

## Social & Emotional Developmental Milestones

The following are general developmental milestones that often happen at the specified ages. In reality, children will reach these milestones at a variety of ages. While developmental milestone guides for early childhood are prevalent, this information is less accessible for middle childhood in Aotearoa.

### Developmental Domain

**AGES 5.6.7.8.**

**AGES 9.10.11.12.**

<b>Generalisations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beginning of formal education</li> <li>• “5-7 Shift” – the increased ability to reason</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active contributors to family life</li> <li>• Transition from early to middle childhood</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Tweens” or “Pre-teens”</li> <li>• Transition from childhood to early adolescence</li> <li>• Increased reliance on peers</li> <li>• Increased independence from family</li> </ul>
<b>Hormonal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Onset of adrenarche</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Onset of puberty</li> </ul>
<b>Cognitive development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grouping information and make links between groups e.g. sorting animals into groups based on physical attributes</li> <li>• Apply reasoning in more and more complex ways in relation to the physical and social world</li> <li>• Begin to learn and gain independence in reading, writing and numeracy</li> <li>• Can draw in 2D and increasingly in 3D</li> <li>• Curious about how things work and able to seek out, interpret and discuss information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begin to connect actions with their consequences</li> <li>• Make plans and set goals</li> <li>• Can think about the meaning of information they hear or read</li> <li>• Gain understanding of complex forms of false-belief around 7-8 years (e.g. such as that another person might believe something untrue about another person or thing)</li> <li>• Can understand and give directions</li> <li>• Gain understanding of time e.g. tomorrow/yesterday/this afternoon</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn to tell time</li> <li>• Able to think more logically and abstractly and express thoughts and ideas</li> <li>• Ability to generalise, problem-solve and reason increases</li> <li>• Testing of assumptions and ideas</li> <li>• Able to analyse risks</li> <li>• Able to read and write independently, and apply mathematical skills in real world situations</li> <li>• Better able to think of the consequences of an action or situation, and be better prepared to respond</li> </ul>
<b>Moral development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Form views about right and wrong</li> <li>• Consider rules to be fairly concrete</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Value and typically follow rules</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Able to think more abstractly about morality</li> <li>• Understand that rules exist, but also that they can be flexible</li> </ul>

## Developmental Domain (cont.)

AGES 5.6.7.8

AGES 9.10.11.12

Developmental Domain	5.6.7.8	9.10.11.12
<b>Attention</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attention and cognition improve due to maturing of the prefrontal cortex</li> <li>• Can focus attention on something and ignore irrelevant information or events happening around them</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Different aspects of attention (alertness, set, spatial attention, sustained attention and interference control) develop between 6 years and 9 years</li> <li>• Impulsivity considered a normal for this age group</li> </ul>
<b>Friendship</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May seek a "best friend"</li> <li>• Children tend to form friendships with children of the same gender</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children are developing friendships based on shared interests</li> </ul>
<b>Social</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and recognise other people's emotions based on body language and vocal cues</li> <li>• Begin to understand different viewpoints and consider others' feelings and perspectives</li> <li>• Develop awareness of feeling embarrassed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased sense of empathy</li> <li>• Enjoy role play and being dramatic</li> <li>• Enjoy playing games and participating in group activities</li> <li>• Develop their own games, rules and competitiveness</li> <li>• Social hierarchies emerge</li> </ul>
<b>Gender</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stereotypical gender roles reflected in children's play (e.g. nurturing games, playfighting)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More likely to play with peers of the same gender</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Friendships grow in importance</li> <li>• Friendship groups become more mix gendered again</li> <li>• Seeking greater independence from family</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hierarchies/popularity beginning to form, and gain in importance</li> <li>• Greater communication skills enable increased cooperation with others and ability to handle conflict</li> <li>• Able to feel multiple and conflicting emotions about the same person, e.g. can be angry at someone they care about</li> <li>• Learning self-control for their emotions, and closeness and distance within relationships</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attention functions mature around 12 years</li> <li>• Focus increases between ages 8-12</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May become more interested in socialising with children of other gender</li> <li>• May question gender identity, or identify with a gender that does not align with sex identified at birth</li> </ul>

## Developmental Domain (cont.)

# AGES 5.6.7.8.

# AGES 9.10.11.12.

<b>Language</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Language is processed musically up to age 7</li> <li>• Vocabulary expands</li> <li>• Understanding of how language is used increases</li> <li>• Able to follow instructions that involve multiple steps</li> <li>• Children begin to use slang</li> <li>• Use language more abstractly around age 8, including using and understanding jokes</li> <li>• Ability to tell stories – both real and imaginary – develops</li> <li>• Able to learn a second language most easily before the age of 7</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Language processing speed and fluency increases significantly between ages 9-10 and 11-12</li> <li>• Use of humour develops as they grow in understanding of social norms</li> </ul>
<b>Memory</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developments in the pre-frontal cortex see working memory grow, adding to skills like the ability to follow directions</li> <li>• Children use memory strategies such as rehearsal and organisation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children's working memory is developed by ages 10-12</li> </ul>
<b>Self-concept</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More influenced by comparisons to others from age 7</li> <li>• Demonstrate pride in their abilities and achievements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More awareness of others opinions</li> <li>• May become more competitive, aggressive and sarcastic</li> <li>• Growing awareness of own values</li> <li>• May become more egocentric</li> <li>• May experience a drop in self-esteem around ages 9-10 due to increased self-awareness</li> </ul>
<b>Self-Control/ Self-Regulation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beginning to develop their own strategies for coping in social situations and resolving problems, but still like support from parents and other trusted adults</li> <li>• More able to self-regulate and manage their own behaviours</li> <li>• Can identify and name a range of emotions</li> <li>• Can generally express feelings but may become frustrated or aggressive when upset – but are generally able to manage this better than during early years</li> <li>• Behaviour regulation is reinforced by expectations and responses from others around them</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emotional regulation impacted by onset of adolescence</li> <li>• Understand behavioural norms and social expectations</li> <li>• Able to develop a range of solutions to manage stressful situations</li> <li>• Able to identify mixed or multiple emotions</li> </ul>
<b>Responsibility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May begin helping with chores around the home</li> <li>• Increasingly able to self-organise and take care of possessions</li> <li>• Can dress themselves and take on more responsibility for their daily routines e.g. eating, washing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better at handling responsibilities on their own</li> <li>• Moving away from reliance on parents</li> </ul>

## Physical Development in Middle Childhood

The following are general developmental milestones that often happen at the specified ages. In reality, children will reach these milestones at a variety of ages. While developmental milestone guides for early childhood are prevalent, this information is less accessible for middle childhood.

Age/Stage	Key Developments
5-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Growth slows and remains steady - typical annual growth rates: 5-6cm in height and 2-3kg in weight</li><li>• Gross and fine motor skills mature. Especially coordination, reactivity, attention, and cognition</li><li>• Gross motor skills improve through involvement in play and sport</li><li>• Bodies grow stronger, more coordinated, and agile</li><li>• Immunity strengthened from natural development and completion of preschool immunisations</li><li>• Loss of first baby teeth</li><li>• Drawings become more detailed</li><li>• Increased bilateral coordination enables skipping, balancing on one foot etc</li><li>• Walk and jump backwards</li><li>• Vocabulary comprises over 2,000 words</li></ul>

Age/Stage	Key Developments
6-7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Muscles develop further and begin accumulating fat</li><li>• Boys tend to have slightly more muscle than girls do, while girls tend to have more body fat than boys</li><li>• Accurately colour in and cut out shapes</li><li>• Able to run faster and longer due to increased lung capacity</li><li>• First permanent molars arrive</li><li>• Adrenarche begins (see page 15)</li><li>• Maturing of the tube that connects the ear to the nose (the Eustachian tube) resulting in fewer ear infections</li><li>• Can ride a bike without training wheels</li></ul>
7-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Brains reach their adult weight by age 7</li><li>• The number of brain cells a person has (grey matter volume), representing the parts of the brain where processing occurs, peaks at age 7.</li><li>• Connections within the brain, enabling communication between different parts of the brain and the body, continue to grow throughout middle childhood</li><li>• Fine motor skills develop to the point of near maturity e.g. advances in their ability to write and draw etc</li><li>• Similar athletic ability irrespective of gender until around age 8</li><li>• Ability to throw and catch improves with increased hand-eye coordination</li></ul>

Age/Stage	Key Developments
8-9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Onset of puberty in girls from age 8 onwards: development of breasts and pubic hair, skin changes, increase in body fat in advance of a growth spurt, darkening of genitals</li> <li>Average onset of shortsightedness in children (child myopia)</li> </ul>
9-10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased changes within the brain (synaptic pruning and myelination), particularly regarding emotional regulation and reward processing</li> <li>Onset of puberty in boys: increased genital size, development of pubic hair, voice deepening, production of sperm begins, increased body odour, facial hair develops</li> </ul>
10-11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children's development rates vary more widely - girls are likely to experience a growth spurt around age 10</li> <li>Typical annual growth rates may increase to up to 9cm in height during puberty</li> <li>Increased risk of injury during puberty due to bones growing faster than muscles</li> </ul>

Age/Stage	Key Developments
11-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Average peak of growth rate in terms of height occurs 2 years following the onset of puberty in girls. (For boys this occurs between 12-15 years)</li> <li>Menstruation typically occurs 2-2.5 years after breast development begins. Almost 50% of girls in New Zealand are likely to have begun menstruation prior to beginning secondary school</li> <li>Girls grow up to another 5cm following the beginning of menstruation and are physically fully grown around 2 years later</li> <li>Loss of all primary teeth by the age of 12</li> <li>Hand-eye coordination nearly fully mature</li> <li>Diminished coordination due to bones growing faster than muscles</li> <li>Boys may begin a growth spurt following the onset of puberty</li> </ul>



These milestones have been identified through a range of sources which can be found in the bibliography of our full Te Kōrero mō ngā Tamariki report.