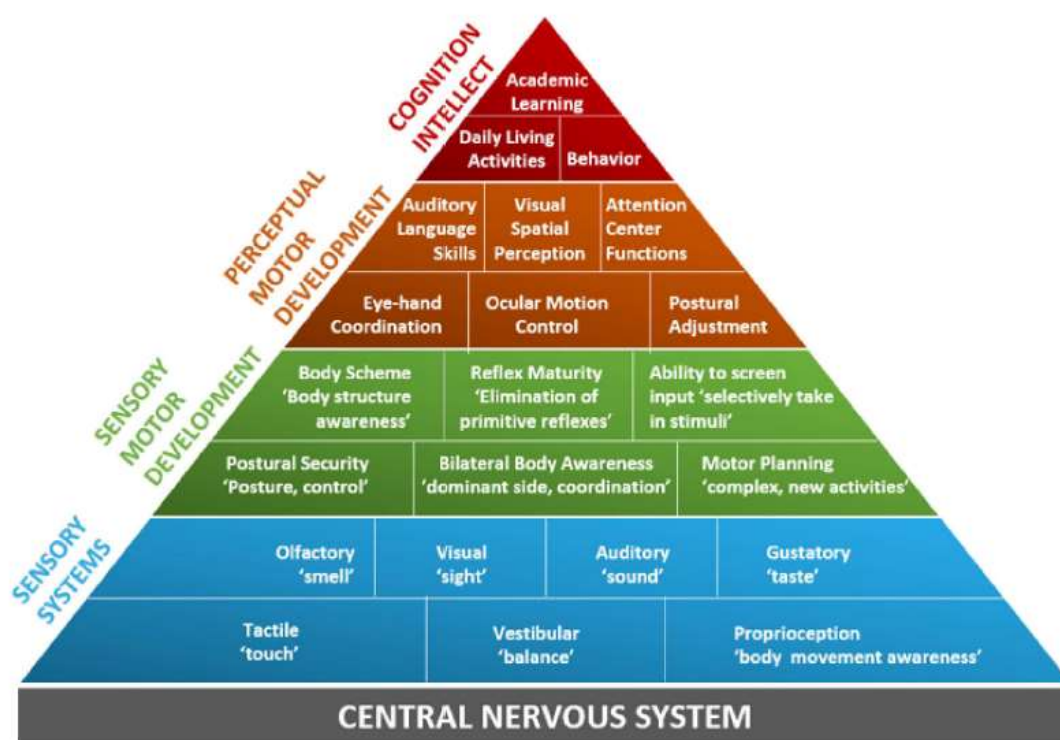


NORMAL VARIATIONS IN CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT

Development follows a recognised sequence and children are not able to fully progress through these stages until they have mastered the previous underlying skills:

Motor skill development for participation in activities



Adapted from Pyramid of Learning (Williams & Shellenberger, 1-4)

These skills are developed through natural play and exploration and the provision of opportunities to practice skills at the appropriate developmental level. Use the 'Developmental Journal' to see what skills are expected to be developed at what age/stage of development.

If children are late developing the underlying skills at the bottom of the pyramid, subsequent skills further up the pyramid will also be late to develop. It is therefore important to ensure that children have plenty of opportunity to practice skills at their **developmental level** rather than their age level. If their skills are progressing through participation in developmentally appropriate activities, then there should be no need for concern. However, therapists are always happy to discuss any concerns that there may be (see [contact list for your local team](#)).

When considering the ability to participate in everyday practical skills there are some points that should be considered before referring to the Occupational Therapy or Physiotherapy service:

- If children haven't been motivated or encouraged to engage in the building block activities such as [writing](#) and [dressing](#) activities then they will be slower to develop the final skills. This is commonly seen with children who are very active pre-schoolers - this is normal and they should be encouraged to continue to participate in these building block activities.
- Many children don't show a hand preference until about the age of four or five, when they start attempting more fine motor tasks and then establish definite hand dominance at approximately age seven.
- It can be common for some children to use one hand for writing but then choose to use the other hand for different fine motor tasks. This is fine as long as they aren't swapping within a task.
- It is a normal variation for children not to have functional pencil grip when they start in reception and this is often not established until Year 1. However, if they are progressing through the normal stages of pencil grip development (see [Writing and the development of writing](#) advice sheet) there should be no concerns.

The Children's Therapists are always happy to be contacted to discuss any concerns that you may have. See the [contact list for details of your local team](#).