

# Early Years Literacy Rich Learning Environment Toolkit



## Literacy Rich Environments

Children's language and literacy learning can thrive when surrounded by attuned adults and enabling environments that are rich and diverse in opportunities for developing listening and talking, reading and writing skills. A literacy rich environment emphasises the importance of using **interactions, experiences and spaces** effectively to facilitate high quality literacy opportunities.

### Practitioners in high quality provision:

- *highly value and promote child-initiated experiences and provide spaces to capitalise on children's interests and motivation.*
- *tune in to child-initiated activity and sensitively intervene to extend children's inquiry, problem solving and thinking skills.*
- *extend learning based on an understanding of developmental stage and interests, rather than providing adult directed activities that have little meaning for children.*
- *enable children to lead their own learning, including planning projects and solving their own problems.*

Realising the Ambition (2020), p.83



## Using the Toolkit

- This Literacy Rich Environment Toolkit can be used to help you and/or your team evaluate the experiences, interactions and spaces within your establishment.
- Use your evaluation to plan for identified areas of development.
- This toolkit is not intended to be used in its entirety at the one time, rather to focus on a particular aspect of literacy. This may be linked to an improvement plan outcome or development need you have identified. For example, if you are focusing on developing reading, you may first use the *reading spaces* pages to identify where you are and how you know, then plan next steps or actions in order to improve the spaces for reading within your establishment. You may then wish to repeat this process using the *reading interactions and experiences* pages to audit the effectiveness of the interactions and experiences currently provided to develop reading.



## Contents

Contents.....	2
Reading – Interactions and Experiences.....	3
Reading – Spaces.....	7
Writing – Interactions and Experiences.....	11
Writing – Spaces.....	14
Listening and Talking – Interactions and Experiences .....	17
Listening and Talking – Spaces.....	20
Phonological Awareness – Interactions and Experiences .....	22
Phonological Awareness – Spaces .....	24

## Reading – Interactions and Experiences

Reading	Where are we now?	How do you know?	Where would you like to be? (Actions)
<b>Interactions and Experiences</b>			
Reading is explicitly planned for e.g. <b>Interactive Shared Reading, Sparkle Words, Shooting for the SSTARs, Effective Questions and Think Alouds</b> , book of the month.			
There are opportunities for 1:1 and small group storytelling sessions.			
There are opportunities to retell stories through role play, e.g. fabrics for dressing up and a range of props.			
Children are involved in choosing books to read for enjoyment.			
Children are involved in recording books that have been read and enjoyed and/or voting for favourite stories/book of the month with adult support.			

# Early Years Literacy Rich Learning Environment Toolkit



Reading (cont.)	Where are we now?	How do you know?	Where would you like to be? (Actions)
<b>Interactions and Experiences</b>			
When reading aloud, all children can see the book easily e.g. small groups sitting on cushions in a semi-circle facing adult in centre.			
Children are encouraged to take an active role in story time within a group setting through an <b>Interactive Shared Reading</b> approach e.g. using props, saying repetitive refrain, rhyming words or sound elements.			
Children are invited to share books/stories daily in small groups and/or 1-1 to meet the needs of learners.			
Children with EAL have the opportunity to read and explore books at home with their parents/carers which have been read aloud in the nursery.			
Children are supported to use texts for real practical purposes e.g. using a recipe to bake, using a simple map.			

# Early Years Literacy Rich Learning Environment Toolkit



Reading (cont.)	Where are we now?	How do you know?	Where would you like to be? (Actions)
<b>Interactions and Experiences</b>			
When reading aloud, adults refer to some of the concepts of print e.g. pointing out the right way to hold a book, author, title, blurb etc. (You do not need to do this with every read.)			
Adults make use of <b>Think Alouds</b> , <b>Effective Questions</b> and following the child's lead, to turn book reading into a conversation.			
Adults make use of comments, <b>Think Alouds</b> and <b>Effective Questions</b> to promote discussion and children's understanding of <b>Story Elements</b> through <b>Interactive Shared Reading</b> .			
Adults seek opportunities, where appropriate, to reinforce <b>Phonological Awareness</b> when reading aloud e.g. rhyme, syllables and initial sounds.			
Adults regularly evaluate children's enjoyment and engagement with stories. (POLLI or Leuven Scale Observations may support adults' evaluation of children's engagement and involvement.)			

# Early Years Literacy Rich Learning Environment Toolkit



Reading (cont.)	Where are we now?	How do you know?	Where would you like to be? (Actions)
<b>Interactions and Experiences</b>			
Adults are available in the book corner out with planned story time experiences e.g. <b>Interactive Shared Reading</b> .			
Adults are aware of the children who engage with the book corner independently and those who only do so in adult organised activities.			
Adults tell/make up stories about their own life experiences and regularly share them with children.			
Parents/older children are invited into the nursery regularly for dual language storytelling sessions.			
Specialist storytellers are invited into the nursery or children visit the library for storytelling sessions.			

# Early Years Literacy Rich Learning Environment Toolkit



Reading (cont.)	Where are we now?	How do you know?	Where would you like to be? (Actions)
<b>Interactions and Experiences</b>			
Story sacks are used to promote family learning, these may include associated props, songs and rhymes and activities to extend engagement with the text.			
Adults and children visit the local library. This may involve listening to stories, selecting and borrowing books.			

## Reading – Spaces

Reading	Where are we now?	How do you know?	Where would you like to be? (Actions)
<b>Spaces</b>			
There is an inviting and comfy space for children to explore and enjoy texts, e.g. cushions, rugs, teddy and blanket baskets and soft lighting, books in a good state of repair.			
Books are displayed attractively and are easily accessible for the children e.g. a book case where children can see the front cover, small baskets of categorised books including areas of interest/non-fiction.			

# Early Years Literacy Rich Learning Environment Toolkit



Reading (cont.)	Where are we now?	How do you know?	Where would you like to be? (Actions)
<b>Spaces</b>			
Children’s favourite stories are readily available and other texts are rotated on a regular basis e.g. monthly.			
The books available suit the developmental stages of learners in your spaces e.g. board books, picture and photo books, lift the flap books, noisy books, rhyming books.			
There are resources available which enable children to retell familiar stories through play e.g. magnetic board and characters/ puppets/ props/ story spoons/ story sacks.			
There are a range of child friendly texts available throughout the spaces e.g. recipes/menus in the home corner, maps/construction plans in block area.			
There are a range of signs/labels, with pictures, around your spaces e.g. labelling resources/areas, hand washing.			



# Early Years Literacy Rich Learning Environment Toolkit



Reading (cont.)	Where are we now?	How do you know?	Where would you like to be? (Actions)
<b>Spaces</b>			
There is a variety of writing on display e.g. hand written, printed, other languages, Braille, child's writing/drawing.			
There are examples of print in the environment placed at children's eye level and adults seek opportunities to discuss these with children, when appropriate e.g. hand washing poster, instructions for making playdough, weather chart, labels on equipment.			
A variety of script that represents your EAL families is available within the environment e.g. food packaging in the home corner, numerals, celebration cards (Eid, Chinese New Year etc.).			
Children with EAL have opportunities to see their name in English, and their home language e.g. on coat peg.			
Children's artwork/writing is displayed and there are annotations on display alongside e.g. child's description of their artwork.			

# Early Years Literacy Rich Learning Environment Toolkit



Reading (cont.)	Where are we now?	How do you know?	Where would you like to be? (Actions)
<b>Spaces</b>			
There is an attractive alphabet visible at child height.			
There is a visual calendar and timetable that children can engage with daily.			

\*\*\* Please also refer to the Phonological Awareness section of the audit \*\*\*



## Writing – Interactions and Experiences

Writing	Where are we now?	How do you know?	Where would you like to be? (Actions)
<b>Interactions and Experiences</b>			
There are opportunities for children to write in role and through imaginative play e.g. envelopes, stamps, cards, letters in the 'Post Office', creating a treasure map, sending a get-well card.			
There is a multi-sensory approach to early writing and mark making e.g. sand, playdough, shaving foam, gloop.			
Children are involved in creating texts for a purpose e.g. shopping lists, self-registration, signs and labels			
Children are encouraged to write and communicate with others for a purpose e.g. letters, post cards, birthday cards.			
Children know where they can find their name to copy or to stick on a picture they have created.			

# Early Years Literacy Rich Learning Environment Toolkit



Writing (cont.)	Where are we now?	How do you know?	Where would you like to be? (Actions)
<b>Interactions and Experiences</b>			
Children have opportunities to develop gross motor skills e.g. sweeping up leaves, washing cars, running, jumping, balancing etc.			
Children have opportunities to develop fine motor skills e.g. encouraging pincer grip through playing with pegs, lacing, threading, using tools etc.			
Children have opportunities to cross the midline through a range of active experiences e.g. reaching across the body to grab object, throwing and catching, popping bubbles, drawing large pictures on paper, sand or mud.			
Children have opportunities to develop bilateral coordination e.g. connecting and separating construction toys, throwing and catching, threading, unscrewing jars, obstacle courses.			
Adults scribe children's ideas and stories for them e.g. <b>story acting.</b>			

# Early Years Literacy Rich Learning Environment Toolkit



Writing (cont.)	Where are we now?	How do you know?	Where would you like to be? (Actions)
<b>Interactions and Experiences</b>			
Adults model writing for a purpose in a variety of contexts e.g. shopping list for snack, marking the register for attendance.			
Adults support and encourage children to contribute to collaborative writing e.g. story maps, labelling model constructed by group.			
Adults support and encourage children to create their own texts, e.g. stories, songs, poems, posters.			

# Early Years Literacy Rich Learning Environment Toolkit



## Writing – Spaces

Writing	Where are we now?	How do you know?	Where would you like to be? (Actions)
<b>Spaces</b>			
<p>There are a variety of tools available for writing and mark making e.g. whiteboard pens, chunky crayons, triangular pencils, chalk, paint brushes, rollers, stampers, pastels, paint. Ensure these tools are fit for purpose e.g. pencils sharpened, pens have ink.</p>			
<p>An attractive variety of sizes, colours and types of paper, e.g. card, envelopes, sticky notes, labels, postcards, writing frames, lined and square paper.</p>			
<p>There are a variety of horizontal and vertical writing surfaces e.g. white boards, chalk boards, easels, on and under tables.</p>			
<p>There are materials for children to make their own books, including resources to join paper, card etc. e.g. paper clips, Sellotape, masking tape, stapler, hole punch, string, ribbon, paper fasteners.</p>			

# Early Years Literacy Rich Learning Environment Toolkit



Writing (cont.)	Where are we now?	How do you know?	Where would you like to be? (Actions)
<b>Spaces</b>			
Other resources such as, rulers, adapted scissors, erasers are available.			
There is a portable writing caddy available to the children.			
Children's names and common words e.g. mum, dad, happy birthday are available for children to write/copy.			
An alphabet and number line are displayed with letters and numbers available and accessible to children.			
Magnetic boards and letters are available.			

# Early Years Literacy Rich Learning Environment Toolkit



Writing (cont.)	Where are we now?	How do you know?	Where would you like to be? (Actions)
<b>Spaces</b>			
There are puppets and story props available for children to create their own stories and texts.			
There are examples of writing in scripts relevant to the children e.g. home language.			
Writing and drawing is encouraged across the learning environment e.g. tools to make menus in the house corner, brushes with water outside.			
There are a range of cardboard boxes, tubes etc. which children can construct with and add marks to ( <b>Deconstructed Role Play</b> ).			



# Early Years Literacy Rich Learning Environment Toolkit



## Listening and Talking – Interactions and Experiences

Listening and Talking	Where are we now?	How do you know?	Where would you like to be? (Actions)
<b>Interactions and Experiences</b>			
Children are encouraged to talk and share experiences, thoughts, ideas and feelings. (Use of <b>Extending Conversations and Observing, Waiting and Listening</b> can support this.)			
Children have opportunities to listen and talk as individuals, in small groups, larger groups and play contexts.			
Children are supported to take turns in group discussions and shared experiences.			
Children have opportunities to watch for useful or interesting information, making links to what they know e.g. information video, digital texts.			
Children are encouraged to explore songs, rhymes and chants using props within their free play.			

# Early Years Literacy Rich Learning Environment Toolkit



Listening and Talking (cont.)	Where are we now?	How do you know?	Where would you like to be? (Actions)
<b>Interactions and Experiences</b>			
Children are encouraged to explore events and characters in stories and other texts, retelling them in imaginative play contexts e.g. using puppets and props or through role play. <b>(Story Elements)</b>			
Children are encouraged to talk about their likes and dislikes relating to stories and other texts and begin to explain preferences.			
Adults support children’s understanding of stories through exploring <b>Story Elements</b> , using <b>Think Alouds</b> and <b>Effective Questioning</b> .			
Adults support and plan for children’s engagement in songs, rhymes and chants through exploring these in imaginative and creative ways e.g. puppets and props.			
Adults use children’s own experiences and interests to promote communication, conversation and expression. (Use of <b>Extending Conversations</b> can support this.)			

# Early Years Literacy Rich Learning Environment Toolkit



Listening and Talking (cont.)	Where are we now?	How do you know?	Where would you like to be? (Actions)
<b>Interactions and Experiences</b>			
Adults listen attentively to children to extend their learning and encourage children to participate in conversations. (Use of <b>Observing, Waiting and Listening</b> can support this.)			
Adults make use of children’s conversational style and/or TALK strategies in order to match the level of language to the children.			
Adults make use of strategies to develop children’s vocabulary e.g. <b>Sparkle Words</b> and <b>Shooting for the SSTARS</b> .			
Adults model asking questions and thinking aloud to support children in asking and answering questions. ( <b>Effective Questions</b> and <b>Think Alouds</b> )			
Adults sit alongside children during snack and lunch times to model, support and facilitate conversation and discussion (Use of <b>Extending Conversations</b> can support this).			

# Early Years Literacy Rich Learning Environment Toolkit



## Listening and Talking – Spaces

Listening and Talking	Where are we now?	How do you know?	Where would you like to be? (Actions)
<b>Spaces</b>			
Digital technology is used to give children opportunities to hear songs, rhymes or stories independently and where possible match texts on display in the book area e.g. QR Codes, SMARTboard, CD's.			
Props for storytelling are available in the book corner to allow children to retell stories independently e.g. materials, story spoons, story stones, puppets.			
Interesting provocations are set up which encourage curiosity and stimulate conversation e.g. tuff trays, curiosity cube, interest table, unusual images and photographs.			
There are quiet spaces available to encourage conversation with peers e.g. tepee with cushions.			

# Early Years Literacy Rich Learning Environment Toolkit



Listening and Talking (cont.)	Where are we now?	How do you know?	Where would you like to be? (Actions)
<b>Spaces</b>			
Musical instruments are available for children to listen and discriminate sounds as well as syllable segmentation.			
There are wall displays of favourite songs and rhymes, with rhyming spoons/stones available to enable children's choice when reciting rhymes.			
The snack space is inviting to encourage listening and talking and sharing of experiences.			

\*\*\* Please also refer to the Phonological Awareness section of the audit \*\*\*

# Early Years Literacy Rich Learning Environment Toolkit



## Phonological Awareness – Interactions and Experiences

Phonological Awareness	Where are we now?	How do you know?	Where would you like to be? (Actions)
<b>Interactions and Experiences</b>			
There are frequent, spontaneous opportunities for children to enjoy participating in songs, rhymes and chants.			
Children are encouraged to explore and play with patterns and sounds of language e.g. clapping games, jingles, alliterative rhymes and stories, rhyming snap, tongue twisters.			
Adults seek opportunities, where appropriate, to reinforce phonological awareness when reading aloud e.g. rhyme, syllables and initial sounds.			
Children have the opportunity to engage in a variety of listening games e.g. sound walks, sound lotto, matching sounds (instruments/everyday objects), Guess Who is Calling Me. <b>(listening)</b>			
There are lots of opportunities for children to hear, sing and discuss rhymes in relevant other languages. <b>(rhyme)</b>			

# Early Years Literacy Rich Learning Environment Toolkit



Phonological Awareness (cont.)	Where are we now?	How do you know?	Where would you like to be? (Actions)
<b>Interactions and Experiences</b>			
Adults promote opportunities for children to enjoy the rhyming components of songs and rhymes e.g. identifying rhyming words, generating rhyming words. <b>(rhyme)</b>			
Children are given opportunities to listen and respond to the sounds and rhythms of words through clapping and music games, e.g. clapping the syllables of own and others names, breaking words of interest into syllables. <b>(syllabification)</b>			
Children are given opportunities to use and explore initial sounds e.g. identifying initial sound of own and familiar names, matching pairs of objects with the same initial sound. <b>(initial sounds)</b>			
Adults are aware of the importance of using 'pure sounds' and use this knowledge to talk about letter sounds as well as letter names. <b>(initial sounds)</b>			

For further ideas on experiences and interactions to support Phonological Awareness scan the QR code:



## Phonological Awareness – Spaces

Phonological Awareness	Where are we now?	How do you know?	Where would you like to be? (Actions)
<b>Spaces</b>			
There is a listening station for children to access stories, songs and rhymes independently e.g. QR codes. <b>(listening)</b>			
Musical instruments are accessible to children. <b>(listening)</b>			
Resources that support children to discriminate different sounds are freely available e.g. shakers with different sounds to pair up, sound lotto. <b>(listening)</b>			
Grab and go sound bags with everyday objects are available e.g. keys, crisp packet, bubble wrap. <b>(listening)</b>			
Texts within your book area have strong examples of rhyme and opportunities to explore syllables and initial sounds.			



# Early Years Literacy Rich Learning Environment Toolkit



Phonological Awareness (cont.)	Where are we now?	How do you know?	Where would you like to be? (Actions)
<b>Spaces</b>			
Grab and go syllable bags with real objects are available e.g. ball, bucket, crocodile, helicopter. <b>(syllabification)</b>			
Grab and go initial sound bags with real objects are available e.g. spotty sock, snake, spoon. <b>(initial sounds)</b>			