



Early Years Revised Framework Briefing - June 2021

Issue 10

Characteristics of Effective Learning

This briefing paper focuses on the characteristics of effective learning which are:



Playing and exploring

– engagement – the ‘skill’ to get engaged

Finding out and exploring	Playing with what they know	Being willing to ‘have a go’
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Showing curiosity about objects, events and people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pretending objects are things from their experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiating activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using senses to explore the world around them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Representing their experiences in play 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seeking challenge
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engaging in open-ended activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taking on a role in their play 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Showing a ‘can do’ attitude
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Showing particular interests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acting out experiences with other people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taking a risk, engaging in new experiences, and learning from trial and error

Active Learning

– motivation – *the ‘will’ to keep going*



Being involved and concentrating	Keeping on trying	Enjoying achieving what they set out to do
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintaining focus on their activity for a period of time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Persisting with activity when challenges occur 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Showing satisfaction in meeting their own goals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Showing high levels of energy and fascination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Showing a belief that more effort or a different approach will pay off 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Being proud of how they accomplished something – not just the end result
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not easily distracted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bouncing back after difficulties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enjoying meeting challenges for their own sake rather than external rewards
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paying attention to details 		



Creating and thinking critically

– thinking – *the ‘thrill’ of discovery*

Having their own ideas	Making links	Choosing ways to do things
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thinking of ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Making links and noticing patterns in their experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning, making decisions about how to approach a task, problem solve and reach a goal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finding ways to solve problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Making predictions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Checking how well their activities are going
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finding new ways to do things 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Testing their ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changing strategy as needed
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing ideas of grouping, sequences, cause and effect 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewing how well the approach worked

The characteristics of effective learning run through and underpin all 7 areas of learning and development. They represent processes rather than outcomes.



Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage (Published: 31 March 2021, Effective: 1 September 2021) states:

In planning and guiding what children learn, practitioners must reflect on the different rates at which children are developing and adjust their practice appropriately. Three characteristics of effective teaching and learning are:

- **Playing and exploring** - children investigate and experience things, and 'have a go'
- **Active learning** - children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy achievements
- **Creating and thinking critically** - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things

Link to document:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/974907/EYF_S_framework_-_March_2021.pdf

Development Matters – Non-statutory curriculum guidance for the early years foundation stage



This guidance document has tables (pages 9 to 12) for each characteristic which outline what children will be learning to do and what adults can do to support this. An example from the playing and exploring table is shown below:

Children will be learning to	Examples of how to support this
Guide their own thinking and actions by talking to themselves while playing.	Help children to develop more control over their actions by giving them many opportunities to play freely and find their own ways of solving problems.
For example, a child doing a jigsaw might whisper under their breath: "Where does that one go? – I need to find the big horse next."	When appropriate, sensitively provide a helpful commentary. You might suggest: "Why don't you look for the biggest pieces first?" That will help a child who is trying to solve a jigsaw. Children may copy your commentary by talking out loud to themselves first. In time, this will develop into their 'inner voice'.

Link to document: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/development-matters--2>

Birth To 5 Matters

Birth To 5 Matters has been written by sixteen early years organisations forming the Early Years Coalition. It has been developed as 'guidance by the sector, for the sector'. It states:

The Characteristics of Effective Learning and the Prime and Specific Areas of Learning and Development are all inter-connected. Different elements of learning are identified in the EYFS, to make the complex picture of learning clearer. But children's learning is not compartmentalised and many or all of these elements are in action at the same time as children interact with people and things.



The Characteristics of Effective Learning describe behaviors children use in order to learn. To learn well, children must approach opportunities with curiosity, energy and enthusiasm. Effective learning must be meaningful to a child, so that they are able to use what they have learned and apply it in new situations. These abilities and attitudes of strong learners will support them to learn well and make good progress in all the Areas of Learning and Development.

Link to further reading: [Rationale for Characteristics of Effective Learning, Tickell Review](#)

To watch a short film follow this link - The Characteristics of Effective Learning: an overview - created by Siren Films with the Birth to 5 Matters team. <https://www.birthingto5matters.org.uk/videos/#launch>

Link to document: www.birthingto5matters.org.uk

Ofsted Early Years Inspection Handbook update...



The Early years inspection handbook for Ofsted registered provision

(Updated 19 April 2021) states:

Teaching should not be taken to imply a 'top down' or formal way of working. It is a broad term that covers the many different ways in which adults help young children learn.

It includes their interactions with children during planned and child-initiated play and activities, communicating and modelling language, showing, explaining, demonstrating, exploring ideas, encouraging, questioning, recalling, providing a narrative for what they are doing, facilitating and setting challenges.

It takes account of the equipment that adults provide and the attention given to the physical environment, as well as the structure and routines of the day that establish expectations.

Integral to teaching is how practitioners assess what children know, understand and can do, as well as taking account of their interests and dispositions to learn (characteristics of effective learning), and how practitioners use this information to plan children's next steps in learning and to monitor their progress.



Support children to develop their characteristics of effective learning

Below are some ideas of what adults can do to support children to develop their characteristics of effective learning

Playing and exploring:

- Pay attention to how children engage in activities - the challenges faced, the effort, thought, learning and enjoyment. Talk more about the process than the end result.
- Talk about how you and the children get better at things through effort and practice and what we all can learn when things go wrong .
- Help children as needed to do what they are trying to do, without taking over or directing.
- Provide stimulating resources which are accessible and open ended so they can be used, moved and combined in a variety of ways.
- Ensure children have uninterrupted time to play and explore.

Active learning:

- Help children to become aware of their own goals, make plans, and to review their own progress and successes. Describe what you see them trying to do and encourage children to talk about their own processes and successes.
- Be specific when you praise, especially noting effort such as how the child concentrates, tries different approaches, persists, solves problems and has new ideas.
- Children will become more deeply involved when you provide something that is new and unusual for them to explore, especially when it is linked to their interests.
- Help children to keep ideas in mind by talking over photographs of their previous activities.
- Keep significant activities out instead of routinely tidying them away.

Creating and thinking critically:

- Use the language of thinking and learning: think, know, remember, forget, idea, makes sense, plan, learn, find out, confused, figure out, trying to do.
- Encourage open ended thinking by not settling on the first ideas - What else is possible?
- Support children's interests over time, reminding them of previous approaches and encouraging them to make connections between their experiences.
- In planning activities, ask yourself: is this an opportunity for children to find their own ways to represent and develop their own ideas? Avoid children just reproducing someone else's ideas.
- Play is a key opportunity for children to think creatively and flexibly, solve problems and link ideas. Establish the enabling conditions for rich play: space, time, flexible resources, choice, control, warm and supportive relationships.
- Develop a learning community which focuses on how and not just what we are learning.

A final thought.....



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