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Guidance

# Areas of learning: 'exceeding' descriptors

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Practitioners should use these descriptors when making judgements about whether a child's level of learning and development is in the 'exceeding' category. These descriptors are sourced from the [Tickell review](#) of the early years foundation stage.

## Prime areas of learning

# 1.

## 1.1 Communication and language

<b>Early learning goal</b>	<b>Description of 'exceeding'</b>
1. Listening and attention	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.
2. Understanding	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.
3. Speaking	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.

## 1.2 Physical development

<b>Early learning goal</b>	<b>Description of 'exceeding'</b>
4. Moving and handling	Children can hop confidently and skip in time to music. They hold paper 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.
5. Health and self-care	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.

## 1.3 Personal, social and emotional development

Early learning goal	Description of 'exceeding'
6. Self-confidence and self-awareness	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.
7. Managing feelings and behaviour	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.
8. Making relationships	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.

# 2. Specific areas of learning

## 2.1 Literacy

Early learning goal	Description of 'exceeding'
9. Reading	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.
10.	Children can spell phonically regular words of more than 1 syllable as well as many

Writing	irregular but high frequency words. They use key features of narrative in their own writing.
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## 2.2 Mathematics

Early learning goal	Description of 'exceeding'
11. Numbers	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.)
12. Shape, space and measures	Children estimate, measure, weigh and compare and order objects and talk about properties, position and time.

## 2.3 Understanding the world

Early learning goal	Description of 'exceeding'
13. People and communities	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.
14. The world	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.
15.	Children find out about and use a range of everyday technology. They select

Technology	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.
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## 2.4 Expressive arts and design

Early learning goal	Description of 'exceeding'
16. Exploring and using media and materials	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.
17. Being imaginative	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.

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