



Child Development Policy

Updating Policy Procedure

When a policy is due for review it will be emailed to the reviewer who will revise and highlight those updates and return the policy in full with the highlighted updates back to the Policy Co-Ordinator.

When a policy reviewer becomes aware of any updates they will ask the Policy Co-Ordinator to email the policy to them and follow the above procedures.

A policy is a statement of intent and the guidelines we follow, that is adopted by the Fortuna and Athena

Policy Reviewed by:

Philippa Rollins

Updated on:

New policy – April 25

Date to be reviewed:

May 2027

Date Ratified at FGM:

15th September 2025



Child Development Policy

Aims

Fortuna School aims to provide a consistency of practice throughout the school, ensuring that all children have access to a developmentally appropriate, high-quality environment which supports pupils academically, emotionally, and developmentally.

Fortuna recognises the importance of meeting pupils 'where they are at' developmentally as opposed to chronologically. The school believes that this enables relationships to be strengthened and opportunities for prior developmental gaps to be addressed.

Fortuna School understands the importance of knowing how young children develop and learn and this helps underpin the school's ethos and culture as well as inform approaches to supporting children who have missed key early life experiences that impact their ability to settle and respond to school positively. As a school we hold the shared belief that supporting a pupil's development will provide the foundations they need to flourish socially and academically.

Our children's starting point

Children's personal, social, and emotional development is crucial for them to lead healthy and happy lives and is fundamental to their cognitive development. Development refers to the processes through which the body, brain, abilities and behaviour of the infant, child and adult become more complex and continue to mature throughout life. Development involves cognition, memory, attention, language, and communication as well as feelings, relationships, and sensory-motor skills. Although development is often considered in terms of different aspects, it cannot really be compartmentalised since one domain very often influences the development of other domains. It is important to consider the whole child at the centre of the many influences on development.

Each child is unique, and while we can be guided by an understanding of some general patterns of development from pre-birth into early childhood, progression is uneven and unfolds differently for each individual child.

A child's growth, development and learning are interrelated in complex ways from the moment of conception all the way through infancy to early childhood and beyond. Experiences during the early years strongly influence a child's future development, as development and learning build on what has already been acquired.

Underpinning a child's development are the important attachments that shape their social world. Strong, warm, and supportive relationships with adults enable children to learn how to understand their own feelings and those of others.



Impact of ACES' on child development

The baby's brain is not simply a fixed structure which develops in a genetically pre-determined way. It depends on external stimulation from experience to form neurological connections. There are many factors which influence a child's development; such as low birth weight, medical needs, child temperament (*a person's nature; it is present from birth and shows up in the way they behave or react to situations or people*) or a family being under stress. Some of the children that attend Fortuna may have experienced multiple Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), these are "highly stressful, and potentially traumatic, events or situations that occur during childhood and/or adolescence that can influence a child's development. These children may have not experienced safety, security and stability resulting in an insecure attachment, difficulties with their emotional and social development, as well as finding it difficult to make and sustain healthy relationships. This insecure attachment is often displayed through the child becoming withdrawn or isolated, as well as through challenging or disruptive behaviour.

Fortuna understands that life can present with challenges, and we work alongside our families in a non-judgemental and supportive way. Fortuna believes that while it is important to acknowledge and learn from the past, we must support our pupils to live in the present and celebrate achievements as well as build for the future.

The children that attend Fortuna can seem 'stuck' at much younger stages of development and their developmental age may be well below their chronological age; therefore, staff have to be aware of their expectations and how to support and move pupils forward developmentally.

Child Development

The following descriptors give some general expectations at different ages:

- Babies from birth to one year are not developmentally able to understand rules
- They respond to their feelings of hunger, tiredness etc and alert adults to these feelings
- They have no concept of 'bad' or 'good' behaviour as they act on instinct and are unaware of the world around them

Most children at 12 months:

- Do not understand they are a separate person
- Like to be with people they know well and may be upset with strangers
- Respond in different ways at different times to similar situation, they may laugh at something one day then cry or be upset by it the next day
- Can follow a simple instruction



- Will make sounds, call and shout to gain an adults attention

By 15 months, children are usually:

- More aware of themselves, but do not yet understand that others are separate beings
- Into everything, exploring without ideas of what is safe to do or touch
- Very possessive, particularly of people he/she loves, they do not like to see mum holding another child
- Easily distracted from behaviours which are unwanted, trying to reason with him/her will not work well. Their mood swings from joy to fury in seconds
- Easily frustrated and this sometimes results in shouting and throwing things

By 18 months a child is usually:

- More aware of him/herself as distinct from others
- Responsive (briefly) to being told 'no', but needs it to be repeated frequently, reinforced by actions, such as moving them away from danger
- Totally self-centred, unconcerned about the effect their actions will have on others
- Very determined to have their own way, and are easily frustrated at not being able to do things for themselves

Sometimes a child at this age:

- Responds to frustration by throwing, screaming, or shouting
- Tries to assert him/herself by refusing to comply with adults and showing defiance

A typical 2-year-old:

- Has a clearer self-image, but still does not appreciate others as separate people
- May be able to play alone for up to 20 minutes, as long as they know a trusted adult is **nearby**
- Is very possessive of their own toys - everything is 'mine'. Sharing has not yet become a way of life and needs to be treated as a developmental stage and not a punishable offence. He/she needs to be shown how to share by frequent and sensitive adult intervention. It's helpful to have more than two items of popular toys available at any one time
- Does not like to wait for demands to be met, impatience is normal
- Will have frequent tantrums when frustrated, even if you are not aware of the cause; can usually be distracted, but you need to guard against rewarding them for screaming by giving your attention and to teach them alternative positive ways to gain an adults attention
- Is now able to show and express feelings, of affection, fear, anger, distress
- Can now understand when others are upset, hurt, excited or happy and will respond appropriately

A typical 3-year-old:

- Knows him/herself well and is becoming increasingly independent
- Is often resistant to being told what to do and how to do it, usually thinking they know best.



- Will go happily with people they know, and is much less worried about strangers, they are becoming more sociable and less shy
- Has usually developed the ability to wait when necessary but be realistic
- Is willing to discuss what he/she needs to do, and to negotiate appropriate behaviours and responses
- Usually has a good command of language and therefore is less likely to have a tantrum or behave rebelliously
- Has sudden mood swings and sometimes behaves in extreme ways without necessarily knowing the reason why
- Likes to be seen to be well behaved, and knows what to do when taken into a wide range of social situations
- Is able to appreciate what is going on around him and fit in with the feelings and moods of adults around him
- Has a real need for approval. Wants to be loved and appreciated by adults
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A typical 4-year-old:

- Can take part in discussions, negotiate and reason
- Is very friendly and can be helpful to both other children and adults
- Understands their own feelings and is therefore more likely to respond in a predictable way and to express feelings verbally
- Is much more self-controlled and can control bodily movements well
- Is less dependent on the main carer and likes to do things with other adults
- Is mostly able to behave appropriately in different situations, understanding what to do where and when
- Likes to play in a small group, not necessarily with friends, but with those showing an interest in the same activity; he/she can move between groups happily and independently
- Takes turns in group games with other children, but usually needs an adult to keep the structure of the game and ensure consistency
- Enjoys imaginative play, and can continue for considerable lengths of time with complicated ideas
- Understands yesterday, today, and tomorrow, as well as now, before, later
- Will argue the case and put their own ideas quite strongly
- Sometimes blame others for their own misbehaviour and denies their own part in it; this is part of a need for approval and a growing awareness of consequences
- Will sometimes behave badly as a way to gain a reaction from an adult. Any attention can be seen as better than none.
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During the year between 4 and 5:

- Although they may seem very confident, sociable and talkative, children are trying to make sense of the world and their part in it
- Self-assurance develops and activities are more purposeful
- Children are more inclined to follow a thing through to the end
- Being able to wait, take turns and to share with others is so much part of behaviour that they no longer need to think about it
- Children are sometimes stubborn, argumentative, and aggressive with adults and other children



- A child who is unwell or tired still needs the help and security of a trusted adult
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A typical 5-year-old:

- Is more independent, more self-contained and more self-controlled
- Needs the approval of adults to support their self-esteem
- Knows, and feel ashamed when their behaviour is unacceptable
- Will sometimes be overactive, aggressive, and argumentative
- Will argue with parents, but not usually with teachers or other adults when denied something
- Will engage in negotiation and bargaining.
- Is not so easily distracted from anger or frustration
- Needs to be given ways to regain control when angry e.g. time in with an adult.
- Enjoys games which enable them to be competitive as individuals rather than in teams
- Still needs adult intervention to adjudicate in arguments
- Likes to assert themselves by boasting and sometimes threatening others
- Loves to be the best and can be very purposeful and persistent to achieve this

A more detailed and comprehensive list of children's developmental progress can be found in Mary D.Sheridan's book, 'From Birth to Five Years' which can be found in school and the following link is also useful: [inourplace | Solihull Approach – Developmental and emotional milestones 0-5y: leaflet](#)

Below are some examples of how staff support children at Fortuna with their development. Through interactions staff must consider children's starting points first:

- Simplify speech: use short sentences, emphasize keywords, use gestures and leave pauses for the child to contribute.
- Verbal reinforcement and elaboration
- Follow the child's attention and talk about what he/she is looking at for a short period on a daily basis
- Use everyday activities for language learning e.g. putting away, choosing
- Establish a daily routine for reading a book with opportunities to talk and ask questions about it
- Give simple step-by-step instructions for the task
- Demonstrate or model activities
- Model activity by verbalising steps aloud
- Allow time to practice skills
- Set up variety of activities
- Use pictures/lists to help organise activities
- Reorganise and label things to make them easy for the child to find
- Consider changing physical environment – thicker pencils
- Limited choices to start



- Adults are an attentive presence
- Creating time for quality interaction with children
- Create opportunities for social play, action songs, turn taking games, joint interactive play, joint book reading
- Opportunities for repetition
- Sharing the excitement of childrens discoveries and achievements
- Protected play space (in early days adults control and supervise each child's play space)
- Be aware of pace of the lessons and day
- Refocusing activities use when needed (action songs, rhymes, follow me games)
- Supporting development of peer relationships – turn taking, sharing, making requests, passing toys etc.
- Model and coach in polite behaviour
- Create opportunities to experience achievement and success
- Consistent and persistent management of behaviour, with clear boundaries

Assessment and Monitoring of Pupils Developmental Needs:

Pupils at Fortuna are formally assessed twice a year (October and June) using the online Boxall Profile assessment tool. This assessment is completed collaboratively by the class team and requires that these key adults have worked closely with the child for a minimum of 6-weeks.

Section 1 (Developmental strands) of the Boxall Profile consist of items describing different aspects of the development process of the earliest years.

Section 2 (The diagnostic profile) consists of items describing behaviours that inhibit or interfere with the child's satisfactory involvement with school.

Following the assessment, each child is set two individualised targets as part of a developmental learning plan to support pupil's social and emotional development. These plans must contain:

- At least one developmental focused target at the earliest area of vulnerability (both targets can be developmental, or there can be one developmental and one diagnostic target).
- A brief summary of the strategies to support the individual child.
- Specific Measurable Achievable Realistic Timebound (SMART) outcomes that would indicate the target has been met.

Each child has an individual Boxall Learning Journey which will contain a copy of their individualised plans. Within the learning journey, staff will record observations and commentary of the child's progress towards their targets. Where progress is limited, observations will still be made to inform an understanding of why this may be.



Observations will be carried out and recorded in the learning journey at least twice per half term for each child.

Should a child meet their targets prior to the next assessment, the class teacher should create a new learning plan by progressing onto the next area/s of vulnerability identified in the most recent Boxall Profile Assessment.

The senior leader responsible for behaviour and attitudes collates and analyses pupil data at a whole school and class level to monitor progress over time. This information is shared with class teams during behaviour data reviews and is also used to inform staff CPD plans.

The senior leader responsible for behaviour and attitudes, and the school's play leads will monitor the enactment of learning plans through learning journey moderation, learning walks and assessment data analysis.

Play Curriculum

The school have a developmentally progressive play curriculum to support the enactment of pupil's learning plans. These plans focus specifically on the Section 1 Development strands of the Boxall Profile.

For each strand the plan includes:

- An introduction to the developmental strand with specific consideration to developmental, trauma and attachment needs.
- A success criteria stating what the child should be able to do when they have secured the developmental stage.
- Suggestions of how play can be used across nine different forms of play to support developmental growth.
- Additional notes from a play therapist to inform how staff interpret and support the play.

To support children's social-development, focused play is timetabled daily across all year groups.

For further detail, reference should be made to the school's Play Policy.



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