**Play Pedagogy Audit Toolkit**

This audit will help you identify areas for development and strengths of your practice in Play Pedagogy. It will support you to identify next steps in your play journey. It can also be used to measure and compare practice before and after a focus for improvement.

The tool is divided into sections that examine the balance of child-led, adult-initiated, and adult-led learning contexts. It also focuses on the learning environment and assessments and observations.

* **Child led learning**: Practitioners follow children’s thinking: resources, experiences and outcomes are freely chosen by the child and controlled by the child. This may or may not involve direct interaction with the adult.
* **Adult-initiated learning**: Practitioner’s fathom/ignite children’s thinking-the adult sets up a starting point, invitation, provocation or stimulus with planned intentions and then stands back to wait, watch and wonder. Children engage independently until the adult joins to observe, interact or enhance learning.
* **Adult-led learning**: Practitioners focus children’s thinking-the adult has planned objectives/outcomes and stays with children whilst learning takes place.

Each section takes account of current guidance from Realising the Ambition as well as the work of leading researchers. The section will guide you through some of the main aspects of practice that will lead to quality Interactions, Experiences and Spaces for our children.

In terms of identifying next steps, think of a few focus statements which can be prioritised and focussed in your future practice. It may also be helpful to think in terms of what you want to change, by when and what the impact will be.

**A logo with puzzle pieces

Description automatically generated**This document will be used by NLC as a before and after snapshot of practice, but as a practitioner this should be used as a working document, to continue to refer to and self-evaluate your journey. Some priorities may be short-term and others longer-term but it is important to continue to monitor and re-assess priorities on a regular basis.

***For each section, there are features of highly effective practice, challenge questions and examples illustrating what highly effective practice looks like. This will help support you in completing the self-evaluation audit.***

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| **RAG Definitions** | | | | **Scale Definitions** | |
| **Red = Not Developed** – development work has not started  **Amber = Developing** – this area is currently being developed and monitored  **Green = Established** – this area is something we have worked on a lot and are confident with | | | | 1 = This is not an area we have developed or understand much about at present  2 = We understand a bit about this but are not yet ready to put it into practice  3 = We know lots about this subject but still need some help putting it into practice  4 = We know lots about this subject and are using it to guide our practice and support our children  5 = We can confidently talk about this subject, share our practice with others and use our knowledge to support children and other practitioners. | |
| Balance and Make Up of Learning and Teaching Approaches | | | | | |
| **High Quality Exemplification**  Staff have engaged well with the national practice guidance and provide a pedagogical approach that offers flexible learning opportunities, where all children experience a balance of child-led, adult-initiated, and adult-led learning throughout the day or week. Practitioners provide a mixture of responsive and intentionally planned, high-quality learning experiences that are well matched to children’s needs and interests. Continuous provision is carefully planned and well resourced, enabling our children to lead their learning, learn new skills and knowledge, challenge their thinking and embed concepts. By providing a balance of learning and teaching approaches through a variety of meaningful contexts, effective challenge and support is provided for learners. Our learners are successful, confident, responsible and contribute effectively to their learning. | | | | **Challenge Questions**   * How much account is taken of the national practice guidance when designing the curriculum structure? * To what extent does the curriculum experienced by learners reflect our rationale? * To what extent does our curriculum structure promote equity and raise attainment for our learners? How do we know? * How well does our curriculum structure enable learners to develop the four capacities? * How confident are we that all learners experience learning opportunities that are varied, differentiated, active, and provide effective challenge and support? * To what extent do you plan for the balance of child-led, teacher-initiated and teacher-led learning? Is this flexible? | |
| **Audit Statement** | **RAG Status** | | **Scale** | **What are you doing now and how do you know?** | **What are you going to do next?** |
| **There is a balance of child-led, teacher-initiated and teacher directed learning within the classroom setting.** |  | |  |  |  |
| **Child-led (free) play is flexible throughout the week e.g. some days or time slots may have more free play than others.** |  | |  |  |  |
| Child-led Learning | | | | | |
| **High Quality Exemplification**  Our learning environment is well planned and well resourced, with practitioners using creative teaching approaches to enrich and support child-led learning. We set high standards for our children, as they manage and lead their own learning. Throughout the day, children have opportunities to engage in child-led play, promoting curiosity, independence, collaboration and application, while fostering higher-order thinking skills in all learners. Teachers demonstrate a clear understanding of their role during child-led play. They are skilled in using effective questioning, think-alouds, and modelling to further facilitate progression and inquiry during child-led play. | | | | **Challenge Questions**   * How confident are we that our learning zones are providing children rich experiences that provide challenge and support? * How do we plan, track and document child-led learning? How do we know how effective this is? * How confident are you in knowing your role as the adult during child-led learning? * To what extent is child-led learning an integral part of the structure of your day? E.g. is it valued as part of the learning process or is it a ‘fast finisher task’? * To what extent does child-led learning promote independence e.g. whose responsibility is resource management? * How well are learners enabled to select and make use of high-quality resources including digital technologies? | |
| **Audit Statement** | **RAG Status** | | **Scale** | **What are you doing now and how do you know?** | **What are you going to do next?** |
| **Free play is an integral part of the school day, not just something for children to do when ‘finished their work’** |  | |  |  |  |
| **Children can choose to play in groups, pairs or alone.** |  | |  |  |  |
| **Children play with materials when, where and how they wish (within reason), self-selecting play resources.** |  | |  |  |  |
| **The adult supports child-led play using strategies such as open questioning, unspoken acknowledgement, think alouds, but does not take over the play. The adult allows children to find out for themselves.** |  | |  |  |  |
| **The adult provides ‘scaffolding’ for some children to enable them to access all areas/resources in the learning environment.** |  | |  |  |  |
| Adult-initiated Learning | | | | | |
| **High Quality Exemplification**  Adult-initiated learning is well planned using CfE Experiences and Outcomes to ensure progression and meet the needs of all learners. Literacy, Numeracy, Health and Wellbeing and Digital are embedded and woven throughout all learning ‘zones’/spaces. For adult-initiated learning, teachers provide meaningful starting points (invitations, provocations, themes, or stimuli) and ensure learning experiences involve real-life contexts. Our children are active participants who are fully engaged, highly motivated and interact well during activities. All adults are responsive and use experiences and outcomes to provide high-quality stimuli and engaging spaces that children can explore through open-ended learning. | | | | **Challenge Questions**   * To what extent are learning intentions and success criteria shared with learners? To what extent can learners identify their next steps in learning? * To what extent are Literacy, Numeracy, Health and Wellbeing and Digital embedded in each learning zone? * To what extent does learning involve real-life contexts? * How confident are you in ensuring responsive planning is meeting the needs of all learners? How do you know? * How confident are we that all learners experience learning opportunities that are differentiated and provide effective challenge and support? * To what extent do children engage with learning provocations? | |
| **Audit Statement** | **RAG Status** | | **Scale** | **What are you doing now and how do you know?** | **What are you going to do next?** |
| **Adult-initiated learning is planned for with specific learning outcomes intended.** |  | |  |  |  |
| **Literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing and digital are embedded and woven throughout all play opportunities and provide the learners with real life experiences.** |  | |  |  |  |
| **The adult introduces a starting point, invitation, provocation, theme or stimulus to the play.** |  | |  |  |  |
| **Some resources are used to support, develop and embed a taught concept.** |  | |  |  |  |
| **The adult is responsive and builds on children’s current interests to provide resources and spaces that encourage children to explore these interests through play.** |  | |  |  |  |
| Adult-led Learning | | | | | |
| **High Quality Exemplification**  Adult-led learning ensures appropriate progression for all learners. The learning is based on the experiences, outcomes and curriculum design principles (progression, coherence, breadth, depth, challenge and relevance).  We plan using progressive pathways to meet the needs of learners across all areas of the curriculum. We use a variety of assessment approaches to allow learners to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding, skills, attributes and capabilities in different learning contexts across the curriculum. Our assessments provide reliable evidence which we use to report on the progress of children. All practitioners provide high-quality, teacher-led learning in Literacy and Numeracy daily, sharing Learning Intentions, Success Criteria, and Quality Feedback to inform and support progress in learning. | | | | **Challenge Questions**   * To what extent are learning intentions and success criteria shared with learners? To what extent can learners identify their next steps in learning? * How is feedback given to children? How often and in what form? * To what extent does learning reflect the 7 Curriculum Design Principles? * How well do we apply the principles of planning, observation, assessment, recording and reporting as an integral feature of learning and teaching? * How well do our questioning strategies enhance the learners’ experience and enable higher order thinking skills? * How well do we enable all children and young people to engage in self- and peer-assessment to improve their learning? How do we know this benefits learning? * How well do we deploy a wide variety of innovative and creative resources and teaching approaches, including digital technologies? * How flexible is adult-led learning? Do you consider appropriate support and challenge rather than a one-size fits all approach? | |
| **Audit Statement** | **RAG Status** | | **Scale** | **What are you doing now and how do you know?** | **What are you going to do next?** |
| **Adult-led learning is planned for in advance with specific learning intentions and success criteria. It involves providing feedback to children and ensures breadth, challenge and application.** |  | |  |  |  |
| **Adult recognises that new and specific concepts and skills require direct teaching e.g. phonics, reading, addition and subtraction. This can be done in groups, whole class or individually.** |  | |  |  |  |
| **Adult gives children a variety of opportunities to demonstrate learning and skills. E.g. orally, written, drawing, ICT etc.** |  | |  |  |  |
| **Direct teaching time is flexible, if a child or group ‘gets’ the concept quickly they can re-join the play allowing more teaching time for other children, similarly the time can be used to extend and challenge children.** |  | |  |  |  |
| **Adult-led learning time can happen simultaneously with child-led or adult-initiated play, adult withdrawing children to support or challenge appropriately.** |  | |  |  |  |
| **Adult-led teaching can follow on from observing children’s play e.g. can start from the child’s current place of learning.** |  | |  |  |  |
| Assessment and Observation | | | | | |
| **High Quality Exemplification**  Assessment is integral to our planning of learning and teaching. We use a variety of assessment approaches to allow learners to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in different contexts across the curriculum. Play observations are used alongside other assessment tools to measure and document progression across the curriculum. Teachers are confident in using these assessments to make informed decisions about planning, learning and teaching. Observations, pupil voice, achievement and evidence are used to build a holistic picture of the learners’ progress, attainment and achievement. | | | | **Challenge Questions**   * How well do we apply the principles of planning, observation, assessment, recording and reporting as an integral feature of learning and teaching? * To what extent are observations of play used? What is the purpose e.g to document the development of knowledge, understanding and skills; what format are they; what is their impact on learners? * Are a range of assessment tools used to measure progression across the curriculum? Consider the purpose and impact of these. * How well do we enable all children and young people to engage in self- and peer-assessment to improve their learning? How do we know this benefits learning? * How do we share assessment information with learners and parents? | |
| **Audit Statement** | **RAG Status** | | **Scale** | **What are you doing now and how do you know?** | **What are you going to do next?** |
| **Adults observe and record children’s play with specific reference to knowledge and skills developed.** |  | |  |  |  |
| **Adults use play observations as evidence of attainment and achievement within literacy, numeracy, HWB etc.** |  | |  |  |  |
| **The adult uses a range of different assessments to measure learners’ progress across the curriculum, these can be through observations or assessments during adult-led learning.** |  | |  |  |  |
| **Effective approaches to observation are integral to making informed decisions about planning, teaching and learning.** |  | |  |  |  |
| **Children’s voice – children are given daily opportunities to reflect on their learning and experiences. (Self and Peer Assessment)** |  | |  |  |  |
| **Observations and evidence should be used holistically to build a picture of the child’s achievements and attainment. (These could be shared on appropriate learning platforms)** |  | |  |  |  |
| The Learning Environment | | | | | |
| **High Quality Exemplification**  The ethos of the learning environment is positive, nurturing and reflects a commitment to children’s rights. Children enjoy rich, meaningful interactions, experiences, and spaces that are thoughtfully designed and appropriately challenging. Children choose from a variety of stimulating resources and, fostering their sense of independence. A range of play contexts are clearly defined, providing a variety of opportunities for different types of play e.g. creative, role play, construction, discovery, outdoor etc. Learners independently explore learning zones during free play, demonstrating ownership and responsibility in maintaining their learning environment. Digital learning is used effectively across the curriculum to support and extend learning. Children are actively involved in regularly monitoring and adapting the environment, ensuring purposeful and safe engagement. Wall displays are interactive and meaningful to the current learning. | | | | **Challenge Questions**   * To what extent do you engage with national practice guidance to design a high-quality environment that meets the needs of the learners? * To what extent do you consider the interactions, experiences and spaces that will meet the needs of learners? Are children involved in this? * Are resources accessible for all children? E.g. clearly labelled with visuals, have a place where children can self-select and tidy away, involve personalisation and choice, do children have ownership of resources? * Are resources stimulating? How do we know? (e.g. are the learners engaged, motivated, curious?) * Is technology used to support and extend learning? * To what extent is the environment language and communication friendly? (e.g. visual timetables, visual prompts/supports) * To what extent do children interact with the wall displays? Are they purposeful? How do you know? * To what extent does the variety of learning zones provide purposeful learning opportunities? How do you know? * To what extent does the learning environment provide opportunities for quality experiences and interactions? How do you know? * How confident are you in determining the quality of spaces provided? Are audits of the environment completed regularly? Are the children involved? * To what extent is outdoor learning used as a space to provide high quality learning opportunities? | |
| **Audit Statement** | **RAG Status** | | **Scale** | **What are you doing now and how do you know?** | **What are you going to do next?** |
| **The learning environment is set up to provide children with high quality interactions, experiences and spaces and not just to look ‘pretty’.** |  | |  |  |  |
| **Resources are available for children to self-select, arranged and labelled so children can see them and make choices for themselves.** |  | |  |  |  |
| **Technology is used to support and extend learning.** |  | |  |  |  |
| **The environment is language and communication friendly e.g. resources labelled with pictures and words, visual timetables etc.** |  | |  |  |  |
| **Wall displays are interactive and meaningful to the current learning.** |  | |  |  |  |
| **A range of play contexts or zones are clearly defined and allow opportunities for different types of play e.g. creative, role play, construction, discovery, outdoor etc. Children can move freely to different areas during child-led play.** |  | |  |  |  |
| **Some of the free play resources are open ended – they do not determine the outcome e.g. loose parts** |  | |  |  |  |
| **Adults regularly monitor and adapt the environment, e.g. is an area not being used as much as others? What provocation/resources could be added instead?** |  | |  |  |  |
| **Children have access to a quiet/calm space.** |  | |  |  |  |
| **Children are responsible for tidying and cleaning the areas and are encouraged to take ownership of their environment.** |  | |  |  |  |
| **Outdoor play opportunities reflect the same principles as indoor e.g. adult looking to up-level the play through open questions, I wonder etc.** |  | |  |  |  |
| Summary for Action | | | | | |
| **Area** | | **Judging from RAG, prioritise the section 1-6 (1 being highest priority)** | | **Focus for change?** | **By When?** |
| Balance and Make Up of Learning and Teaching Approaches | |  | |  |  |
| Child-led Learning | |  | |  |  |
| Adult-initiated Learning | |  | |  |  |
| Adult-led Learning | |  | |  |  |
| Assessment and Observation | |  | |  |  |
| The Learning Environment | |  | |  |  |