



Personal, Social and Emotional Development: Self-confidence and self-awareness

Introduction

Personal, Social and Emotional Development (PSED), along with Communication and Language (CL) and Physical Development (PD), is one of the **three prime areas** of learning in the EYFS framework. These areas are called prime because they underpin all other aspects of young children's learning and development. From the moment they are born, young children experience the world through interacting and communicating with others, and engaging physically with the environment around them. The three prime areas of learning are regarded as particularly important for inspiring young children's curiosity and enthusiasm, laying the foundations for future success in all aspects of life and education.

Personal development is about how children come to understand who they are and what they can do.

Social development covers how children come to understand themselves in relation to others; how they make friends, understand the rules of society and behave towards others.

Emotional development is about how children understand their own and others' feelings and develop their ability to be empathetic – to see things from another person's point of view.

In the EYFS, **Personal, Social and Emotional Development** covers three key aspects:



Prime and specific areas of learning

The **three prime areas** of the EYFS should be the focus for practitioners working with the youngest children, as they form the basis for successful learning and progress in the **four specific areas**.

As children become older, the emphasis will shift towards a more equal focus on **all areas of learning** as children's confidence and abilities increase.

If at any time a child's progress within any of the prime areas gives cause for concern, practitioners should discuss this with the child's parents and provide focused support in that area. This approach is designed to ensure that any issues are addressed at an early stage of a child's life.

Nurturing young children's self-confidence and self-awareness

For practitioners, supporting young children to grow in self-confidence and self-awareness involves providing opportunities for them to:

- develop a positive sense of themselves and others
- have confidence in their own abilities.

During their early years, young children build their understanding of themselves as individuals. This increases their confidence to engage with the people, objects and experiences in the world around them. As children grow in self-confidence and self-awareness they extend their horizons and begin to see that what they do can make a difference. This ability to proactively engage with the world underpins all other aspects of a young child's learning.

Progress in PSED: Self-confidence and self-awareness

24-36 months

Children separate from their main carer with support and encouragement from a familiar adult. They begin to recognise danger and know who to turn to for help. They seek to do things for themselves, knowing that an adult is close by, ready to support if needed.

36-48 months

Children can select and use activities and resources with help. They talk about their own needs and feelings in simple ways. They are confident to talk to other children when playing together and will talk freely about their home and community.

Early Learning Goal

Children are confident to try new activities, and say why they like some activities more than others. They are confident to speak in a familiar group, will talk about their ideas, and will choose the resources they need for their chosen activities. They say when they do or don't need help.

[Statements from Draft EYFS Framework, 2011]

The relationship between Personal, Social and Emotional Development and the other prime areas of learning

'Personal, Social and Emotional Development supports Physical Development as a child who feels secure and safe is confident to expand the boundaries of exploration and is motivated to reach, move and test physical capacities; it supports Communication and Language within relationships which establish turn-taking, joint activity, a desire to communicate and understanding of shared meanings of words.'

[Tickell Review of the EYFS, 2011]

Summary of development for two-year-olds

When a child is aged between 24 and 36 months, practitioners must review progress in Personal, Social and Emotional Development, along with the other two prime areas of learning. Parents or carers should be given a short written summary of their child's development as part of the ongoing dialogue between the setting and the family. This summary should identify any areas where the child's progress is less than expected and should shape a targeted plan to support that child's future learning and development in the setting.

There will be no standard format for this developmental summary; instead it should reflect the culture and ethos of the setting and the particular needs of the child and/or parental preferences.

What quality looks like in practice

The three scenarios below describe the environment and practice in a nursery attached to a children's centre, located in a culturally diverse area of the country.

Under twos

In a nursery, the practitioners make great efforts to create an environment for the babies and toddlers that is full of opportunities for them to make choices, follow their interests, and develop their awareness of themselves as competent and confident. There are interesting Treasure Baskets for the babies to explore and a wealth of interesting natural, reclaimed and household resources for the children to play with. These are stored attractively on open shelves at child height so children can express preferences and make choices.

Sleeping nests at floor level mean children decide for themselves when to go to sleep and when to get up again.

Each key person knows the children they look after well, and takes time during the day for individual one-to-one conversations and interactions. Children's interests and achievements are noticed and remarked upon, and observations are used effectively to plan what experiences to offer the children next. Persistence and resilience are highly valued and children learn from a very early age the rewards of being able to do things for themselves.

Daily feedback to parents about the highlights of their child's nursery day helps to provide a consistency in the nursery's approach to fostering self-confidence and self-awareness.

Two- to three-year-olds

The environment for the two and three year old children is full of interesting open ended resources that they can use in many different ways. There are baskets of shells, pebbles, cones, fabrics and interesting reclaimed materials to handle and explore. Mirrors placed at different angles around the room provide interesting reflections of oneself and other things. Practitioners talk with the children, explore ideas, and encourage them to express themselves. They are observant and quick to pick up on individual children's interests.

New experiences, such as exploring darkness, are introduced sensitively to make sure less confident children are not overwhelmed. New ideas for experiences indoors, in the outdoor area, or further afield are subjected to a robust risk benefit analysis so that children can enjoy exciting challenges in a safe and secure environment.

The role of the key person is well understood by staff, and underpins all the nursery's organisation and practice. Good teamwork and cooperation means there is always time for individual children who may need extra support.

Photographs and displays around the setting show children engaged in a wide range of different learning situations. Many of the captions draw attention to the attitudes and dispositions displayed by the children, rather than just recounting what they are doing.

Four- to five-year-olds

As children grow in self-confidence and self-awareness, they become increasingly able to take control of their own learning. The nursery encourages this by providing an environment full of choices and possibilities. Rather than being dictated by the adults, the organisation of the day is discussed by the children and the adults as a group. Children are able to express preferences and negotiate when and how they will do things, and who with. There is much discussion of individual rights, but also of duties and responsibilities to other people. Through group discussions and group projects, children's individual strengths and abilities are nurtured, as is their awareness of the different strengths and abilities of other people.

The children have access to a wide range of open-ended creative resources, both indoors and out of doors. They are stored where they can be accessed easily and where children can put them away when they are finished. Resources and images throughout the nursery reflect cultural diversity and avoid gender stereotyping to provide all children with positive messages about their own identities and the life opportunities available to them.

Parents are encouraged to play an active role in the life of the nursery, and all parents are helped to see the importance of nurturing their child's self-confidence and self-awareness as an essential part of 'school readiness.'

How to support young children's self-confidence and self-awareness

Use these reflective questions to think about how you support young children's self-confidence and self-awareness.

Under twos

- What sorts of toys and resources do we provide for our youngest children to play with?
- How do we set up the physical environment to encourage children to make choices?
- How do we ensure children have sufficient time, opportunity and encouragement to master skills?
- How well is the outdoor environment resourced to provide interesting and engaging experiences?
- Do we all agree how to provide very young children with risk and challenge?
- Do we feel the routines and staffing arrangements of the setting are supportive of key person working?
- How good are we at observing children and using their interests as the basis of future planning?
- How well do we support new parents in understanding their young child's learning and development?

Two- to three-year-olds

- How could we extend the range of interesting resources available for children to play with and explore?
- Do we pay enough attention to ensuring resources are well organised and attractively presented?
- How could we create outside spaces for exploration or for sitting quietly, as well as for running around?
- Do we all have a consistent attitude to risk and challenge for young children?
- How do we make sure everyone understands the importance of listening to children and picking up on their interests and ideas?
- How well do we show we value individual children's strengths and abilities?
- Do our displays emphasise the importance of children's attitudes and approaches to learning rather than just the final product?
- Do we take time to listen to parents and to share information about how they can support their child's learning and development at home?

Three- to four-year-olds

- How well do we resource the environment indoors and out of doors to engage and extend children's interests?
- How do we make sure children can access a wide range of open-ended creative resources to express their thoughts and ideas?
- How do we make sure the organisation of the day allows enough time for children to become absorbed in their self-chosen activities?
- How effectively do we help children to express themselves in a confident and self-assured way?
- How effectively do we act as role models for the children by being open to new ideas and experiences?
- How could we provide more opportunities for children to engage with people in the outside world – through visits and visitors?
- Do we all feel the images displayed around the setting fully reflect the local community?
- How can we provide more opportunities for parents to learn more about young children's learning and development?

Ideas for parents

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Personal development is about how children come to understand who they are and what they can do.

Social development is about how children come to understand themselves in relation to other people, how they make friends, understand the rules of society and behave towards others.

Emotional development is about how children understand their own and other's feelings and develop their ability to see things from another person's point of view.

Supporting young children's **Personal, Social and Emotional Development** is all about:

- encouraging their self-confidence and self-awareness
- helping them to manage their feelings and behaviour
- supporting them in building relationships with other people.

Building your child's self-confidence and self-awareness

To help your child learn how to manage their feelings and behaviour you will need to provide lots of opportunities for them to:

- develop social skills and learn how to manage their feelings
- understand how to behave as a member of a group.

You could use the ideas below as starting points to help you do this.

Under twos

- When you talk to your baby, leave time for him to respond so he knows how interesting he is.
- Pay attention to what your child is interested in so you can offer new experiences you think she might enjoy.
- Make faces at your baby and watch for a response. Name the parts of your face as you do this.
- Place a mirror next to the changing mat or cot so your baby can see himself easily.
- At mealtimes, give your child a selection of finger foods so he can choose what he wants to eat.
- Encourage your toddler to enjoy new experiences like walking barefoot on damp grass.
- Encourage your toddler to try to do things for himself, such as putting on socks or shoes.

Two- to three-year-olds

- Choose clothes, shoes and coats that are easy for your child to put on and take off.
- Help your child to make simple choices, such as about the food she eats or the clothes she wears.
- Be interested in what your child has to say.
- Involve your child in simple decisions about what happens during the day so she sees that her opinions matter.
- When your child is learning new skills, give her plenty of time to practise.
- Help your child to see the importance of putting effort into trying to do things – even if they don't work out perfectly every time.
- Don't compare your child with others – celebrate what he can do, not what he can't do.

Four- to five-year-olds

- Help your child to develop the language she needs to express herself clearly.
- Be aware of what interests your child – fairies, superheroes, dinosaurs, etc.
- Try to give your child lots of opportunities to explore the world of nature – in the garden, the park, the woods, or on the beach.
- Be enthusiastic about rain, mud, worms and spiders – your child will pick up her attitude to the world from you.
- Praise your child for learning new skills such as using scissors or tying laces.
- Avoid the temptation to do things for your child all the time – you won't always be there to help.
- You can help your child to have a positive attitude to the world by providing a secure, loving home environment.