

Using the learning characteristics

I have written quite a few blogs and information sheets about the learning characteristics ...

An explanation of what each of the characteristics means –

<http://www.childmindinghelp.co.uk/freeresources/Free%20downloads/characteristicsofeffectivelearning.html>.

A blog about the characteristics –

<http://independentchildminders.weebly.com/1/post/2013/08/childrens-learning-dispositions-characteristics.html>

Characteristics prompt list -

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/independentchildminders/664027093618701/>

Ideas for using the characteristics -

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/independentchildminders/609608939060517/>

A lot of childminders have been asking me recently how I use the characteristics in observations and planning. This is the sheet I use to write most of my observations – I have 3 of these little observations on 1 x A4 piece of paper - they work well with the little Pogo photos which I sometimes take and add to my observations -

OBSERVATIONS of my play - what am I doing / saying?

What am I doing / saying? –

Flossie went to the beach with her parents at the weekend. To extend her interests and link in with her home learning, we provided sand play for her to explore.

Flossie says that she has enjoyed playing with the sand. We have noticed that she has been playing with the sand for extended periods of time with it this week, making sandcastles and hiding sea creatures under big piles of sand. We added glitter to extend her experience and she said it looked 'magic like a princess place'.

Observation from – inside outside outing home other setting

Main areas of learning – C&L PD PSED LIT M UW A&D

Learning characteristics... Playing and exploring Learning actively Creating and thinking critically

Now I know what Flossie likes and how she plays I can think about some more planning for her. I do not write new planning every time I do an observation – that would be silly and unnecessary. However, when I notice a particular interest and link it to a learning characteristic, I often want to extend it further.

So, next week I might...

Help the children to make some sand mousse – this will extend Flossie's interest in sand play and give a new dimension to her play.

Play more hiding games – to link with Flossie's game of hiding sea creatures under the sand.

Change my continuous provision to incorporate Flossie's interests - I have noticed in her observation that she is concentrating for longer when she enjoys the play. I will think of how I can include, for example, sand creatures in stories about the beach or sing some songs about the beach and sea (I am sure there are lots on t'internet).

To evidence working with home...

I will chat to Flossie's parents about how much she clearly enjoyed her visit to the beach and ask if they have any photos I can include in her Learning Journey file from her day out. I can then talk to Flossie about her special outing when we next look through her file together.

To share learning with home...

I will give parents the sand mousse recipe (sand, water and lots of bubble bath) which they can make at home.

Some more examples

Observation – John is repeating the same play over and over again – putting things in a basket and carrying it around the house and garden. You have recognised it as a transporting schema and you want to support his play so you research for more information and plan some other activities for him.

When looking at the learning characteristics using the document from the Childminding Forum, you recognise his schema as 'playing and exploring' and make a note in his file. You share some more transporting ideas with mum at home and suggest she buys some baskets and bags for John to use.

Mum tells you that he loves putting things into the basket on the back of his bike to carry them round the garden - you add that home comment as a 'home observation' to John's observations.

Observation – Jane has done a brilliant picture and she wants it on the wall. She is very proud of her picture and wants mummy to come in and see it displayed.

Reading through the characteristics, you recognise this as Jane 'actively learning' and you think about how you can use positive praise in other ways to support her learning, maybe in areas where she sometimes struggles.

Observation – Janet always wants to play games with other children but you have never observed her setting up her own game. Your observations show that when she is on her own in the provision, she mostly clings to you and wants you to play with her. If you don't play, she will sit and watch the door until home time.

The learning characteristics say that Janet does not yet 'have her own ideas' (creating and thinking critically). While you cannot make a child change the way they play, you can provide opportunities to support them to do things for themselves and teach them how to play to extend their interest in what is on offer.

Observation – Jack throws everything in fits of temper when he cannot get them to do what he wants or if he cannot, for example, do a jigsaw first time. To support him you read through the learning characteristics and recognise that he cannot yet 'keep on trying' (active learning).

To support Jack, you plan to sit with him and help him to play, teaching him to wait and try before getting cross. A quick word with mum at home time tells you he is doing this at home too, so you do some research at the weekend about supporting children who are quick to give up – and share some of the strategies you are going to try with mum.

Please ask if you have any other questions. Sarah / [Knutsford Childminding](#)