

Teaching and Learning

Child development - Holistic approach



Young children's development does not follow a predictable step-by-step sequence, and each child will have their own unique pathway, progression, and momentum. There are, however, some aspects of development which enable you to describe the child's progress in terms of whether it is typical for their age, for example learning to talk. Practitioners need to consider overall development within these aspects and not rely on matching every element in a list of statements to judge children's progress. It is important to take a holistic, professionally informed view to determine whether a child is roughly on track or developing more slowly or more quickly in particular areas. A holistic summary will give attention not just to areas of knowledge and skills, but also to the child's emotional wellbeing and connections, and development of attitudes and dispositions for learning

Birth to 5 Matters 2021

With this in mind, it is important to remember to not always solely focus on one area of learning when observing a child. Keep in mind how beneficial it can be looking at the whole picture of a child rather than being too specific and limiting what you could potentially notice.

TASK 1

Watch the video showing 4 snaps shots of Oliver. Oliver is 4 years old and has Down Syndrome. This has impacted on all areas of his development. He is a sociable little boy and he is motivated to communicate. The delay in his receptive and expressive language impacts on his development in the “specific’ areas of learning. His physical development (moving and handling) has shown rapid improvement since he began to cruise around furniture and walk with adult support.

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Once you have watched the video, consider the following questions, and discuss with your colleagues:

- What did Oliver demonstrate an interest in?
- How would you describe Oliver’s emotional wellbeing?
- What Characteristics of Effective Learning did Oliver show?
- How did he use his senses to explore the shapes and bottles?
- What did you observe about Oliver’s physical development?
- How did Oliver interact with his peers?
- What communication and language skills did Oliver demonstrate?
- What mathematical skills did Oliver demonstrate?
- Were there any other areas of learning that Oliver demonstrated development in?
- Using a guidance tool of your choice, where would you assess Oliver in all areas of learning?
- Do you require any further information?
- What next steps would you plan for Oliver?

TASK 2

“Enabling environments foster holistic approaches to early development and learning, recognising that different aspects are constantly connected in a child’s experiences. In the EYFS, areas are described separately in order to break down the complexity of development and learning, but it is important to keep the whole child in mind. As a child encounters objects, events and other people, all spheres of development and learning are in action at the same time”

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With this in mind, choose one child for all staff to observe whilst playing in the outdoor environment. Focus on the ‘holistic’ child, looking at all aspects of their development including the Characteristics of Effective Learning. Once you have done this, moderate your findings with your team, answering the questions below:

- What did you observe and what were the key points of your observation?
- Did you notice anything different from one another?
- Were there any similarities in your observations?
- Were there any areas of development that became a particular focus, if so why?
- Has this exercise made you think about you will observe children?