

months old), and every year from the age of 3 on (36, 48, 60 and 72 months). To ensure reliable results, the sheet must be filled out within max. two weeks of the respective date (normally the child's birthday).

How are the parents involved?

The "development milestones" are a tool which is presented to parents when their children are accepted into the childcare centre. Explicit approval is not required from the parents, as the observation of the child's development is a standard task of child day care. In any case it is vital for the childcare staff to provide feedback on the child's development to the parents during meetings. This allows childcare staff and parents to exchange observations, clarify mutual expectations and opportunities and decide which further steps may need to be taken and how the child can be supported and challenged in his/her development.

Who has access to the results of the "milestones"?

No personal data collected using the "milestones" by the childcare centres or the childminders may be passed on to third parties without the prior explicit approval of the parents. Furthermore, the assessment form for the "milestones" has to be stored on a locked place in accordance with the data protection regulations.

Information on child day care in the Federal State of Brandenburg can be found online at:
www.mbjs.brandenburg.de/kita-startseite.htm



Milestones of development

An instrument for early recognition

Grenzsteine der Entwicklung –
Ein Instrument der Früherkennung

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Dear parents,

Nowadays we know a lot more about how children develop than even just a few years ago. Scientists agree that every child develops in a different way and at a different speed.

Nevertheless, development goals exist which most children reach at a certain age and can be described with "milestones". If the child's development is different, that is no reason for alarm, but

at least a key signal to be especially attentive. Caring and precise observation helps childcare staff decide, together with the parents, which individual support is best suited to help the child master important development stages.

Based on the scientific work of the development neurologist Professor Richard Michaelis from the University Children's Hospital of Tübingen, the Institut für angewandte Sozialisationsforschung/Frühe Kindheit e. V. (infans) (Institute for Applied Socialisation Research/Infancy) has developed "milestones" as an early warning instrument for risk situations in children. The "milestones" allow childcare staff to observe the development of children at certain intervals and to detect any impairments.

Any deviations from the norm can lead to insecurity. Parents often feel abandoned when they discover that their child is developing differently to or slower than others. It is very important to me that there is no reason for this insecurity in the future. We want to develop childcare centres and schools into communities where every child is welcomed with appreciation, attention and individual encouragement. If parents and childcare staff see things from the children's perspective and jointly consider how childcare centres can best meet the needs of the children, then the "milestones" do not lead to exclusion, but instead help childcare staff and parents to support their children in their individual development in the community of their childcare centre.

Dr. Martina Münch
Minister of Education, Youth and Sport of the Federal State of Brandenburg

How do children develop?

In recent years, the image of children has changed significantly. Research has shown that children's development processes are very individual. There is no uniform sequence of certain development stages. Nevertheless it is possible to specify some indispensable transition stages in a child's development. They are development goals which are reached by approx. 95 percent of children at a particular age. They are described in the "milestones".

Not every deviation from an expected norm means that there is a particular problem or abnormality. However, if a child does not reach a particular development stage by a particular time, increased attention is required. Development deficits, abnormalities or even disabilities must be identified at an early stage. The earlier support is given, the more effective it can be.

How do the "development milestones" work?

The "development milestones" focus the attention of the childcare staff on important development and educational stages, in the course of which certain skills are observed in children. Note that many children go through these transition stages of child development without any abnormalities. However, unreached milestones have a warning function: They warn childcare staff of impairments in development. The staff can use these warnings for their own didactic work and also contact the parents immediately for further clarification. The parents should then visit early support centres, socio-educational and psycho-social centres or paediatricians and psychologists with appropriate specialist qualifications. With their resources, the specialists can determine more precisely whether there is a need for action, and if so, what action should be taken, as the "milestones" are not diagnosis instruments, but merely provide important initial clues.

How are the "milestones" applied?

The "milestones" can be applied both in childcare centres as well as in day care nurseries. To use them, general knowledge of infant development and fundamental observation techniques are required. Before using the "milestones", explanations and guidelines about the interpretation of results should be read (information on child day care in the Federal State of Brandenburg can be found online at: www.mbjs.brandenburg.de/kita-startseite.htm).

Childcare staff and childminders can avail of advisory services on the "milestones" from the practical consultants of the Jugendämter (Youth Welfare Service), the local communities and independent care providers. Advanced training for childcare staff is offered by the Sozialpädagogisches Fortbildungsinstitut Berlin-Brandenburg (Socio-Educational Institute of Advanced Education in Berlin-Brandenburg).

The six areas of development

The "milestones" are used to monitor six areas of child development in everyday events on certain deadlines:

1. **Language acquisition**, for example saying Mama and Papa (15 months), 3 – 5 word sentences (36 months), talking about events/stories in the correct chronological and logical sequence (48 months);
2. **Motor skills** (all uniform, regular movements of the body), e.g. turning from lying on the stomach to the back (12 months), walking independently (18 months), using a tricycle or similar safely and under control (48 months);
3. **Hand/finger movements**, for example moving small objects from one hand to the other (6 months), the conscious use of the index finger (18 months), being able to cut a straight line with children's scissors (60 months);
4. **Cognitive development** (the development of action strategies, attention and concentration, playing behaviour and the ability to arrange or classify), e.g. following an object moving slowly backwards and forwards with the eyes (3 months), copying the habits of adults (18 months), "W" questions (why, what, who, when, where— 48 months);
5. **Social skills** (the ability to create and shape social relationships with other children and adults), e.g. telling the difference between familiar people and strangers (9 months), understanding the meaning of "no" (18 months); the child is willing to share things with others (48 months);
6. **Emotional skills** (the ability to recognise his/her own emotional experiences, and thereby also to develop his/her own emotional skills), e.g. laughing, eye contact, making noise and movements when being talked to by familiar people (6 months), calming after everyday stresses within 3 minutes (24 months); the child knows that he/she is a girl or boy (48 months).

An individual record is kept for each child. It has to be completed when the child reaches a particular age (3, 6, 9, 12, 15, 18 and 24