# **Foundation Milestones** **and Notes**

This resource should always be used in conjunction with [Section 1: Guidance](#_Section_1:_Guidance), [Section 2: Supporting resources](#_Section_2:_Milestones) and [Notes](#Notes)

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| **Communication** | **Attention skills** | * Shows a simple reflex response to an individual stimulus * Shows a simple reflex response to a range of sensory stimuli, objects, people and/or activities. * Shows awareness of something happening:   + Gives a quick and fleeting response   + Gives inconsistent response   + Gives more consistent attention and response. * Gives shared attention to a range of sensory stimuli, objects, people and/or activities. * Anticipates within familiar routines and situations * Shares a consistent response in familiar routines and situations. * Shows understanding of a sequence of activities within a familiar routine. * Demonstrates extended attention within familiar settings. * Demonstrates extended attention within unfamiliar settings. |
| **Preference and choice** | * Shows pleasure/displeasure through:   + Non-verbal or physical response   + Verbal response. * Accepts or rejects in response to sensory stimuli, objects, people and/or activities * Indicates preferences in response to sensory stimuli, objects, people and/or activities * Consistently shows and expresses preference to sensory stimuli, objects, people and/or activities. * Communicates basic needs that enables them to be understood by others (for example, more/again/finished/enough/stop) * Makes a choice using:   + Real objects   + Photos   + Symbols. |
| **Interaction** | * Shows awareness of people and activities. * Tolerates other people within their space * Demonstrates a clear reaction to people and activities * Responds to facial expressions and/or body language. * Shows a response to a social interaction with familiar people and activities. * Shows a response to a social interaction with unfamiliar people and activities * Imitates, during interactions, using vocalisations and/or body movements. * Maintains an interaction for a brief period * Terminates an interaction (may be unconventional) * Terminates an interaction in a conventional way (for example, saying bye or all done) * Initiates an interaction with a familiar person or in a familiar situation (for example, through play) * Initiates an interaction with an unfamiliar person or in an unfamiliar situation * Takes turns in an interaction with a familiar person or in a familiar situation (for example, through play) * Takes turns in an interaction with unfamiliar people and/or unfamiliar settings |
| **Making connections (cognitive)** |  | * Notices stimuli. * Follows/tracks a stimulus when it moves. * Looks around for disappearing stimuli. * Explores toys and objects using one or two senses * Explores toys and objects with a wide range of senses * Demonstrates an interest in environment * Shows preference for toys and objects * Recognises that repeated actions leads to particular effects (cause and effect). * Responds differently to familiar and unfamiliar sensory stimuli, objects, people and/or activities * Seeks a preferred or favourite toy or object in a familiar place * Returns a familiar toy or object to a familiar place * Demonstrates an awareness of their own possessions through behavioural, physical, facial and vocal expression * Demonstrates an awareness that a specific toy or object has a purpose, e.g. pours from a watering can, feeds a doll using a bottle * Shows awareness of a change or difference in a familiar activity or routine * Follows steps within a familiar routine (for example, transitions between activities, daily hygiene activities * Begins to initiate or complete a familiar routine (for example, transitions between activities, daily hygiene activities) |
| **Self and emotions** | **Awareness** | * Shows basic emotions (happy, sad, angry, scared, surprised and disgust) through behavioural, physical, facial and vocal expression * Reacts in some way to the emotions of others * Demonstrates a consistent emotional response to indicate displeasure to a range of sensory stimuli, objects, people and/or activities * Demonstrates a consistent emotional response to indicate pleasure to a range of sensory stimuli, objects, people and/or activities * Shows emotional responses to a range of sensory stimuli, objects, people and/or activities * Copies the emotional responses of others in their facial expression and body gestures * Recognises different facial expressions that demonstrate basic emotions (real people, photos, symbols) * Demonstrates pleasure in response to feedback from others * Demonstrates a sense of achievement through behavioural, physical, facial and/or vocal expression |
| **Regulation** | * Attempts to self soothe (may be unconventional) * Tolerates an adult’s attempts to intervene when distressed * Accepts redirection when distressed * Uses a range of sensory stimuli, objects and/or activities to self soothe at the direction of others * Responds to adult support when distressed * Selects a range of sensory stimuli, objects and/or activities to self soothe * Seeks adult support when distressed * Begins to regulate emotional response by using a range of sensory stimuli, objects, people and/or activities |
| **Functional movement** |  | **Gross Motor Skills**   * Shows an awareness of different body parts * Demonstrates control of a body part (for example, stays still, turns head towards a stimulus or reaches hand towards a switch) * Maintains a position (on side, sitting, standing etc.) * Transitions in and out of a position (sitting, standing etc.) * Transitions out with centre of gravity and returns * Travels in different ways (crawling, bottom shuffling, rolling, sliding, walking etc.) * Moves in a range of directions e.g. reaches or moves forward, backwards or sideways * Starts to control speed of movement * Starts to control force of movement   **Fine Motor Skills**   * Uses hands, fingers or feet to explore objects * Grasps and releases a range of objects * Holds and stabilises a range of objects * Uses hands to manipulate an object for a range of functions (for example, push, pull, open, close)   **Coordination**   * Starts to coordinate actions (for example, walking and holding an object, reaching for an object etc.) |

## **Notes:**

**Communication**

This section includes the range of skills which form the foundation of early communication from attention skills to communicating preference and choice, and the basis of social interaction. It relates to how learners respond to and receive information. Development of skills in this area will form the foundation to progression in many other areas particularly to the development of early literacy skills. As in other areas, the continuum of engagement will support practitioners to identify different levels of engagement in many of these skills but there are a number of very basic skills in this area for which the continuum of engagement won’t apply. These include milestones such as ‘Shows a simple reflex response to an individual stimulus’ where the expectation is either that the learner is either able to do this or not.

**Making Connections (Cognitive)**

This section relates to how learners explore and interpret the world. Learners with complex additional support needs can experience difficulties making sense of the world and may need many opportunities to encounter, experience and engage with stimuli, objects, people and activities in a range of ways; to look for patterns and sequences in experience; and generally extend their focus from the immediate and concrete to the less immediate and more abstract. As learners begin to develop the understanding that they can have an effect on their world, they can be offered a much wider range of activities and objects to explore. At this stage learners should be given opportunities to choose or show their preference for particular objects, people, or activities. A focus on progression within regular daily living activities and routines can be helpful at this stage as developing skills in this context can be an important life skill for many learners.

**Self and Emotions**

This section explores how children and young people will develop their awareness of both themselves and of their emotions. It is not expected that learners at this stage will necessarily have the language to express their emotions or to access appropriate support. It is important, however, that as part of their progression within health and wellbeing that they are able to recognise that they are experiencing emotions and to seek out support when needed. It is particularly important that they can find ways through their environment, and the adults within that environment, to begin to regulate any emotions or feelings that they have and accept the support of others to co-regulate.

Often learners with complex additional support needs may seek ways to self-soothe or regulate themselves in unconventional ways. Unconventional means of self-soothing or regulation may include: making loud noises; moving around a lot; and in some instances may include behaviours that cause harm to themselves and others (for example, banging their head or grabbing for others). The skills which demonstrate progression in regulation will generally be towards more conventional means of regulation. It may be the case that some unconventional ways of self-soothing or regulating emotions still demonstrate progression but it is paramount that learners should move towards developing skills in this area which ensure the safety of themselves and others. (See also ‘[Understanding the Profile of Learners’](#ProfileofLearners) section for ways to accommodate or manage health, physical, and sensory issues through profiles developed in conjunction with Allied Health professionals)

**Functional Movement**

This section emphasises the ultimate aim of each learner being able to maximise their physical and functional independence[[1]](#footnote-1). Some learners may require high levels of physical support including postural management. Reporting should include the type and level of physical support required. Physically able learners have a diverse range of physical skills and abilities and it is not the intention to represent all of the variation in these skills in these milestones. The milestones that are outlined here focus on the functionality of movement to support the development of independence and not on the quality of movement. In order to fully support the progression of learners in a way that benefits them, practitioners should continue to plan in partnership with other agencies including Allied Health Professionals.

It should be recognised that the oral motor system is also a complex set of fine motor skills. The use of lips, tongue and jaw movements should be routinely encouraged. However, the description of the development of these skills is beyond the scope of these milestones.

1. It should be recognised that where there is paralysis some learners may not be able to develop functional movement with some or any of their limbs. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)