



EARLY YEARS: HIGH-QUALITY SPACES

A CORE PROVISION



Early Years in Fife



Acknowledgments

Images contained within this document were captured across a range of Fife based Early Years settings.

Many thanks to the following centres for opening their doors and agreeing to share images of their settings with the wider Early Years community. Without their support, creation of this document would not have been possible.

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|---|--|
|  Beanstalk Family Nurture Centre (Aberdour Road) |  Balcurvie Nursery |
|  Beanstalk Family Nurture Centre (Fergus Place) |  Ceres Nursery |
|  Woodlands Family Nurture Centre |  Paxton Nursery |
|  Methilhaven Nursery |  Pitteuchar East Nursery |
|  Strathkinness Little Beehive | |

High-Quality Spaces: A Core Provision was developed through the collective efforts of a working group consisting of the following representatives:

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CONTENTS

CONTENTS

01	Welcome	59	Block Play
03	How to Use	65	Small Construction
07	Provision Changes	69	Sand
11	Schematic Play	73	Water
13	Home Corner	77	Science & Technology
19	Doll's House	83	Snack
23	Small World	89	Baking & Cooking
27	Dressing-Up	93	Book Area
31	Role Play	99	Writing
35	Music	103	Quiet Spaces
39	Art	107	Tabletop Activities
45	Clay	111	Displays
49	Dough	115	Outdoors
53	Woodwork	121	Nature Kindergarten

WELCOME

Welcome to *High-Quality Spaces: A Core Provision*, an inspiring, insightful, and informative document designed to provide guidance surrounding the creation of Early Years spaces that nurture children's learning, wellbeing and development.



The aim of a Core Provision is to set clear expectations regarding what high-quality provision should look like, offering practical advice for designing and organising spaces and resources. This helps to ensure that all practitioners work towards the same standards.

This document represents the most significant review and update of core provision since 2014 and has been developed to reflect the changing landscape of Early Years in Scotland.

The introduction of *Realising the Ambition* has placed greater emphasis on child-centred pedagogy and the importance of adopting a holistic view of the child, prompting reflection of ways in which spaces can best meet children's needs and rights.

Furthermore, the expansion of funded ELC to 1140 hours means that children may be spending longer periods of time in settings, therefore, consideration must be given to the structure of the day and the types of spaces that are required as a result.

High-Quality Spaces: A Core Provision reflects these changes and aims to provide readers with greater knowledge and deeper understanding of the purpose and intended impact of each core provision area, regardless of role, experience or setting. This supports readers to truly value the role that ELC can play in a child's life, enabling them to grow, thrive and explore their potential.

Whilst readers are encouraged to become familiar with *High-Quality Spaces: A Core Provision* in its entirety, the document can be used flexibly, enabling consultation of specific core provision areas when necessary.

Self-evaluation of core provision areas is crucial to maintaining and developing a high-quality environment that is both inclusive and capable of supporting learning and teaching. Therefore, an accompanying audit tool has been developed to support settings to identify where they are, how they know this, current strengths, development needs, and to plan for next steps.

In order to ensure that *High-Quality Spaces: A Core Provision* reflected and represented the interests and needs of a broad spectrum of those involved in the delivery of ELC, it was developed by a working group comprised of representatives from the Area PT, EYDO, Funded Provider EYDO and Training Development teams.

Through this collaborative approach, it has been possible to identify and present a robust set of key best practice messages, that when applied, can support the generation of high-quality spaces across the ELC landscape. This has enabled the document to effectively dispel commonly arising myths and misconceptions.

It is hoped that through embracing the messages within this document, readers feel well informed, inspired, and empowered to create environments of the highest quality, capable of supporting our youngest learners to reach their full potential.



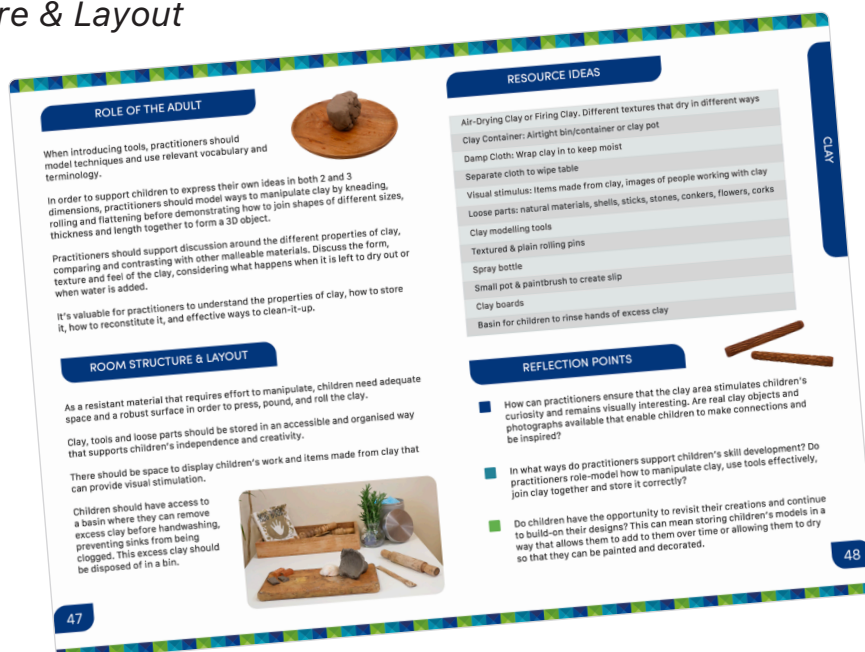
HOW TO USE

Whilst the document can be read cover-to-cover, it has been designed in a manner that also enables readers to access individual provision areas in isolation.

Each provision area follows the same formula, with information organised under a consistent set of category headings throughout the document.

- Introduction
- Room Structure & Layout
- Curricular & Developmental
- Resource Ideas
- Role of the Adult
- Reflection Points

This enables readers to consult provision areas as necessary based on their current requirements or to focus on specific category headings, such as consulting *Room Structure & Layout* when evaluating or restructuring a particular core provision area.



INTRODUCTION

Each provision area begins with an introduction that defines the space, justifies why it is important for children's learning and development, and provides a general overview of the opportunities on offer.

These introductions also include insights into the most essential elements of each area and key messages surrounding best practice.

CURRICULAR & DEVELOPMENTAL

The purpose of this section is to help identify how each core provision area is linked to the curriculum and ways in which children's development is supported. To ensure consistency with Personal Learning Journals, these have been divided into the following key areas:

-  Health & Wellbeing
-  Literacy
-  Maths & Numeracy
-  Other

Whilst some of the key experiences and outcomes have been incorporated, the information provided is not exhaustive. Practitioner's key observations and professional judgement will inform any additional curricular and developmental links.

POP-UPS

Keep an eye out for 'Pop-Up' features throughout the document. These contain important points to remember, top-tips, and useful additional information.

POP-UP!

I contain points to remember, top-tips and useful information.

ROLE OF THE ADULT

This section details the responsibilities of practitioners within each core area specifically. For example, in the Book Area, practitioners have a responsibility to ensure that they are familiar with a book's content before reading it with children.

However, there are fundamental elements of the practitioner's role that must be applied universally across all areas that are not necessarily listed throughout the document.

These include:

- Ensuring that each area and its accompanying resources are safe, appropriate, fit for purpose, clean and well-maintained.
- Modelling and fostering the culture, vision, values and aims of the setting to cultivate a positive atmosphere within which children can thrive, feel loved and be respected.
- Replenishing and refreshing resources accordingly to facilitate children's play and learning, supporting them to achieve.
- Extending children's learning through providing appropriate pace and challenge, skilful questioning and supportive interactions.
- Conducting regular audits and engaging in self-evaluation to ensure that each area represents children's interests, voice, and stage of development.

When reading each section, it's important to remain mindful of these essential responsibilities, reflecting on how these are applied in practice.

ROOM STRUCTURE & LAYOUT

This section provides useful information regarding how to set-up playrooms in a way that is safe, accessible and inclusive. Readers are encouraged to consider how the location of provision areas and their proximity to others can help extend learning, encourage smoother transitions, and support different types of play.

RESOURCES

Here, readers will find useful examples of resources capable of supporting children's learning and development.

Whilst some of these resources are considered essential, it's important to note that these lists are designed to inspire, are not exhaustive, and that the resources provided may change according to the child's needs and interests.

REFLECTION POINTS

The Reflection Points section contains key questions based on information within each chapter that can help practitioners reflect on the quality of practice, provision and learning experiences. These are useful prompts that can be revisited regularly.

AUDIT TOOL

The document is accompanied by an audit tool that can be used to self-evaluate a chosen provision area. Teams are asked to provide a rating against each criterion and include evidence to demonstrate how they know this.

Next, teams are encouraged to engage in professional dialogue to identify both strengths and areas for development, which will inform next steps.

The final part of the audit evaluates the extent to which improvement aims have been achieved.

PROVISION CHANGES

Since publication of the previous Core Provision in 2014, the Early Years landscape has changed significantly due to an accumulation of factors, including the introduction of 1140 hours, the release of *Realising the Ambition*, and advances in technology.

These factors have influenced the way in which learning opportunities can be offered and have provoked reflection surrounding how these can be weaved throughout the provision.

Following observations of children's play, interactions and experiences, discussions with practitioners, and consultation of recent documentation, it has become apparent that certain areas are no longer justifiable as standalone areas. This is because some can be integrated across different areas of the provision, or due to financial constraints.

Despite no longer being standalone elements, it's important that children continue to experience and explore the learning opportunities that these areas can offer. Justifications for these changes are included over the following pages.

LISTENING CENTRE

Historically, listening centres would consist of resources such as heavy cd/cassette players. However, with advancements in the ever-evolving world of technology, Tonieboxes, Yoto players, portable CD players and streaming platforms have become more commonly used within Early Years settings.

Whilst traditionally, settings may have had a dedicated listening centre, today's technology enables learning opportunities through listening to take place across the provision.



For example, using a transportable Toniebox with earphones in the quiet space to listen to classical music, or a Yoto player to record or listen to a story in the book area.

Due to this newfound flexibility, there is no longer a requirement for a dedicated listening centre or station, as the associated learning opportunities are now capable of being represented throughout multiple other core provision areas outlined within the document.



Significantly, Tonieboxes and Yoto players offer 'pop culture' characters and stories, such as Disney or Peppa Pig. It's advisable that these resources are avoided. However, stories such as *The Gruffalo*, *Guess How Much I Love You*, typical nursery stories or educational books are more appropriate.

In Fife Council settings, virtual assistant devices or smart speakers such as Alexa or Google Pebbles are not permitted due to GDPR restrictions. Furthermore, personal mobile phones and devices are not permitted in the playroom. Likewise, Funded Partner Provider settings should remain aware of the implications these devices can pose to children's rights and privacy.



It's worth noting that listening technology can be expensive, however, rich, high-quality listening experiences can still be provided through a relatively inexpensive CD player.



GROSS MOTOR

Gross motor skills are abilities that involve the use of large muscle groups for the performance of movements such as walking, running, jumping, climbing and throwing. Supporting gross motor development in Early Years helps children build a foundation for more complex physical actions, healthy development and growth.

Energetic play and opportunities to move afford children a range of health, wellbeing and developmental benefits, ranging from an increase in stamina and resilience to the acquisition of vital pre-writing skills. In order to support the development of gross motor skills, children should have daily opportunities to:

Climb & Balance

Crawl

Move

Dance & Skip

Jump & Hop

Throw & Catch

Carry

Start & Stop

Push & Pull

Historically, there was an expectation that gross motor opportunities were provided via the provision of tunnels, climbing frames and balance beams. However, with increased possibilities for free flow, daily access to outdoors and nature kindergarten, it is not necessary to have this kind of apparatus indoors.

Whilst 'gross motor' is no longer a dedicated core provision area, information regarding ways that it can be supported across the setting are contained throughout this document.

ROCKING HORSE

A rocking horse can be a valuable resource for supporting balance, vestibular function, and the development of both fine and gross motor skills. Ideally, every playroom would include one, however, this may not always be realistic or possible due to factors such as cost, ongoing maintenance, and the amount of space required.

It should be recognised that playing on the rocking horse encourages children to use their imagination, engage in roleplay, and develop social skills such as turn-taking, negotiating and sharing.

Sitting on the rocking horse offers children a unique perspective of the playroom, enabling them to observe activities and process their thoughts at a safe height.

Additionally, the rocking and rhythmic motion of the horse provides a comforting sensory experience, enabling children to self-soothe.

In playrooms with a rocking horse, practitioners should conduct regular checks to ensure that it remains safe to use and that children have enough room to mount, dismount and rock safely, ensuring there is adequate space around the horse.



SCHEMATIC PLAY

Schemas are an unconscious response to a child's developmental needs. They are a natural urge that children have to do things, such as: climb, throw and hide. Schemas vary from child-to-child and should not be discouraged.

Some children may never appear to be engaged in 'schematic play', others may develop a predominant schema, whilst some will present more than one schema at a time.

Recognising schemas when they are displayed enables practitioners to provide intentional promotions and provocations that can extend learning, as well as matching curricular content to meet a child's specific interests.

It's important that practitioners maintain awareness of what schemas are, the different types of schemas, and ways these can be supported throughout each area of the core provision.

Some of the most common schemas include:



Transforming

An interest in changing the appearance or state of an object and its properties, and experimenting with 'Cause & Effect', such as turning things from a liquid to a solid.



Enveloping

Children may show an interest in covering, hiding, and wrapping objects or themselves. This can involve putting things inside bags, hiding under blankets, or covering items in material.



Rotation

Involves showing interest in things that turn or spin around. This can include spinning tops and other spinning toys, but may also involve the child twirling or spinning themselves around in circles.



Connection

An interest in joining or fastening objects together, as well as taking them apart. This can involve stacking blocks to make a tower, stringing large beads together, or connecting tracks on a train set.



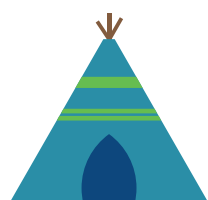
Trajectory

Represents the child's interest in the way that people and objects move; including watching things move or experimenting with cause and effect through setting things in motion. This often involves a fascination with horizontal, diagonal and vertical movement.



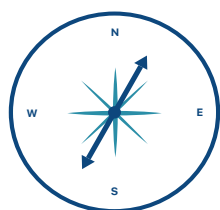
Transporting

Moving objects or oneself from one place to another. Children enjoy repeatedly carrying things from place-to-place, sometimes in their hands, or by filling containers and moving them around.



Enclosing

An interest in exploring boundaries and containment through creating physical barriers, drawing borders, or occupying spaces. A child may enjoy being enclosed in spaces such as dens and tents, or enclosing toys inside a box.



Orientation

An interest in how objects look and appear from different angles and perspectives. For example, turning objects around or climbing high to gain a birds-eye view.



Positioning

Carefully placing or arranging objects or oneself in a particular way. For example, a child may line-up blocks in a row, organise their toys in a certain sequence or order, or put them into groups.

HOME CORNER

The 'home' experience is something all children have in common that is relevant to their own lives and is inclusive of different backgrounds, cultures and family structures.

As an essential feature of all Early Years settings, the Home Corner must be available at all times, as it supports children to explore and make sense of their immediate world.



The Home Corner is a symbolic representation of the home environment and should include somewhere to eat, sleep, cook, sit and wash. This enables children to model their home routines, explore different roles and recreate the experiences they have at home.

Whilst it should be linked to other forms of role-play, given its significance in supporting children's connection between the early learning environment and their home, it must not be replaced.



In order for children to enjoy the full benefits and available experiences, the area must be set up and fully resourced for the beginning of every session. It's worthwhile considering ways to involve children in this process.

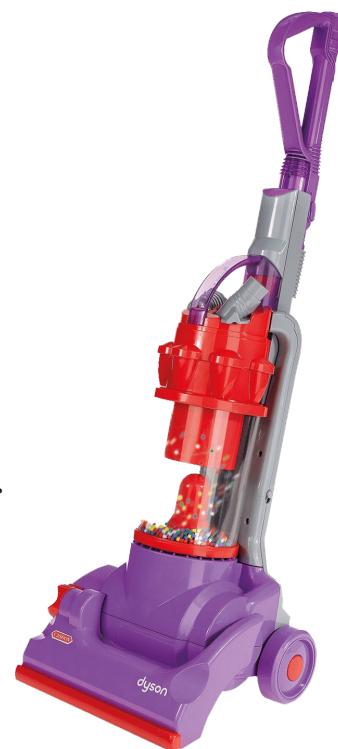
Remember, this is the children's space, therefore, consideration should be given to when and why adults enter the Home Corner. When invited in to play or entering to provide support, it's important to remain mindful of the impact an adult's presence can have on children's play.

Health & Wellbeing

Children have the opportunity to develop relationships with others, make friends and be part of a group. This supports learning around sharing, taking turns, negotiation, cooperation and managing conflict.

Through 'playing-out' concerns, worries or problems, children can work through their own experiences in a way that helps them to better understand and regulate emotions.

Dressing dolls, managing fasteners and engaging with other 'home-like' activities, affords children the opportunity to practice and develop their fine-motor skills.



Literacy

The Home Corner is a rich environment for language acquisition. Children can engage in conversations with peers, listen to others, and use both new and existing vocabulary to express needs, ideas and emotions, or mimic conversations overheard at home.



Resources such as message pads, calendars, and shopping lists provide opportunities for mark-making and writing. This enables children to explore and develop understanding regarding the purpose and meaning of writing within real-life contexts.

Early reading skills are supported through rich experiences that enable children to explore and engage with a variety of texts within their role play.

Maths & Numeracy

The area offers possibilities for children to match, group, count, pair and sort resources. Through experiences such as setting the table with cutlery and crockery, children can engage with concepts such as one-to-one correspondence.



Children can explore concepts relating to number, measure, time, shape, money and information handling by using real-life objects within their play experiences.

Other

The Home Corner provides opportunities to reflect on cultural and religious celebrations, as well as family traditions. Through role-play, children can explore routines and scenarios that reflect their own home life, including family meals or caring for younger siblings.

By engaging in pretend scenarios that differ from their own home experiences, children broaden their social awareness and appreciation for the diversity of family structures, traditions and ways of life.

Children can engage with technology through their role-play experiences, using objects such as the washing machine, cooker, and timer to develop an understanding of their purpose in daily life.



ROLE OF THE ADULT

Practitioners should set up the space to ensure that it is welcoming, homely, clean and cosy. This can be achieved using soft lighting, natural tones and a variety of textures. Displaying photos of children and their families can support a sense of belonging.

Ensure that resources are frequently refreshed and renewed in order to reflect current interests. For example, linking clothing items, objects and decorations to match the seasons, weather, and different cultural festivals or celebrations.



Foster and support children's awareness, knowledge and understanding of different family structures.

Maintain a consistent team approach regarding the transportation of resources to and from the Home Corner, remaining mindful of ways that this can support and enhance children's play experience.

ROOM STRUCTURE & LAYOUT

Whilst it is preferable to position the Home Corner in a quiet, peaceful area, this is not always achievable depending on the layout of the setting. Careful consideration should be given to other areas that would benefit from being nearby, such as the Doll's House or Dressing-Up.

Ideally, the Home Corner will have defined areas such as a kitchen, living room and separate bedroom. Remember, children live in a variety of home types, all of which can't possibly be recreated.

Consider the available space and number of children in the setting when planning the size and layout of the Home Corner. Space can be better utilised through the creative use of furniture as boundaries, barriers and dividers.

RESOURCE IDEAS

When considering essential resources, remember that the Home Corner must represent a place to: cook, eat, wash-up, sit and sleep.

Cook	Cooker, kitchen cupboards, pots, kettle, utensils
Eat	Table, chairs, crockery, cutlery
Wash-Up	Sink, washing machine
Sit	Child-sized seating
Sleep	Child-sized bed & bedding, cot, storage (bedside drawers)

There should also be:

Real and relevant household items: lamps, mirrors, rugs, welcome mat, plants, telephone, vacuum cleaner, art work, family photos

Reading materials that are in context and linked to current interests: newspapers, magazines, brochures, leaflets, recipe books

Maths & Numeracy opportunities: analogue or digital scales and clocks, money, telephones, measuring spoons/jugs, timers

Items to wear that relate to daily life: sleepwear, hats, coats, bags, purses, slippers, scarves and shoes

Writing materials: diaries, calendar, notepads

Pictures, photos and items which reflect different lifestyles, families and cultures

Only one baby in the home, unless there are twins in a family or a visitor arrives with a baby

A selection of clothes for the baby, which are designed to fit

Loose parts: corks, wooden pegs, pinecones, curtain rings, and wooden discs

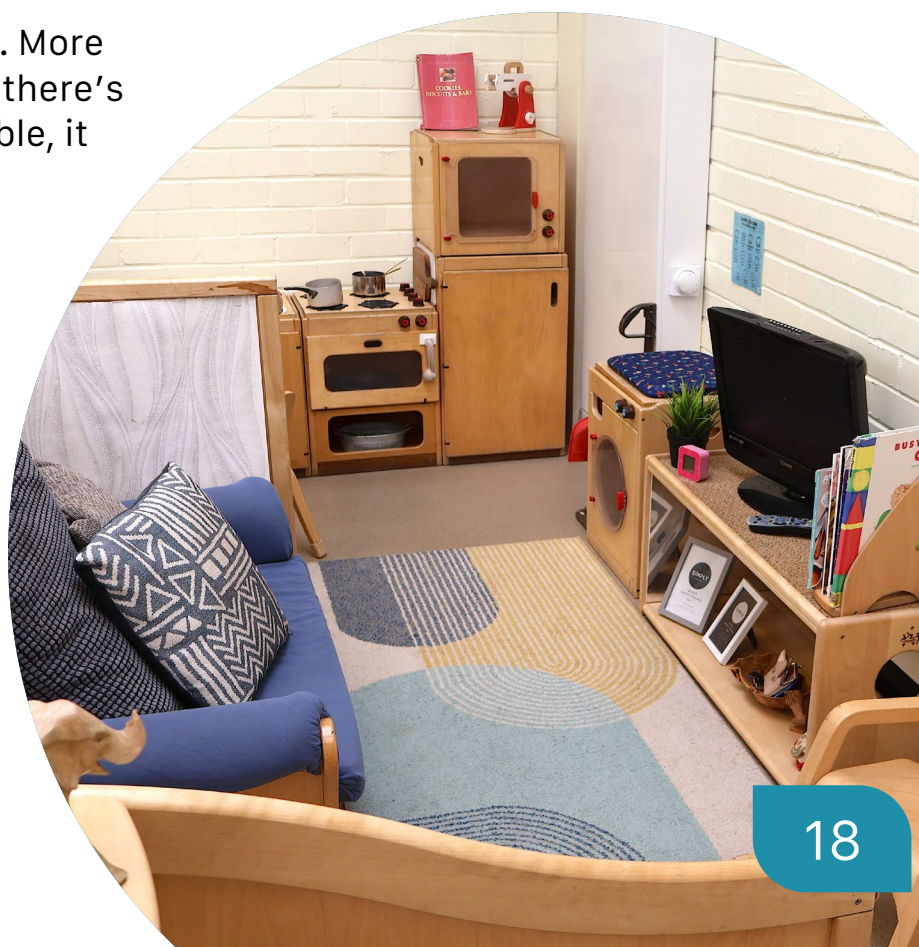
REFLECTION POINTS

- What kinds of things can practitioners do or include that will support children to understand and value different cultures, religions and family structures?
- How can the Home Corner be replenished and maintained in order to ensure that it is inviting and appropriately resourced? Are there real-life resources?
- Are reading and writing materials available to help extend learning? How do these connect with current interests throughout the playroom?
- In what ways do the resources provided support children to develop an understanding of purposeful and relevant maths concepts?

TOP TIPS & IDEAS

Don't be tempted to over-resource. More isn't always better. For example, if there's only space for two people at the table, it only needs two plates.

Loose parts provide children with richer opportunities for imaginative role play in the Home Corner compared to wooden, plastic, or knitted items designed to represent food.



DOLL'S HOUSE

The Doll's House is the most significant small world activity and should be available at all times. It represents a real house with a variety of rooms, including a bathroom. Careful consideration should be given to the location and positioning of this area in order to optimise its potential.



The figures and dolls used in the Doll's House should reflect the diverse society in which we live and represent different family structures, including extended family members, such as Grandparents.

Socially and emotionally, the area supports children to explore the different roles of people within families and communities.

The Doll's House affords children opportunities to control events, play out and make sense of their home experiences and the world around them. This enables them to work through and better understand feelings and emotions.

CURRICULAR & DEVELOPMENTAL

Health & Wellbeing

Children have the opportunity to take control of their play, to make decisions and exercise choice.

Through re-enacting and exploring 'real-life' experiences, children can better prepare for and understand significant life changes and events.

Manipulation of small resources and figures supports the development of fine-motor skills and hand-eye co-ordination.



Literacy

Through the naming of different rooms, pieces of furniture and discussion of their function and purpose, children can explore new vocabulary and develop their language skills.



Children can explore both real and imaginary situations through expressing the thoughts, feelings and emotions of others whilst playing in-role.

The Doll's House affords possibilities for children to develop understanding surrounding the rules of conversation, as they learn to take turns, listen and respond appropriately.

Maths & Numeracy

The development of maths skills such as sorting, matching, categorising and sequencing can be supported through collecting and organising the objects and furniture relevant to each room.

Arranging furniture and working out the capacity of space available in each room can help children to develop spatial reasoning. For example, the tall wardrobe might not fit in the attic space.

The Doll's House affords opportunities for the development and use of positional language, including the description of where rooms or objects are located. For instance, *"the bedroom is above the kitchen"* or *"grandad is sitting on the chair in front of the TV."*



Other

Through collaborative play, children can learn to share, care and play fairly, developing an understanding of the importance of taking responsibility and showing consideration for others.

Imaginative play in the Doll's House enables children to talk about and explore the different roles that people play in the daily lives of families and communities.



ROLE OF THE ADULT

The Doll's House can represent a window into a child's life and provide insights into their home experiences. Therefore, it's important that practitioners value the intimacy of this play and sensitively observe children, remaining aware of their questions and enquiries.

As an area, the Doll's House can sometimes be overlooked. Practitioners should regularly monitor, refresh and renew resources to ensure that children have the opportunity to enjoy high-quality provision. Remember, Doll's House furniture and objects should be in good condition and any broken items should be replaced.



ROOM STRUCTURE & LAYOUT

Ideally, the Doll's House should be near the Home Corner, preferably in a secluded area with adequate space where children can play without being interrupted. It should not be located in a busy, high-traffic area, or narrow walkway.

The Doll's House itself should be raised off the floor and positioned on a low table or unit that will allow easy access to all rooms.

Positioning the Doll's House near the Home Corner provides opportunities for children to mirror observed play. The area enables children to re-enact their own experiences on a smaller scale, supporting children who may find the busier Home Corner overwhelming, or who may prefer to engage in more solitary forms of play through which they can lead and control the narrative on their own terms.



This positioning takes into consideration children's developmental stage and can support the building of confidence in cooperative role-play and social interactions.

RESOURCE IDEAS

Various Dolls	Representative of different family structures and cultures
Bedroom Furniture	Bed, bedside table, duvet, pillow, cupboard, drawers
Kitchen Furniture	Cabinets, sink, cooker, fridge
Living Room	Sofas, armchairs, cabinets, lamps, TV
Dining Room	Table & chairs
Bathroom	Toilet, shower, bath, sink, cabinet
Books & Pictures	Illustrating different types of home and family life
Supplementary	Pets, garden items: artificial grass, swing
Storage/Basket	To store supplementary resources not currently in use

REFLECTION POINTS

- How often are observations made in the Doll's House area for a child's PLJ or for Daily Responsive Planning? Given the valuable insights into a child's life that this area can provide, practitioners should consider the significance of observations that can be recorded.
- A common question regarding the Doll's House is *"should it be set up for each session, or should items be left in the basket for children to set up themselves?"* Whilst there is no 'right' or 'wrong' answer, it's worth considering the benefits of setting up the Doll's House. This can support children to play in the passing and express feelings and emotions. For example, picking up a doll to re-enact an argument observed at home. This re-enactment may have been lost if the child had to set up the house prior to play.
- Consider the number of people and the amount of furniture in the Doll's House. Are there enough beds for the people or are there too few/many? To what extent is the Doll's House over or under-resourced?

SMALL WORLD

Small World areas should be inviting and engaging, offering children opportunities to be creative, imaginative, and to develop understanding of the world around them.



Play in the Small World area enables children to be the storytellers of their own miniature adventures, exploring and recreating familiar events and experiences or using their imagination to create fictional stories.

The area should be reflective of current interests in the nursery. Through high-quality observations, practitioners can pick up on these interests and offer Small World play and resources to extend this or provide an intentional promotion to support exploration of new learning.

CURRICULAR & DEVELOPMENTAL

Health & Wellbeing

The area encourages children to share and communicate with each other, supporting understanding of how to resolve issues and solve problems together.

Children can explore and understand their own feelings and anxieties as well as the emotions of others through the safety of a character, such as a fairy, animal or police officer.

Small World environments, such as hospitals, police stations and fire stations help children recognise and understand rules within their own communities, learning about concepts relating to adult life.

Children can communicate their knowledge about life and the world around them within a safe, contained environment.



Literacy

Language skills are developed as children explore and extend their vocabulary through the use of both new and existing words as they identify and name resources such as animals, vehicles and buildings.

Through mimicking voices and sounds, children can explore characterisation, expressive language, communication and early storytelling concepts in both real and imaginary situations.



Maths & Numeracy

Within Small World, the resources provide opportunities for grouping, sorting and counting. For example, sorting animals according to size, counting how many animals are in the pen, or sorting different types of dinosaur into groups.

Children can explore the concepts of space and size, developing understanding of the space around them and how to use it with others.



Small World play inspires problem solving as children experiment and apply reasoning when playing with figures. This can include figuring out ways to fit all of the cows into the trailer or how to connect different pieces of the train track so that the train can reach its destination.



Sorting animals of the African Plains according to height/size.

Other

Through engaging in imaginative play scenarios, children can explore the ways in which people lived in the past and how these lives differ from their own, for instance, knights and castles.

Imaginative play scenarios support children to consider ways that people and services within their local community provide help and support in their daily lives, these include: the police force, fire service, or doctors and nurses.



ROLE OF THE ADULT

Practitioners should carefully consider when to introduce appropriate resources, ensuring that this addition enhances or extends children's play and learning without impacting upon creativity. When children are creating their own castles, it may be more beneficial to only add figures that can support this play rather than a ready-made castle set.

The effective role-modelling of Small World resources can support children to handle these with care and respect, being gentle with more fragile items.

By joining-in and role-modelling play around Small World scenarios, practitioners can support the introduction of new language and vocabulary associated with children's current interests.

ROOM STRUCTURE & LAYOUT

Ideally, Small World areas are best located in a secluded, small and intimate space where individual children or small groups can play.

Consideration should be given to where the Small World area is located. Positioning it next to the Block Play area can support children to extend their learning and play, as children use Small World resources and figures in their Block Play creations.

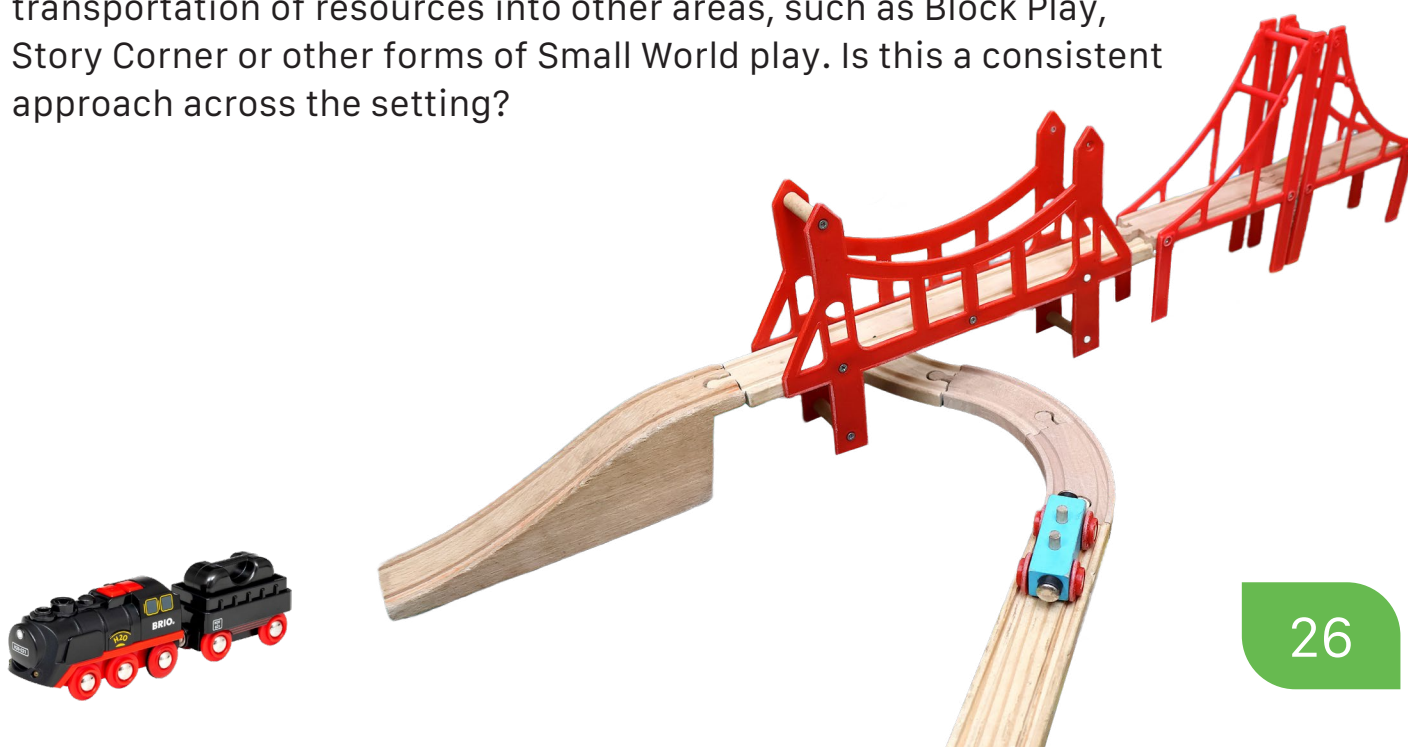
RESOURCE IDEAS

Garage & cars
Hospital
Fire station
Airport
Animals: Farmyard & Zoo
Dinosaurs
Train-set, trains & carriages

General vehicles: lorries/ trucks
Pirates
Castles: Knights, Kings, Queens
Characters from well-known stories
Mini-Me blocks
Related books, stories, images
Natural loose parts

REFLECTION POINTS

- Without making assumptions, how do practitioners find out what children really want to learn about? Are high-quality interactions and effective questioning used to unpick children's curiosities around Small World play?
- Is it okay for children to transport Small World items into other provision areas? Whilst this isn't appropriate for every area of core provision, Small World learning can be extended through transportation of resources into other areas, such as Block Play, Story Corner or other forms of Small World play. Is this a consistent approach across the setting?



DRESSING-UP

Dressing-Up is a diverse provision area that can support children to explore both fictional and real-life characters in greater depth. Additionally, it supplements learning that takes place within Role-Play areas.

The use of open-ended resources and materials can help ensure that children are free to explore their imagination and experiment creatively. For example, one child may use a piece of material as a superhero's cape, whilst another may use it as a veil or a skirt.

Through dressing-up, children can make sense of their world and the roles of others. Taking on these roles enables children to better understand their lived experiences from both their own and others' perspective. This helps them to process events, play out concerns and learn to empathise.



CURRICULAR & DEVELOPMENTAL

Health & Wellbeing

When participating in a group, children can learn to negotiate, take turns, share, manage conflicts and build positive relationships.



Dressing-up materials afford children the opportunity to develop both fine and gross-motor skills. Through the manipulation of fasteners, clips, zips and buttons, children can further develop their coordination and enhance their independence.



Literacy

Materials and props support children to explore both real and imaginary scenarios. Children can embody characters and develop stories through which they can communicate their thoughts and ideas.

Through dressing-up, children can participate in the retelling or re-enactment of familiar stories. This supports exploration of new vocabulary, the sequencing of stories, and the art of bringing characters to life through accents, tone, pitch and volume.



Maths & Numeracy

Dressing-up provides opportunities to develop an understanding of size as children use comparative language to describe items and materials. *"This piece of material is bigger than the other."*

Children have the opportunity to develop sorting and matching skills through organising clothes into pairs, outfits, groups and themes.

Resources and materials can be identified according to colour, pattern and texture, with children using mathematical language to describe and discuss their properties.

Other

When dressing-up, children engage in selecting appropriate materials and resources suitable for their intended purpose. This can open up conversations surrounding the properties and textures of different materials.

Children can compare and contrast clothing from the past with their own clothing in the present.

ROLE OF THE ADULT

When providing specific dressing-up clothes, practitioners must be well-informed about the purpose behind why these are being introduced. If there is a focus on Julia Donaldson books, this could justify the presence of a scarecrow outfit. Specific dressing-up clothes are not a permanent fixture. Open-ended materials are always best practice.



Practitioners should demonstrate that materials can be used by everyone, regardless of gender or cultural background. It's important to be mindful of gender stereotyping.

Be aware of the number of resources available at any one time in this area. It's essential not to over-resource.

ROOM STRUCTURE & LAYOUT

Ideally, the Dressing-Up area should be located in a space that can comfortably accommodate a full-length, child-sized mirror, allowing children to fully see themselves as they engage in imaginative play.

The area should have suitable storage that allows for resources to be presented in an organised and inviting manner.

It's important to note that this doesn't need to be a large or elaborate setup. A small case, mirror and coat stand can often be sufficient. The emphasis should always be on providing high-quality, open-ended resources that inspire creativity, self-expression, and imaginative exploration.

Remember!

Dressing-up is different from 'fancy dress.' A Spider-Man costume can only represent one thing!

Open-ended resources offer endless possibilities.



RESOURCE IDEAS



A range of materials and fabrics

Clothes related to interests

Open-ended clothes: plain tops, shirts, trousers, skirts, dresses

Clothes that reflect our multicultural world

Bags, purses, cases, hats

Appropriately sized shoes

Costume jewellery & accessories

Glasses, sunglasses (non-prescription or remove lenses)

Seasonally relevant resources: scarves, hats and gloves

Belts, aprons, towels

Pegs, clasps, ribbons

Relevant books and visuals



REFLECTION POINTS

- Are children supported to wear dressing-up materials whilst they explore the setting, including outdoors? Does the setting maintain consistency in this approach?
- In what ways do practitioners promote inclusivity and support discussions surrounding gender-bias and cultural stereotypes?
- Does the area include a range of open-ended resources and materials that can support children's imagination and creativity?



ROLE PLAY



Whilst role play is represented throughout various areas within an Early Years environment, the setting-up of additional 'Role Play' areas can support children to re-enact significant life experiences, such as going to the hospital or visiting the hairdressers. These areas should be linked to children's interests and exist alongside the Home Corner rather than as a replacement.

Role Play promotes imagination and creativity, providing opportunities for children to develop self-esteem, be expressive, build emotional resilience, and have fun.

Through performing the role of others, children can develop social connections and discover more about themselves, including their likes, dislikes and aspirations.

CURRICULAR & DEVELOPMENTAL

Health & Wellbeing

Playing alongside peers, children develop social skills and awareness surrounding the needs and emotions of others, fostering empathy and respect.

Role play can support children to share their ideas and experiences, listen to others and negotiate.

Through role play, children have opportunities to explore different roles in their communities, including a lollipop person, doctor, shopkeeper and teacher. Roleplaying enables children to understand things from another person's perspective.

Role play provides opportunities to engage with environmental print from different societal contexts, such as signs or symbols associated with a visit to the dentist or supermarket.

Children develop communication skills through both verbal and non-verbal interactions. Verbally, they can explore role-specific language and experiment with volume, pitch, tone and accent. Non-verbally, they may imitate the body language of different roles within the community, such as a postal worker delivering mail.

Within role-play scenarios, there exists a wide-range of meaningful mark-making opportunities, including making shopping lists, creating menus, or writing prescriptions.

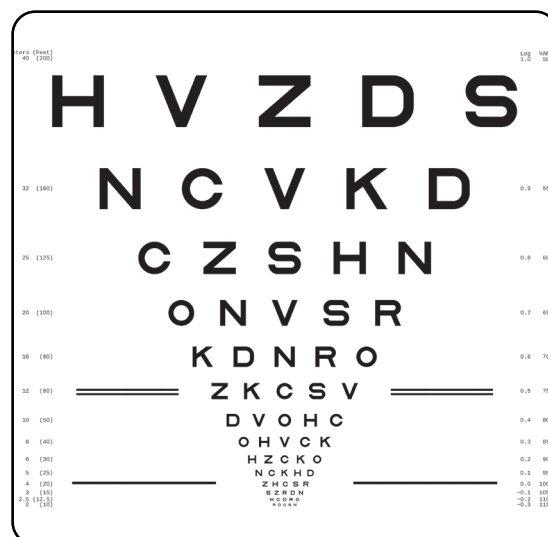


Maths & Numeracy

Role-play areas support children to explore and develop mathematical concepts and skills related to number, money, time, measure, and problem-solving with meaningful concepts.

Scenarios such as going to a shop or café can provide opportunities to explore counting, adding, subtracting, one-to-one correspondence, and the writing of numbers. It can also support the introduction of the concept of fractions.

Children can develop problem-solving skills through imaginative play, exploring comparisons and figuring-out problems such as *"do I have enough?"*, *"how many do I need?"* and *"how much will it cost?"*



Concepts such as time and information handling can be explored through scenarios that include the use of calendars, diaries and charts at the opticians.

Other

Role-play can support children's dramatic expression by enabling them to deeply portray characters and become immersed within their roles.

Children can develop an understanding of similarities and differences between themselves and others within families, communities and across traditions.

Different role play scenarios support children to explore the ways that technology can be used across the world of work.

ROLE OF THE ADULT

Staff should observe, support and 'tune-in' to the needs and interests of children to ensure that learning opportunities are child-led and sensitively supported.

Practitioners should work in partnership with children, collaborating to develop a plan, select appropriate resources, and create role play areas.

The area lends itself well to the purposeful transportation of resources between different provision areas. Staff should be aware of this and maintain a consistent approach.

ROOM STRUCTURE & LAYOUT

Whilst some settings may not have a permanent role-play area, when setting up, it's important to consider the space required for a particular scenario. A café will require space for a table and chair, whilst a hospital will require space for a bed.

Role-play areas can extend the play taking place in the Home Corner. If a child is 'going to the shops', they need somewhere to shop and somewhere to bring the shopping back to. This supports children to make connections with the 'shopping cycle', enhancing understanding of what this looks like and the process involved.



RESOURCE IDEAS

Resources required for the Role Play area will be specific to the current interest being explored. Below are some examples of resources for common role-play scenarios.

Shops

Till
Items to sell: loose parts & recycled packaging
Bag, purse, money
Receipts, price tags, labels
Shelving
Scales



Doctor/Hospital



Stethoscopes
Medical uniforms and scrubs
Thermometer, mirror, bandages, syringe
Blood pressure monitor, prescription pad
Height chart
Waiting Room: magazines, leaflets, posters

REFLECTION POINTS

- What are the different factors taken into consideration when planning children's learning through additional role-play? What are children able to explore in this space that they can't in any other area?
- To what extent is the role-play area valued? Is it given the necessary space and resources for children to play meaningfully and with purpose?

MUSIC



Music is a universal language that speaks to everyone, transcending cultural and linguistic barriers. Making sounds with objects and voices is something that almost all children will experiment with.

The music area provides children with opportunities to explore instruments, sing, listen to songs and move to music whilst developing a sense of rhythm, beat and rhyme.

In addition to providing a space for children to freely express their feelings and emotions, the music area affords opportunities for the exploration of different musical genres and cultures.

Within nursery, music encompasses more than simply the 'music area', it includes the musical experiences that practitioners provide.

CURRICULAR & DEVELOPMENTAL

Health & Wellbeing

Exploring the use of instruments can support children to use and develop their motor, visual and auditory skills.

Learning to keep a beat supports development of cognitive skills, such as pattern recognition, memory and attention.

The control required to play instruments helps children develop both fine and gross-motor skills.

Listening to music can promote a sense of wellbeing. It helps children to regulate their emotions and supports brain development.



Literacy

Developing a strong sense of rhythm can support development of language and literacy skills through experimenting with pace, pitch and pause. Rhymes and songs encourage rhythmic flow which supports fluent speech, whilst slowing the rate of speech enhances articulation.

Listening to music and singing songs and rhymes helps children become aware of the sounds of language, supporting phonological awareness including rhyming words, alliteration and syllabification.

The rhythmic and repetitive qualities of music help children memorise words and phrases, supporting language acquisition and expansion of vocabulary.

Maths & Numeracy

Music is based on repeating mathematical patterns and sequences, such as beat, tempo and rhythm. Children can develop mathematical thinking skills through recognising, engaging with, and responding to these as they join in, make and sustain a beat.



Rhymes and songs explore number concepts, including sequence order, counting on and back, and quantity. *"One, two, buckle my shoe."*

Concepts of size, amount and positioning can be explored through songs and rhymes. The Hokey Cokey explores the terms 'in' and 'out', whilst a song about Goldilocks can compare sizes of bowls, chairs, beds and bears.

Other

Children can use their imagination to experiment with and create their own musical ideas, followed by opportunities to experience the excitement of presenting and performing.

Music supports creative expression through movement and dance, involving rhythmic, playful and expressive movement whilst responding to the beat or mood.

Through listening, exploring and responding to music from a range of cultures, children widen their musical horizons, develop appreciation for diversity, and enrich their musical and cultural knowledge.

ROLE OF THE ADULT

Practitioners should demonstrate ways that children can hold, play and care for instruments, such as using the correct beater and adopting appropriate playing techniques. This is particularly important when introducing new or unfamiliar instruments.

It's important to provide opportunities for children to experience music and instruments from a variety of genres and cultures. This can inspire and provoke children's curiosity.

Adults should ensure that children have opportunities throughout the day to experience musical activities, including listening to music, playing instruments, singing songs and saying rhymes.

Practitioners can support this through remaining an active participant, supporting children by leading sessions, encouraging engagement, modelling actions and providing props and resources.



ROOM STRUCTURE & LAYOUT



Given that music is typically 'noisy', ideally, it should not be positioned next to a 'quiet area.'

The music area often involves movement and dance; therefore, the space should be adequately sized to facilitate this.

If providing electronic instruments, resources, or a CD player, it's important to ensure that the area is located near a power source.

RESOURCE IDEAS

A selection of both tuned and untuned musical instruments

Sheet music, musical notation and writing materials

Clear labelling or images of instruments showing names and beaters to be used

Song and rhyme visuals: spoons, stones, books, Boardmaker visuals

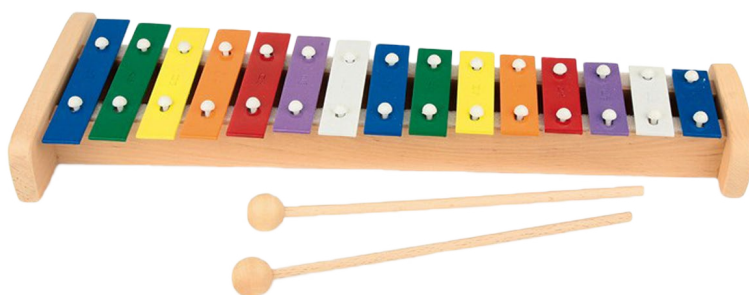
Song and rhyme of the moment display with props

Keyboards, drum mats, recording devices

Scarves, ribbons and floaty materials to use whilst moving to music

REFLECTION POINTS

- Is the music area located in a place that reflects its value and the rich learning opportunities it provides?
- Do practitioners have confidence in their knowledge, understanding, and ability to model and demonstrate the use of instruments and resources? For example, if providing musical notation, is there understanding around what a particular note represents?
- To what extent do children have the opportunity to engage with a range of different music, songs and rhymes, addressing a variety of concepts?
- Resources should be refreshed regularly in order to reflect children's interests, support development, and extend learning. Are resources presented in a manner that can provoke curiosity and inspire creativity?



ART

The Art Area encompasses a wide-range of experiences, including drawing, painting, model-making, collage, sewing and weaving.

Art provides open-ended opportunities for self-expression and supports the development of children's imagination and creativity. It enables children to communicate their thoughts, feelings and ideas through a range of media and mark-making opportunities.

When children engage with art materials and media, they can enjoy rich sensory experiences and opportunities for exploration. Art supports children's understanding of the world around them, helping them make connections as they explore and experiment with texture, shape and form, whilst building deeper understanding of processes and how things work.

Through art, children can learn to share, take turns and work together. Additionally, as they problem-solve, make choices and plan their own learning, children develop independence skills.

Art supports the development of artistic and aesthetic awareness, promoting appreciation for others artwork and providing a vehicle through which to celebrate achievement and build self-esteem.



Remember!

Rather than focusing on the end result, emphasis should be placed on the creative process.

Health & Wellbeing

Through mixing their own paints, putting on their own apron, selecting resources, and tidying up, children develop a sense of responsibility and ownership, supporting their independence.

Activities such as weaving, painting and collage-making enable children to engage in both new and familiar learning opportunities, helping them to experience satisfaction, develop self-esteem, and build confidence.

Multiple aspects of art require children to use small hand muscles, for example, using a pair of scissors or gripping a small paint brush. These support the development of fine-motor skills and hand-eye coordination.

Some activities require the use of larger muscle groups, such as shoulders and arms as children paint on an easel or add to a large model. This supports gross-motor development.

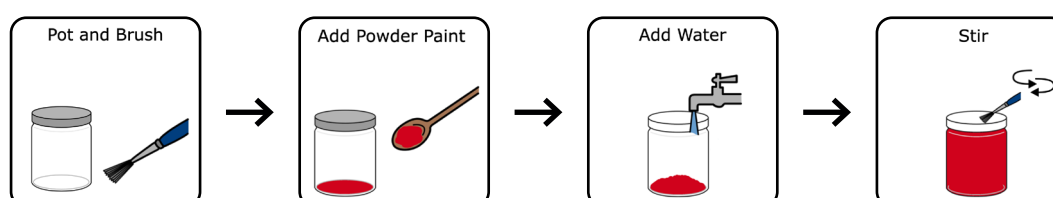
Literacy

Children develop their communication and language skills as they talk through plans, ideas and creations, work collaboratively with others, and share their thoughts and feelings using a range of different media.

When engaging in conversations surrounding their creations with peers and practitioners, children can develop their listening skills and understand when to talk and when to listen.

Children can develop mark-making skills as they explore and experiment with a variety of media. Through making patterns, shapes and letters to share ideas, feelings and communicate information, children recognise that mark-making conveys meaning.

Using visual sequences, children can learn to follow instructions and processes, such as how to mix paint.



Maths & Numeracy

As children explore and participate in different forms of art, they have opportunities to engage with mathematical concepts, including measure, volume, estimating, predicting and problem-solving through trial-and-error. For example, predicting what might happen when different colours are mixed together or estimating how much water to add to achieve the correct consistency.

Children can recognise, investigate and use patterns and shapes to create their own artwork using a variety of mediums.



Other

Through exposure to different art stimuli, children can recognise, appreciate and respond to the work of both well-known artists and peers, sharing their preferences and discussing reasons behind their likes and dislikes.

Art affords children the opportunity to explore the uses of everyday materials and resources (both natural and man-made) enabling them to incorporate these into pictures, models and creations in imaginative ways.



As an open-ended creative area, art offers children the freedom to discover and choose their own way to create images and objects using a variety of materials, colours, shapes, patterns and textures.



ROLE OF THE ADULT

Practitioners should value the process of creation rather than the end-result. This can support children to build confidence and develop self-esteem.

Ensure resources are available, easily accessible, of high-quality and fit-for-purpose. These should be inviting and capable of sparking children's curiosity, imagination and creativity.

Due to the potentially messy nature of art, the area should be maintained and cared for throughout the course of the day, with resources being monitored and replenished. When offering different types of paint for mixing, provide appropriately sized pots to reduce waste.

Modelling and scaffolding of art processes and skills can support understanding and problem-solving, whilst promoting experimentation.

Demonstrating potential solutions to problems can encourage children to explore, exercise choice and develop independence.

ROOM STRUCTURE & LAYOUT

The space should be large enough for children to move around, explore and experiment whilst providing adequate space for resources to be stored in a way that is easily accessible and well-organised, promoting independence and choice. Remember, chairs in the Art Area can restrict movement and accessibility.



There needs to be a dedicated space for children to let their creations dry and set. This is not only for paintings, but also models.

It should be located in an area where flooring and furniture are easy to clean and in close proximity to sinks.

Children should have a space to display their artwork. These can include drawings, weavings, models and collages.

RESOURCE IDEAS

Clean, vertical easel

Flat horizontal surface

Different types and styles of apron

Paint in various colours and forms: powder, liquid and block

Short-handed brushes of different sizes and thickness

Paper and card in different shapes, sizes, textures and colours

Paint pots and pallets. Additional different sized pots to mix powder paints

Instructions and sequences for mixing paints

Natural and everyday objects to print with

Assorted junk boxes, tubes, lids, corks, trays, lollipop sticks, dowels, discs

Left and right-handed scissors and a hole-punch

Natural Resources: sticks, shells, wooden discs and wool

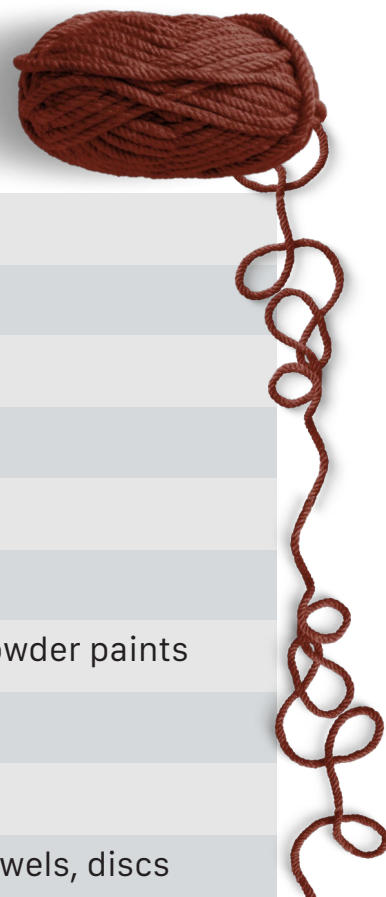
Mark-Making Materials: pens, pencils, crayons, chalk, charcoal and pastels

Adhesives & Fasteners: PVA glue, Pritt Sticks, Sellotape, paperclips, elastic bands, stapler, paper fasteners, string

Textiles, fabrics and materials in various colours, shapes, sizes and textures: ribbons, lace, cotton, silk, foil, crepe paper, buttons and sequins

Weaving & Sewing Resources: threads, wool, different sized needles, simple weaving loom, crochet hook

Books, photos and pictures from a range of artists, including painters, photographers, textile artists and sculptors



REFLECTION POINTS

Does the Art Area promote curiosity, excitement and engagement? What can practitioners do to ensure it remains inviting and appealing to children?

Are there opportunities for children to extend their projects across a range of media? For example, can children create something at the woodwork bench and then continue adding to this in the Art Area?

How can practitioners value children's work appropriately? Success looks different for different children. Are there different ways to celebrate and display creations, such as a gallery?

Do practitioners consult children around how to put their name on their artwork? Do children have the opportunity to write their own name? Similarly, do practitioners consult children when framing their artwork for display? Is the picture orientated in the right way or does the frame exclude an important part of the picture from the child's perspective?

Is there any value in 'uniform artwork', such as Christmas cards using the child's handprint to replicate reindeer antlers, or pre-cut shapes for children to use? Does this truly encourage engagement with the creative process? Is this something that children want to create, or does it simply cater to adult expectations?



CLAY

Clay is a natural, malleable material that engages senses and provides opportunities for exploration of texture, shape and form, supporting children to make connections with everyday life and nature.

Whilst clay offers distinct learning experiences from dough, both support children's imagination and creative expression, are open-ended, and allow for symbolic representation in two and three-dimensional forms.

Covering clay after use makes it possible for children to revisit their creations, intricately sculpt, and add to them over time. Clay also has the potential to be moulded into a permanent object.



CURRICULAR & DEVELOPMENTAL

Health & Wellbeing

Fine-motor development occurs as children manipulate clay and gain mastery over tools, enabling them to create more intricate designs.

Due to clay's resistant properties, children are required to work harder in order to manipulate it. This supports the development of core strength and gross-motor skills.

Children can engage with clay at their own level and pace, increasing confidence as they gain greater familiarity and comfort using the material.



Literacy

Children can explore vocabulary as they describe their clay creations to others.

Playing with clay provides opportunities to experiment with creating patterns, letters and shapes. The unique properties of clay make it possible for children to mark-make, easily erase it, then start again.

The resistant properties of clay foster the strengthening of children's hand muscles, wrists and forearms, supporting development of pre-writing skills.

The potential permanency of clay means that children can create characters which they can use in their storytelling of both imaginary and real-life experiences.

Maths & Numeracy

As children cut, scrape and draw into the clay, they explore concepts of pattern, shape and symmetry.

The exploration of balance, stability, weight and size when building clay models can support the development of problem-solving skills.

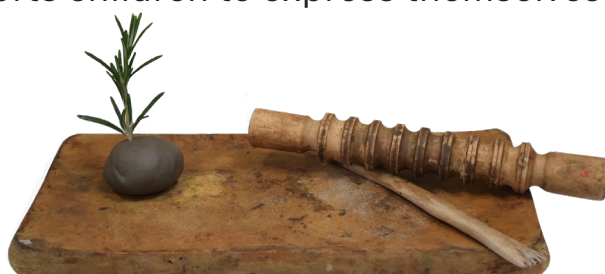
Children explore shapes by experimenting how they fit together through stacking, turning, joining and fitting 2D shapes together to make a 3D shape.

When playing with clay, children use mathematical language to describe and compare size, for example: small, smaller, smallest or big, bigger, biggest.

Other

When fully immersed in a messy tactile experience, children explore the properties of clay and develop an understanding that it is a natural material that comes from the earth.

Due to its unique properties, clay supports children to express themselves and their creative ideas through the exploration of texture, line and form.



ROLE OF THE ADULT

When introducing tools, practitioners should model techniques and use relevant vocabulary and terminology.



In order to support children to express their own ideas in both 2 and 3 dimensions, practitioners should model ways to manipulate clay by kneading, rolling and flattening before demonstrating how to join shapes of different sizes, thickness and length together to form a 3D object.

Practitioners should support discussion around the different properties of clay, comparing and contrasting with other malleable materials. Discuss the form, texture and feel of the clay, considering what happens when it is left to dry out or when water is added.

It's valuable for practitioners to understand the properties of clay, how to store it, how to reconstitute it, and effective ways to clean it up.

ROOM STRUCTURE & LAYOUT

As a resistant material that requires effort to manipulate, children need adequate space and a robust surface in order to press, pound, and roll the clay.

Clay, tools, and loose parts should be stored in an accessible and organised way that supports children's independence and creativity.

There should be space to display children's work and items made from clay that can provide visual stimulation.

Children should have access to a basin where they can remove excess clay before handwashing, preventing sinks from being clogged. This excess clay should be disposed of in a bin.



RESOURCE IDEAS

- Air-drying clay or firing clay. Different textures that dry in different ways
- Clay container: airtight bin/container or clay pot
- Damp cloth: wrap clay in to keep moist
- Separate cloth to wipe table
- Visual stimuli: items made from clay, images of people working with clay
- Loose parts: natural materials, shells, sticks, stones, conkers, flowers, corks
- Clay modelling tools
- Textured & plain rolling pins
- Spray bottle
- Small pot & paintbrush to create slip
- Clay boards
- Basin for children to rinse hands of excess clay

REFLECTION POINTS



- How can practitioners ensure that the clay area stimulates children's curiosity and remains visually interesting. Are real clay objects and photographs available that enable children to make connections and be inspired?
- In what ways do practitioners support children's skill development? Do practitioners role-model how to manipulate clay, use tools effectively, join clay together and store it correctly?
- Do children have the opportunity to revisit their creations and continue to build-on their designs? This can mean storing children's models in a way that allows them to add to them over time or allowing them to dry so that they can be painted and decorated.

DOUGH

Dough is a thick malleable, elastic paste used in Early Years settings as a modelling material. Making dough supports children to learn about the properties of materials, to make predictions and test ideas through trial and error.



Playing with open-ended materials, such as dough, provides opportunities for children to express their ideas in both 2 and 3 dimensions. This enables them to make connections with the world around them as they express themselves and create representations of their experiences.

Dough differs from clay in that it is an easily manipulated material. Given its potential variation in texture and consistency, it can support children to engage in a broad range of sensory experiences.

It's important to ensure that there are daily opportunities for children to make dough, both independently and with adult support.

CURRICULAR & DEVELOPMENTAL

Health & Wellbeing

Manipulating dough through pinching, pulling, twisting and squeezing supports children's fine-motor development.

The shoulder and core strength required to press, pound and roll dough promotes gross-motor development.

Playing with dough can be a therapeutic, calming experience for children, helping them to work through their emotions. As a result, it can be a useful de-escalation strategy.



Literacy

Throughout the dough-making process, children can engage with text in meaningful ways as they read and follow instructions and recipes.

Whilst creating with dough, children can make marks, form letter shapes and explore patterns of writing.



Due to dough's malleable properties, it can support development of children's muscles and dexterity, contributing towards pre-writing skills.

Maths & Numeracy

Following recipes and instructions to make dough enhances awareness of measure, volume and number. Information handling is explored through engaging with signs and symbols.

Playing with dough can support understanding of sharing, progressing to the concept of 'fair share.'

Dough supports exploration of mathematical concepts, such as addition, subtraction, fractions, estimation, measuring and comparison (longer, shorter, wider, thinner, more or less).



Other

Children can investigate ways that different substances react to and with one another. For example, the way that water combines with flour to create a new substance. In order to achieve a useable consistency, children must engage in trial and error, prediction, evaluation and analysis.



Dough affords children the freedom to explore, discover and choose the way that they create, inspired by a range of stimuli and their own experiences.

ROLE OF THE ADULT

Practitioners should ensure that dough is freshly made every day. This should be child-led with adults providing support where required. The focus of dough making should be the process rather than the end-result.

Given the sensory nature of dough-making, practitioners should remain flexible in approach, realising that whilst some children will wish to make dough that feels warm and dry, capable of being moulded, other children may be interested in creating a messier gloop with flour and water.

Children should be supported to follow dough-making sequences and to understand picture, word and number-based instructions, including signs and symbols.

Fife Council settings should follow the most up-to-date local authority guidance surrounding the provision of dough. Funded providers should adhere to national guidance and their setting's health and safety policy.

Practitioners should resource the area to encourage creative, imaginative, open-ended play. Remember that prescriptive resources limit children's opportunities for exploration and self-expression.

If all you offer is rollers and cutters, all children will do is roll and cut.

ROOM STRUCTURE & LAYOUT

The dough area should be located in a space where the floor is easy to clean.

Children should have enough space and a robust enough surface to actively engage in the creative process and practise gross-motor movements, such as pressing, pounding and rolling.

Sometimes, the dough-making process can take place in a smaller, separate area. Children can then move to a larger space to be creative.



RESOURCE IDEAS



Dough ingredients: flour & water in small containers. Recipe ingredients

Measuring tools: measuring spoons & cups

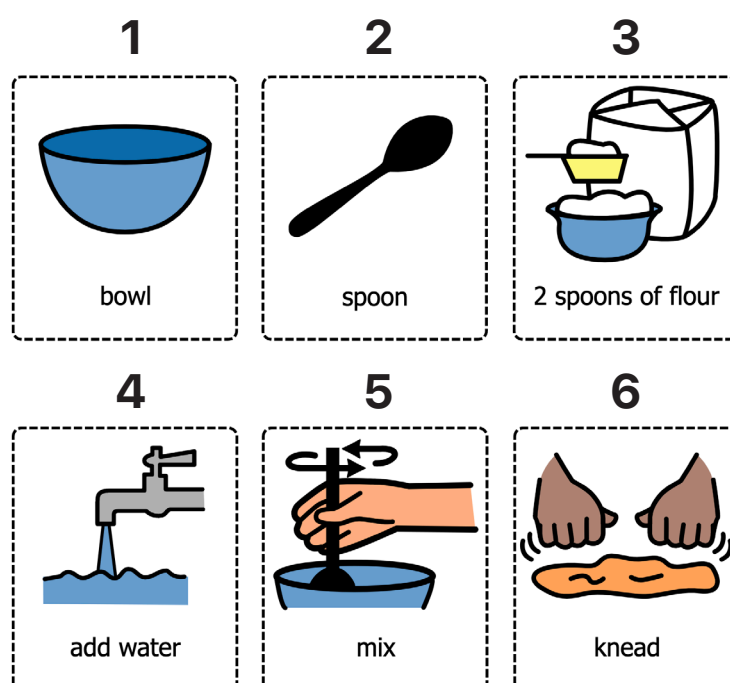
Herbs & spices

Loose parts: natural materials, shells, conkers, flowers, pine cones, corks

Cloth to wipe the table

Mark-making tools: knives, forks, mashers, rolling-pins, plain/textured buttons

Dough-making instructions: photos, numbers, words, symbols



REFLECTION POINTS

- To what extent do practitioners genuinely value the process of dough-making? Is it recognised for its own rich learning opportunities, such as the potential to experiment, investigate and problem-solve? Or, is it simply viewed as a procedure to create a piece of dough?
- Whilst dough should remain natural in colour, how can practitioners use natural materials to extend and support children's creativity? Consider the addition of herbs and spices to the dough area for children to experiment with.

WOODWORK

The Woodwork area supports multiple aspects of learning and development across the breadth of the curriculum. It enables children to progress at their own pace, mastering basic skills before moving onto open-ended exploration as they make unique creations.



Using real tools and authentic materials supports children to learn how to use tools safely, manage risks and build essential skills for life that promote confidence and self-esteem.

Woodworking encourages exploration, experimentation, creativity and critical thinking. It empowers children to plan, make choices, problem-solve, and learn through trial and error whilst affording opportunities for deeper engagement.

Working with wood is a highly sensory experience. Children can smell the wood, feel the grain, and hear the sounds of sawing and hammering whilst experiencing the feel of real tools and materials.

Children may not have opportunities to engage in woodworking beyond nursery. Woodworking experiences can expand children's horizons and provide insights into the wider world of work through highlighting different roles, such as joiners, designers, craftspeople and artists.



CURRICULAR & DEVELOPMENTAL



Health & Wellbeing

Using real tools and natural materials supports mastery of new skills and techniques, development of hand-eye coordination, and increased manipulative control, agility and dexterity.

Through holding nails and screws, children can develop fine-motor skills. Actions such as rotation when screwing and drilling or pushing and pulling when sawing, support the development of core strength and gross-motor skills.



Using real tools helps children learn the importance of following rules and being responsible. Through developing understanding of risk assessment and safety, children learn to keep themselves and others safe.

Building skills and developing mastery over tools helps children to experience a sense of achievement alongside increased confidence and self-esteem.

Literacy

Children can expand their vocabulary by naming tools and materials, describing actions, discussing tasks, and using comparative language such as 'smoother/rougher', 'longer/shorter', 'thicker/thinner'.

When collaborating with others, children can discuss and describe their creations, share thinking and ideas, negotiate and problem-solve.

Woodworking typically requires supervision and guidance from an adult, especially with regards to safety when working with unfamiliar tools. As children listen to and follow instructions, they enhance their capacity for sustained concentration and focus.



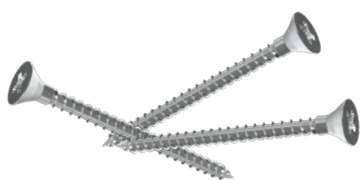
Designing and planning woodwork creations encourages children to express thoughts and ideas through mark-making. Following completion of creations, children may use mark-making to describe and label its features, outline the process and explain how they solved problems.

Maths & Numeracy

As children bring their plans to life, they have opportunities to explore 'measure' in depth, ranging from simply measuring comparatively to using a measuring tape to estimate where they need to saw.



Children can develop understanding of matching, sorting and grouping. For example, grouping nails according to size or matching screws with the appropriate screwdriver.



As children craft and construct their designs they encounter positional language, placing the saw 'on top' of the wood and moving their arm 'backwards and forwards' to saw.

The woodwork area provides rich opportunities to engage with number. For example, figuring out how much of something is required to complete a creation supports exploration of the concepts of 'one more' or 'one less.'

"How many more nails do I need to make my model strong? One more?"

Other

Working with wood helps children develop understanding around sustainability, supporting them to appreciate where wood comes from, to consider its potential uses, and to recognise the importance of taking responsibility for the environment through the reduce, reuse and recycle approach.



Woodworking requires children to solve complex problems, encouraging them to investigate issues and engage in critical thinking as they explore different viewpoints and test potential solutions.

The area offers rich possibilities for children to explore STEAM, helping them to investigate how things work and make sense of the world as they engage in different stages of the plan, design and create process.

As a tactile material, children can investigate the properties of wood through touch, smell, sound and sight.

ROLE OF THE ADULT

Woodwork

WOODWORK

It is essential that staff possess a shared understanding surrounding a risk-benefit approach, maintaining awareness of how their attitudes or apprehensions surrounding woodworking can impact children's confidence.

The practitioner helping children in the woodwork area should be supported by the wider staff team to ensure that they have capacity to remain attentive to children's needs and questions, to scaffold learning, engage in high-quality interactions and maintain health and safety.

Practitioners should check the woodwork area regularly throughout the day, ensuring that tools are in good working order and that there is a sufficient supply of resources to support children's choice, thinking and creativity.



Given that children may be unfamiliar with tools and materials, practitioners should model appropriate uses and techniques, demonstrating a positive and resilient attitude towards woodworking that promotes perseverance.

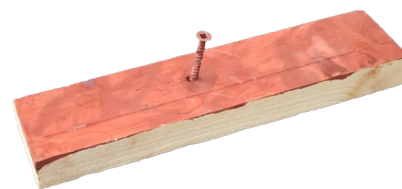
It's important that practitioners reflect on the weight of tools being provided and children's capacity to control these. Remember, sometimes short-handled hammers can be heavier compared to some longer-handled hammers.

Staff should have a consistent approach towards supporting children to assess and consider whether their model is complete and safe enough to take home, or whether these require further work and adjustments.

For example, if there are exposed nails, conversations may evolve around actions children can take to make these safe.



ROOM STRUCTURE & LAYOUT



Ideally, the woodwork bench should be in a place that is easily observable and not situated on a walkway. Woodwork can be an extremely noisy area; therefore, it shouldn't be positioned alongside quieter provision areas, such as the Quiet Space or Book Area.

Due to the creative nature of woodworking, children may want to extend their creations. Therefore, the woodwork bench can benefit from being close to the art area.

There should be a space where children can store models they are working on and a place to display their completed creations.



The area should be decluttered, with tools and resources clearly labelled and organised. For example, using silhouettes or images of tools. It's important that there is a clear system to ensure tools can be stored and accessed safely.

Whilst there are no limits on the number of children using the area at any one time, consideration should be given to the quality of experience that children can have. Notably, children can't use larger movements or engage fully with the equipment within a confined space.

Practitioners can help guide the capacity through the number of resources on offer. For example, providing 2 pairs of appropriately sized safety glasses as opposed to 4.

Remember!

It's important to ensure that saws are well maintained and sharp! Blunt saws pose greater danger than sharp ones.



RESOURCE IDEAS

- Woodwork bench that is sturdy and of suitable height, with a vice
- Real, appropriately sized and weighted tools: saw, hammer, screwdriver, spirit level, pliers, hand-drill, plane, pincers and set square
- Various types/shapes/sizes/lengths of wood, soft enough to saw
- Nails and screws, tacks of different sizes, widths and lengths
- Appropriately sized safety glasses
- Paper, pencil, cardboard, ruler, measuring tape
- Sandpaper and block (course and fine), wood glue, elastic bands
- Loose parts: bottle tops, washers, corks, yoghurt pots, buttons
- Reference and story books
- Stimulating images of wooden objects and real-life objects made from wood
- Log for hammering nails into

REFLECTION POINTS



- The woodwork bench can sometimes provoke concern from parents. In what ways can practitioners support parents to understand a risk-benefit approach and the learning opportunities?
- Are there opportunities for children to deconstruct items? What are the learning opportunities that can come from this?
- What steps can practitioners take to promote an inclusive approach to woodworking? Through promoting opportunities for all, practitioners can help address gender bias, supporting children to recognise potential future possibilities within the wider world of work.

BLOCK PLAY

Block Play is one of the most valuable play experiences available in an Early Years setting, providing opportunities for high-quality learning across all curricular areas.

As an open-ended resource, blocks support children to symbolically recreate their world through building and dramatic play. Blocks are a universal resource that all children can explore and experience success with, regardless of their developmental stage.

The area provides rich opportunities for children to engage in schematic play, especially enclosing, transportation and positioning.



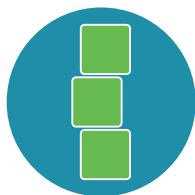
7 STAGES OF BLOCK PLAY

The 7 Stages of Block Play demonstrate the steps that children progress through when learning with blocks.



Stage 1 - Carrying

During this introductory stage, children carry blocks around, exploring weight and using a variety of containers to transport blocks. At this stage, blocks are not necessarily used for construction. Block play promotes sensory exploration, with children tapping or hitting blocks together to create sound or investigating how the blocks feel and smell.



Stage 2 - Rows, Stacks & Towers

This is where building begins as children learn to stack blocks vertically in towers and horizontally in rows. Children may stack blocks for the sole purpose of knocking them down.



Stage 3 - Bridging

Children begin to create simple bridges, bridging the space between two upright blocks with a third block. This opens up greater possibilities for children to extend their buildings and creations.



Stage 4 - Enclosures

Purposefully lining-up blocks to enclose a space, starting with four blocks and eventually moving onto circles, ovals and joined enclosures. Children develop cognitive understanding of spatial orientation, as they develop knowledge of which way to turn blocks in order to create these enclosures. Adding small world animals, people, or natural loose parts can extend children's play.



Stage 5 - Patterns & Symmetry

Children show more imagination in their building and incorporate balance, patterns and symmetry into their creations. Selection of blocks becomes more intentional and the number of blocks used increases.



Stage 6 - Naming Structures

Demonstrating their mastery of basic block building skills, children create structures which they can assign meaning to and name. The naming of these will typically reflect the purpose and function of the building that will then be used to enhance role-play.



Stage 7 - Later Representations

At this final stage, children create representations of places and buildings that they know from either real-life or stories. Children can often be seen planning and designing their creations before building starts. More intricate and actual details from known structures are incorporated into their designs.

CURRICULAR & DEVELOPMENTAL



Health & Wellbeing

As children stack, balance and make blocks work together successfully, they enhance their coordination, gross and fine-motor skills.

Block play enables children to build self-esteem and feel a sense of achievement as they complete their designs and tell stories around their creations.

Through learning to assess and manage risk, children develop understanding of how to protect themselves and others, navigate space, and learn safety rules that can reduce potential harm.

Alongside independent play, children develop social skills such as cooperation, sharing, patience and resilience.

Literacy

Exploring a variety of media – such as books, images and technology – can help children gather useful information to plan their ideas and serve as a point of reference throughout the building process.

Within block play, children can explore mark-making and writing using various materials as they play, label and record their thoughts and ideas.

Block Play supports the extension of existing vocabulary, providing opportunities to explore new vocabulary that can be used to talk about creations with others.



Maths & Numeracy

Block play helps children develop problem-solving skills through opportunities to test limits, think critically, and discuss strategies and solutions.

Children can explore mathematical concepts, such as number, fractions, positional language and 2D/3D shapes.

Exploration of size and measurement concepts introduces mathematical language. For example, "*big, bigger and biggest*" when comparing tower sizes.

Playing with blocks enables exploration of patterns and symmetry alongside enhanced spatial awareness.



The provision of shape shadows or block images on storage shelves can support the early exploration of matching and sorting.

Other

Block play affords freedom to discover and choose ways to be creative using various materials.

Through role-play and retelling stories around both real and imaginary situations, children can engage in and lead their own dramatic play.

Children can explore and discover different ways to document their ideas. For example, using a digital camera to record their model that represents their experience of the world around them.

Block play supports children to recognise engineering in the world around them as they plan and create bridges, towers and buildings.



ROLE OF THE ADULT



By using high-quality interactions and open-ended questions, practitioners can scaffold learning, supporting development of children's creative thinking and problem-solving skills.

Practitioners should understand and value potential learning opportunities, including the 7 Stages of Block Play and different forms of schematic play. They should use observations to effectively plan and support children's development, introducing resources and materials to help extend learning.

Adults should support children to evaluate risk and adopt a risk-benefit approach. For example, helping children risk-assess how to build a tower safely.

ROOM STRUCTURE & LAYOUT

The Block Play area is likely to be one of the largest in the playroom. It should include adequate space for children to move freely and be creative.

Blocks should be easily accessible, stored and organised in a way that supports choice and independence. Consideration should be given to the amount and range of blocks on offer to allow for the creation of complex models.

Block play can generate 'purposeful noise.' Therefore, it's important to remain mindful of areas adjacent to the space. Thought should be given to which areas would benefit from being close by, such as Small World or Small Construction, both of which can help to extend play.

There should be opportunities to engage in Block play both indoors and outdoors. Settings may have separate blocks for outdoors or allow children to transport them from indoors.



RESOURCE IDEAS

Wooden blocks with a natural finish

A variety of blocks ranging from large, medium to small. For example, unit blocks, large and small hollow blocks

Natural loose parts: twigs, shells, logs, stones, pinecones, wooden pegs, cotton reels, curtain rings, bike tyres, decking strips, cardboard tubes and guttering

Cable reels in a variety of sizes

Scarves and large pieces of material

Tape measures and spirit levels

Clipboards, pens, pencils, blank and graph paper

Reference books, inspirational images and plans

Small world resources: people, cars and animals

REFLECTION POINTS

- Is there a good range and sufficient number of high-quality blocks on offer?
- Taking into consideration any schemas that may be present, is the space large enough to allow several children to build simultaneously?
- In what ways can practitioners promote gender equality and encourage all children to engage with the Block Play area?
- Are children supported to risk assess when building higher, wider or longer creations? Are all practitioners in the team consistent in their approach?
- To what extent are practitioners mindful of the way that their language can impact upon children's creativity? For instance, saying to a child *"if you take all of those blocks out, you'll have to put them away"* can discourage children before they've even started building.



SMALL CONSTRUCTION

Small Construction provides children with the opportunity to explore and create using high-quality, open-ended, unstructured materials. These can include resources such as Duplo, Lego and Mobilo.



Through designing and constructing unique structures, children can experiment with new ways to build, this supports 'out of the box' thinking, encouraging children to put their knowledge and ideas to the test.

Typically, Small Construction resources are plastic and therefore more robust. The properties of these materials mean that children can click, snap and connect smaller and more intricate pieces together to create structures and models, enabling them to add to and enhance their creations.

The durability of these resources mean that children can extend their learning by transporting their models to different play areas, both indoors and outdoors.

CURRICULAR & DEVELOPMENTAL

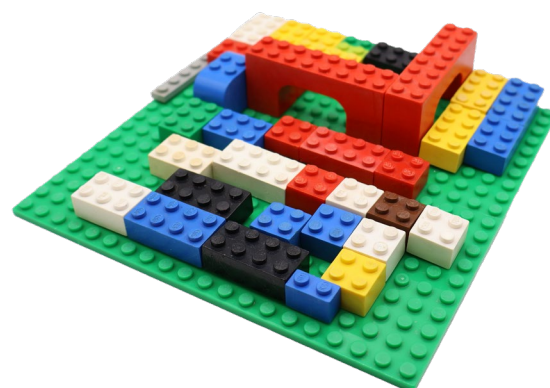
Health & Wellbeing

Small Construction play can support children to build confidence and persevere when trying to solve problems, resulting in a sense of achievement.

Children have opportunities to express their feelings through construction, learning to process emotions such as frustration, disappointment and sadness.

Construction play encourages collaboration and teamwork, supporting children to develop relationships. Through working together, children take turns, share ideas, problem solve, and learn from each other's challenges and successes.

The manipulation and connection of smaller pieces promotes the development of fine-motor skills, hand-eye coordination and dexterity.



Literacy

Children explore and develop new vocabulary as they work through building processes, describe their creations and answer questions.

Through provocations such as pictorial booklets and instructions, children can learn to follow sequences and processes. This can inspire children to experiment with recording their own processes in a variety of ways, for example, using photographs or talking pegs.

Engaging in imaginative play around their creations, children develop narratives that support storytelling. This can lead onto collaborative storytelling as children bring their creations together.

Maths & Numeracy

Through planning models and creations, children develop understanding surrounding mathematical concepts, such as ordinal numbers and positional language. For example, the use of *“first, next, last”* and *“on top, underneath, beside.”*

Small Construction gives children opportunities to investigate 3D shapes as they experiment with fitting pieces together by turning and connecting.

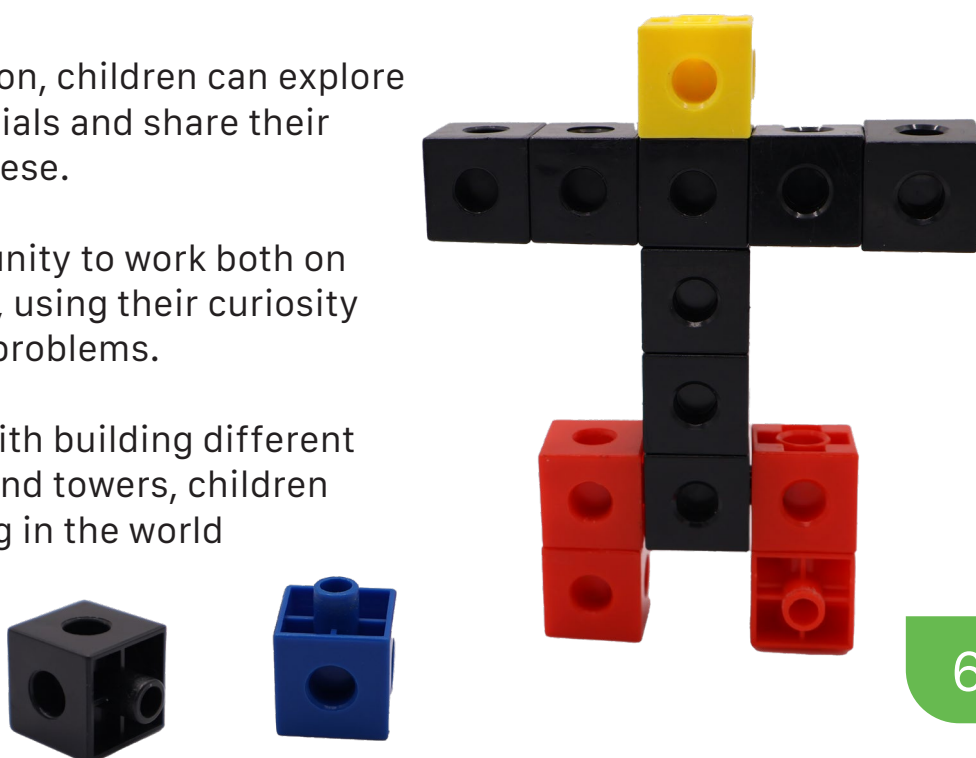
As children play with Small Construction materials, they have the opportunity to explore early symmetry, patterns and colour concepts.

Other

Through Small Construction, children can explore the use of different materials and share their reasoning for selecting these.

Children have the opportunity to work both on their own and with others, using their curiosity and imagination to solve problems.

Through experimenting with building different models, such as bridges and towers, children can recognise engineering in the world around them.



ROLE OF THE ADULT

Practitioners should ensure this space is well-maintained with a sufficient amount of each resource available to enable children to fulfil their creative ideas. Adults should inspect resources regularly, removing any damaged pieces.

Through the use of higher-order questions, practitioners can positively impact the longevity of children's play and encourage perseverance and resilience.

Adults should support children to take the lead in documenting the processes behind making their own constructions. For example, creating an instruction booklet.

Given there are a number of small parts in this area, it's essential for practitioners to risk-assess throughout the year to ensure the safety of all learners.

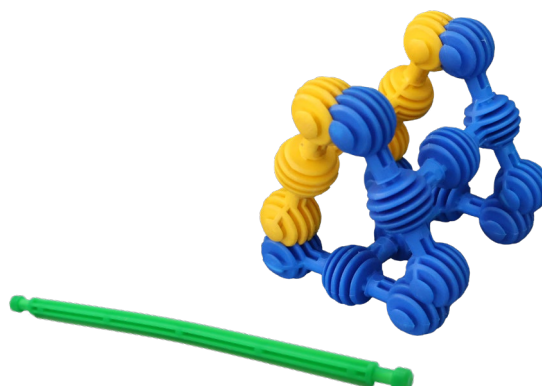


ROOM STRUCTURE & LAYOUT

Small Construction play can produce 'purposeful noise', therefore, consideration should be given to its location within the room.

This small defined space should be separate from the Block Play area, however, ideally close enough to allow children to extend Small Construction learning into it. For example, making cars using Mobilo, then playing with them in a block town.

A table can be a useful addition to provide a level building surface.



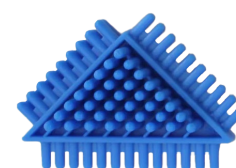
RESOURCE IDEAS

Lego
Stickle Bricks
Duplo
Mobilo
Magnatiles
Gears

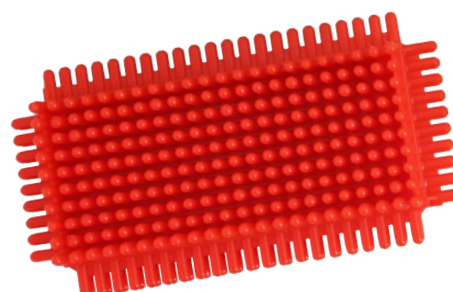
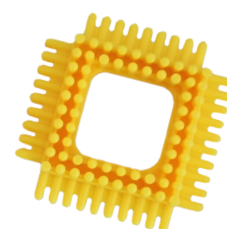
Octoplay
KNEX
Wooden Meccano
Natural loose parts
Construction blocks with nuts/bolts/poles
Linking cubes

Commercially created pictorial booklets can be used to challenge learning and play, but do not have to be available at all times.

REFLECTION POINTS



- Do practitioners observe this area regularly, providing resources and using high-quality interactions to extend children's learning and interests?
- To what extent do staff value and understand the skills that children can potentially develop in this area?
- Do the resources on offer challenge children in a developmentally appropriate way?
- Consider how many types of Small Construction are available at any one time. Over-resourcing this area can lead to overwhelming children, resulting in a lack of purpose in their play.



SAND

Sand is a basic, natural, open-ended material that offers limitless play and learning opportunities that children can explore through their senses. Additionally, it helps children connect with nature through discussion about where it can be found in the natural environment.

Damp sand should be available as Core Provision in the main tray. As a sensory play resource, children can explore different textures and consistencies, using their imagination to mould and shape sand into an endless variety of creations.

Naturally, children want to create small world scenarios in the sand. Resources such as animals, trucks, diggers and natural materials encourage narrative play.

Dry sand can be offered as an additional experience. It flows like liquid, offering opportunities for pouring, scooping and sifting. In shallow trays, it can support mark-making and can help children relax and regulate emotions through calming, sensory-rich exploration.



A large outdoor sand tray provides opportunities for a fuller sensory experience. Children can take shoes and socks off to feel the sand between their fingers and toes.

Additionally, it supports development of gross-motor, co-ordination and co-operation skills. The larger scale outdoor sandpit enables other resources to be offered that would be unsuitable for smaller trays, such as large diggers, trucks, winches and pulleys.



CURRICULAR & DEVELOPMENTAL



Health & Wellbeing

Sand play supports fine-motor development and hand-eye coordination as children dig, mark-make, manipulate utensils and clean-up spillages.

Gross-motor skills are strengthened when playing with damp sand, as children fill-up buckets with a spade or scoop sand using a digger. Lifting heavier/larger containers encourages exploration of gross-motor capacity.

Children develop a sense of respect and ownership over the sand area, taking responsibility for cleaning-up.

Literacy

Sand affords children opportunities to mark-make, explore patterns and connect lines, supporting pre-writing skills.

Playing with sand facilitates discussion of real-life and fantasy experiences, including trips to the beach or imagined scenarios.

As children explain what they are doing, discuss materials they are using and describe the properties of sand, they develop new language and vocabulary: wet, cold, damp, soft.

Maths & Numeracy

Sand supports exploration of mathematical concepts surrounding weight and capacity, encouraging the use of mathematical language such as *"heavy/light"* and *"full/empty."*

When moulding sand, children recognise the shapes they make. Making patterns using fingers, tools and resources supports early understanding and identification of pattern.

Children explore number and size, counting the scoops it takes to fill a bucket, or describing creations using language such as *"small, smaller and smallest."*



Other

Children have opportunities to problem solve when they build and create, learning to find solutions when creations collapse, such as adding more water or building stronger foundations. This supports cause and effect thinking and the exploration of scientific concepts.

Sand offers possibilities to explore/identify features of the beach environment: insects, animals, rocks, shells and the shoreline.

Exploring sand's properties supports understanding of how it is formed from rocks, minerals and shells. Children can experiment with how its consistency changes when water is added.



ROLE OF THE ADULT

Sand supports exploration of STEAM concepts, including: estimation, capacity and displacement. Practitioners should recognise the learning potential of sand play and how to provide challenge for children.

Top-up sand levels regularly, ensuring there is plentiful supply, enabling children to explore fully. Sand swept from the floor should be discarded, not returned to the tray.

Sand, both indoors and outdoors, should be covered at the end of each session to prevent development of harmful bacteria.

ROOM STRUCTURE & LAYOUT



Trays should be located on easy-clean flooring, preferably near complementing provision areas like water and art.

Deep rectangular or square box trays allow for unlimited, open-ended exploration. Additionally, a shallow tray with dry sand for mark-making should be accessible.

RESOURCE IDEAS



Sand trays, both deep and shallow

Play sand, not builder's sand

Child-sized dustpan and brushes for cleaning-up

Containers of various shapes/sizes/materials: metal, wooden, high-quality plastic

Spoons, spades, rakes, measuring cups, and measuring spoons

Jugs, buckets, sieves, combs

Natural loose parts: shells, feathers, sticks, stones

Imaginative play resources: people, vehicles, animals and dinosaurs

Mark-making resources, open-ended resources, relevant books and visuals

SAND

REFLECTION POINTS

- Do children have the opportunity to play with damp and dry sand both indoors and outdoors?
- Are the resources provided dictating play, or do they support children to be creative? Whilst shells, logs and open-ended resources support children to be imaginative, plastic moulds are limiting. For example, a mould of the letter 'R' can only represent that letter.
- Is there shared understanding around how to support children to use the area respectfully? How can staff achieve the balance of not limiting the number of children using the space at any one time, whilst remaining mindful of individual children's needs?



WATER

Naturally fascinating, water captivates children, encouraging curiosity and experimentation whilst offering limitless open-ended play. It supports learning across the curriculum, including the exploration of maths and science concepts.

In addition to fostering cognitive, physical and social development, water affords a range of joyous sensory experiences, as children splash, guddle and play. For many children, this is highly therapeutic.

Children should have opportunities to play with water both indoors and outdoors, due to the different experiences each can offer.

The water tray should generally remain in its natural state. For alternative explorations and experiments, a separate container should be provided.



CURRICULAR & DEVELOPMENTAL

Health & Wellbeing

Water play creates opportunities for development of both gross and fine-motor skills. Lifting, filling and emptying large containers engages large muscle groups, whilst using and manipulating tubes, droppers, squeeze bottles and sponges strengthens smaller ones.

Hand-eye coordination develops as children explore waterplay resources, such as tongs, nets, scoops, whisks and eggbeaters.

Playing in water fosters social awareness, as children learn to share the space and resources, remaining considerate of other's needs. Even during solitary play, children develop awareness that they share the water.



Literacy

The water area supports extension of children's vocabulary. Children may name resources like sieves, funnels and jugs or use vocabulary to describe water's movement or properties: warm, cold, wet.

Children can share personal experiences relating to water, such as trips to the swimming pool or explore different uses for water: hydration, washing and cooking.

Water play creates possibilities for children to express and share thoughts and ideas during cooperative and imaginative play.



Maths & Numeracy

Playing with water encourages exploration of mathematical concepts, especially number and measurement, which include volume, counting and weight. For example, *"how many egg cups does it take to fill the jug?"*

Children can develop understanding of mathematical language, including empty/full and shallow/deep. Additionally, they can explore comparative language, for instance *"big, bigger, biggest"* when comparing different sized containers.

As children experiment and make predictions, such as guessing whether objects will float or sink, they can sort, collect, organise and display information.

Other

Water play supports exploration of flow, force and movement, such as how water flows through pipes at different heights, lengths and angles, or how the force of water can make objects move at different speeds.



As a vital, life-giving resource, children learn about water's vitality through feeding plants, learning where water comes from, and the types of animals that live in water.

Children can explore the changing properties of water, investigating freezing and melting.

ROLE OF THE ADULT

Children should be supported to exercise independence, plan their learning, select resources and practise self-help skills, such as putting on their own apron, managing risk and taking responsibility for spillages.

Water is a natural resource that children should learn to value and not waste. Practitioners can model this by reusing water to care for plants.

Remain mindful of schemas and offer alternatives for children to explore ways that water can change the texture of different materials. This should occur in a separate space to ensure the main water tray remains on offer to all children.

Possess knowledge and understanding of the ways that water play facilitates STEAM learning and exploration of concepts, such as estimation, capacity and displacement.

Practitioners should ensure that resources are open-ended, relevant to children's interests and capable of extending learning.

ROOM STRUCTURE & LAYOUT

The water tray should be in an area with easy-to-clean flooring, situated near a sink and preferably near the sand and art areas.

Ensure there is enough water on offer to explore a deep rectangular or square box type tray. This affords open-ended, unlimited play.

Thought should be given to providing accessible, well-organised storage that supports independent choice of inviting resources that promote curiosity and exploration.



RESOURCE IDEAS



Deep water tray (preferably clear)

Enough water to enable full exploration of concepts

Containers of various shapes/sizes/materials: metal, wooden, high-quality plastic

Spoons, ladles, measuring cups, jugs, buckets, watering cans

Funnels, whisks, sponges, squeeze bottles

Pipettes, corks, fishing nets

Natural loose parts: shells, feathers, sticks and stones

Appropriately sized guttering, pipes and hoses

Resources to support imaginative play: boats, people, sea life creatures

Relevant reference books

Different types and styles of aprons

Mop and bucket

REFLECTION POINTS



- Do children have opportunities to explore water concepts fully? Does the water tray hold an adequate amount of water for experimenting with concepts like floating and sinking?
- Is there a consistent approach towards play happening in this area? For example, whilst it's advisable for children to wear aprons, it's important to be mindful of each individual child's needs. Additionally, if children want to experiment with bubbles, this should be supported using a separate container.
- Do practitioners value and understand the learning that can occur in the water area? How often is water play detailed in Daily Responsive Planning?

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY



Science and technology play a vital role in fostering curiosity, creativity and critical thinking in children, helping them make sense of the world around them through everyday play, conversations and hands on exploration. These lay the groundwork for understanding scientific concepts, mathematical thinking, technical processes and help connect abstract ideas with real-life experiences.

Through science and technology children can begin to see themselves as capable thinkers and problem-solvers. Rather than focusing on the right answer, emphasis is placed on the process of wondering, exploring, trying, failing and trying again. This builds confidence, resilience and perseverance. Science and Technology affords children the freedom to ask questions, explore boldly and discover the joy of finding things out.

Opportunities to engage in science and technology should be woven throughout children's daily routines and interactions. Whilst this may not be represented within a dedicated Science & Technology area, settings may use investigation stations filled with resources that encourage scientific thinking and independent exploration based on children's current interests.

Likewise, opportunities are present across multiple provision areas, for example, the iron or microwave in the home corner or involving children in ordering snack ingredients online using the smartboard/computer.



Remember!

Science and technology learning can take place with everyday household objects, open-ended loose parts, recycled items and real-life tools.

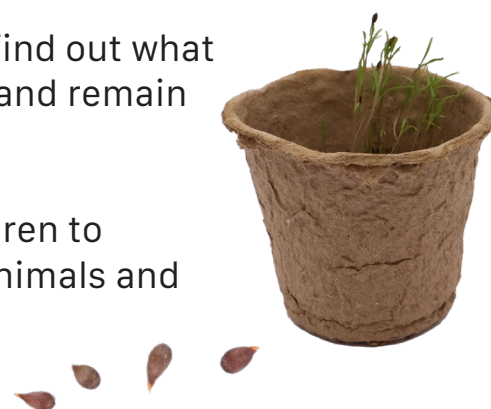
Health & Wellbeing

Engaging with Science & Technology affords children opportunities to experience feelings of excitement, joy, success and pride, as well as frustration and failure, creating possibilities to explore ways to process and regulate emotions.

Through considering science and technology through the lens of the wider world of work, children can discover different sector specific roles and develop aspirations for their own future. For example, becoming a doctor, robotics engineer or marine biologist.

When learning about the human body, children can find out what nutrients their bodies need to grow, become strong and remain healthy.

Furthermore, science and technology supports children to develop understanding of the life cycles of plants, animals and other living organisms.



Literacy

As children experiment with and observe science and technology processes, they are exposed to a range of new and unique vocabulary, for example "*absorb*", "*gravity*" and "*circuit board*."

At this stage, children are developing an awareness that information can come from a range of sources and that they can learn new things regarding science and technology by finding and gathering information from books, texts, websites and posters.



For activities such as logging onto a computer or mixing different ingredients to make playdough, children follow symbols, sequences and instructions, learning that these have meaning.

Maths & Numeracy

When navigating different spaces using programmable toys, such as Beebots, children learn positional language, simple directions and can engage in early coding opportunities.



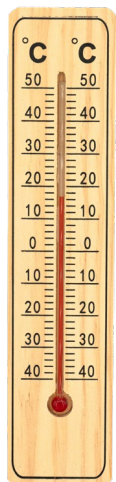
Science and technology experiments and experiences afford children the opportunity to collect data, process and sort the information, discuss their findings and present these in different ways, such as charts and drawings.

Children can develop awareness of size and amount which supports the real-life application of measurement.

As children conduct a variety of experiments, they engage with the language of chance, uncertainty and probability.

Other

Predictions and estimation are critical elements of science and technology; children can develop these skills through engaging in experiments, such as predicting what will happen to the paper boat in the water tray. Will it sink or float?



Science and technology afford children the opportunity to learn about the natural world and biodiversity, including how plants grow, weather cycles, and how our bodies and senses develop.

Children have the opportunity to engage and experiment with simple forms of force through everyday play experiences, for example, swirling the water to create a whirlpool effect or pushing and pulling a toy vehicle on different surfaces.

Through engaging with their nursery environment and their local community children can make sense of how things work in their daily lives and develop understanding of how technology impacts upon the wider world of work and society. For example, using a fob for the photocopier or getting an x-ray at the hospital.

ROLE OF THE ADULT

When exploring new science and technology, it's important that practitioners remain playful and curious, joining the child where they are and learning together.

Practitioners should be mindful of using the correct terminology, introducing children to new vocabulary, such as *"react"*, *"predict"*, or *"condensation"*.

Staff should ensure that they maintain awareness of recent advances in science and technology appropriate to early years.

Adults can support children to extend their thinking and go further through careful open-ended questions, such as *"how can we make this stronger?"* or *"what do you think will happen if?"* This encourages children to test ideas, think critically and reflect on outcomes.

It is the practitioner's responsibility to ensure that devices are charged, functional and with available storage space.

Children need to be shown how to use resources properly in order to understand, respect them, and eventually use them independently. Therefore, practitioners should model appropriate use and function.



ROOM STRUCTURE & LAYOUT

Science and Technology should be embedded throughout the environment, both indoors and outdoors, as part of everyday play and learning across all provision areas. For example, construction areas afford possibilities for design, balance, engineering, predicting and problem-solving.

Smart boards, tablets and computers can support exploration of technology. These should be easily accessible and located in an area where children can concentrate and focus on developing skills.

Outdoors spaces are ideal for supporting engagement with science and technology, offering opportunities for exploring nature, weather, forces and materials. Activities such as den and obstacle building, gardening and water play enable children to investigate concepts like habitats, life cycles and physical properties.

To encourage scientific thinking and independent exploration, it's possible to have designated investigation stations with resources such as magnifying glasses, mirrors and magnets. These areas can be intentionally planned according to children's current interests.



RESOURCE IDEAS

Magnifying glasses, bug catchers, observation kits, light tables/boxes, torches

Planting pots, soil, seeds, gardening tools

Thermometers, weather symbols and charts

Magnets and magnetic objects, shapes and pattern materials

Measuring cups, pipettes, funnels, measuring tools

Floating and sinking objects

Programmable toys, walkie talkies

Camera or tablet, laptop/computer

Blocks, loose parts, ramps, pulleys

Books – fiction and fact

Simple switches

Pens, pencils, clipboards, blank, lined and squared paper

REFLECTION POINTS

- How do staff track children's progress, depth of knowledge and understanding of science and technology?
- Are science and technology experiences and resources accessible and inclusive, enabling children to explore and investigate independently?
- Science and technology resources can often be one-off purchases, for example a tablet, light box or torches. How do practitioners support and encourage children to take responsibility for these?
- The most important part of promoting curiosity, learning and exploration of science and technology is the quality of interactions. How do practitioners encourage and support children to have fun and explore their curiosities whilst persevering and building resilience?

SNACK

The snack area is an integral part of the nursery environment. Fruit, water and milk or milk alternatives are always available, whilst snack and meals are offered at setting specific times.



Children should have access to opportunities and experiences that support them to prepare and taste a variety of foods, learning where food comes from and how it's produced. The space should be enabling, supporting and promoting children's independence.

Snack routines are about more than simply meeting children's fundamental needs, they support children to learn necessary life skills, such as: cutting, spreading, pouring, and basic mealtime etiquette.

Through facilitating relaxed, unrushed snack experiences, practitioners help children develop positive attitudes towards different experiences associated with food: socialising with peers, exercising choice and preferences, and experimenting with new flavours and textures.

CURRICULAR & DEVELOPMENTAL

Health & Wellbeing

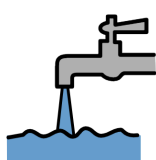
Snack experiences such as using cutlery, carrying crockery, and pouring drinks help children develop their fine-motor skills, hand-eye coordination, dexterity and balance.

Children can develop independence, make their own choices and enjoy trying various foods in different social contexts.

By tasting, exploring and learning about different foods, children gain understanding of how eating and drinking affect their growing bodies, promoting healthy lifestyle habits.

Through participating in setting-up, eating, clearing away, washing-up, composting and recycling, children learn about being respectful and responsible citizens.

The snack area supports positive daily hygiene practices and safety routines, including handwashing and toothbrushing, helping children recognise the importance of maintaining good personal hygiene.



Water On



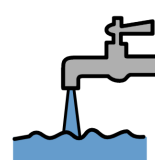
Wet Hands



Apply Soap



Wash Hands



Water Off



Dry Hands

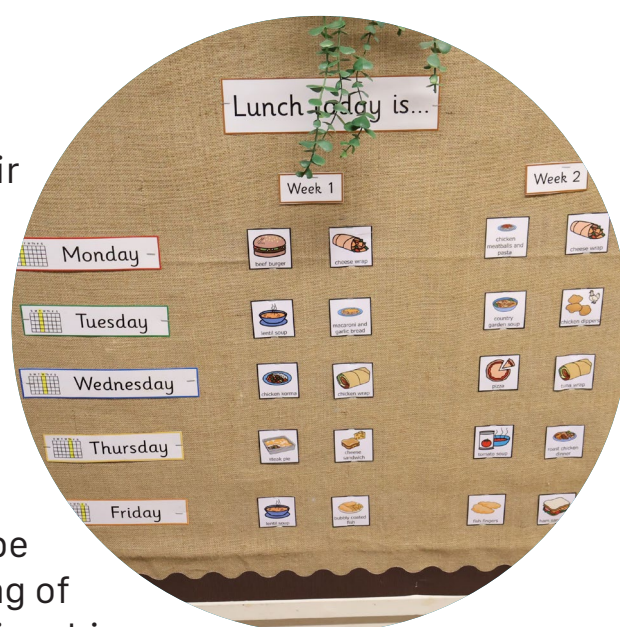
Literacy

Children extend their vocabulary as they learn the names of foods, use and hear phrases that describe textures and flavours, and express their preferences.

Through engaging in discussions around food experiences, children can share thoughts and ideas and learn the basics of conversation, including when it's appropriate to talk or listen.

Signs, books and texts, such as menus and recipe books support children to develop understanding of sounds, letters and words, discovering the relationship between them.

Children can develop mark-making skills as they learn to write menus, make shopping lists for snack, create recipes and share their experiences and feelings around food.



Maths & Numeracy

Involving children in setting-up snack supports exploration of mathematical concepts: one-to-one correspondence, volume, comparison and size.

Through preparing snack, children build awareness of how to share a collection of items by creating smaller groups. Splitting whole objects into smaller parts supports understanding of fractions.

Signs and charts around the snack area help children find information, follow routines and sequences, plan, and make choices.



Other

Using technology such as toasters, microwaves and kitchen utensils help children develop understanding of technology in their everyday lives.

Involving children in planning, ordering, paying for and receiving food enhances understanding of ways that money is used to pay for items and services.

Through opportunities to taste food from various countries, children can explore the origins of food, discovering how these relate to different cultures and festivals.

Children's understanding of the 'seed-to-plate' process can be supported by offering various food-related experiences, including participating in the planting, growing and harvesting of food.



ROLE OF THE ADULT

Practitioners should ensure that food experiences happen within a positive, relaxed and unhurried atmosphere, free from pressure. This encourages the development of positive attitudes and relationships towards food, affording opportunities to engage in interactions with peers and practitioners.



By sitting with children during snack, practitioners can role-model skills and expected behaviours, such as sitting at the table whilst eating and using cutlery properly.

Adults should possess strong understanding and confidence regarding processes designed to support children's safety. This includes appropriate preparation of food to prevent choking risks, and awareness of allergens, dietary requirements and cultural preferences. It's important to consult nutritional guidance and food standards to promote healthy food choices.

It's essential that staff follow their setting's policies and guidelines to ensure the environment remains safe, clean and hygienic. This includes adherence to cleaning schedules, appropriate storage of foods and cleaning materials, and accurate record keeping.



Practitioners should support children to develop skills that will enable them to exercise independence and choice around food. However, it's important that staff observe children, remaining attuned to their needs, offering support where necessary.

ROOM STRUCTURE & LAYOUT

Ideally, the area should have an easy-clean floor and be located beside sinks and sockets, allowing for appliances to be plugged-in.

Consider the impact that nearby areas may have on children, do these help to promote a calm and relaxing atmosphere?

The space should be enabling, supporting children to access food, resources and equipment. Items and resources should be well organised and clearly labelled.

Surfaces should be available for both preparation and presentation of snack. Children should have adequate space to move in and around the table.

RESOURCE IDEAS

Appropriately sized tables and chairs

High-quality cups, plates, bowls, cutlery

Sharp colour-coded child-sized knives

Tongs and serving plates

Small jugs for water and milk

Menus

Washable tablecloths

Handwashing poster and sequencing strips

Real flowers or centre pieces



REFLECTION POINTS



- In what ways can settings involve families and members of the community in children's snack and mealtime experiences? If the setting has a local farm shop, is it possible to pay a visit? Can the setting's food and nutrition policy be developed in consultation with families?
- Are children encouraged and supported to plant and grow their own food? Are they afforded the opportunity to experience the full 'seed-to-plate' process? What are the unique learning experiences associated with this?
- Do practitioners value the quality of children's mealtime experiences? Are mealtimes facilitated in a way that provides an unhurried, relaxed and positive atmosphere around food, or are they organised to accommodate staff rotas, lunches and tasks?
- Does the setting offer a diverse range of foods that provide experiences from and support understanding of different cultures?



BAKING & COOKING



Children should have regular opportunities to participate in baking and cooking, either independently or as part of a group.

These experiences support development of important life skills and enhance children's understanding of different cultures as they explore foods from around the world.

Independent activities, such as making bird seed cake, require children to plan, problem-solve and follow sequences to achieve their desired goal. However, independent baking should value the process rather than the end result.

Whilst there is no set number of participants, baking and cooking in smaller groups can provide engaging and valuable learning experiences for children. Practitioners can take time to discuss recipes and ingredients, considering ways to best support skill development during activities, such as maths and numeracy skills when weighing and measuring.

CURRICULAR & DEVELOPMENTAL

Health & Wellbeing

Children can explore, prepare and taste a variety of foods, developing the fine-motor and coordination skills required to use utensils effectively.

Using equipment helps children develop risk assessment skills, supporting learning around how to handle knives and use appliances safely.

Baking and cooking in groups encourages sharing, turn-taking, cooperation and teamwork to achieve a common goal.



Through handling, tasting, and discussing food, children can explore their own preferences, learn about dietary requirements, allergens, and how different foods support healthy growth and development.

Children can learn about the importance of food safety and personal hygiene. This includes developing awareness of when to wash their hands and effective handwashing techniques supported by pictorial sequence strips.



Literacy

Through exploring ingredients, shopping lists, recipes, product labels and related environmental print, children can engage with different forms and purposes of writing.

When planning their own recipes, children have opportunities to mark-make through writing shopping lists, labels and associated texts, such as menus.

Maths & Numeracy



Baking and cooking experiences support children to develop a sense of size, amount and measure, which includes volume and weight.

Through sharing out a group of items and splitting whole objects into smaller parts, children begin to learn about fractions and fair share. They can explore numbers, understanding that they represent quantities and can use them to count, describe order, create and follow sequences.

When baking and cooking, children can explore budgeting, considering what ingredients they already have, what they need, and what they can afford. Following this, they can visit local shops to buy ingredients, developing awareness of how money is used.

Following recipes provides opportunities for children to match objects and sort them using their own and others' criteria. Consulting signs and charts around them for information, children can plan and make decisions in their daily lives.



Other

The exploration of different ingredients supports children to become aware of where foods come from. This can also extend their knowledge of how local shops and services provide them with what they need in their daily lives.



Children can use different types of technology to make food and record their experiences, for example, using scales to weigh ingredients or using a camera to capture the process and finished product.

Through preparing, cooking and eating a range of different foods, children have opportunities to taste, smell, and touch, supporting sensory development.

Baking and cooking support exploration of scientific concepts. Children can observe food changing when subjected to heating or cooling processes.

ROLE OF THE ADULT

Practitioners should model good hygiene practices: handwashing, tying back hair, and cleaning surfaces to avoid cross contamination. Also, it's important to check equipment and utensils to ensure that they are safe and model how to use these safely.

Adults should scaffold and support learning by helping children plan and carry out baking/cooking processes.

High-quality questions help children reflect on what went well, what didn't and what they can do differently next time. This helps children develop greater skills and confidence when baking independently.



ROOM STRUCTURE & LAYOUT

This area should be located near a kitchen, in a low traffic space with access to sinks and plug sockets. Consideration should be given to the location of ovens and heating implements to ensure children's safety.

When in groups, children should have a suitable work surface and adequate space to chop, grate, slice, peel, stir and pour.



RESOURCE IDEAS

Child friendly knives, graters, pots, pans, bowls and peelers

Candle burner, tea lights, ignitor and oven

Cleaning equipment

Measuring utensils & tools: scales, spoons, measuring cups, jugs

Mixing utensils: wooden spoons, metal spoons, spatulas and whisks

Timer, aprons, relevant books and recipe books.

Recipes or sequence strips containing Boardmaker symbols

Baking trays, tins, cupcake cases and a cooling rack

REFLECTION POINTS

- Do staff have confidence in their ability to manage risk whilst supporting children to develop key life skills, such as using sharp knives?
- Are baking and cooking activities inclusive of children's individual dietary needs and requirements? How can practitioners accommodate children with particular allergies?



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.



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.



WRITING

Writing is a vital lifelong skill that helps children to communicate and express themselves. Research highlights that children need opportunities to develop physical strength and control in their core, upper body, hands and fingers to support the development of pre-writing skills. For more information, please consult the dedicated *Supporting Early Literacy* resource.



A dedicated space for mark-making helps children connect spoken and written word, reinforcing the idea that writing conveys meaning and allows ideas to be shared.

There are four main developmental stages of writing. These stages reflect children's growing understanding of literacy conventions, including oral language, fluent reading, and effective writing using letters, sounds, and correct word spacing.

While each setting should include a designated writing space, it is equally important to embed writing opportunities throughout the environment, both indoors and outdoors. This allows children to explore writing in meaningful, real-life contexts, such as writing a shopping list during role play or labelling plants in the garden.

CURRICULAR & DEVELOPMENTAL

Health & Wellbeing

As children learn how to hold a pencil, they develop fine-motor skills. Their pencil grasp develops alongside confidence in mark-making, typically starting with a Palmer Supinate grasp, evolving to a Tripod grasp.

Exploring the wider community helps children understand how writing is used in everyday jobs, for example, doctors writing a prescription. This highlights the purpose and value of writing.



Literacy

Exposure to environmental print, adult writing and their own writing efforts, helps children recognise letters and symbols, often leading to mark-making through imitation.

Introducing new vocabulary linked to interests or events supports language development. For example, "dragon fruit" when creating a shopping list.

Children can explore various writing materials to express and record their ideas and experiences.

A dedicated writing space encourages children to connect spoken and written language, using their growing knowledge of sounds, patterns and words within meaningful contexts.

Maths & Numeracy

Through the use of calendars and diaries, opportunities arise to explore dates and sequences of time, enabling children to incorporate these concepts into their writing.

The writing area affords opportunities to explore number and shape, children can experiment with these to mark-make.

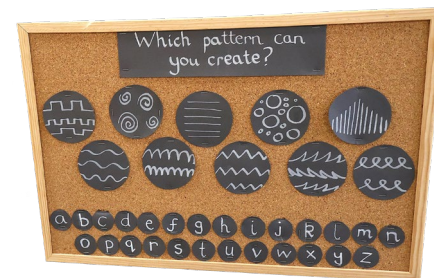
Other

Writing invites exploration of symbols, characters and writing systems across different cultures and languages. These explorations should be meaningful and relevant to children within the setting and their learning interests.

Different events and cultural celebrations support awareness that it's common to write to someone as part of these customs. For example, writing a letter to Santa or sending invitations.



ROLE OF THE ADULT



In some instances, writing areas can appear neglected or uninspiring. It's vital that practitioners ensure the area remains inviting, enticing and is regularly replenished and updated.

The area should be well organised, clearly labelled and have a plentiful stock of resources that are fit for purpose. Writing pencils should be sharpened, pens should work, and a variety of paper should be available.

When modelling for children, practitioners are demonstrating writing and its purpose. Therefore, it's important that practitioners remain mindful of their own handwriting, ensuring letter formation is clear, correct and legible.

Where appropriate, adults should support children to write, scaffolding the process and providing meaningful encouragement to ensure that children can confidently engage in sharing their opinions, thoughts, ideas and stories through mark-making.

Practitioners should be aware of the different languages spoken within the setting, ensuring these are appropriately represented and reflected in available environmental print, using correct terminology and accurate information.

ROOM STRUCTURE & LAYOUT

The writing area should be in a quiet location, ideally near the story corner. Where space allows, a separate drawing area can be offered. If writing and drawing tables are combined due to lack of space, consideration should be given to the size of the area, ensuring a group of children can write/draw comfortably.

Resources should be easily accessible and stored in a manner that encourages and enables children to select writing materials independently.

There should be a designated space to display examples of writing or environmental print which can act as a stimulus for children.



RESOURCE IDEAS

Appropriately sized writing table and chairs

Various sizes of paper, unlined/lined/squared

Card, slate, white boards, chalk boards (and erasers)

Sticky notes, envelopes, note pads, diaries, calendars

Alphabet line with lower and upper-case letters

Number line (including zero)

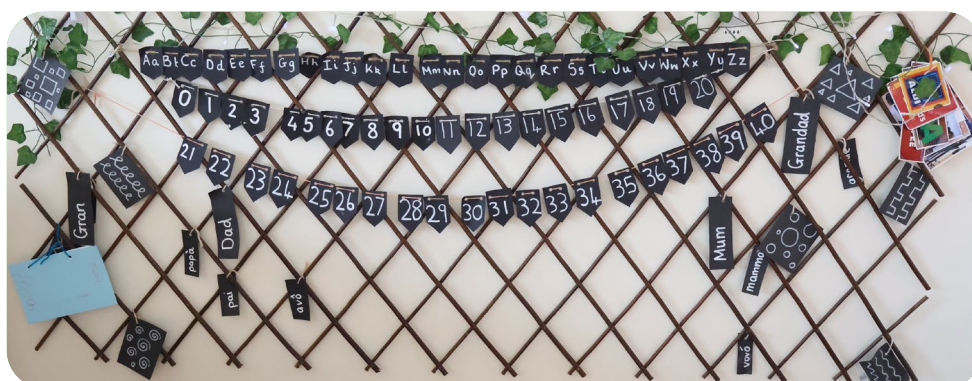
Jumbo writing pencils, normal pencils and pens

Office supplies: Sellotape, stapler, hole punch, erasers, rulers, clipboards

Examples of writing and environmental print, greeting cards, postcards, stamps

REFLECTION POINTS

- How do practitioners promote children's ability to write independently? Remember, stencils and worksheets can hinder children's writing development.
- Are additional writing opportunities embedded across the provision areas, including both indoors and outdoors? Remember, outdoors does not mirror the indoors experience.
- Is there a shared consistent approach towards supporting the transportation of tools and equipment that children may need to engage in their writing process? For example, larger pieces of paper and crayons from the art area when creating a comic book.



QUIET SPACES

The quiet spaces that practitioners create both indoors and outdoors can empower children to self-regulate and discover strategies that can help them to understand and communicate their thoughts, feelings and emotions.



Designated, continuously available quiet spaces help promote children's wellbeing, providing opportunities to relax, reset, feel safe and regulate emotions as they rest, reflect, and engage in solitary play.

The design of quiet spaces can be unique, varying to meet the needs of the children within the setting.

Quiet spaces can provide opportunities for children to engage in schematic play, such as enclosing and enveloping.

CURRICULAR & DEVELOPMENTAL

Health & Wellbeing

Being in a quiet space supports children to reflect on and develop awareness of their feelings and emotions, helping them to understand how these can make their bodies feel and ways in which they can impact their interactions with others.

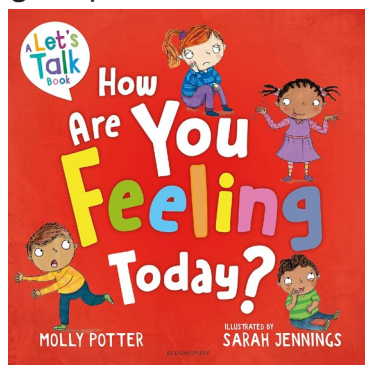
Emotional exploration can support the development of empathy as children learn to recognise and understand other people's feelings.

Quiet spaces enable children to take time to themselves, relax and 'simply be.' Rest and relaxation are central to wellbeing and should be valued.



Literacy

When used in relation to self-regulation, the quiet space offers a more intimate and secure area for talking and listening, especially around vocabulary related to emotions and feelings. This can be an invaluable space for children, particularly those who may find it difficult to engage in larger group conversations.



The quiet area offers possibilities for children to engage in books and stories on a more individual basis.

Resources such as books, props and visuals relating to emotions can support children to understand that text has meaning.

Maths & Numeracy

Involving children in the creation of a quiet space supports exploration of size, shape and capacity. This can include discussion around how big an area is and the size and number of resources required.

Other

The quiet area can support children to develop respect for and understanding of others' feelings, beliefs and values. In addition to being an area where children take time for themselves, it also nurtures awareness of others and fosters respect for their use of the shared space.



ROLE OF THE ADULT

A quiet space is commonly an area where children explore their emotions. Practitioners should remain sensitive to this, ensuring they adopt a nurturing approach, using quality interactions to support children to understand their feelings and develop self-regulation skills.



It's important that practitioners model appropriate use of the quiet space. Speaking in a soft, calming, nurturing voice and emphasising the purpose of the quiet area can encourage children to value and respect the space.

Practitioners should observe the area regularly, remaining mindful of who is using it and sensitively offering support when necessary.

The quiet area should be inviting, uncluttered and well maintained. Thoughtfully selected resources can help to create a calm, tranquil and relaxing atmosphere.

ROOM STRUCTURE & LAYOUT

Quiet spaces can be threaded throughout the learning environment, both indoors and outdoors. These can consist of a welcoming picnic blanket in an uncongested part of the garden, a cosy sitting area, or a partially enclosed structure that provides children with a sense of privacy.

To preserve a peaceful atmosphere, quiet spaces should not be situated near loud, energetic, high-activity provision areas, such as Block Play or Woodwork.



RESOURCE IDEAS

Soft furnishings: cushions, drapes, blankets

Sensory resources: textured materials, fidget toys, squishy objects, mirrors

Books & story props

Soft toys & comforters

Soft lighting

Resource storage



REFLECTION POINTS

- What strategies or approaches are used to support children who use quiet spaces for emotional regulation? For example, de-escalation techniques or naming emotions. Are these approaches used consistently across the Team?
- Is the purpose of quiet areas valued and understood? Are these spaces appreciated as an important aspect of core provision with unique qualities and benefits?

Did You Know?

Following the introduction of 1140 hours, children typically spend more time at nursery.

Quiet spaces provide children with opportunities to operate at their own pace, and negotiate the ebb and flow of the day.



TABLETOP ACTIVITIES



Tabletop activities such as games and puzzles provide opportunities for children to enhance their executive function skills, including working memory, flexible thinking and impulse control.

Children can engage in both critical and lateral thinking, learning how to play games, follow rules, problem solve and develop strategies that can help them succeed. For example, when working on a jigsaw, a beneficial strategy may be to collect and organise the edges first.

Whilst participating in tabletop activities, children can work with others, develop social skills that enable them to build positive relationships, take turns, understand boundaries, and recognise social cues.

Games and puzzles can support children to develop their capacity for self-regulation, perseverance, and resilience as they face different challenges. This includes learning how to cope with the frustration of landing on a snake instead of a ladder.

CURRICULAR & DEVELOPMENTAL

Health & Wellbeing

Tabletop activities promote learning around caring, sharing, turn-taking and fairness, which are central to the development of positive relationships. Children can learn to respect their own and others' rights.

Games support children to explore concepts of winning and losing, developing strategies to understand and cope with disappointment, frustration, and unexpected outcomes.

Through picking-up and manipulating game pieces using the pincer or Palmer grip, children develop hand-eye coordination, dexterity and fine-motor skills.



Literacy

Through participating in conversations and discussions during tabletop activities, children discover new words and phrases which can help them to express ideas, thoughts and feelings.

Each activity can help children develop different literacy skills, ranging from: listening skills when playing a 'Sound Lotto' game, new vocabulary when playing a 'Shopping List' game, or developing pre-reading skills through recognising sounds, letters, or rhyming.

Games provide opportunities for children to listen attentively to rules and instructions, developing understanding before conveying this information to others.

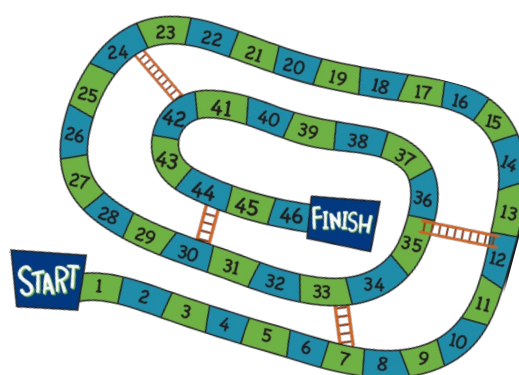
Maths & Numeracy

Tabletop activities afford children a range of rich opportunities to explore and develop understanding of maths and numeracy concepts.

Dice support the development of conceptual understanding of subitising: recognising that a pattern arrangement of 5 dots represents the number 5. Dominoes promote understanding of partitioning: collections can be separated into parts. For example, 3 and 3 make 6.

When counting spaces in Snakes & Ladders, children engage in one-to-one correspondence, recognising that each space receives one count and one count only. Additionally, they enable children to experience the use of positional language, e.g., *"move forwards/backwards."*

Jigsaws and puzzles can support understanding of shape, size, space and pattern. Children can experiment with different ways that shapes can fit together and use spatial reasoning to imagine what something may look like when rotated or flipped.



ROLE OF THE ADULT



When games are introduced, practitioners should support children to set-up and play. This ensures that children can understand the game's rules, purpose and aim. Through modelling and scaffolding, practitioners can support children to understand turn-taking, problem-solving, and how to follow game sequences.

Practitioners should possess firm understanding of the learning intention behind the tabletop activities offered. Are these developmentally appropriate? Do they follow children's interests? Do they provide suitable challenge?

Adults can support children to understand and manage their emotions. Through engaging in discussion surrounding attitudes towards winning and losing, practitioners can help children foster resilience, perseverance and a sense of responsibility.

Tabletop games require children to manage multiple concepts, restrictions and boundaries. Practitioners should be aware of these, understanding that they may be required to support children through co-regulation of emotions.

Prior to offering games and puzzles, it's essential to ensure that all resources/components are complete with no missing pieces. Resources on offer should be refreshed and replenished regularly.

ROOM STRUCTURE & LAYOUT

Ideally, tabletop activities should be located in a low-traffic area to ensure that children can focus and remain uninterrupted. This should be an adequately sized area that enables a number of children to play games in a group.

In some instances, games or puzzles may require a larger space. Identify a suitable area where activities can be transported to, such as the floor.

It's important that games and activities have a dedicated, clearly labelled, and well-organised storage area.



RESOURCE IDEAS

Appropriately sized table and chairs

Adequate accessible storage

Small selection of developmentally appropriate puzzles/games

Traditional board games, e.g., Snakes & Ladders

Dominoes & dice

REFLECTION POINTS

- In what ways can practitioners support children to take responsibility for the games and puzzles that they use?
- How do practitioners ensure that all developmental stages are catered for? To what extent do practitioners observe and reflect on how children engage with the games and puzzles on offer? Do these provide appropriate challenge?
- Can children exercise choice surrounding the games/puzzles that they use? Are there opportunities to explore the options available?

Remember!

In order to effectively support children's engagement with subitising, it's recommended to always have either a dice or domino game on offer.



DISPLAYS

Displays are thoughtfully arranged visual materials and stimuli that can support and document children's learning and development, provoke intrigue, and celebrate achievements.

Depending on purpose, these can take the form of table displays, provocations, learning walls and information boards.



When presenting work, it's important that children can identify their own creations. Not only does this help create a sense of belonging, but also encourages children to revisit their learning, discuss it, and feel inspired to repeat it. This supports practitioners to develop stronger understanding of where a child is at in their learning, leading to identification of potential next steps.

Effective displays begin with a clear understanding of their purpose, intended impact, and audience. To ensure that children remain interested and engaged, it's essential to ensure that they are involved, their voices are represented, and that current learning and interests are reflected.

Displays typically include a range of media, text and tangible objects, such as: photos, drawings, adult's writing, children's mark-making, printed text and resources.

CURRICULAR & DEVELOPMENTAL

Health & Wellbeing

Through displaying children's work, they can experience a sense of pride, achievement and self-esteem, learning to value their own work, recognise their skills and talents, and build confidence. Likewise, children can appreciate the work of others, evaluating and asking questions.



Literacy

Engaging with displays can support awareness of environmental print and symbols that convey meaning. For example, reading a nursery charter or recognising their own name.

Children can discuss their learning and experiences, listen to others and make simple responses. This can include the sharing of ideas, thoughts and feelings, or describing creations and achievements.

As children contribute to displays, they can experience mark-making across a range of contexts. This helps establish a link between the purpose of marks and what they communicate.



Maths & Numeracy

Children can gather and contribute information and data to displays, including the results of how they have voted using simple charts and graphs.

Displays may include photographs that afford opportunities to engage with various mathematical and numerical concepts. For example, an image of a butterfly can help children recognise symmetry and pattern, or a number line to support number recognition and ordering.

Other

Through contributing to a display, children can experience the excitement and process of presenting their work for an audience.

Displays create possibilities for children to interact with artefacts, images or equipment that children may be unfamiliar with, for example, a telescope if interests are linked to space. This can promote curiosity, investigation and questioning.

The area provides opportunities for engagement with technology, such as using the printer to print things to add to the wall, or using talking pegs to record messages and capture children's voice. Additionally, introducing QR codes can make displays more interactive, especially for displays designed for parents.

ROLE OF THE ADULT

To ensure that displays have purpose and impact, it's essential that practitioners understand what they are displaying and why. When adding a feature, consider the potential learning benefits, who this is for, and whether it represents children's interests.

Practitioners should use displays to engage in conversations with children, helping them to revisit and reflect on their learning. This supports children to understand their progress and plan their next steps, whilst also enabling practitioners to guide and facilitate further learning based on those discussions.

Opportunities to contribute foster children's responsibility and respect for the display area. Children are more likely to engage with a display if they can see themselves represented within it.

Adults should ensure that displays are regularly updated, refreshed and well-maintained. Instructions or processes should be easily readable and undamaged.

Practitioners must support and facilitate engagement with displays, encouraging use and interaction in order to support sustained interest. This can involve revisiting children's questions to evaluate whether they



ROOM STRUCTURE & LAYOUT

Consideration regarding who the display is intended for will help guide where it is best placed. Displays for children are ideally placed at children's height and should be inclusive, easily visible and accessible.

Preferably, displays should not be located on a busy thoroughfare or where doors/furniture obstruct. Remember, displays can be both vertical and horizontal.

Given that children's visual discrimination isn't advanced, it's important that displays are not overwhelming or cluttered. Backgrounds and borders should draw focus to children's contributions; therefore, these should remain neutral. Extremely busy displays can prevent children's engagement.

Informational displays intended for parents, carers and families are generally at adult height and not located within play spaces. Typically, these are located near the nursery entrance or cloakroom.



RESOURCE IDEAS

Post-its, speech bubbles, writing materials, talking pegs and camera to support independent contributions

Resources or objects linked to current interests and learning

Display relevant information and media: books, stories, photographs

Neutral background materials: brown paper or hessian

Well-maintained visual resources

REFLECTION POINTS

- Learning walls are not simply for the documentation of learning, they are an ongoing process intended to promote curiosity, follow interests, spark children's imagination and support children to find and explore answers to their questions. To what extent is this reflected in the setting?
- Displays are more than simply notice boards or learning walls, they are present throughout different curricular areas, such as self-registration, instruction processes, and signs. Are displays reflected throughout the setting?
- Are displays monitored, evaluated and updated on a regular basis? In what way do practitioners promote and model the use of displays effectively and appropriately?

OUTDOORS

Outdoor play is crucial for early development, offering a range of physical, cognitive and social-emotional benefits. It enables children to engage with the natural world, develop physical skills and foster social interactions in a way that promotes overall wellbeing and a lifelong love of learning.



Evidence shows a decline in safe outdoor spaces where children can play, making it all the more essential that settings offer outdoor, free-flow play opportunities.

Outdoor environments should be safe, inviting, stimulating and challenging for all learners. Ideally, children should be able to move from indoor to outdoor areas freely. However, due to building constraints, this may not always be possible. Therefore, it's important that staff ensure children have daily opportunities to access outdoor spaces.

Spending time outdoors can have a positive impact on both mental and physical health, therefore, it's important that this is encouraged from a young age. Participating in just ten minutes of physical activity can support the psychological and emotional wellbeing of children, boosting self-esteem, lowering anxiety and reducing stress.

Although every outdoor space is different and resources will vary from setting-to-setting, there are seven outdoor core provision experiences that should always be on offer:

- Discovery & Investigation
- Building
- Transport/Transportation
- Physical
- Imagination/Creativity
- Shelter
- Nature



Health & Wellbeing

Playing outside supports development of gross-motor skills, including agility, balance and coordination. Children who spend time outdoors are more likely to move in ways that challenge their muscles, bones and physical endurance.

There are many long-term health benefits to spending time outdoors, such as enhanced mood, improved immunity, reduced anxiety, mental relaxation, improved sleep quality, restored concentration and ability to focus.

Being outdoors supports children to explore energetic play and understand the impact this can have on their body, including heightened heart rate, increased temperature, or feeling energised and empowered. These activities promote healthy lifestyle habits and can help prevent childhood obesity.

As children engage in potentially risky play, they can assess risk, challenge themselves and build awareness of their own developing abilities.

Literacy

The outdoor space affords opportunities to engage in activities such as stirring big pots in the mud kitchen, throwing bean bags, and making circles with streamers. These support the development of pre-writing skills including crossing the midline, shoulder and arm pivots, core strength and coordination.

Being outdoors offers a range of unique surfaces upon which children can explore mark-making and begin to communicate their ideas, thoughts and opinions. Outdoor mark-making surfaces have a range of textures, heights and levels, often vertical rather than horizontal. The tools children use to mark-make will also vary, such as sticks, feathers and shells.

Children can use books to gather information and make links to real-life experiences. For example, identifying birds, investigating weather and exploring their local community.



Maths & Numeracy

Children can experience the passing of time and seasons first hand as they observe seasonal changes in the environment and earlier or later sunrises and sunsets. This can support the development of new comparative vocabulary, such as: longer, shorter, darker, lighter, colder and warmer.

As they engage with natural environments and landscapes, children can develop understanding regarding the size of the world around them, including the depth of the sea, the height of a tree, or the tininess of an ant, further supporting development of comparative language. *"It's as big as a tree!"*

The natural environment is filled with opportunities to identify and explore patterns, such as the structures of leaves or tree bark and the symmetry of butterfly or ladybird wings.



Other

Through technology like a rain gauge, children can use the information they gather to record and identify different weathers over time and make links to the seasons.

Spending time outdoors throughout the year supports children to explore and differentiate between seasons. Here, they can investigate why trees lose their leaves, why the weather gets colder or warmer, and what happens to plants and wildlife as the seasons change.



The outdoor environment can provide unique stimulus for expressive arts, this can include transient art, role play, loose part play, exploration of sounds and the creative use of spaces and resources.

As children engage with outdoors, they develop a love for nature, fostering respect for and a sense of responsibility over natural environments. This can be supported through simple acts such as learning how to care for plants in the nursery garden.

ROLE OF THE ADULT

Reading and hearing stories outdoors can be a highly sensory experience that supports children to become more fully immersed. Practitioners should give careful consideration to the stories they select in order to enhance this experience, making links to the outdoors that enable children to make connections.

When outdoors, children are often drawn to engage in risky play that may involve moving at speed, playing at heights, and engaging in rough and tumble play. Whilst this play requires supervision, practitioners should remain supportive in their interactions and questioning rather than preventative, for example *“do you think that branch is strong enough to hold your weight?”* or *“have you asked Lucas if they want to play this game?”*

It's important that staff seek to make activities as safe as possible without the removal of opportunities, striving to ensure that the provision works in a manner that promotes challenge and equity for all children. Staff should have a consistent shared vision regarding a risk-benefit approach and expectations for children.

Practitioners should encourage handwashing and promote good hygiene routines upon returning from outdoors.

ROOM STRUCTURE & LAYOUT

There are 7 outdoor core provision areas that should be provided: Discovery and Investigation, Building, Transport/Transportation, Physical, Imagination/Creativity, Shelter, and Nature.

Ideally, children should have free-flow access from indoors to outdoors. Whilst this may not always be possible due to the limitations of the building, children must have daily opportunities to access outdoors.

In order to ensure maintenance of outdoor resources, appropriate weather resistant storage is advised.



RESOURCE IDEAS

Discovery & Investigation - Natural materials, spades, trowels, buckets, pulleys, pipes, guttering, compasses, material, binoculars, magnifying glasses, metal detector, camera, microscope, reference books, paper, pencils

Building - Large and small blocks, wood, bricks, different length planks, pipes, hoses, guttering, bread crates, ropes, tyres (different sizes), recycled seats, wheels, clipboard, pencil, measuring tape

Transport/Transportation - 2 or 3 wheeled vehicles, trugs/pails/buckets, wheelbarrow, pram/buggy, watering can, some registration plates

Physical - Space for running, climbing, wheeled vehicles, trees, tyres, barrels, ropes, boxes, hills/slopes, balls, cones, traditional games

Imagination/Creativity - Leaves, sticks, brushes, mud, materials, scarves, paper, natural sounds, pots, pans, loose parts

Shelter - Dens, tarpaulin, pegs, tent, wigwam, hut, tree, willow, pallets, bread crates, material, big boxes

Nature - Water, ice, sticks, leaves, mud, stones, puddles, birds, bugs/bug hotel, sand/mud, planting/growing - plants, seeds



REFLECTION POINTS

- For settings unable to offer free flow access into a nursery garden, how are daily opportunities to access outdoors ensured?
- Do practitioners take a shared responsibility for outdoors? Can staff rotate, especially during extremes of weather?
- Are garden areas inviting, inspiring and well maintained? How are children encouraged to take responsibility over this area?
- Do staff conduct robust daily risk assessments prior to children arriving? Are children involved in age-appropriate risk assessments following this?
- Are outdoor observations recorded within Daily Responsive Planning? It's important to consider the valuable learning opportunities that can be captured within the outdoor space.

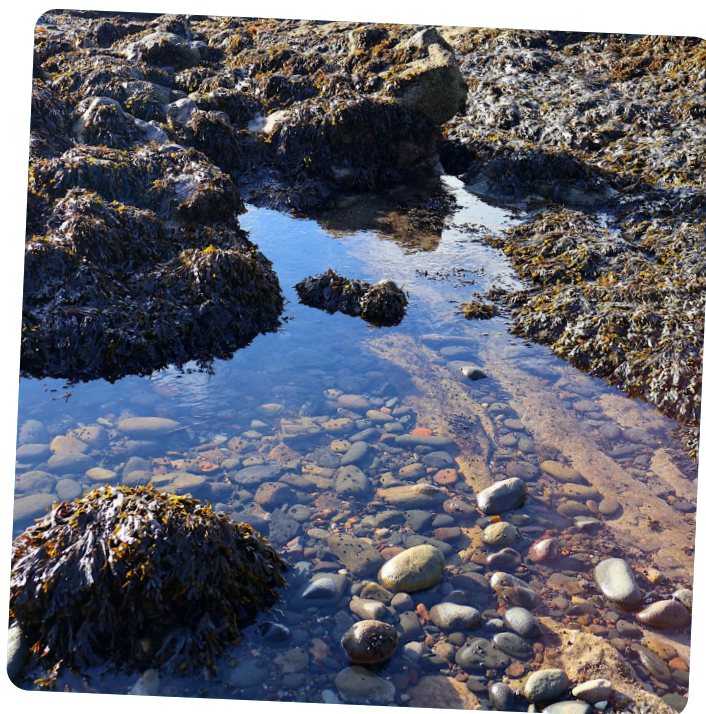
Did You Know?

Pre-schoolers should spend at least 3 hours per day participating in a variety of physical activity, including active and outdoor play.



NATURE KINDERGARTEN

Nature Kindergarten is rooted in the belief that children have an innate tendency to connect with the natural world. Spending time immersed in a natural environment, such as a beach or forest, supports children's physical, cognitive, emotional and social development.



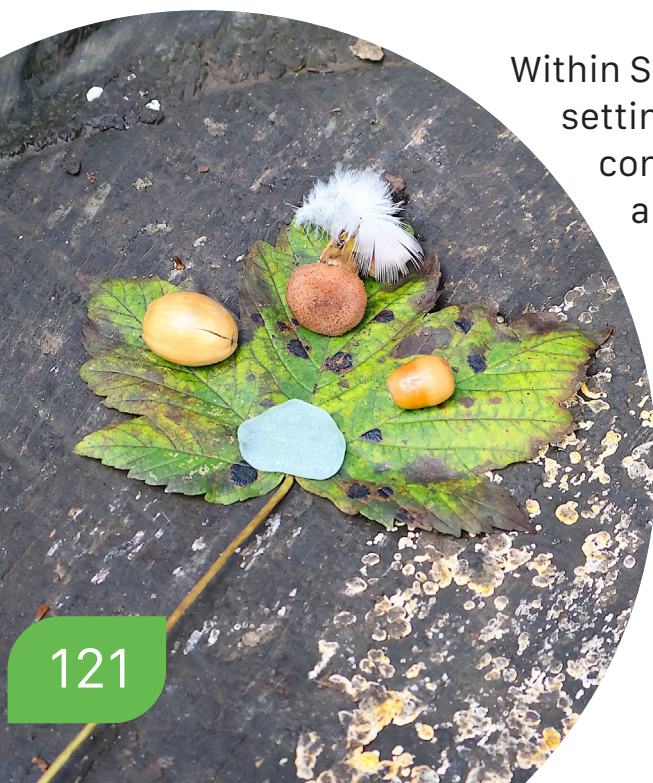
Rather than following a fixed curriculum, learning is guided by children's interests and interactions with their surrounding environment, with practitioners observing, supporting and extending learning based on what children are naturally drawn to.

The outdoor environment provides unique learning opportunities, ranging from physical and sensory experiences to complex social interactions and problem-solving that can help enhance children's resilience, independence, creativity and wellbeing.

Positive experiences within natural environments are fundamental to learning for sustainability, the development of progressive attitudes towards being outdoors, and the nurturing of children's sense of responsibility towards the natural environment.

Within Scotland, there is an expectation that Early Years settings facilitate opportunities for children to have contact with nature on a daily basis, to experience almost all weathers throughout different seasons, and to engage in manageable risk, appropriate challenge and free play.

A more thorough insight into Nature Kindergarten can be found in the dedicated *Nature Kindergarten in Fife* document.





Health & Wellbeing

Regular contact with nature helps to reduce stress, anxiety and illness whilst enhancing physical health, immunity, cognition and wellbeing through exposure to natural light, organic life, structures, textures and colours.

Through engaging with distinct challenges and play opportunities, children develop greater resilience, independence, self-esteem and confidence.

Negotiating features of the outdoor environment challenges children to run, jump, climb, balance and crawl.

Climbing trees, treading through sand, ascending slopes and navigating muddy paths supports development of gross-motor skills, coordination, balance and spatial awareness.

When supported to explore unpredictable environments and physical challenges, children learn to risk assess, consider their movements, judge distances, recognise hazards and assess their own capabilities, promoting greater independence and resilience.



Literacy

Using various natural materials and surfaces, children can engage in and experiment with mark-making. For example, using sticks or their fingers to write in sand or mud.



Through engaging with natural materials and environmental features, children can enhance their vocabulary, learning new words and phrases, such as pinecone, crustacean and fungus.

Collaborative activities like hanging hammocks, help children develop their communication skills and learn to follow and provide simple instructions. Children further develop their language and communication skills as they describe their creations and share experiences and ideas.

Maths & Numeracy

Natural environments provide opportunities to explore size, shape, symmetry and pattern. Children can identify and describe naturally occurring patterns and use natural resources to create their own.

Nature Kindergarten supports understanding of 'measure', analysing the height, weight, size and thickness of natural resources and features of the landscape, including the thickness of trees or the weight of logs, rocks, and pebbles.

As children explore, experiment and create within nature, building structures, bridges and dens, they have excellent opportunities to problem-solve. This can include adding more water to sand creations to make a more robust consistency or finding ways to construct a den that doesn't fall over.

Children can categorise, group and sort different items and materials, such as pinecones, leaves or shells according to size, shape, colour and texture.

Other



Children can observe, experience and discuss the transformation of natural spaces throughout different seasons. Exploration of why leaves fall in autumn and flowers bloom in spring supports understanding of nature's life cycles.

Immersed in environments abundant in plants, animals, insects and sea creatures, children can identify, engage with, and gain knowledge about the variety of living things found within nature and how these interact with the environment.

Positive experiences in nature support learning for sustainability, fostering children's appreciation for outdoor spaces and recognition of their environmental responsibility.

Natural environments provide unique opportunities for art, drama and creative expression, inspired by a range of stimuli and natural materials.

Nature Kindergarten enables children to explore technology that extends learning and curiosity, such as using magnifying glasses to examine leaf structures or investigate insects and sea creatures closely.



ROLE OF THE ADULT

It is essential that staff plan thoroughly for sessions, visiting the site beforehand. For beach specifically, it's vital to understand and ensure tide times are appropriate for the duration of the visit.

Practitioners must plan for the practicalities of Nature Kindergarten, including the journey to and from the site, risk assessments, toileting/handwashing arrangements, first-aid, and medication. A thorough list of considerations can be found within the *Nature Kindergarten in Fife* resource.

Nature Kindergarten may be the first time that a child experiences these environments and is therefore unfamiliar with the surroundings and play opportunities. Practitioners should scaffold learning and support children by modelling ways to engage with nature and its resources.

Some visits may include the use of fire bowls. Before providing these, staff must receive Nature Kindergarten training or dedicated fire bowl training. These courses provide necessary knowledge and information for starting and maintaining fires, safe practice, safety considerations, and insights into the different purposes for fire and the associated learning opportunities.

ROOM STRUCTURE & LAYOUT

Prior to visiting with children, practitioners must ensure the site is a safe, suitable space and conduct a dynamic risk assessment. Ensure there is a designated space that can provide children with privacy and maintain their dignity when toileting.

Consider how the groups presence may impact others. Equally, consider how sessions may be impacted by the public.

When appraising the site, consider if it is within reasonable walking distance or whether parent helpers/additional staff are required to meet ratios.

It is advisable to have shelter where children can find respite from the elements, for example, a tarpaulin. Likewise, children should be provided with a way to warm themselves on cold days: shelter, mats, hot drinks or a fire.



RESOURCE IDEAS

Backpack – First Aid kit, spare clothes, emergency contacts, risk-assessment, evolve

Den Building – Tarpaulin, metal pegs, spring pegs, rope, hammer/mallet, twine, scissors, hammock, knots guide, rigger gloves, vegetable peeler

Binoculars, magnifying glasses, camera, talking pegs, torches

Information/reference books and guides, paper, clip boards

Sieves, clear tubs for rock pooling, buckets, spades, nets

Water for handwashing, tissues, wipes and nappy sacks

Resources for fire making: kindling, flint and steel, cotton balls, Vaseline, fire gloves, fire blanket, kneeling mats, rope for setting boundaries, ceramic fire bowl

Snack, water, forest phone for emergencies



Using natural resources found in the woods to make a den.

REFLECTION POINTS

- When planning visits, do staff reflect on how to ensure quality experiences and rich learning opportunities? Is consideration given to group size, ratios and group dynamics? Do the number of children afford staff the necessary capacity to interact and extend learning in the moment? Remember, larger groups can sometimes result in 'crowd control' rather than engagement in quality interactions.
- Do practitioners possess an awareness and understanding of the learning opportunities and potential benefits inherent within Nature Kindergarten? In what ways can they use this knowledge to extend children's learning and provide appropriate challenge, supporting them to build and further develop their skills?
- Do staff adopt a risk-benefit approach to ensure that activities are safe without the removal of opportunities? It's important that practitioners remain mindful that the language they use is supportive rather than preventative. Staff should reflect on their own attitudes, biases and apprehensions surrounding risky play, considering how these may impact children.
- Are children afforded the opportunity to engage in Nature Kindergarten experiences over the course of the year, experiencing different types of weather and seasonal changes?
- In what way does the setting promote children's independence and personal responsibility? For example, do children carry their own backpack with spare clothing, a water bottle, and a piece of fruit?

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