

30–50 Months

Communication & Language

Listening & Attention

19	Listens to others one-to-one or in small groups, when conversation interests them.	
20	Listens to stories with increasing attention and recall.	
21	Joins in with repeated refrains and anticipates key events and phrases in rhymes and stories.	
22	Focusing attention – still listen or do, but can shift own attention.	
23	Is able to follow directions (if not intently focused on own choice of activity).	

Understanding

12	Understands use of objects (e.g. <i>‘What do we use to cut things?’</i>)	
13	Shows understanding of prepositions, such as ‘under’, ‘on top’, ‘behind’ by carrying out an action or selecting correct picture.	
14	Responds to simple instructions, e.g. to get or put away an object.	
15	Beginning to understand ‘why’ and ‘how’ questions.	

Speaking

23	Beginning to use more complex sentences to link thoughts (e.g. <i>using and, because</i>).	
24	Can retell a simple past event in correct order (e.g. <i>went down slide, hurt finger</i>).	
25	Uses talk to connect ideas, explain what is happening and anticipate what might happen next, recall and relive past experiences.	
26	Questions why things happen and gives explanations. Asks e.g. <i>who, what, when, how</i> .	
27	Uses a range of tenses (e.g. <i>play, playing, will play, played</i>).	
28	Uses intonation, rhythm and phrasing to make the meaning clear to others.	
29	Uses vocabulary focused on objects and people that are of particular importance to them.	
30	Builds up vocabulary that reflects the breadth of their experiences.	
31	Uses talk in pretending that objects stand for something else in play, e.g. <i>‘This box is my castle.’</i>	

Literacy

Reading

7	Enjoys rhyming and rhythmic activities.	
8	Shows awareness of rhyme and alliteration.	
9	Recognises rhythm in spoken words.	
10	Listens to and joins in with stories and poems, one-to-one and also in small groups.	
11	Joins in with repeated refrains and anticipates key events and phrases in rhymes and stories.	
12	Beginning to be aware of the way stories are structured.	
13	Suggests how the story might end.	
14	Listens to stories with increasing attention and recall.	
15	Describes main story settings, events and principal characters.	
16	Shows interest in illustrations and print in books and print in the environment.	
17	Recognises familiar words and signs such as own name and advertising logos.	
18	Looks at books independently.	
19	Handles books carefully.	
20	Knows information can be relayed in the form of print.	
21	Holds books the correct way up and turns pages.	
22	Knows that print carries meaning and, in English, is read from left to right and top to bottom.	

Writing

2	Sometimes gives meaning to marks as they draw and paint.	
3	Ascribes meanings to marks that they see in different places.	

Physical Development

Moving & Handling

34	Moves freely and with pleasure and confidence in a range of ways, such as slithering, shuffling, rolling, crawling, walking, running, jumping, skipping, sliding and hopping.	
35	Mounts stairs, steps or climbing equipment using alternate feet.	
36	Walks downstairs, two feet to each step while carrying a small object.	
37	Runs skilfully and negotiates space successfully, adjusting speed or direction to avoid obstacles.	
38	Can stand momentarily on one foot when shown.	
39	Can catch a large ball.	
40	Draws lines and circles using gross motor movements.	
41	Uses one-handed tools and equipment, e.g. makes snips in paper with child scissors.	
42	Holds pencil between thumb and two fingers, no longer using whole hand grasp.	
43	Holds pencil near point between first two fingers and thumb and uses it with good control.	
44	Can copy some letters, e.g. letters from their name.	

Health & Self-Care

23	Can tell adults when hungry or tired or when they want to rest or play.	
24	Observes the effects of activity on their bodies.	
25	Understands that equipment and tools have to be used safely.	
26	Gains more bowel and bladder control and can attend to toileting needs most of the time themselves.	
27	Can usually manage washing and drying hands.	
28	Dresses with help, e.g. puts arms into open-fronted coat or shirt when held up, pulls up own trousers, and pulls up zipper once it is fastened at the bottom.	

Mathematics

Numbers

13	Uses some number names and number language spontaneously.	
14	Uses some number names accurately in play.	
15	Recites numbers in order to 10.	
16	Knows that numbers identify how many objects are in a set.	
17	Beginning to represent numbers using fingers, marks on paper or pictures.	
18	Sometimes matches numeral and quantity correctly.	
19	Shows curiosity about numbers by offering comments or asking questions.	
20	Compares two groups of objects, saying when they have the same number.	
21	Shows an interest in number problems.	
22	Separates a group of three or four objects in different ways, beginning to recognise that the total is still the same.	
23	Shows an interest in numerals in the environment.	
24	Shows an interest in representing numbers.	
25	Realises not only objects, but anything can be counted, including steps, claps or jumps.	

Shape, Space & Measure

13	Shows an interest in shape and space by playing with shapes or making arrangements with objects.	
14	Shows awareness of similarities of shapes in the environment.	
15	Uses positional language.	
16	Shows interest in shape by sustained construction activity or by talking about shapes or arrangements.	
17	Shows interest in shapes in the environment.	
18	Uses shapes appropriately for tasks.	
19	Beginning to talk about the shapes of everyday objects, e.g. ‘round’ and ‘tall’.	

Expressive Arts & Design

Exploring & Using Media & Materials

10	Enjoys joining in with dancing and ring games.	
11	Sings a few familiar songs.	
12	Beginning to move rhythmically.	
13	Imitates movement in response to music.	
14	Taps out simple repeated rhythms.	
15	Explores and learns how sounds can be changed.	
16	Explores colour and how colours can be changed.	

17	Understands that they can use lines to enclose a space, and then begin to use these shapes to represent objects.	
18	Beginning to be interested in and describe the texture of things.	
19	Uses various construction materials.	
20	Beginning to construct, stacking blocks vertically and horizontally, making enclosures and creating spaces.	
21	Joins construction pieces together to build and balance.	
22	Realises tools can be used for a purpose.	

Personal, Social & Emotional Development

Self-Confidence & Self-Awareness

12	Can select and use activities and resources with help.	
13	Welcomes and values praise for what they have done.	
14	Enjoys responsibility of carrying out small tasks.	
15	Is more outgoing towards unfamiliar people and more confident in new social situations.	
16	Confident to talk to other children when playing, and will communicate freely about own home and community.	
17	Shows confidence in asking adults for help.	

Managing Feelings & Behaviour

22	Aware of own feelings, and knows that some actions and words can hurt others’ feelings.	
23	Begins to accept the needs of others and can take turns and share resources, sometimes with support from others.	
24	Can usually tolerate delay when needs are not immediately met, and understands wishes may not always be met.	
25	Can usually adapt behaviour to different events, social situations and changes in routine.	

Making Relationships

19	Can play in a group, extending and elaborating play ideas, e.g. building up a role-play activity with other children.	
20	Initiates play, offering cues to peers to join them.	
21	Keeps play going by responding to what others are saying or doing.	
22	Demonstrates friendly behaviour, initiating conversations and forming good relationships with peers and familiar adults.	

Understanding the World

People & Communities

7	Shows interest in the lives of people who are familiar to them.	
8	Remembers and talks about significant events in their own experience.	
9	Recognises and describes special times or events for family or friends.	
20	Shows interest in different occupations and ways of life.	
11	Knows some of the things that make them unique, and can talk about some of the similarities and differences in relation to friends or family.	

The World

16	Comments and asks questions about aspects of their familiar world, such as the place where they live or the natural world.	
17	Can talk about some of the things they have observed, such as plants, animals, natural and found objects.	
18	Talks about why things happen and how things work.	
19	Developing an understanding of growth, decay and changes over time.	
20	Shows care and concern for living things and the environment.	

Technology

5	Knows how to operate simple equipment, e.g. turns on CD player and uses remote control.	
6	Shows an interest in technological toys with knobs or pulleys, or real objects.	
7	Shows skill in making toys work by pressing parts or lifting flaps to achieve effects, such as sound, movements or new images.	
8	Knows that information can be retrieved from computers.	

Being Imaginative

5	Developing preferences for forms of expression.	
6	Uses movement to express feelings.	
7	Creates movement in response to music.	
8	Sings to self and makes up simple songs.	
9	Makes up rhythms.	
10	Notifies what adults do, imitating what is observed and then doing it spontaneously when the adult is not there.	
11	Engages in imaginative role play based on own first-hand experiences.	
12	Builds stories around toys, e.g. farm animals needing rescue from an armchair ‘cliff’.	
13	Uses available resources to create props to support role play.	
14	Captures experiences and responses with a range of media, such as music, dance and paint and other materials or words.	

40–60+ Months

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Communication & Language

Listening & Attention

24	Maintains attention, concentrates and sits quietly during appropriate activity.	
25	Two-channelled attention – can listen and do for short span.	

Understanding

16	Responds to instructions involving a two-part sequence. Understands humour, e.g. nonsense rhymes, jokes.	
17	Able to follow a story without pictures or props.	
18	Listens and responds to ideas expressed by others in conversation or discussion.	

Speaking

32	Extends vocabulary, especially by grouping and naming, exploring the meaning and sounds of new words.	
33	Uses language to imagine and recreate roles and experiences in play situations.	
34	Links statements and sticks to a main theme or intention.	
35	Uses talk to organise, sequence and clarify thinking, ideas, feelings and events.	
36	Introduces a storyline or narrative into their play.	

Mathematics

Numbers

26	Recognise some numerals of personal significance.	
27	Recognises numerals 1 to 5.	
28	Counts up to three or four objects by saying one number name for each item.	
29	Counts actions or objects which cannot be moved.	
30	Counts objects to 10, and beginning to count beyond 10.	
31	Counts out up to six objects from a larger group.	
32	Selects the correct numeral to represent 1 to 5, then 1 to 10 objects.	
33	Counts an irregular arrangement of up to ten objects.	
34	Estimates how many objects they can see and checks by counting them.	
35	Uses the language of 'more' and 'fewer' to compare two sets of objects.	
36	Finds the total number of items in two groups by counting all of them.	
37	Says the number that is one more than a given number.	
38	Finds one more or one less from a group of up to five objects, then ten objects.	
39	In practical activities and discussion, beginning to use the vocabulary involved in adding and subtracting.	
40	Records, using marks that they can interpret and explain.	
41	Begins to identify own mathematical problems based on own interests and fascinations.	

Shape, Space & Measure

20	Beginning to use mathematical names for 'solid' 3D shapes and 'flat' 2D shapes, and mathematical terms to describe shapes.	
21	Selects a particular named shape.	
22	Can describe their relative position, such as 'behind' or 'next to'.	
23	Orders two or three items by length or height.	
24	Orders two items by weight or capacity.	
25	Uses familiar objects and common shapes to create and recreate patterns and build models.	
26	Uses everyday language related to time.	
27	Beginning to use everyday language related to money.	
28	Orders and sequences familiar events.	
29	Measures short periods of time in simple ways.	

Physical Development

Moving & Handling

45	Experiments with different ways of moving.	
46	Jumps off an object and lands appropriately.	
47	Negotiates space successfully when playing racing and chasing games with other children, adjusting speed or changing direction to avoid obstacles.	
48	Travels with confidence and skill around, under, over and through balancing and climbing equipment.	
49	Shows increasing control over an object in pushing, patting, throwing, catching or kicking it.	
50	Uses simple tools to effect changes to materials.	
51	Handles tools, objects, construction and malleable materials safely and with increasing control.	
52	Shows a preference for a dominant hand.	
53	Begins to use anticlockwise movement and retrace vertical lines.	
54	Begins to form recognisable letters.	
55	Uses a pencil and holds it effectively to form recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed.	

Health & Self-Care

29	Eats a healthy range of foodstuffs and understands need for variety in food.	
30	Usually dry and clean during the day.	
31	Shows some understanding that good practices with regard to exercise, eating, sleeping and hygiene can contribute to good health.	
32	Shows understanding of the need for safety when tackling new challenges, and considers and manages some risks.	
33	Shows understanding of how to transport and store equipment safely.	
34	Practises some appropriate safety measures without direct supervision.	

Literacy

Reading

23	Continues a rhyming string.	
24	Hears and says the initial sound in words.	
25	Can segment the sounds in simple words and blend them together and knows which letters represent some of them.	
26	Links sounds to letters, naming and sounding the letters of the alphabet.	
27	Begins to read words and simple sentences.	
28	Uses vocabulary and forms of speech that are increasingly influenced by their experiences of books.	
29	Enjoys an increasing range of books.	
30	Knows that information can be retrieved from books and computers.	

Writing

4	Gives meaning to marks they make as they draw, write and paint.	
5	Begins to break the flow of speech into words.	
6	Continues a rhyming string.	
7	Hears and says the initial sound in words.	
8	Can segment the sounds in simple words and blend them together.	
9	Links sounds to letters, naming and sounding the letters of the alphabet.	
10	Uses some clearly identifiable letters to communicate meaning, representing some sounds correctly and in sequence.	
11	Writes own name and other things, such as labels and captions.	
12	Attempts to write short sentences in meaningful contexts.	

Personal, Social & Emotional Development

Self-Confidence & Self-Awareness

18	Confident to speak to others about own needs, wants, interests and opinions.	
19	Can describe self in positive terms and talk about abilities.	

Managing Feelings & Behaviour

26	Understands that own actions affect other people, for example becomes upset or tries to comfort another child when they realise they have upset them.	
27	Aware of the boundaries set, and of behavioural expectations in the setting.	
28	Beginning to be able to negotiate and solve problems without aggression, e.g. when someone has taken their toy.	

Making Relationships

23	Initiates conversations, attends to and takes account of what others say.	
24	Explains own knowledge and understanding, and asks appropriate questions of others.	
25	Takes steps to resolve conflicts with other children, e.g. finding a compromise.	

Understanding the World

People & Communities

12	Enjoys joining in with family customs and routines.	
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The World

21	Looks closely at similarities, differences, patterns and change.	
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Technology

9	Completes a simple program on a computer.	
10	Interacts with age-appropriate computer software.	

Expressive Arts & Design

Exploring & Using Media & Materials

23	Begins to build a repertoire of songs and dances.	
24	Explores the different sounds of instruments.	
25	Explores what happens when they mix colours.	
26	Experiments to create different textures.	
27	Understands that different media can be combined to create new effects.	
28	Manipulates materials to achieve a planned effect.	
29	Constructs with a purpose in mind, using a variety of resources.	
30	Uses simple tools and techniques competently and appropriately.	
31	Selects appropriate resources and adapts work where necessary.	
32	Selects tools and techniques needed to shape, assemble and join materials they are using.	

Being Imaginative

15	Create simple representations of events, people and objects.	
16	Initiates new combinations of movement and gesture in order to express and respond to feelings, ideas and experiences.	
17	Chooses particular colours to use for a purpose.	
18	Introduces a storyline or narrative into their play.	
19	Plays alongside other children who are engaged in the same theme.	
20	Plays cooperatively as part of a group to develop and act out a narrative.	

Early Learning Goals

Mathematics

Numbers

42	Children count reliably with numbers from 1 to 20, place them in order and say which number is one more or one less than a given number.	
43	Using quantities and objects, they add and subtract two single-digit numbers and count on or back to find the answer.	
44	They solve problems, including doubling, halving and sharing.	
E	Children estimate a number of objects and check quantities by counting up to 20. They solve practical problems that involve combining groups of 2, 5 or 10, or sharing into equal groups. (This descriptor has been amended to reflect the increased level of challenge applied to the expected descriptor following the Tickell review.)	

Shape, Space & Measure

30	Children use everyday language to talk about size, weight, capacity, position, distance, time and money to compare quantities and objects and to solve problems.	
31	They recognise, create and describe patterns.	
32	They explore characteristics of everyday objects and shapes and use mathematical language to describe them.	
E	Children estimate, measure, weigh and compare and order objects and talk about properties, position and time.	

Literacy

Reading

31	Children read and understand simple sentences.	
32	They use phonic knowledge to decode regular words and read them aloud accurately.	
33	They also read some common irregular words.	
34	They demonstrate understanding when talking with others about what they have read.	
E	Children can read phonically regular words of more than 1 syllable as well as many irregular but high-frequency words. They use phonic, semantic and syntactic knowledge to understand unfamiliar vocabulary. They can describe the main events in the simple stories they have read.	

Writing

13	Children use their phonic knowledge to write words in ways which match their spoken sounds.	
14	They also write some irregular common words.	
15	They write simple sentences which can be read by themselves and others.	
16	Some words are spelt correctly and others are phonetically plausible.	
E	Children can spell phonically regular words of more than 1 syllable as well as many irregular but high-frequency words. They use key features of narrative in their own writing.	

Physical Development

Moving & Handling

56	Children show good control and co-ordination in large and small movements.	
57	They move confidently in a range of ways, safely negotiating space.	
58	They handle equipment and tools effectively, including pencils for writing.	
E	Children can hop confidently and skip in time to music. They hold wpaper in position and use their preferred hand for writing, using a correct pencil grip. They are beginning to be able to write on lines and control letter size.	

Health & Self-Care

35	Children know the importance for good health of physical exercise, and a healthy diet, and talk about ways to keep healthy and safe.	
36	They manage their own basic hygiene and personal needs successfully, including dressing and going to the toilet independently.	
E	Children know about, and can make healthy choices in relation to, healthy eating and exercise. They can dress and undress independently, successfully managing fastening buttons or laces.	

Personal, Social & Emotional Development

Self-Confidence & Self-Awareness

20	Children are confident to try new activities, and say why they like some activities more than others.	
21	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.	
22	They say when they do or don't need help.	
E	Children are confident speaking to a class group. They can talk about the things they enjoy, and are good at, and about the things they do not find easy. They are resourceful in finding support when they need help or information. They can talk about the plans they have made to carry out activities and what they might change if they were to repeat them.	

Managing Feelings & Behaviour

29	Children talk about how they and others show feelings, talk about their own and others' behaviour, and its consequences, and know that some behaviour is unacceptable.	
30	They work as part of a group or class, and understand and follow the rules.	
31	They adjust their behaviour to different situations, and take changes of routine in their stride.	
E	Children know some ways to manage their feelings and are beginning to use these to maintain control. They can listen to each other's suggestions and plan how to achieve an outcome without adult help. They know when and how to stand up for themselves appropriately. They can stop and think before acting and they can wait for things they want.	

Making Relationships

26	Children play cooperatively, taking turns with others.	
27	They take account of one another's ideas about how to organise their activity.	
28	They show sensitivity to others' needs and feelings, and form positive relationships with adults and other children.	
E	Children play group games with rules. They understand someone else's point of view can be different from theirs. They resolve minor disagreements through listening to each other to come up with a fair solution. They understand what bullying is and that this is unacceptable behaviour.	

Expressive Arts & Design

Exploring & Using Media & Materials

33	Children sing songs, make music and dance, and experiment with ways of changing them.	
34	They safely use and explore a variety of materials, tools and techniques, experimenting with colour, design, texture, form and function.	
E	Children develop their own ideas through selecting and using materials and working on processes that interest them. Through their explorations they find out and make decisions about how media and materials can be combined and changed.	

Being Imaginative

21	Children use what they have learnt about media and materials in original ways, thinking about uses and purposes.	
22	They represent their own ideas, thoughts and feelings through design and technology, art, music, dance, role play and stories.	
E	Children talk about the ideas and processes which have led them to make music, designs, images or products. They can talk about features of their own and others' work, recognising the differences between them and the strengths of others.	

Communication & Language

Listening & Attention

26	Children listen attentively in a range of situations.	
27	They listen to stories, accurately anticipating key events and respond to what they hear with relevant comments, questions or actions.	
28	They give their attention to what others say and respond appropriately, while engaged in another activity.	
E	Children listen to instructions and follow them accurately, asking for clarification if necessary. They listen attentively with sustained concentration to follow a story without pictures or props. They can listen in a larger group, for example at assembly.	

Understanding

19	Children follow instructions involving several ideas or actions.	
20	They answer 'how' and 'why' questions about their experiences and in response to stories or events.	
E	After listening to stories, children can express views about events or characters in the story and answer questions about why things happened. They can carry out instructions which contain several parts in a sequence.	

Speaking

37	Children express themselves effectively, showing awareness of listeners' needs.	
38	They use past, present and future forms accurately when talking about events that have happened or are to happen in the future.	
39	They develop their own narratives and explanations by connecting ideas or events.	
E	Children show some awareness of the listener by making changes to language and non-verbal features. They recount experiences and imagine possibilities, often connecting ideas. They use a range of vocabulary in imaginative ways to add information, express ideas or to explain or justify actions or events.	

Understanding the World

People & Communities

22	Children talk about past and present events in their own lives and in the lives of family members.	
23	They know that other children don't always enjoy the same things, and are sensitive to this.	
24	They know about similarities and differences between themselves and others, and among families, communities and traditions.	
E	Children know the difference between past and present events in their own lives and some reasons why people's lives were different in the past. They know that other children have different likes and dislikes and that they may be good at different things. They understand that different people have different beliefs, attitudes, customs and traditions and why it is important to treat them with respect.	

The World

22	Children know about similarities and differences in relation to places, objects, materials and living things.	
23	They talk about the features of their own immediate environment and how environments might vary from one another.	
24	They make observations of animals and plants and explain why some things occur, and talk about changes.	
E	Children know that the environment and living things are influenced by human activity. They can describe some actions which people in their own community do that help to maintain the area they live in. They know the properties of some materials and can suggest some of the purposes they are used for. They are familiar with basic scientific concepts, such as floating, sinking, experimentation.	

Technology

11	Children recognise that a range of technology is used in places, such as homes and schools.	
12	They select and use technology for particular purposes.	
E	Children find out about and use a range of everyday technology. They select appropriate applications that support an identified need. For example, in deciding how best to make a record of a special event in their lives, such as a journey on a steam train.	