

How Children Learn in the Foundation Stage.



The Characteristics of a Learner!



Play builds children's confidence, because, in play, the child is in control. The subject matter, the nature of the play and the direction it takes must be the decision of the child or children. During play, the children choose the theme, when to start and when to stop, and what will be involved. They can decide to move in and out of play at any point or repeat it as much as they like. Play helps us come to terms with fears, dangers, and the unpredictability of the world and human relationships. As adults, we can support and facilitate play, but if we take control of it, it is no longer the child's agenda and is unlikely to bring about learning.



"We know if its come from the sea as you will hear it". They took it in turns to listen carefully to the shell. "If I can't where has it come from?" Children discussing the natural materials found on the table. Here they have created their own question to investigate and explore.

Playing and Exploring

Play and exploration are key ways that children (and adults) learn. During play, the child operates at their highest level 'beyond his average age, above his daily behaviour; in play it is as though he were a head taller than himself. This is why it is so powerful.

Because it is so important to learning, the revised Statutory Framework states that:

Each area of learning and development must be implemented through planned and purposeful play and a mix of adult led and child initiated activity. (EYFS, 2012: 1.9)

This document is a tool that we as practitioners use to support teaching and planning.

Finding out and exploring

Exploratory play is important to all of us. It is how young children begin to understand their surroundings and the relationships between themselves and others, using all their senses and every part of the body.

Being willing to 'have a go'

Play is the ideal context for trying things out, taking risks, making mistakes and challenging ourselves – in other words, being willing to have a go. It builds resilience and encourages creativity from an early age.



Rolling the wheel around the track.
How does it roll?
Why does it roll?
Would it roll if it was a different shape?



Enjoying achieving what they set out to do

Following on from persistence is the satisfaction gained from achieving *one's own* intentions 'rather than relying on the approval of others' (Tickell, 2011: 90). The emphasis here is on the children achieving *their own* goals, whatever these might be: to be successful and enjoy the personal pleasure of success, the goal needs to be the child's. This will mean the child is fully signed up to it and the motivation is intrinsic, coming from within. If the motivation is extrinsic, arising from a perceived external reward, then once the reward has been achieved there is little motivation to continue. We need to take care presenting children with rewards. This is important when it comes to goals we want children to achieve. Tapping into the child's curiosity and interests is likely to help them make the goal their own, resulting in better longer-term outcomes.

Effective Practice in the EYFS: An Essential Guide



Active Learning

The second characteristic of learning is not about being physically active, which of course is important in children's learning and development, but refers to being *mentally* active and alert. It involves children becoming deeply involved and concentrating, being motivated to persist (keep on trying) and deriving satisfaction from achieving what they have chosen to do. We can foster this inner drive to learn and achieve, supporting a can-do approach and building confidence, or we can all too easily discourage it.

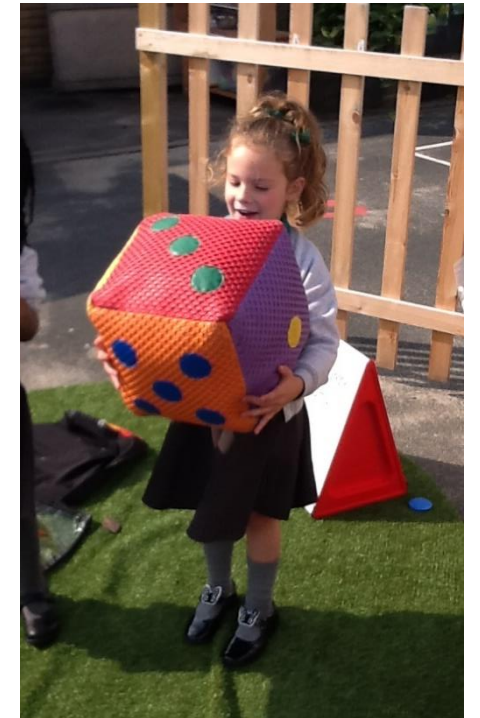
Being involved and concentrating

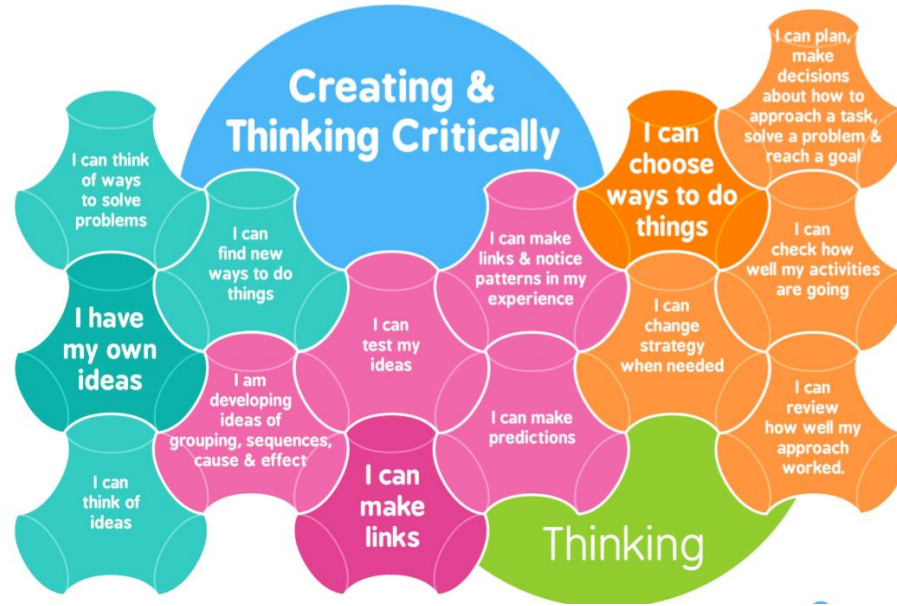
In order to concentrate fully on something, we need to be motivated. Concentration is closely linked to the concept of involvement. When children are deeply involved in what they are doing, it is likely that *deep level learning* is taking place. And, 'if deep-level learning is taking place, a person is operating at the limits of their "zone of proximal development"'. When a child is deeply involved she/he cannot easily be distracted. The importance of play and exploration cannot be underestimated as it is when children make their own choices, follow their natural curiosity and own train of thought that deep involvement is most likely to happen.

Keeping on trying

Keeping on trying, as it is called, is all about persistence, being motivated to master a new skill or understand a new idea, even though this may require considerable effort. Research has shown that some children and adults are more prone to persisting when faced with a challenge than others and what we can do to help this. It is how we see ourselves as learners that is the root of the issue, whether we have a 'fixed mind-set', with a self-belief that tells us that our abilities are fixed and cannot be changed, or a 'growth mind-set', through which we believe our abilities can grow and develop. For those with a fixed mind-set there is a desire to get things right from the start so as not to feel a failure, wanting to stay in the safety zone of what they know they can achieve, not taking on any new challenge. The opposite is true for those with the growth mind-set, who love a challenge and will therefore keep on trying, find a way around obstacles and figure out the problem.

Rolling the dice, counting the dots and recognising the numbers. The children then took this further by seeing who could roll the biggest number.





Making a map for the pirate ship so that the pirates don't get lost. The child has chosen to do this during child initiated. This activity encourages writing and mark making.



Here children are making an aeroplane big enough for everybody to fit inside. The children build on previous experiences, knowing it needed seats, wings and somewhere for a pilot to sit.

Building a den. "It needs to be taller than me so it can have a roof." The children continued to make it taller, "It's not tall yet." Why? "Because he is bigger than me and so wont fit inside."

Creating and Thinking Critically

Creating and thinking critically are fundamental processes in making sense of experiences and developing thought. Creativity in this sense is not about being talented in the arts, but a core aspect of the thinking process, involving imagination and helping us 'to think flexibly . . . and come up with original ideas'. Thinking critically helps us to organise our thoughts, figure things out, solve problems and come up with new strategies. It helps us reflect on ideas and on our own thinking, and from this learn how to learn.

Having their own ideas

In order to be able to solve problems in their daily experiences, children, like adults, need to generate their own ideas and put these good use. Play and exploration are fundamental to this, something we as parents or practitioners close to the child should be encouraging children to do, so that they can develop their own ideas. Enabling children to think critically and creatively means encouraging them to play and investigate, providing a rich environment with interesting things to discover, explore and wonder about (and, crucially, they are given the time to do so). Some of the most important skills children need for the future are the metacognitive skills, which involve them in reflecting on their learning.

Choosing ways to do things

This aspect of the Characteristics of a Learner involves the child making choices as to how to go about something and is not about following instructions. It involves 'making choices and decisions'. This occurs when children are involved in self-chosen activities because they are more likely to want to find the right strategy to achieve their goal.



Here at Redhill, our mission is to assist each child in attaining her/his maximum potential within all areas of development, building on their strengths and supporting the needs of each individual child within a rich, stimulating, happy, secure, safe and healthy environment where they can take risks and set themselves challenges.

Characteristics of Effective Learning

Playing and exploring – engagement

- Finding out and exploring
- Playing with what they know
- Being willing to 'have a go'

Active learning – motivation

- Being involved and concentrating
- Keeping trying
- Enjoying achieving what they set out to do

Creating and thinking critically – thinking

- Having their own ideas
- Making links
- Choosing ways to do things