

BOOK AREA

The Book Area is a fundamentally important feature of core provision, helping children foster a love for reading and storytelling, whilst performing a vital role in their cognitive, emotional and social development.

Reading lays the foundation for confident and successful lifelong learning by building early literacy skills like vocabulary, phonetic awareness, and recognition of pace and rhythm, while encouraging self-expression and imagination.

Positive experiences with books help stimulate children's intrigue and curiosity, encouraging a genuine enthusiasm for stories.

Hearing stories from a trusted adult can be calming and therapeutic, fostering emotional connection, trust, and attachments between children and their caregivers. The soothing nature and predictable structure of stories provides a sense of comfort and security.

Books introduce children to themes like friendship, emotions, and diversity. Through stories and images, they explore interests, learn about different cultures, and build understanding, appreciation, and respect for the world around them, supporting development of a broader, more inclusive perspective.

Whilst there should be a designated Book Area within each setting, it is important that opportunities to engage with books are embedded throughout each core provision area, both indoors and outdoors.



CURRICULAR & DEVELOPMENTAL

Health & Wellbeing

Through books and stories, children can be supported to express, understand and process their feelings as they connect with themes and characters. Additionally, this can support the development of empathy as they gain insight into the thoughts and feelings of others.

Turning pages, lifting flaps and handling books of various shapes and sizes help enhance fine-motor skills and improves hand-eye coordination.

Books can introduce children to the wider world of work, the different roles that people play across society and the variety of potential careers available to them. This can spark curiosity and conversation surrounding their own interests and future aspirations.

When shared with warmth, sensitivity and attentiveness, the familiar narrative and structure of stories can be comforting and reassuring for children, providing a sense of security and supporting them to navigate their feelings via co-regulation.

Sharing materials and ideas whilst working cooperatively with others supports children to develop social skills.



Literacy

The Book Area offers rich opportunities to explore language patterns, rhythms, and sounds. Through stories, children learn to listen attentively, anticipate events, and respond with comments, questions, or actions, gaining familiarity with the concepts of titles, authors and illustrators.

Books and stories provide opportunities to experiment with pace, rhythm, and rhyme whilst learning how to use tone and pitch to emphasise feelings and emotions.

Exploring books encourages conversations about characters, themes and events, inspiring children to express their own thoughts, ideas, and opinions.

A diverse range of books, texts and media helps children understand different purposes, such as storytelling in fiction or fact sharing in non-fiction. Offering variety enables children to immerse themselves in imaginative stories, discover new information, and explore unfamiliar concepts.

Maths & Numeracy

Through the use of images within books, children can explore mathematical concepts and language, including counting, one-to-one correspondence, positional language, comparison of size and awareness of shape.

Other

The Book Area encourages children to express ideas through role play, dance, puppets and resources.

Accessing books for different purposes extends knowledge and supports exploration of personal interests, new information, and real-life connections, such as linking texts and images to past events.

Non-fiction books help deepen understanding of the world, covering topics like people, places, science, and technology.

Children can explore stories, images, and poems that introduce the beliefs and practices of world religions, supporting cultural awareness and understanding.

ROLE OF THE ADULT

Practitioners should review books before sharing them, ensuring awareness of the learning intentions behind each selection. Children should also be involved in choosing stories and updating the available books.

Regularly rotating books, genres and resources ensures children access texts that match their needs, reflect interests, and support new learning, keeping the area fresh, engaging, and responsive.

Staff have a responsibility to be skilled, knowledgeable and confident in their understanding of tools for reading, including title, blurb, story structure, author and illustrator. These tools can challenge children's depth of learning, helping them make connections and engage more meaningfully with books and stories.

Practitioners should model the use of story sacks, stones, spoons and interactive resources to enrich engagement. These tools enhance comprehension, vocabulary, and create a more immersive, intriguing reading experience.

Staff should hone their storytelling craft, understanding how pace, tempo and rhythm can complement evolving events and how using volume and purposeful pauses can help generate intrigue.

Adults should maintain developmentally appropriate expectations, recognising that children engage with stories in different ways. Some may listen from afar or from another area of the playroom, others may drift in and out of the area while a story is being told.



ROOM STRUCTURE & LAYOUT

The Book Area should be in the quietest part of the room. Ideally, it should have a carpet, rug, soft seating, cushions, and be in a cosy area where both adults and children can read comfortably.

Books should be displayed front facing on a bookcase or shelves in a way that allows children to see the covers easily. As a rule of thumb, shelves should generally house between 10-12 books. More books (4-5) can be displayed in a small accompanying basket.

Additionally, there should be an area for storing props, such as puppets, story spoons and stones. By offering visual, hands-on representations of ideas, props and puppets can help children better understand complex concepts. Using these during storytelling encourages active participation and imaginative expression.

RESOURCE IDEAS

Varied selection of good-quality books, both fiction and non-fiction, reflecting a variety of interests, cultures and languages

A range of reading materials reflecting different developmental stages and genres

Props: story spoons, story stones, and puppets that align with books and stories

Story sacks

Sequence cards

Book of the moment, recordable devices for telling stories, floor books



REFLECTION POINTS

- Do practitioners consider 'why', 'when' and 'how' stories take place?

Why: It's important to consider 'why' stories take place. Whilst at times it may be necessary to sensitively 'gather' children, careful consideration should be given to the purpose and intention behind this. Story shouldn't take place to accommodate staff breaks or because children are being noisy. The intention behind offering a story should be to provide a quality literacy experience.

When: It doesn't have to take place at the same time every day. Practitioners can read stories with children throughout the session, and not necessarily with a whole group.

How: Consider how to invite children for story. Is this promoted with excitement and curiosity? For example, intentional promotions, such as a story bag containing a story book, props and puppets, that can provoke children's interest and intrigue when it appears.

- In what way are children's individual needs considered when choosing or offering a story? Some learners won't necessarily sit for a long time; therefore, stories need to be age and stage appropriate.
- Are children encouraged to share their own stories and choose the stories that they want to hear? This can help ensure that children's interests are reflected.
- Due to the limited learning opportunities associated with popular culture characters, such as Thomas the Tank, these types of books are not encouraged. However, it may be necessary to use these as a short-term transition tool for identified children.
- How often are books throughout the nursery audited, including those in lending libraries. Reflect upon the quality of books that parents/carers are encouraged to share at home.

