

Behavioural Milestones

Behavioural expectations of children should not be higher than is actually developmentally appropriate for their stage of development and be consistent with their level of understanding. A one year old is unlikely to understand and learn discipline whereas a child of three years developmentally is highly likely to have a better understanding of their behaviour and the consequences of inappropriate behaviour.

“Behavioural milestones” are important as they support us to determine how a child's behaviour and understanding is developing. Remember that each individual child develops in their own way and at their own rate.

0-12 months

No understanding for consciously intentional behaviour (when a baby find a marker, they may begin to draw on their face, the walls, the floor. The baby doesn't understand that this is unacceptable behaviour, they are just exploring.).

No understanding of conscious reactions during interactions (when interacting with a baby you may notice them grabbing toys from you or other babies. This is because the baby is unable to understand the concept of sharing at this stage).

Beginning to develop trust (first step towards positive self esteem).

12 - 36 months:

Still does not consciously plan actions or have control.

Does not have the capacity to understand, remember or obey rules.

Sharing is developmentally incompatible at this stage.

Begins to explore cause and effect relationships (when you are hungry, you eat).

Begins to become interested in other children.

Beginning to develop independence.

Starts to test boundaries and able to do things considered “naughty” or “destructive”.

36 - 60 months:

Consciously aware of their own interests and intentions.

Becomes easily frustrated when things don't turn out as expected.

Begins to manipulate ideas in their minds.

Begins to understand consequences of their behaviour.

Able to make appropriate decisions before acting.

Can talk through things in a simple manner.

Establishes friendships and learns how to be a friend.

Becomes independent and finds own limits.

Wanting to please adults (feels guilty for disappointing others).

Will follow rules to please adults.

Able to follow simple rules.

Becomes very competitive.

Beginning to comprehend the relationship between actions and consequences.

5 – 8 years:

Asks questions constantly and becomes more critical.

Compares selves to others.

Makes simple judgements (good/bad, win/lose).

Uses words to hurt others.

Needs encouragement to support self-esteem.