress*. 3rd edition. Routledge.

Smidt, S. (2005) *Observing, Assessing, Planning*. Routledge.

---