

EYFS · RECEPTION / PRE-K / K

Characteristics of Effective Learning

A working tracker

Why this matters

The Characteristics of Effective Learning (CoEL) are the three dispositions that EYFS frameworks (and equivalent international frameworks) identify as foundations for lifelong learning. They are: 1. PLAYING AND EXPLORING — engagement 2. ACTIVE LEARNING — motivation 3. CREATING AND THINKING CRITICALLY — thinking These matter MORE than specific skills, because they predict how a child will learn later. A child with strong CoEL but average skills will overtake a child with weak CoEL but strong skills within a couple of years.

Playing and Exploring (Engagement)

Indicator	Autumn	Spring	Summer
Finds things to do, follows curiosity	_____	_____	_____
Uses senses to explore	_____	_____	_____
Engages with new experiences	_____	_____	_____
Takes appropriate risks	_____	_____	_____
Has a 'go' at challenges	_____	_____	_____

Active Learning (Motivation)



Indicator	Autumn	Spring	Summer
Maintains focus on chosen activities	_____	_____	_____
Concentrates for sustained periods	_____	_____	_____
Persists when difficulty arises	_____	_____	_____
Is satisfied with effort, not just product	_____	_____	_____
Feels pride in achievement	_____	_____	_____

Creating and Thinking Critically

Indicator	Autumn	Spring	Summer
Has own ideas, follows them through	_____	_____	_____
Makes links between ideas	_____	_____	_____
Tests theories ('I wonder if...')	_____	_____	_____
Plans before doing	_____	_____	_____
Reviews what they've done, adjusts	_____	_____	_____



Examples observed

For each characteristic, note 1-2 specific examples you've observed this term: Playing and exploring:

_____ Active learning:

_____ Creating and thinking critically:

How to support each characteristic

PLAYING AND EXPLORING is supported by: rich provision, time for exploration, adults who don't over-direct, safe-to-fail challenges. ACTIVE LEARNING is supported by: respect for child-led activity, adults who don't interrupt deep play, recognition of process not just product, 'I wonder...' questions rather than 'why don't you...?' CREATING AND THINKING CRITICALLY is supported by: open-ended materials and questions, time for sustained thinking, adults who model their own thinking aloud, valuing surprising ideas. If a child is weak in one characteristic, look at what's been DONE rather than concluding the child lacks it. Often a child labelled 'lacks engagement' is one whose interests have not been engaged.

