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Characteristic	Stage	Baseline	End of Autumn	End of Spring	End of Summer
<b>Playing and Exploring</b> <i>(Finding out and exploring, playing with what they know, being willing to 'have a go')</i>	Nursery	Shows curiosity about objects and people. Explores new resources with support.	Engages in open-ended play. Begins to choose activities independently.	Uses familiar resources in new ways. Tries new experiences with encouragement.	Initiates play and explores confidently. Combines resources and ideas in imaginative ways.
	Reception	Selects resources with support. Begins to explore new activities.	Chooses activities independently. Shows curiosity and asks questions.	Explores new challenges with confidence. Uses prior knowledge in new contexts.	Initiates and adapts play. Shows sustained interest and willingness to take risks.
<b>Active Learning</b> <i>(Being involved and concentrating, keeping on trying, enjoying achieving what they set out to do)</i>	Nursery	Focuses on self-chosen activities briefly. Enjoys praise and encouragement.	Persists with tasks when supported. Begins to show pride in achievements.	Returns to activities to deepen learning. Begins to manage distractions.	Shows resilience and keeps trying. Celebrates success and effort.
	Reception	Maintains focus for short periods. Seeks adult support when challenged.	Persists with tasks and begins to self-correct. Shows motivation to complete activities.	Sets simple goals and works towards them. Begins to reflect on their own learning.	Demonstrates independence and pride in achievements. Sustains concentration and effort over time.
<b>Creating and Thinking Critically</b> <i>(Having their own ideas, making links, choosing ways to do things)</i>	Nursery	Tries different ways to do things. Begins to solve simple problems in play.	Makes simple choices and decisions. Begins to talk about what they are doing.	Notices patterns and links in experiences. Begins to plan and test ideas.	Thinks through problems and tries new strategies. Explains their thinking with support.
	Reception	Chooses ways to do things with support. Begins to talk about ideas.	Plans how to approach tasks. Makes links between experiences.	Thinks of different ways to solve problems. Explains ideas and choices.	Reflects on learning and adapts strategies. Shows originality and flexible thinking.