

James Nottingham and Jill Nottingham

Challenging Early Learning

Helping Young Children Learn How to Learn



A David Fulton Book

CHALLENGING EARLY LEARNING

What are the goals of Early Years education? A lot of people ask this question and receive answers ranging from keeping children safe; introducing them to the values of society; encouraging a love of language; and giving them experience of socialising, harmonising and behaving appropriately. This book shares the best strategies to help children grow into even more curious, resilient, happy, articulate and thoughtful learners.

Challenging Early Learning takes James Nottingham's tried and tested and acclaimed 'learning to learn' methodology and applies it to teaching three- to seven-year-olds. Each chapter includes:

- Colourful and stimulating learning activities that will help children learn how to learn.
- Practical 'Now Try This' sections that encourage readers to think about current practice and explore new ideas.
- A Review section that focuses on building a broad tool kit of teaching strategies.

Covering a range of key topics such as feedback, dialogue, growth mindset and the Learning Pit, this book is aimed at all pedagogues, teachers, parents and leaders wanting to challenge the way in which we learn and make learning more challenging.

James and Jill Nottingham started an educational company in 1999 to support local nurseries and schools with the development of Philosophy for Children. This evolved into a multimillion-pound social regeneration project to raise the aspirations and abilities of young people in North East England. With the success of this project, early childhood centres across Scandinavia, Australia and New Zealand wanted to get involved in the Nottinghams' award-winning approaches to challenge, dialogue, feedback, questioning and progress. To meet this demand, Jill and James set up companies in Australia, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, the UK and the USA, and now employ 30 educational experts who lead, demonstrate and guide practitioners and parents in the best ways to enhance young children's learning.



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 **Routledge**
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK



First published 2019
by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge
52 Vanderbilt Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Nottingham, James, author. | Nottingham, Jill, author.

Title: Challenging early learning : helping young children learn how to learn /
by James Nottingham and Jill Nottingham.

Description: Abingdon, Oxon ; New York, NY : Routledge, 2019.

Identifiers: LCCN 2018060405 | ISBN 9780367027629 (hardback) |

ISBN 9780367027650 (pbk.) | ISBN 9780429397929 (ebk)

Subjects: LCSH: Early childhood education. | Cognition in children. | Learning, Psychology of.

Classification: LCC LB1139.23 .N67 2019 | DDC 372.21—dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2018060405>

ISBN: 978-0-367-02762-9 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-0-367-02765-0 (pbk)

ISBN: 978-0-429-39792-9 (ebk)

Typeset in Swis

by Apex CoVantage, LLC

1. CREATING THE CONDITIONS FOR EARLY LEARNING

CHILDREN LEARN AS THEY PLAY. MOST IMPORTANTLY,
IN PLAY CHILDREN LEARN HOW TO LEARN.

(O. Fred Donaldson, 1993)

1.0 CHALLENGING EARLY LEARNING

The youngest of our three children recently celebrated her fourth birthday. Living in England as we do, this means she has just a few months left before she starts school. So now seems a good time to reflect on her nursery experiences.

For the last two years, Phoebe has attended two Early Years settings: an outdoor nursery and a playgroup. We wish she could attend the outdoor nursery every morning, but unfortunately it is only open twice a week. So she heads off to the local playgroup for the other three weekday mornings.

When it is a Little Acorns day, she springs out of bed and is the first one ready, waiting expectantly by the door with her rucksack on her back. (See Figure 1.) When it is a playgroup day, she gets herself ready without any fuss but without much excitement either. On arrival, she bounces off to Little Acorns without so much as a glance back or a kiss on the cheek. At the beginning of the three playgroup mornings per week, she generally holds hands with one of us until the last moment and gives us a tight hug before she enters the room. At the end of the day, she is full of chatter about the Little Acorns activities she's been engaged in, whereas we rarely get an insight into her playgroup day.

Our daughter is the same child every day. She comes from the same home with the same parents and same brother and sister. Yet she is also so very different depending on which Early Years setting she attends that day. It was the same for her older siblings. That is how significant educational settings are. Get it right, and children will flourish; just do OK, and children will just do OK.

The aim of this book, therefore, is to share what Little Acorns (and many other nurseries and schools just like it) are getting right in the hope that more of our young children might thrive more of the time. There is no recipe for success, of course. So much depends on context. But in our experience, there are very definitely aspects of learning in the Early Years that seem to work much better than others to encourage, nurture and excite young children, and so it is these that we will share with you here.

The culture you set makes an enormous difference in the attitudes and experiences of your young learners.

1.1 ENCOURAGING GROWTH IN A NURSERY

The names for Early Years settings vary so much around the world, from daycare to preschool, crèche to nursery, kindergarten to playgroup. Of these, we would like to draw attention to the term 'nursery' because of the comparison with horticultural nurseries in which young plants are nourished and grown. This might seem a strange thing to do, but bear with us, please: there is a good reason to do so.

Some people we work with, particularly in Scandinavia, view with suspicion any attempt to 'teach' or 'challenge' young children. Their belief is that youngsters should be allowed to play,

Figure 1: Phoebe Nottingham at Little Acorns



What is the optimum balance between free play and structured learning for young children?

Using the analogy of young plants, it is clear that many seedlings will grow with or without support. Yet it is also true that given the right environment and nurture, the chances of *all* plants blooming are significantly increased.

investigate and try without the direction of 'pushy' adults. They believe in a form of child-centred learning in which children should go in any (safe) direction their curiosity and interest take them. Adults should not lead.

Though we have sympathy with this ideal in that we are certainly not advocating pushiness, it is also true to say we are promoting the idea of adults designing specific learning opportunities for children to engage in. Not hothousing or controlling but engaging and extending children's learning. So we would like to take this opportunity to explain our point of view before we proceed with this book, and to do so, we'd like to draw a comparison with horticulture.

If we were to consider plants, it would be true to say that many species are remarkably hardy. Lay down some new concrete, and still some plant life will find a way through. Gardens that are tended lovingly still have weeds growing in unwanted places. Even with the most unforgiving of elements, vegetation finds a way to grow. Hot deserts and freezing tundra show sign of life. The hardest always seems to find a way to survive. Naturally.

Horticulturalists know this, of course, and yet they don't just leave it to nature. They want other plants to survive too. Indeed, not just survive but thrive. So they cultivate, tend, provide for and protect their young crops to enable more of them to flourish and grow. They alter the conditions and the provisions so that even weaker saplings have a chance to bloom. They know that many plants will survive without their help, but they also know if they get the conditions just right, then many more will not just survive but also thrive.

So it is with education: children tend to learn. Naturally. Children develop socially, physically, emotionally and intellectually even when the situation is 'just OK'. Think back to the story of our youngest in the previous section: she is learning all the time, even at her uninspiring playgroup. The playgroup supervisors rarely provide super engaging activities, but Phoebe and her pals still learn. They play, they investigate; they think.

Yet at Little Acorns (the Early Years setting that excites our youngest child the most), there is a mix of free play *and* purposeful play. Free play is encouraged, of course, but there is *also* time to engage in activities, designed by the adults, that engage, extend, excite and puzzle the children. The activities are still 'child centred' in that they start from where the children are in terms of developmental levels and interest levels. But, rather like the horticulturalists, the adults are also

looking at ways to support each sapling's growth so that each and every one of them flourish and thrive.

Unfortunately, this analogy leads very quickly to the idea of hothousing and/or pruning to create the 'ideal' form. Of course, we are *not* advocating either of these approaches. There are already far too many people (parents and educators) falling into the trap of hothousing or 'pruning' children's interests and activities in the pursuit of 'ideal' scores in narrowly conceived, standardised tests.

Instead of hothousing or standardising, we are advocating a 'nursery' approach to learning: one in which conditions are adjusted to promote the growth and development of every single 'plant'. This might include a frame to support and extend, words of encouragement (you talk to your plants, don't you?) to nurture and show care, help for roots as well as leaf tips, moving the pots into the light or the shade, depending on the need, and so on. In other words, we are advocating small but definite adjustments to encourage growth of all young 'saplings'. In our minds, that is what will help children in in Early Years and school settings to flourish.

We are advocating a 'nursery' approach to learning: one in which conditions are adjusted to help all 'seedlings' to flourish and bloom.

But then that leads to the question: learning what?

1.2 LEARNING HOW TO LEARN

What are the goals of education for young children? A lot of people ask this question and receive many more answers than they bargained for. Answers range from helping children to learn, to keeping them safe; introducing them to the values of society; encouraging a love of language; giving them the experience of socialising, harmonising and behaving appropriately; and so the list goes on.

(James): Whenever I am asked what the purpose of education is, I tend to include in my answer, 'learning how to learn'. Of course, as we've already said, children learn naturally. Watch babies 'sensing' the environment and people around them, and we can see that even the youngest beginning straightaway (and probably even before birth). And yet this ability for learning can be enhanced.

All children learn, and yet helping them learn 'how' to learn can enhance their development even further.

In the previous section, we compared horticulture with education, saying that by adjusting the conditions, we can help young 'saplings' to flourish and thrive. And that, I believe, is true in the case of plants *and* humans. However, one of the many differences between these two life forms is that, as humans, we also have consciousness and an awareness of self. So not only do we adapt to the environment around us, but we are also able to think about and change that very environment to suit ourselves. As far as we know, plants are not able to do that!

Amongst the many important roles that education plays is the nurturing of the emerging sense of self in young children. During their nursery years, children grow from reactive to proactive creatures. They learn that they are able to plan, design and influence the world around them. They don't just have to respond to the people and things around them; they can actually influence and sometimes control those things. And so it is with learning. Children can learn how to adapt, change, improve and control their own learning.

For example, a young child might say 'that one' when actually they mean, 'What is that?' When they don't get the response they are seeking, they begin to wonder why. Later, a different child asks, 'What is that?' and receives the response that the first child had hoped for. So now the first child reflects on this and tries out the question for themselves: success! They get the response they were after! Of course, this is just a rudimentary form of reflection but an important one nonetheless. Taking this further, as adults working with children, we can (and in my opinion should) therefore look for ways to help our young charges not just learn but also to learn how to learn.

That then leads to the question: how can we teach children how to learn? It seems to be a relatively simple question, but, of course, the answer is far more complex. Learning how to learn includes knowing how to ask meaningful questions and how to decide which answers are the best; it includes thinking about the tone and timing of interactions; and it includes when to persevere in comparison to when to compromise. The list is almost endless, and it is very definitely contextual.

Learning how to learn includes learning how to reflect, to check, to compare and to reason.

Indeed, it is unlikely that any one society could agree on one set of guidelines. A national or regional government might publish a summary for local education, but that doesn't mean everyone – or indeed anyone – will agree completely!

Learning 'how' to learn is enhanced when you know which direction you wish to take your children.

Thinking about what you want your children to learn by the time they leave you is an important discussion to have with your colleagues.

Throughout the book, there are many 'Now Try This' suggestions to help you and your colleagues reflect on your children's early learning experiences. This is the first of them.

That shouldn't stop us coming together in our own educational setting to agree on at least some of our aims. Indeed, it is generally worthwhile to do so because, without direction, deciding on our next steps becomes casual at best and chaotic at worst. Cast your mind back to *Alice in Wonderland* (Lewis Carroll, 1865) when Alice asks the Cheshire Cat for directions:

Alice: Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?
The Cheshire Cat: That depends a good deal on where you want to get to.
Alice: I don't much care where.
The Cheshire Cat: Then it doesn't much matter which way you go.
Alice: . . . So long as I get somewhere.
The Cheshire Cat: Oh, you're sure to do that, if only you walk long enough.

As the Cheshire Cat says, if you don't know where you are going, then it doesn't really matter which route you take. And yet in real life, it does matter. In our educational settings, it *does* matter where we go with our children and how we get there. It matters to the children, it matters to their parents, and it matters to us.

NOW TRY THIS

The sorts of questions that can help identify the purpose of your educational setting include:

- **What do we want our children to be capable of (for example, by the time they leave us and move onto the next stage of education)?**
- **What learning attitudes do we want our children to value and develop?**
- **What are the social and emotional behaviours we want to encourage in our children?**

We have also included a Diamond Nine activity at the end of this chapter about things that children in nursery and school should learn. This can be a good way to begin talking about what is important to you as a group or staff.

Once you and your colleagues have thought about these questions or had a go at the Diamond Nine in Section 1.7, it can be very useful to organise your ideas into three categories: attitudes, skills and knowledge. These come together in the ASK Model. Originally written about by James in his second book, *Encouraging Learning* (2013), here is an adapted version for use with younger children.

1.3 THE ASK MODEL

The ASK Model helps to identify the attitudes, skills and knowledge you would like your children to develop.

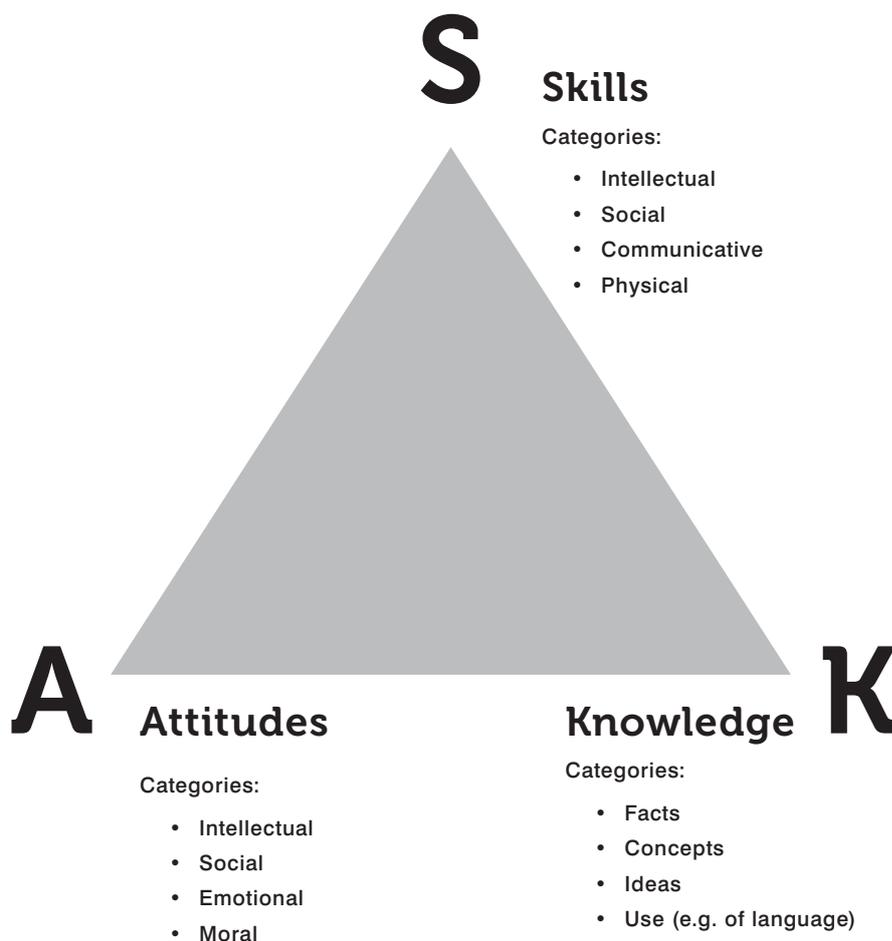
When drawn as a triangle, the ASK model can be used as a planning and reflection tool.

ASK stands for attitudes, skills and knowledge, which are made up of these key ingredients (see Figure 2):

- **Attitudes:** Positive attitudes towards learning, including curiosity and willingness to try
- **Skills:** Abilities to carry out those actions necessary to accomplish something
- **Knowledge:** Familiarity with information such as facts, concepts and context

The ASK Model is commonly drawn as a triangle. This means that you can plot any activity along one of the sides of the triangle. Thus, if you placed an activity along the bottom line in Figure 2, then this would indicate an emphasis on (A) attitudes and (K) knowledge.

Figure 2: The ASK Model



For example, the purpose of a learning activity could be to consider the fairest way to divide eight pieces of chocolate among six children. This would involve the children exercising their moral attitude (A) of being fair with the knowledge (K) of how to share.

Or another example could be designing an activity to help children ask questions about a story they've just heard. So this would be a balance between the skill (S) of asking questions (an intellectual skill) and the uncovering of information or knowledge (K) about the story.

When toddlers are learning to walk, the adults around them would be likely to encourage them to keep going and not give up. In ASK Model terms, this could be said to be developing the emotional attitude (A) of determination with the physical skill (S) of walking.

Over the next few pages, we have given some examples of the attitudes and skills that you might wish to develop with your young children. These are by no means exhaustive lists. Instead, they are intended to give you some inspiration as well as to better explain what we mean by the ASK Model.

Plot a point along one side of the triangle to show which two aspects of learning are being activated.

For example, an X along the bottom of the triangle would reflect an activity that enhances an attitude (of, for example, being careful) whilst also enhancing the knowledge (for example, knowledge of hygiene).

1.4 THE ASK MODEL: ATTITUDES

Lev Vygotsky, one of the pioneers of educational psychology, wrote at length about cultural learning. He said children learn from those around them: what to laugh at, what to be afraid of, what to have a go at, what to avoid, and so on. He emphasised that children pick up mental as well as physical habits from their elders, and warned us that the way we react to things is

arguably more influential on young minds than the knowledge we share with children. In other words, children adopt many of our attitudes and values through dialogue with us. That's one heck of a responsibility for those of us with children in our lives!

Of course, there is no hierarchy or exhaustive list of attitudes, at least not that we're aware of, but here are some that are displayed by the best learners we've come across. The most enthusiastic and capable learners are:

- Full of wonder.
- Curious.
- Willing to try.
- Want to learn from their mistakes.
- Focussed on what is relevant.
- Determined.
- Open to new ideas.
- Strategic.

This list shows some of the attitudes you might want to encourage in your young learners.

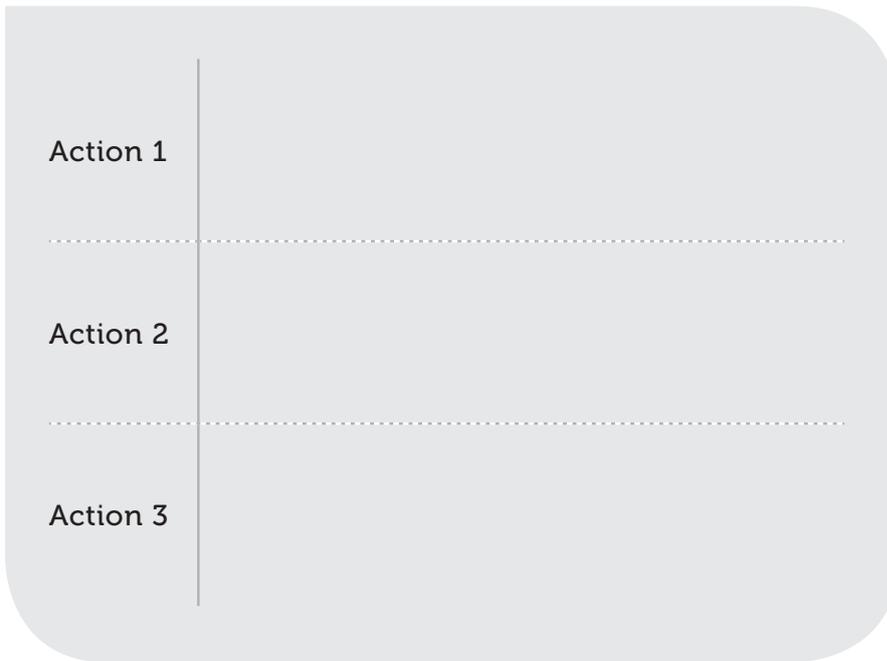
For an explanation of how you can help your children develop these sorts of attitudes, we encourage you to read Section 6.2, example 1.4.

Think about the differences that attitudes, skills and knowledge make to the growth and development of your children.

Compare two children you work with. List the attitudes, skills or knowledge of a child making lots of progress compared with those of a child not making much progress currently.

	Child making lots of progress	Child not making much progress
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

Once you have identified five differences between these two children, write down three actions that could be taken to help the less successful child make more progress.



1.4.1 The Marshmallow Experiment

One of the better known examples of attitudes to be encouraged in young children is that of self-control. Just mention 'the Marshmallow Experiment', and many of us in early childhood education will have at least a vague recollection of the case study.

In 1972, Stanford University psychologist Walter Mischel conducted an experiment to find out when the trait of deferred gratification – the ability to wait for something you want – develops in children. The experiment has been repeated many times since, including in the BBC series *Child of Our Time* (Mischel, 2011).

The original experiment involved more than 600 children between the ages of four and six. Sitting in an empty room, the children were offered a treat of their choice – a cookie, a pretzel or a marshmallow. They were each told they could eat their treat, but if they could wait for 15 minutes without eating it, then they would get a second one. (See Figure 3.)

We encourage you to watch some of the video clips of similar experiments available online. In them you'll see some children refusing to look at their marshmallow, others peeking at it from behind their hands, one boy licking the plate but not the marshmallow, and one even stroking it as if it were a pet!

In all, approximately one-third of the children were able to delay their gratification long enough to be rewarded with a second marshmallow. Of course, the older the child, the more likely he was to succeed, but what Mischel also found from follow-up studies was:

The children who could not wait were more likely to have behavioural problems both at home and school; they had lower exam scores; more often struggled to deal with stressful situations or to pay attention; and found it more difficult to maintain friendships.

The children who were able to wait also craved the treat but were able to distract themselves by covering their eyes, playing hide and seek or singing songs. Their desire wasn't dispelled; it was merely forgotten.

Forty years after the first experiment, the researchers tracked down 60 of the original participants and invited them to take part in a new study. They were shown a range of flash cards with faces

A good example of an attitude to teach children is that of being willing to wait.

The Marshmallow Experiment showed how important it is to develop children's capacity for waiting.

Children in the experiment who could not wait before eating their marshmallow showed higher incidences of behavioural problems later in life.

Whereas those who did manage to wait until they were rewarded with a second marshmallow showed higher degrees of happiness and stability in later life.

Figure 3: The Marshmallow Experiment



displaying a range of expressions – happy, neutral or fearful – and asked to press a button every time they saw a fearful face.

This may seem an easy task, but, as B. J. Casey, the neuropsychologist who carried out the tests along with Mischel, explains: 'A happy face is a social cue that is hard to resist'. The results showed that the participants who had struggled to defer gratification when they were younger also struggled to resist pressing the button when they saw a happy face.

The experiment concluded with many of the participants repeating the test whilst lying in a brain scanner. The participants with better self-control showed more activity in the part of the brain associated with risk aversion, whereas those with poorer self-control showed increased activity in the brain region associated with reward and addiction.

The outcome from this study is the recommendation that young children should be helped to develop the capacity to wait for or defer gratification. Telling them they shouldn't want something doesn't help; we can help them instead by teaching tactics to divert their attention, to focus on other things, to look forward, to plan and so on. Incidentally, this is partly why so many diets fail – we focus on the foods we shouldn't eat rather than on finding healthier foods or activities to distract us.

Increasing children's willingness to defer gratification can lead to significantly positive outcomes.

NOW TRY THIS

Developing the attitude of self-control

Self-control develops with maturity and practice. Temperament also plays a role. Impetuous children may need more guidance, particularly in exciting or distracting situations; reflective children may appear more self-controlled when in fact they're just more reserved. Either way, explaining the reasons behind particular rules, teaching children how to focus and appealing to their sense of fairness should help develop their attitude. Modelling self-control always helps too!

Suggested activities

- 1 Tell children about exciting activities or events coming up, and then draw attention to waiting strategies they could use in the meantime.**

- 2 Set a medium- to long-term target with the children and engage them in collecting enough tokens to reach the 'prize'.
- 3 Play waiting games. For example, waiting for 10 seconds after a question has been asked before children give their answers.
- 4 Use daily planners to show the main activities of the day. Draw attention to some of the things the children can do whilst waiting for the more exciting events to begin.
- 5 Talk about the strategies you use for waiting. As you do this, model 'waiting' language such as 'yet', 'soon', 'later' and 'until' so that the children make the connection between words and actions.
- 6 Play games in which there is a switch in the instructions so that children need to think more before responding. This develops self-control because the children need to check their own responses rather than use auto responses. For example, play *Heads, Shoulders, Knees and Toes*, but switch the instructions so that when you say 'head', they should touch their toes, or when you say 'shoulders', they should touch their knees.

A video showing the last example in practice can be viewed at youtu.be/CVT6FQ9czoc.

1.5 THE ASK MODEL: SKILLS

As well as helping children develop learning attitudes, it is a good idea to think about the skills children need for learning. Here's a list to begin with. It is not exhaustive, but it will give you a reference point and underpins some of the activities later in the book.

This list shows some of the categories of skills you might want to encourage in your young learners.

Intellectual skills – including the ability to:

- Concentrate.
- Remember.
- Make connections.
- Understand an idea.
- Give opinions.
- Ask questions.

Social skills – including the ability to:

- Make friends.
- Understand other people have different ideas.
- Respond appropriately to others.
- Work individually and in a team.
- Encourage others.
- Influence others.

Communication skills – including the ability to:

- Communicate clearly.
- Listen to others.
- Respond appropriately.
- Request things politely.
- Understand body language and tone of voice.
- Choose a good time to talk.

Physical skills – including the ability to:

- Write, draw and paint.
- Manipulate objects (e.g. building a model with LEGO).
- Catch and throw objects.
- Dance, act, sing.
- Balance and ride (e.g. on a bike or scooter).
- Climb, sit still, play a sport.

Of course, many of these skills overlap. Writing, painting and drawing are intellectual as well as physical skills. We have suggested some activities in Chapter 4 for developing learning skills and attitudes with children. However, the most important thing is to think about and look for ways to enhance children's attitudes and skills as well as their knowledge. By getting the balance right, you will give children a great head start.

1.6 LEARNING DETECTIVES

Learning Detectives is an idea created by our former colleague, Louise Brown. She developed the approach as a way to help her four- and five-year-old children think about what they are learning. We have also written about adaptations of it in *Challenging Learning Through Dialogue* (Nottingham, Nottingham, Renton, 2017) and *Challenging Learning Through Feedback* (Nottingham & Nottingham, 2017).

The Learning Detectives approach helps children concentrate on 'how' to learn.

Learning Detectives are children who have been nominated to stay 'outside' of the main learning task. Their job is to look for 'clues' of learning such as listening, asking questions, concentrating, remembering, taking turns and so on. Over the next few pages, you will find example clues together with visual prompts for the children. In our experience, this approach works well with children from the age of four onwards.

A good way to introduce Learning Detectives is to say to your children something along the lines of: 'Wow, you've learnt so many things already. You've learnt to walk and talk; to ask for things; to make friends; to ride a scooter. How on earth did you manage to do all of that?'

The children are likely to say, 'We tried hard', to which you can reply, 'Well, that is an important thing to do when learning. So, let's make that one of our Learning Detective clues. Now, what else helped you to learn to walk and talk and make friends?' They then might say, 'Getting help'. You can then add this to your list of clues for the children to detect. By doing this, you create a starter list that can be built on as the year progresses.

There are many ways to use Learning Detectives. This list gives a few examples.

What you do next will depend on the developmental stage of the children. Here are some possibilities:

- 1 Select between one and four children to be Learning Detectives.
- 2 Give them a prop to show that they have been chosen as a detective: this could be a hat, a magnifying glass, a notepad, a camera or simply the clue they are looking for on a piece of card.
- 3 Print a selection of the cards shown on the next few pages, and give each Learning Detective one clue each.
- 4 Ask each detective to look for examples of her 'clue'. For example, if she got the 'listening' card, then she should look for incidences of other children listening.
- 5 The Learning Detectives should record the incidences of their clues in action. For example, they might write down the name of the person they saw listening. Or they might take a photograph of the person listening. Or they might point out that person to an adult.

The children you choose to be Learning Detectives look for 'clues' of learning such as thinking, listening, asking questions, etc.

Once the Learning Detectives have collected some examples of the clue they are looking for, then you should bring all the children (the Learning Detectives and the other children) together to consider the findings. This is a really important part of the process.

When you have gathered the children together, ask the Learning Detectives to reveal the clues that they were searching for and the examples they found. For example, the Learning Detective who was looking for examples of listening should tell the rest of the children what they were looking for and whom they saw doing some really good listening.

Then you should question their findings to give them more opportunity to articulate their thinking. For example:

- You: What learning clue were you searching for?
- Child: Listening.
- You: What does that mean?
- Child: Using your ears.
- You: So, who was listening?
- Child: Sarah and John were listening.
- You: How do you know that?
- Child: Because they were looking at the person who was talking.
- You: But do we listen by looking?
- Child: No, we listen with our ears.
- You: So why would it be a good idea to look at the person who is talking?
- Child: Because then they know you are listening because they can see you are.

(James): Incidentally, the answers given in this dialogue represent a real-life interaction I had with a group of four-year-old Learning Detectives recently. In my opinion, the children were trying to explain the importance of encouraging a speaker by showing that you are listening. Of course, the children didn't have the language skills yet to explain precisely, but I think you can tell that they were at least giving it their best shot.

Anyway, the point of asking these questions is *not* to try to catch the children out. In fact, the very opposite is true: the aim is to support the children's learning by helping them to articulate their ideas. It is also to give the other children the opportunity to understand what is meant by terms such as listening, concentrating, taking turns and so on. Many children already know what these words mean, but others might not be so sure, which is why it is important to unpack the terms with the children.

The impact of children not fully understanding what is meant by terms such as these can be seen frequently in educational settings. For example, ask young children in a primary school in England who is listening, and you will see most children covering their lips with their index finger. See Figure 4 for a prime example of this. If you look at that picture, the boy does indeed look as though he is paying attention and listening to the teacher. However, some children – perhaps even in that same class – think his finger-on-lips pose is enough to 'prove' he is listening. This then leads to some children placing a finger on their own lips but continuing to talk and distract others. They then react indignantly when someone tells them that they are not listening! 'Of course, I'm listening', they assert: 'I've got a finger over my lips!'

We suspect the reason for this is that teachers very often 'shush' young children in the hope of quietening them down, and they do this by putting their index finger to their lips. Some of the more attentive children copy this and get praised for it. So other children copy them by putting their fingers on their lips also, but very many of them don't realise that they also have to stop talking and start concentrating!

Being clear is the key here, and talking through the Learning Detective findings can help enormously.

For more ideas about how to help your children learn the most from the Learning Detectives strategy, we encourage you to read Section 6.2, example 1.6.

Once the Learning Detectives have collected their clues, bring all your children together to review the findings.

Encouraging your children to talk about their findings and question the meanings of each clue will help to deepen everyone's understanding of learning behaviours.

The Learning Detective cards in Figure 5 can be used as prompts for your children. Depending on their age, you could give each child between one and five clues to look for at any one time.