

Helping children achieve using Characteristics of Effective Learning

Desired outcome	We could help by....
PLAYING AND EXPLORING children investigate and experience things, and ‘have a go	
Plan and think ahead about how they will explore or play with objects	Provide different pebbles, shells and other natural materials for children to explore and arrange freely
Guide their own thinking and actions by talking to themselves while playing. 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.”	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. When appropriate, sensitively provide a helpful commentary. You might suggest: “Why don’t you look for the biggest pieces first?”
Respond to new experiences that you bring to their attention	Regularly provide new materials and interesting things for children to explore and investigate. Introduce children to different styles of music and art. Give them the opportunity to observe changes in living things in the setting, and around the local environment. Take children to new places, like a local theatre or museum
Make independent choices. Do things independently that they have been previously taught	Provide a well-organised environment so that children know where materials and tools are and can access them easily. Provide enough materials and arrange spaces so that children can collaborate and learn alongside peers. Once children know how to use scissors, they can use this skill to achieve what they want to do. For example, they may want to make a mask or cut out material for a collage.
Bring their own interests and fascinations into early years settings. This helps them to develop their learning	Provide appropriate non-fiction books and links to information online to help them follow their interests
ACTIVE LEARNING children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy achievements	
Keep on trying when things are difficult	Help children to think about what will support them most, taking care not to offer help too soon. Some children learn by repeating something hard on their own. They learn through trial and error. Others learn by asking a friend or an adult for help. Others learn by modelling. They watch what you do or what other children do.
Use a range of strategies to reach a goal they have set themselves.	Provide plenty of high-quality, open-ended resources for children to play with freely, inside and outdoors. Suggestion: children can use wooden blocks to make lots of different structures.
Begin to correct their mistakes themselves. For example, instead of using increasing force to push a puzzle piece into the slot, they try another piece to see if it will fit.	Help young children to develop by accepting the pace of their learning. Give them plenty of time to make connections and repeat activities.
CREATING AND THINKING CRITICALLY children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things	
Know more, so feel confident about coming up with their own ideas. Make more links between those ideas.	Help children to look come up with their own ideas and explanations. Suggestion: you could look together at woodlice outdoors with the magnifying app on a tablet. You could ask: “What’s similar about woodlice and other insects?” You could use and explain terms like ‘antennae’ and ‘thorax’.
Concentrate on achieving something that’s important to them. They are increasingly able to control their attention and ignore distractions.	Offer children many different experiences and opportunities to play freely and to explore and investigate. Make time and space for children to become deeply involved in imaginative play, indoors and outside.
Use pretend play to think beyond the ‘here and now’ and to understand another perspective. For example, a child role-playing the billy goats gruff might suggest that “Maybe the troll is lonely and hungry? That’s why he is fierce.”	Help children to extend their ideas through sustained discussion that goes beyond what they, and you, have noticed. Consider ‘how’ and ‘why’ things happen.
Review their progress as they try to achieve a goal. Check how well they are doing. Solve real problems: for example, to share nine strawberries between three friends, they might put one in front of each, then a second, and finally a third. Finally, they might check at the end that everyone has the same number of strawberries	Help children to reflect on and talk about their learning through using photographs and learning journeys. Share in children’s pride about their achievements and their enjoyment of special memories. Suggestion: you could prompt a conversation with questions like: “Do you remember when...?”, “How would do that now?” or “I wonder what you were thinking then?”