4.4 Early Detection Guidelines

4.4.2.2 Assessment for Identified Concerns

4.4.2.2.4 How Children Develop - 6 Year Olds

The following section outlines the major developmental milestones for six year old children. Six areas of development are addressed: social/emotional, personal/social, gross motor, fine motor, language and communication and cognition. Developmental milestones given for each age should be considered as those that will typically be reached by the upper level of the age range.

A child’s development can be affected by how they process and use sensory information. This can impact on how they learn, attend and interact with others and express feelings. Their senses are the building blocks for developing many other skills including the six areas of development mentioned above. This document identifies warning signs for children experiencing difficulties with sensory processing, to provide an indication of when additional support or referral may be required.

The document also includes general warning signs for child developmental problems which may require referral for further assessment and intervention. The warning signs are indicators only and need to be considered in context of the child, their family, culture and community.

Children develop at different rates across each domain and within specific areas of development. Some children are slower than others but catch up with time. Other children, however, may have an underlying problem that causes their delayed development, and they may not catch up. There are a number of factors which can impinge on children reaching milestones, for example; bilingualism (for language development), ongoing illness, the presence of genetic abnormality, or family stress.

The document aims to assist community health nurses to assess six year old children and take early action to rectify problems when normal development deviates. This is not a checklist. It acts as a guide for community health nurses. It should be used in conjunction with professional judgement, and consultations with teachers and parents.
# How Children Develop

## Around the age of 6 YEARS

A child should be able to do some or all of the following:

### Social/Emotional
- play with same-sex children and gender-specific toys
- understand the perspective of others and engage in socially appropriate behaviour that is conducive to making friends
- share with others
- engage in complex social pretend play
- show understanding of pride, gratitude, shame, worry, jealousy
- use private speech to calm self down
- follow the rules
- develop and display fears e.g. of the dark, dogs, thunderstorms etc.

### Personal/Social
- comb and brush hair independently
- blow nose independently
- hang up clothes
- tie shoe laces with adult assistance
- cut with a knife independently
- give and maintain appropriate eye contact during conversation and in classroom environment
- manage a variety of experiences within a classroom, respond appropriately and maintain focus on the activity at hand

### Gross Motor
- skip with a rope, using alternating feet
- can throw and catch a small ball competently e.g. tennis ball
- hop a distance of 15 metres
- swing a bat
- ride a two wheel bicycle independently
- competently control their body in play e.g. monkey bars, climbing
- carry larger items/load competently
- participate with confidence in movement activities in the classroom and playground

### Fine Motor
- use a mature pencil grasp for handwriting, drawing and colouring, with movement only from fingers
- draw a person with most body features, with attention to shape and detail
- touch and work with a variety of textures and grasps objects using all of hand confidently e.g. manipulating clay or play dough
How Children Develop

### Around the age of 6 YEARS

A child should be able to do some or all of the following:

- use scissors skilfully for complex shapes
- fold and cut paper into simple shapes
- hold a brush or pencil between thumb and forefinger
- draw a wide range shapes, including a three lined cross and oblique cross
- print name and write some letters
- steady paper with one hand while writing with the other

#### Language and Communication

- speak and understand 8000 or more words
- use the speech sounds r, v, th, r blends as well as those achieved in earlier years
- think of words starting and ending with particular sounds
- display speech which is fluent and grammatically correct in verb tenses, word order and sentence structure
- memorise songs and television jingles
- use plurals, appropriate tenses and questions
- imitate slang and profanity; finds ‘bathroom’ talk extremely funny
- use language rather than tantrums or physical aggression to express displeasure e.g. ‘that’s mine! give it back!’
- can verbalise the sounds of letters e.g. recognise letters and the sounds they make
- use language rather than tantrums or physical aggression to express displeasure e.g. ‘that’s mine! give it back!’

#### Cognition

- know colours, shapes and sizes
- begin to understand concept of equivalence e.g. that short and wide and tall and narrow containers hold the same amount
- compare the concepts of bigger and smaller, part and whole
- understand time concepts e.g. today, tomorrow, yesterday
- recognise seasons and major holidays
- arrange objects from smallest to largest, shortest to longest and lightest to heaviest
- understand that the quality of an object remains the same when arranged differently e.g. that a ball of clay is the same amount when flattened out, or when water is poured from a fat jug to a tall thin one, it is still the same amount of water
- hold up and correctly name right and left hands fairly consistently
- have an understanding of money and identifies familiar coins
### How Children Develop

#### Around the age of 6 YEARS

**Warning signs - it may be of concern if a child:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Social/Emotional</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>is fearful of and avoids active play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>has limited eye contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>has difficulty getting along with peers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is uncommunicative, passive or withdrawn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>has behaviour that seems out of control or hyperactive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>has frequent aggressive behaviour towards other children or adults e.g. hitting, kicking, biting or scratching.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>avoids social situations even in familiar environments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>demands constant attention</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Personal/Social</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>has difficulty transitioning between activities e.g. doesn’t want to stop and start</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is reluctant to try new and/or challenging tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>needs help with feeding, dressing and toileting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Gross Motor</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>is unable to throw and catch a small ball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is unable to skip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stumbles/falls frequently and/or is fearful when feet leave the ground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is slow to learn or master new gross motor skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>experiences tremors (mostly arms and/or legs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>avoids physical activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>has poor body in space awareness e.g. bumps into things</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Fine Motor</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>has consistent difficulty ruling up a page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>has difficulties with construction games/activities e.g. building lego</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>avoids or is slow to learn new games or movement tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>has difficulty opening containers/lunchbox or tying shoelaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>has barely legible writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>has an awkward or tense pencil grip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>has poor speed of printing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>avoids fine motor activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>has pencil pressure on paper that is too heavy/light</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>has difficulty with pencil control e.g. colouring in, drawing lines or shapes, tracing</td>
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</tbody>
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Date Reviewed:  
Review Date: 2013  
EQuIP: 1.1.1
## How Children Develop

**Around the age of 6 YEARS**

### Warning signs - it may be of concern if a child:

- does not use non-preferred hand to assist and stabilise
- holds their head close to the paper when working
- experiences hand tremors
- has difficulty with cut and paste activities
- has difficulty with activities requiring rhythm and coordination e.g. clapping games

### Language and Communication

- has delayed speech milestones for age
- does not regularly acquire new words despite frequent exposures to a wide vocabulary

### Cognition

- has difficulty copying from the classroom board
- has difficulty spacing and/or forming shapes/letters correctly
- skips or re-reads words or lines
- gets left and right confused more than peers
- has no recognition of written numbers or letters
- seems to understand verbal instructions but cannot complete the task
- inaccurately labels common objects
- has a short attention span or limited ability to concentrate
- is slow to complete work

### Sensory Processing

- fidgets and moves on an ongoing basis, which interferes with daily routine e.g. during mat time or on the chair
- avoids movement activities, especially when feet leave the ground e.g. playground/outdoor equipment or rough & tumble play
- avoids messy play or is repelled by the feeling of certain textures e.g. play dough, painting, sand etc
- does not seem to notice when someone else has touched him or her
- has decreased awareness of temperature and pain compared to other children
- has difficulty standing in line or close to other people
- gets distracted by visual information in the classroom e.g. another child, items on the board
- gets bothered by bright lights or shiny objects
- does not always appear to hear what you say or appears to ignore you
- difficulty following verbal instructions in the classroom
- gets upset by loud noises and may put hands over ears
- likes to put non-food objects in mouth and suck/chew on them (toys, pencils)
# How Children Develop

*Around the age of 6 YEARS*

**Warning signs - it may be of concern if a child:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>➢ any parental or teacher concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ significant regression of skills and abilities</td>
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</tbody>
</table>