

4.2 **Active Learning**

Children learn best through **physical and mental challenges**. Active learning involves other people, objects, ideas and events that **engage and involve children for sustained periods**.

**Decision making**

- Active learners need to have some independence and control over their learning to keep their interest and to develop their creativity.
- As children become absorbed in finding out about the world through their explorations, investigations and questions they feel a sense of achievement and their self-esteem and confidence increase.
- As children grow in confidence they learn to make decisions based on thinking things through in a logical way.

Mental and physical involvement

- To be mentally or physically engaged in learning, children need to feel at ease, secure and confident.
- Active learning occurs when children are keen to learn and are interested in finding things out for themselves.
- When children are actively involved in learning they gain a sense of satisfaction from their explorations and investigations.
- When children engage with people, materials, objects, ideas or events they test things out and solve problems. They need adults to challenge and extend their thinking.

Personalised learning

- Personalised learning involves planning for each child, rather than the whole group. It should also involve parents in their child's development and learning.
- Begin to plan for personalised learning by knowing about each child's well-being.
- Look at children's involvement in their learning as well as at the nature and quality of adult interactions in children's learning.



Challenges and dilemmas

- Making sufficient time for busy staff to reflect on what has been observed about individual children and to reach conclusions about what has been learned.
- How to make the principle of active learning a foundation for learning while maintaining a focus on planning for the group.
- Gradually giving children greater independence in their learning while retaining control over the curriculum.
- Giving children time to follow a particular line of enquiry given the constraints of your routines and access to areas such as outdoor spaces.

Effective practice

- Ensure children's well-being and involvement in learning by making each child feel secure and confident, and allowing them some control over their learning.
- Have realistic expectations of every child based on information from parents, what children themselves 'tell' you and from observation.
- Review your environment to ensure that it is interesting, attractive and accessible to every child so they can learn independently.
- Make learning plans for each child based on information gained from talking to them, their parents and your colleagues and by observing the child.
- Recognise that every child's learning journey is unique to them.



Reflecting on practice

Children develop and learn in many different ways. How does your setting take this into account in planning for:

- an individual session;
- a week;
- six weeks;
- a year?

Is every child's learning journey reflected on and celebrated with the child, parents and peers? How do you do this?

What do I do next?

- **Welfare requirements** are explained in full in the *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage* booklet.
- **Areas of Learning and Development** including effective practice, planning and resourcing at different stages are detailed in the *Practice Guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage* booklet and on the CD-ROM.
- **Early Support** information is available on the CD-ROM under areas of Learning and Development.
- **Research and resources** are available on the CD-ROM.

