East Sussex
County Council

Appendices
A-H

Appendix
Contents

A. Emotional Environment
B. 0 - 2 indoor and outdoor emotional and physical provision
C. Audits   1. Role play   2. Creative   3. Sand/water   4. Malleable/messy   5. Book sharing and story telling   6. Mark making   7. Exploration and investigation   8. Construction   9. Small world   10. Music and singing   11. Problem solving and mathematical thinking   12. Physical – fine and gross motor
D. Good practice guidance   1. Role play   2. Creative   3. Sand/water   4. Malleable/messy   5. Book sharing and story telling   6. Mark making   7. Exploration and investigation   8. Construction   9. Small world   10. Music and singing   11. Problem solving and mathematical thinking   12. Physical –fine and gross motor
E. Preferred Learning Styles/Schemas
F. The Importance of Play
G. Wellbeing and Involvement
H. Every Child a Talker

Emotional Environment Audit

Consider your settings provision in terms of the emotional environment and ask yourself the following questions. You may wish to use these questions as the basis of a staff discussion.

- ❑ Do the key persons make time to build secure attachments with their key children?
- ❑ Do all the children and their parents /carers feel welcome in the setting?
- ❑ Is every child and their parent/carer greeted as they arrive at the setting?
- ❑ Are children supported to separate from their parent/carers and settle in the setting?
- ❑ Do the key persons talk regularly with the parent/carers to ensure that a strong parent partnership is developed?
- ❑ How does the setting help fathers to feel welcome?
- ❑ Are all the children's physical needs met with patience and kindness?
- ❑ Do practitioners adapt their routines to meet children's needs?
- ❑ As a team do all the practitioners follow a consistent approach and have consistent expectations of themselves and the children?
- ❑ Are the behaviour strategies developmentally appropriate for the children in the setting?
- ❑ Are the behaviour strategies for the setting arrived at in consultation with the children?
- ❑ Are the settings behaviour strategies shared with parent/carers?
- ❑ Do practitioners explain to parents why it is important to support emotional development?
- ❑ Do practitioners give children strategies to calm down?
- ❑ Do practitioners help children to cope with their fears and anxieties?
- ❑ Do practitioners support children to explore and consider the needs and feelings of others?
- ❑ Do practitioners make time and opportunities for children to explore and discuss their feelings?
- ❑ Do practitioners help all children to recognise and name their feelings?
- ❑ Do practitioners model good emotional responses to children and other adults in the setting?
- ❑ Do practitioners encourage children to explore different ways of expressing their emotions, for example through dance or by using mark making resources to express their emotions pictorially?
- ❑ Are boys and girls equally encouraged and supported to explore their emotions?
- ❑ Is there an area where children can go to be quiet and alone?
- ❑ Are the children aware that they can access the quiet/cosy area at all times?
- ❑ Do all children have a place to keep their own possessions?
- ❑ Are the resources used developmentally appropriate for the age and stage of the group of children currently at the setting?
- ❑ Are books used to support emotional development?
- ❑ Do practitioners ask children how they feel about being in the setting and what they would like to change?
- ❑ Do practitioners support the development of sharing and turn taking skills?
- ❑ Do practitioners know how to respond to discriminatory comments?
- ❑ Do practitioners observe and assess children's wellbeing?
- ❑ Are there strategies for encouraging 'reluctant' children to express their emotions?
- ❑ Do all practitioners feel supported and part of the team?

Are practitioners confident in how to support the emotional environment?

0 - 2 emotional and physical continuous provision

Date:

Check	Y/N	Comments
Transition		
Is each family and child greeted warmly by the key person?		
Is each child supported to settle by their key person? (some will need longer than others) Is information collected to enable the child to settle, such as use special names for comfort objects or family members like grandparents?		
Does the key person have one to one time with unsettled child and is the team flexible enough to support this?		
Does the key person use individual and appropriate strategies to settle?		
Are greeting and departure times used by the key person as information sharing times and an opportunity to share ideas on how to carry on interests at home?		
Is information on children's learning and development is shared with other settings the children attend?		
Are photographs and feedback shared with parents on the first session and following sessions in nursery?		
Do key persons share information to ensure continuity of care and routines?		
Do you have a transition policy to support continuity of care when children are changing rooms?		
Attachment and Wellbeing		
Is the atmosphere positive, warm and accepting?		
Do practitioners value the bond between themselves, their key children and family?		
Is the key person spending regular quality one to one time with each of their children to develop and maintain attachments?		

Are practitioners seen to continue to give particular support and care to their key children throughout their time in the baby room?		
Do practitioners value the use and accessibility of comfort objects?		
Do practitioners make natural reference to the children's friends, family and home experiences?		
Are practitioners positively introducing experiences to the children?		
Do practitioners make experiences enjoyable and model attentive behaviour?		
Are practitioners at child level whenever possible?		
Do practitioners treat all children equally and actively support children to do the same?		
Do practitioners acknowledge and give voice to the children's feelings, needs and concerns?		
Do practitioners support children to play along side each other?		
Do practitioners make the children feel confident that their needs will be met? (which will then allow the children to be generous to their peers as a first step to sharing)		
Do practitioners show appreciation of children's efforts and achievements through genuine use of praise and non-verbal communication methods?		
Are practitioners aware of/identify when a child needs support to overcome challenge?		
Do practitioners have high expectations for all children and promote a 'can do' atmosphere?		
Do practitioners show respect for children at all times, for example, listening attentively, making eye contact, positive comments?		
Do practitioners show awareness of the whole group even when working with one child or small group, for example, scanning the room frequently?		
Do you include a relaxed time every day for children to rest in the room?		
Are expectations for behaviour appropriate for age and developmental level of children?		

Do all practitioners have consistent expectations of children's behaviour?		
Do all practitioners have consistent strategies to support children's behaviour?		
Are all parents/carers aware of developmental expectations and familiar with the behaviour policy?		
Are students/volunteers encouraged to develop positive relationships with the children?		
Physical environment		
Is the room homely, uncluttered and orderly?		
Is the space well maintained and inviting?		
Is the room set up for children to move easily and to support cruising such as stable child height furniture 2-3 steps apart?		
Do you provide interesting surfaces to lie on and explore such as lamb skin, textured rugs?		
Do you have suitable flooring for crawling on and equipment to crawl through and under indoors and outdoors?		
Is there a rest/cosy area (with soft lighting and cushions) for babies to play and other children to have quiet watchful times indoors and outdoors?		
Are there spaces for toddlers to play alone?		
Are there mirrors and photographs of familiar faces displayed at children's eye level?		
Is the play space organised so that children can see and choose what to play with and have a good chance of finding what they are looking for?		
Are resources clearly labelled with photographs (or a piece of the resource) as well as printed words?		
Do children have free access to all resources that are on display?		
Are children able to move resources from one place to another and combine resources to support their play?		
Are special resources which require practitioner support visible for children to request?		
Are items that are not intended for children to use stored away?		

Have all broken and tatty resources been removed?		
Do displays show children's different development stages and the different ways the children learn?		
Are there annotated photographic displays showing the children's process of learning as well as the product?		
Are the wall displays maintained in the same way as the resources?		
Are there enough resources provided so that children do not need to share such as putting out 3 separate piles of Duplo for 3 children?		
Are there resources which promote equality, reflect the wider community and diversity within society?		
Do practitioners ensure a ratio of 80% familiar and 20% new when changing the provision for individual children?		
Are the core experiences provided every day (non-negotiable) indoors and outdoors? • sensory play • treasure baskets • natural/real resources • sand/water/malleable/ messy • snuggling toys • pretend play • opportunities to mark-make • book sharing • small world • construction • posting, sorting, stacking, and container play • cause and effect play • music and singing • opportunities for varied physical play (fine/gross)		
Are there opportunities to smell, listen and touch each day indoors and outdoors?		
Are children given opportunities to explore using all their senses and become immersed such as sitting in a tray full of sand or leaves or shredded paper?		
Are the resources made from a variety of materials and textures that develop the senses in children's finger pads as plastic is very limiting?		

Are there treasure baskets containing a variety of natural resources to share?		
Do practitioners develop treasure baskets for individual children to meet their unique needs and interests?		
Are there multiples of the same resource for heuristic play such as tubes, pegs, lids, ribbons and scarves?		
Are there a variety of natural and real resources such as pebbles and metal pans and spoons?		
Is exploring food and cooking planned for as part of messy play?		
Are there soft resources and flooring to cuddle into for security, cosiness and exploring?		
Is appropriate home pretend play available daily such as babies, baths bottles and buggies?		
Is there a rich variety of mark making materials to allow the children to experiment?		
Is there a variety of books and do the practitioners take one to one opportunities to share books?		
Are there opportunities for story time in each session using, story props, oral storytelling and books?		
Are there small world resources that reflect the child's world such as people, familiar vehicles, farm and wild animals?		
Are there a variety of resources for stacking, nesting and construction play including cardboard boxes, Russian dolls, beakers, wooden and soft blocks of different sizes?		
Are there repetitive opportunities for children to explore posting and sorting?		
Are there opportunities to experience cause and effect which could include peek-a-boo, guttering to pour water down, wind up toys, press button toys, pop-up toys, hammer and peg toys and bubble wrap to crawl across?		
Does singing of nursery rhymes and repetitive songs happen regularly either in a small group, during play or as part of routines?		
Are their musical instruments and sound makers available at all times?		

Are there opportunities for children to engage in dance and movement?		
Are there 'scoot-alongs', toddle trucks and rocking toys?		
Are there objects to push and pull such as large cardboard boxes, carts and buggies?		
Are there opportunities every day for robust physical play for children to be active and energetic?		
Are there open ended climbing resources such as logs to climb, tunnels to crawl through, bushes to hide under, tyres to jump in, planks to balance along?		
Free flow indoors and outdoors and deployment of staff		
Do all children have regular opportunities to play outside?		
Are children allowed to choose whether they play indoors/outdoors?		
Are there opportunities for babies/toddlers to watch or interact with older children?		
Do practitioners move with the children to support free flow?		
Are children offered extended periods of play?		
Does the outdoor environment provide for all kinds of learning?		
Snack and meal times		
Is allergy and food preference information up to date?		
Do practitioners ensure children's hands are washed before each meal/ snack time?		
Is there a comfortable chair to bottle feed babies?		
Does the key person always bottle feed their own key children? Are they making eye contact? Are they holding the baby at the correct distance for the baby to focus on them? Do they communicate with the child when feeding them?		
Are toddlers supported to wash their own hands in a hand basin before lunch/snack?		
Are babies' hands and faces cleaned after meals/snack and are toddlers supported to do this independently?		

Are snack and meal times flexible enough to take into account the different needs of each child?		
Are the snack choices healthy, varied and appropriately presented?		
Are children encouraged to try different food?		
Are toddlers encouraged to develop self help skills during snack/meal times such as feeding themselves?		
Are snack and meal times unhurried, relaxed and social occasions presented in a homely manner?		
Are the children allowed to play with and explore the food as they eat?		
Are children able to return to play if they have finish their food?		
Where possible is the key person feeding their babies?		
Do after-lunch activities allow for some children to be active whilst others prefer to relax?		
Do practitioners observe and record significant developments during snack/meal times?		
Nappy changing		
Does the key person change their own children's nappies?		
Are the health and safety nappy changing procedures being followed?		
Are the care routines personalised and unhurried?		
Are the children being changed when they individually need to be and not in a group?		
Do practitioners interact with the child when changing their nappy?		
Tidy up times		
Is play closed down calmly, respectfully and does it take into account those children who are very absorbed in their play?		
Are the children encouraged to help?		
Are toys returned to the places where the children can access them later?		
Sleep times		
Do practitioners follow each child's individual sleep routines and times?		
Are the children always using a familiar cot/basket?		
Are the settings safety guidelines displayed and followed?		

Are the children assured that they will be checked on and how often is this done?		
Role of the adult: **Supporting baby and toddler play**		
Do practitioners follow the babies' and toddlers' agendas, interests and /or schemas?		
Are babies given opportunities for face to face times to explore the practitioner's face?		
Are babies given opportunities for face away times from the comfort of the key person's lap to play or observe the other children playing?		
Are babies being supported to develop their physical awareness and strength by using the key person's body?		
Are babies given their own treasure baskets to explore?		
Do babies get regular tummy time?		
Do practitioners allow children to explore, experiment and 'take risks'?		
Do practitioners offer children choices, according to their level of development?		
Do practitioners model play and language skills by playing in parallel with the children describing their own play?		
Do practitioners model play and language skills by being part of the play with the children?		
Do practitioners take account of the children's developmental stages and preferred learning styles and/or schemas when supporting play?		
Role of the adult in supporting **language and communication**		
Do practitioners use 'parentese' (sing-song, soft language)?		
Are practitioners patient and relaxed when communicating with the children?		
Are the practitioners offering unhurried opportunities for children to communicate?		
Are the practitioners supporting communication through objects and words, body language and attentiveness?		

Are the practitioners following the baby's lead with sounds and facial expressions as part of the two way communication?		
Do practitioners listen and respond to the child?		
Do practitioners give plenty of time for the child to respond? (12 second rule)		
Do the practitioners use positive, encouraging words?		
Do practitioners model back the correct word or grammar? (Do not tell the child they have made a speech error.)		
Do practitioners talk about what the child can see/do and help them name objects and noises?		
Do practitioners talk through what they are doing for the benefit of the children?		
Do practitioners respond to pointing by naming the object being pointed at? (Mostly pre-verbal children point at objects because they want to know what they are called and not because they want them.)		
Do practitioners ask open ended questions such as 'What happens if…' 'I wonder what...'?		
Are instructions given in a simple way that children can understand?		
Do practitioners know and use some words in the home language of a child with English as an Additional Language?		

Audits
Role Play

Consider your setting's role play area/s and ask yourself the following questions. You may wish to use the questions as the basis of a team discussion.

❑ Are opportunities for role play provided outside?

❑ Are there always opportunities provided for domestic role play? Do children know they are able to access this play at all times?

❑ Are offer other kinds of role play also provided, such as shops, vets and fantasy role play i.e. the jungle, the space rocket?

❑ Does the role play develop from the children's interests and experiences? Do you involve the children in the planning for the role play area?

❑ Do practitioners ask children what they think about the role play area after it is set up? Have they been asked children for their ideas on how it could be improved?

❑ Are role play areas inviting? Ask practitioners to get down to child level and imagine how the children would see them.

❑ Are the role play areas located in the best places?

❑ Do boys and girls have equal opportunities and encouragement to use the area?

❑ Is as much of the equipment as possible real? Do you have real saucepans, real crockery and real vegetables in the shop?

❑ Do practitioners safety and risk assess new objects?

❑ Is a range of everyday objects provided for babies or toddlers to explore and investigate?

❑ Are culturally diverse artefacts provided and are parents/carers encouraged to bring in culturally specific and familiar items from home to share?

❑ How are resources chosen? Are the children asked what they would like?

❑ Are the resources developmentally appropriate for the age and needs of the group of children currently at the setting?

❑ Is equipment stored in appropriate ways, for example vegetables in a vegetable rack?

❑ Can children reach the equipment and replace things easily? Does the setup encourage children to be independent?

❑ Are photographs used to show how resources should be stored?

❑ Are the areas regularly maintained, equipment checked, cleaned or replenished when necessary?

❑ When the children arrive are the role play areas set up ready for play, for example as a home, or shop, or are they already in a muddle? Consider what messages you are giving about your expectations.

❑ Do practitioners regularly consider the storage, the quantity and appropriateness of the equipment? Do the children need someone to role model tidying? Consider Spring Clean role play.

❑ Does the area have opportunities to support all areas of learning, for example clocks, calendars, phones, phonebooks?

❑ Do practitioners evaluate children's talk in this area?

❑ Do practitioners evaluate the area to see which children access it and how it is used?

❑ Are there strategies for encouraging 'reluctant' children to become interested?

❑ Are all practitioners confident in their role when supporting this area?

❑ Are there photographic displays of role play?

Creative

Consider your setting's creative area and ask yourself the following questions. You may wish to use the questions as the basis of a team discussion.

- ❑ Is there a creative area and are the children aware that they are welcome to use it at all times?
- ❑ How did practitioners decide on the location of the area? Is it in the most appropriate place?
- ❑ Is the area inviting? If you were a child, would you want to use the area?
- ❑ What do children think about the creative area? Have you asked children for their ideas about how it could be improved?
- ❑ Is the area regularly maintained, equipment checked and cleaned and resources replaced when necessary?
- ❑ Are the resources developmentally appropriate for the age and needs of the group of children currently at the setting?
- ❑ Is the range of resources enough to inspire?
- ❑ Is there a balance of media available?
- ❑ Are there inspirational books and photographs?
- ❑ How is ICT used to support this aspect of learning?
- ❑ Are there resources available which are appropriate for babies or younger children?
- ❑ Is there a creative area outside?
- ❑ Is it possible to take resources outside for appropriate purposes?
- ❑ Can children reach the resources and replace things easily? Does furniture and storage encourage children to be independent?
- ❑ How are resources chosen? Are the children asked what they would like?
- ❑ Do practitioners evaluate children's talk in this area?
- ❑ Do practitioners evaluate the area to see how it is used and who accesses it?
- ❑ Do boys and girls have equal opportunities and encouragement to use the area?
- ❑ Are there strategies for encouraging 'reluctant' children to become interested?
- ❑ Is the area supported by attractive displays including children's own work?
- ❑ Are there annotated photographic displays showing the process the children go through when creating their work?
- ❑ Do children use the camera to record their creation?
- ❑ Are there systems in place to save work in order to return to it at a later time?
- ❑ How do practitioners ensure that the children's work is celebrated, for example by dedicating a space at child height for display?
- ❑ Are all practitioners confident in their role when supporting this area?

Sand and Water

Consider your setting's provisions for sand and water play and ask yourself the following questions. You may wish to use these questions as the basis of a staff discussion.

- ❑ Are there sand and water areas, and are the children aware that they are welcome to use them at all times?
- ❑ Does the setting provide for sand and water play indoors and outdoors?
- ❑ How did practitioners decide on the location of the areas? Are they in the best place?
- ❑ Do practitioners encourage children to combine the sand and water play?
- ❑ Are there opportunities for running water play?
- ❑ How does everyone feel about mess versus tidiness? Can you agree the difference between creative and uncreative mess?
- ❑ Do boys and girls have equal opportunities and encouragement to use the areas?
- ❑ Are the areas inviting and stimulating? Do they entice children in?
- ❑ Are children asked what they think about the areas? Do practitioners ask children for their ideas on how the areas could be improved?
- ❑ Are there resources that encourage problem solving such as hoists and pulleys and guttering to join and place at different gradients?
- ❑ Are children given adequate time to experiment with and explore the resources, so that they can become involved and conversations can develop?
- ❑ Are the resources developmentally appropriate for the age and needs of the group of children currently at the setting?
- ❑ Is the area regularly maintained, equipment checked and cleaned or replenished when necessary?
- ❑ How are resources chosen? Are the children asked what they would like?
- ❑ Is protective clothing available?
- ❑ Do practitioners explain to parents that their children may get dirty or wet at nursery and why?
- ❑ How do practitioners protect flooring that needs to be covered?
- ❑ Is suitable floor covering available so children can play on the floor?
- ❑ Is the best use being made of natural/recycled materials?
- ❑ What happens at the end of a session/day? How are these areas maintained?
- ❑ Are resources kept clean, in good repair and resources stored in an organised and accessible way? Does the storage encourage children to be independent?
- ❑ Do practitioners evaluate children's talk in this area of play?
- ❑ Do practitioners evaluate the area to see how it is used and who accesses it?
- ❑ Are there strategies for encouraging 'reluctant' children to become interested?
- ❑ Are all practitioners confident in their role when supporting this area?
- ❑ Are there photographic displays of water and sand play?

Malleable and Messy

Consider your setting's provisions for malleable and messy play and ask yourself the following questions. You may wish to use these questions as the basis of a staff discussion.

- ❑ Is there always malleable and messy play available indoors and outdoors and are the children aware that they are welcome to access it at all times?
- ❑ How did practitioners decide on the location for this kind of play? Is it in the most appropriate place?
- ❑ How do practitioners protect flooring that needs to be covered?
- ❑ Is suitable floor covering available so children can access resources on the floor?
- ❑ Is malleable and messy play sometimes incorporated into other play for example the home corner?
- ❑ How do practitioners feel about mess versus tidiness? Can you agree the difference between creative and uncreative mess?
- ❑ Do practitioners explain to parents that their children may get messy at nursery and why?
- ❑ Is protective clothing available?
- ❑ Are your malleable and messy areas inviting and stimulating? Do they entice children in?
- ❑ Do the boys and girls access the area equally?
- ❑ What do children think about the area? Do practitioners ask children for their ideas about how it could be improved?
- ❑ Are the children given adequate time to experiment with and explore the resources?
- ❑ Is a wide variety of malleable and messy play provided to allow children to experience different sensory experiences?
- ❑ Are a variety of resources provided such as kitchen equipment, sculpting tools and natural materials for messy and malleable play?
- ❑ Do practitioners support the children to combine resources such as small world toys in their play?
- ❑ Are a wide range of experiences and resources provided to enable all children to be included?
- ❑ Is the area regularly maintained, equipment checked and cleaned or replenished when necessary?
- ❑ What happens at the end of a session/day? How are these areas maintained?
- ❑ Are tools and containers stored in an organised and accessible way?
- ❑ Can children reach the equipment and replace things easily? Does furniture and storage encourage children to be independent?
- ❑ How are resources chosen? Are the children asked what they would like?
- ❑ Do practitioners evaluate children's talk in this kind of play?
- ❑ Do practitioners evaluate the area to see how it is used and who accesses it?
- ❑ Are there strategies for encouraging 'reluctant' children to become interested?
- ❑ Are all practitioners confident in their role when supporting this area?

Book Sharing and Story Telling

Consider your setting's book area and ask yourself the following questions. You may wish to use the questions as the basis of a team discussion.

- ☐ Is there a book area and are the children aware that they are welcome to use it for looking at and sharing books and story telling at all times?
- ☐ How did practitioners decide on the location of the book area? Is it in the most appropriate place?
- ☐ Is the book area inviting? Is the area visually attractive? Does it entice children in?
- ☐ Is there comfortable seating for children and practitioners?
- ☐ Is the book area regularly maintained, resources checked and cleaned or replenished when necessary? Are the soft furnishings clean and in good repair?
- ☐ Is the book area defined, for example with a rug, cushions or furniture?
- ☐ Are there books available for children outside?
- ☐ Are books used in other areas of learning to stimulate play and learning, for example a book on trucks in the 'building site'?.
- ☐ Are the books and resources developmentally appropriate for the age and needs of the group of children currently at the setting?
- ☐ Are there a significant number of books displayed with their covers showing?
- ☐ Is the range of books representative of our present day diverse society? Have older books that portray rigid stereotypical images been removed?
- ☐ Are there books with positive images and messages about the setting, the community and the wider world? These may be home made.
- ☐ Are there books made by the children in the setting?
- ☐ Are there books that contain photographs (with captions) about the children at the setting?
- ☐ Is there a balance of fiction and non-fiction books that reflect the children's current interests?
- ☐ Are there any comics in the book area?
- ☐ Are there board, cloth, textured and sensory books for babies and younger children?
- ☐ Are story sacks, story boards and other props available to support story telling?
- ☐ Can the children reach the books and replace them easily?
- ☐ Is the book area supported by attractive displays including children's own story telling?
- ☐ Is the area regularly maintained, with damaged books removed and replaced?
- ☐ Do children have access to a CD player and CDs?
- ☐ What do children think about the book area? Have you asked children for their ideas about how it could be improved or what resources they would like?
- ☐ Do boys and girls use the book area equally?
- ☐ Are the children involved in selecting books to borrow from a local library?
- ☐ Do practitioners evaluate children's talk in this area?
- ☐ Do practitioners evaluate the area to see how it is used and who accesses it?
- ☐ Are strategies used to encourage 'reluctant' children to become interested in books? For example, small world play or role play can be linked with stories.
- ☐ Are opportunities taken around the setting to encourage early reading development? Is the setting a 'print-rich' environment with, for example, labels, messages and captions used in display, name cards at snack time, reading material in the role play areas?
- ☐ Are all practitioners confident in their role when sharing books and telling stories?
- ☐ Do practitioners inspire a love of books in children?

Mark Making

Consider your setting's mark making area and ask yourself the following questions. You may wish to use the questions as the basis of a team discussion.

- ❑ Are there always permanent mark resources in the setting, and are the children aware that they are welcome to use them at all times?
- ❑ Is there a mark making area that is visually stimulating and that entices children to come and engage?
- ❑ Is the area situated in an appropriate place? It could, for example, be near the role-play area so that writing can be easily incorporated into imaginative play.
- ❑ Is there enough space for small groups of children to work/play together near the mark making area?
- ❑ Is there a variety of mark making tools and surfaces to encourage children to make choices, explore and experiment?
- ❑ Is there a wide range of developmentally appropriate resources to ensure that all children are included?
- ❑ Are there strategies for encouraging 'reluctant' children to become interested?
- ❑ Have the children been asked if they like mark making and what other resources they would like to use?
- ❑ Are the resources stored with labels and photographs to help children access mark making?
- ❑ Are mark making resources refreshed and changed regularly to encourage children to write and draw for a variety of purposes?
- ❑ Are resources equally appealing to boys and girls?
- ❑ Do staff model writing for a variety of different purposes, using a clear and correct writing style?
- ❑ Do practitioners evaluate children's talk in this area?
- ❑ Do practitioners evaluate mark making provision to see how resources are used and who accesses them?
- ❑ Do practitioners discuss and evaluate their strategies to stimulate all children to mark make/write/draw with the resources that are available?
- ❑ Are all practitioners confident in the developmental stages of mark making?
- ❑ Are there words and messages in the learning environment to encourage children to understand that writing is meaningful?
- ❑ Is there somewhere for children to display their own work?
- ❑ Do children know where to store their completed pictures/mark making/writing safely?
- ❑ Is the learning environment enhanced with meaningful displays of children's own work or photographs of children involved in early writing activities?
- ❑ Are mark making and early writing skills promoted throughout the setting including outdoors?
- ❑ What opportunities are there for mark making in your environment, for example role play and construction?
- ❑ Do practitioners provide gloop and other sensory materials in small trays so babies can enjoy making marks?
- ❑ Are babies encouraged to make marks in paint or with thick crayons?
- ❑ What opportunities are there for daily mark making outside?
- ❑ Are there daily opportunities for using paint?

Exploration and investigation

Consider your setting's provisions for exploration and investigative play and ask yourself the following questions. You may wish to use these questions as the basis of a staff discussion.

- ❑ How does the setting provide for exploration and investigation indoors and outdoors?
- ❑ Do practitioners ensure that new challenges are introduced to encourage the children to investigate?
- ❑ Are there opportunities for children to explore and compare materials and their properties?
- ❑ Is there an area where resources for exploration and investigation can be found, and are the children aware that they are welcome to use them at all times?
- ❑ How did practitioners decide on the location for these resources? Are they in the most appropriate place?
- ❑ Are your resources inviting and stimulating? Do they entice children to explore and investigate?
- ❑ Are the resources regularly maintained, equipment checked and cleaned or replenished when necessary?
- ❑ Is the storage clearly labelled with both the word and either a photograph or sample of its contents?
- ❑ Are resources for exploration available to the children in their outdoor play, for example magnifying glasses or colour paddles?
- ❑ Are the resources developmentally appropriate for the age and needs of the group of children currently at the setting?
- ❑ Can children reach the equipment and replace things easily? Does furniture and storage encourage children to be independent?
- ❑ How are resources chosen? Are the children asked what they would like?
- ❑ Do practitioners observe and assess learning when the children are exploring and investigating?
- ❑ Do practitioners evaluate children's talk in this kind of play?
- ❑ Do practitioners monitor the resources to see how they are used and who accesses them?
- ❑ Are there strategies for encouraging 'reluctant' children to become interested?
- ❑ Are all practitioners secure in supporting children's investigation such as looking carefully at a spider web or experimenting with a light box?
- ❑ Is ICT used to support this aspect of learning?
- ❑ Are all practitioners confident in their role when supporting this aspect of learning?

Construction

Consider your setting's construction area and ask yourself the following questions. You may wish to use the questions as the basis of a team discussion.

- ❑ Is there construction play indoors and outdoors and can the children access it at all times?
- ❑ How do practitioners decide on the location of a construction area? Is it in the most appropriate place?
- ❑ Are the construction resources developmentally appropriate for the age and needs of the group of children currently at the setting?
- ❑ Are there found and recycled objects for the children to construct with?
- ❑ Does the setting have small and large scale construction resources?
- ❑ Is the storage suitable for the task? Is it clearly labelled with both the word and either a photograph or sample of its contents?
- ❑ Can children reach the construction equipment and replace things easily? Does furniture and storage encourage children to be independent?
- ❑ Is the area inviting?
- ❑ Is the area regularly maintained, equipment checked and cleaned or replenished when necessary?
- ❑ What do children think about the construction area? Have practitioners asked the children for their ideas about how it could be improved?
- ❑ How are resources chosen? Are the children asked what they would like?
- ❑ Are you encouraging children to combine resources from within the nursery to support their play, for example including transportation toys, people and animals?
- ❑ Do practitioners evaluate the quality of children's talk in this kind of play?
- ❑ Do practitioners evaluate the area to see how it is used and who accesses it?
- ❑ Are there strategies for encouraging 'reluctant' children to become interested?
- ❑ Do boys and girls have equal opportunities and encouragement to use the area?
- ❑ Are examples of construction displayed? Are the constructions clearly labelled?
- ❑ Are there photographic displays of construction play?
- ❑ Is it possible for children to leave out constructions and continue the next day?
- ❑ Can children access small world resources as part of their construction play for i.e. Playmobil people.
- ❑ Has outdoor provision been addressed? Are there resources and opportunities for construction play outside: for example, boxes, bricks, pipes, guttering?
- ❑ Are there opportunities for woodwork with real tools?
- ❑ Are there inspirational books with photographs of architecture, bridges etc?
- ❑ Are the children aware they can move the construction resources to other areas to enhance their play and learning?

Small World

Consider your setting's provisions for small world and ask yourself the following questions. You may wish to use these questions as the basis of a team discussion.

- ❑ Is there a small world area and are the children aware that they are welcome to use it at all times?
- ❑ How did practitioners decide on the location of the area? Is it in the most appropriate place?
- ❑ Does the setting promote small world play in a variety of ways, for example small world environments in sand, water or compost play, a building site, a treasure island or dinosaur world?
- ❑ Are small environments provided to replicate familiar stories or rhymes: for example, 'The Three Billy Goats Gruff' or 'Five Little Speckled Frogs'?
- ❑ Are there inspirational books with photographs of possible scenes?
- ❑ Are your small world areas inviting and stimulating? Do they entice children in?
- ❑ Are children encouraged to be creative in planning and altering the small world environments? It is important that children develop 'ownership' of the environments?
- ❑ Are children given adequate time to experiment with and explore the resources, so that language and narrative can develop?
- ❑ Are small world resources kept clean, in good repair and stored in an organised and accessible way? Does storage encourage children to be independent?
- ❑ What do children think about the area? Have you asked children for their ideas about how it could be improved?
- ❑ How are resources chosen? Are the children asked what they would like?
- ❑ Is protective clothing available for messy or wet small world play?
- ❑ Is suitable floor covering available for babies to access resources on the floor?
- ❑ Do the small world environments reflect the interests of boys and girls and children of different social and cultural groups?
- ❑ Are the resources developmentally appropriate for the age and needs of the group of children currently at the setting?
- ❑ Do practitioners evaluate the area to see how it is used and who accesses it?
- ❑ Do practitioners evaluate the quality of children's talk in this kind of play?
- ❑ Are there strategies for encouraging 'reluctant' children to become interested?
- ❑ Are the 'real world' environments reflective of an all inclusive society? For example, are there sometimes disabled people in the environment and are stereotypical representations discouraged?
- ❑ Is the best use being made of natural materials?
- ❑ Do practitioners ever record and retell some of children's small world 'stories'? This could be using a Dictaphone, photos or a video clip. Make books.
- ❑ What opportunities are there for small world play outside?
- ❑ Are all practitioners confident in their role when supporting this area?
- ❑ Are small world landscapes created to support the children's imagination?

Music and Singing

Consider your setting's response to music and singing and ask yourself the following questions. You may wish to use the questions as the basis of a team discussion.

- ❑ Is there a resource base where musical instruments are stored and are the children aware that they are welcome to use them at all times?
- ❑ How did practitioners decide on the location of the resources? Are they in the most appropriate place?
- ❑ Is there a suitable area inside and outside to allow children to explore instruments?
- ❑ Are the instruments displayed in an inviting way? Does the display entice children to play them?
- ❑ Can children reach the instruments and replace them easily? Does the storage encourage children to be independent?
- ❑ Are the musical instruments well maintained?
- ❑ Are the instruments developmentally appropriate for the age and needs of the group of children currently at the setting?
- ❑ Do boys and girls have equal opportunities and encouragement to use the musical instruments?
- ❑ How are resources chosen? Are the children asked what they would like?
- ❑ Are opportunities for children to express themselves through music and singing provided regularly?
- ❑ Is the ICT equipment available and accessible to support music and singing?
- ❑ Is there a variety of music from different cultures available?
- ❑ Are resources available and accessible so that children can make their own instruments?
- ❑ Do practitioners evaluate children's talk in this area?
- ❑ Do practitioners evaluate the area to see how it is used and who accesses it?
- ❑ How are children supported to learn how to respect the resources?
- ❑ Are there strategies for encouraging 'reluctant' children to become interested?
- ❑ Do practitioners sing with the children daily, allowing the children to take the lead?
- ❑ Do practitioners make music with the children, allowing the children to take the lead?
- ❑ Do practitioners demonstrate how to play instruments correctly?
- ❑ Do practitioners talk to the children about music and singing?
- ❑ How are 'Rhythm and Rhyme' and 'Letters and Sounds' materials used to support children's learning and development through music and singing?
- ❑ Do practitioners introduce the language of music such as naming the instruments, fast, slow, high, low and rhythm?
- ❑ Are all practitioners confident in their role when supporting this area?

Problem Solving and Mathematical Thinking

Consider your setting's problem solving and mathematical thinking and ask yourself the following questions. You may with to use the questions as the basis of a team discussion.

- ❑ Is there a resource base where problem solving and mathematical resources are kept, and are the children aware that they are welcome to use them at all times?
- ❑ How did practitioners decide on the location of the resources? Is it in the most appropriate place?
- ❑ Are the resources attractive, interesting and in good working order? For example, do items such as balance scales work reliably and give accurate readings? Are they cleaned or replenished when necessary?
- ❑ Are the resources developmentally appropriate for the age and needs of the group of children currently at the setting?
- ❑ Do practitioners evaluate the mathematical resources to see how they are used and who accesses them?
- ❑ Does storage encourage children to be independent? Can children reach the equipment and replace things easily?
- ❑ Are the resources stored with labels and photographs to help children keep them tidy and organised?
- ❑ Are children able to take play with them inside and outside?
- ❑ Are natural objects used such as shells, pebbles and cones for mathematical exploration?
- ❑ Are objects of different textures and weights available for mathematical play to excite and encourage children in mathematical exploration?
- ❑ Do practitioners let babies see and hear the sequence of actions you go through as you carry out familiar routines?
- ❑ Are objects provided in treasure baskets that are single items, two or possibly three of the same, for example cotton reels, brushes, balls?
- ❑ Do practitioners use songs and rhymes during personal routines for example, 'two little eyes to look around' pointing to their eyes, one by one?
- ❑ Are there opportunities for problem solving, reasoning and numeracy in play both inside and outside?
- ❑ Are all practitioners confident in their role when supporting problem solving, reasoning and numeracy?
- ❑ Do practitioners interact with children as they play, to model appropriate mathematical language and an investigative approach in all areas of provision?
- ❑ Are there strategies for encouraging 'reluctant' children to become interested?
- ❑ Do practitioners evaluate the quality of children's talk in this kind of play?
- ❑ Are there printed mathematical words and messages to encourage children and staff to use appropriate vocabulary?
- ❑ Does the setting have annotated displays of the children involved in mathematical exploration both indoors and outdoors, for example learning about shape in den making or putting together a train track?
- ❑ Is there a range of appropriate books to support mathematical learning accessible to the children?

Physical – Fine and Gross Motor Development

Consider your setting's provisions for physical play and ask yourself the following questions. You may wish to use these questions as the basis of a staff discussion.

- ❏ Are opportunities provided for children to develop gross and fine motor skills?
- ❏ Can children engage in active physical play throughout the session?
- ❏ Is there enough space to allow children to move unhindered?
- ❏ Can children move and dance inside and outside?
- ❏ How do practitioners ensure children stay safe?
- ❏ Does the setting provide large non-fixed equipment which offers flexibility?
- ❏ Is equipment checked, cleaned and well maintained?
- ❏ Does the setting offer a range of small and large equipment?
- ❏ Do the resources offer challenge?
- ❏ Do resources encourage co-operative play?
- ❏ Are the resources developmentally appropriate for the age and needs of the group of children currently at the setting?
- ❏ What do children think about the physical resources? Are the children asked for their ideas on how they could be improved?
- ❏ Do boys and girls have equal opportunities and encouragement to engage in gross and fine physical play?
- ❏ Do practitioners organise simple games to promote physical learning that children can later play independently?
- ❏ Are opportunities regularly provided for children to express themselves through movement and dance?
- ❏ Is the ICT equipment available and accessible to support dance and movement?
- ❏ Is there a variety of music available to support movement and dance?
- ❏ Are dance resources available and accessible?
- ❏ Do practitioners evaluate this kind of play and who engages in it?
- ❏ Do practitioners evaluate children's talk in this kind of play?
- ❏ Do practitioners have strategies for supporting children's behaviour in this area?
- ❏ Are there strategies for encouraging 'reluctant' children to become interested?
- ❏ Are all practitioners confident in their role when supporting this area?

Good Practice Guidance

Role Play

Learning and Development

Learning across all six areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum can take place in role play areas.

They offer opportunities for children to:

- work as part of a group, taking turns and co-operating;
- develop negotiation skills;
- increase their vocabulary through conversations and acting out the storyline;
- experience mark making for a purpose;
- develop language for thinking;
- develop mathematical thinking to solve practical problems;
- develop knowledge and understanding of the world;
- increase fine and gross motor skills;
- engage in active learning, shared sustained thinking, creativity and critical thinking;
- use ICT to enhance their play.

Key Points

- Have a home corner in some form at all times as children need to express themselves in domestic play.
- Consider other role play e.g. café, tent, shop in addition to a home corner. To be set up in another area inside or outside, to support the children's current interests.
- If the area is set up before children arrive ensure it looks attractive.
- Opportunities should be provided for children to support or lead in the process of creating an area.
- Areas can be various sizes according to space and context both indoors and outdoors.
- The area should be flexible enabling children to enclose and create own boundaries with drapes, bricks etc.
- Position the area in a space that is away from walkways.
- Role play can be supported by a prop box that can be taken to any area within the setting.

Resources

- Use real items wherever possible, for example metal pans, wooden spoons, tea towels, washing up items, vegetables, fruit and pasta.
- Consider allowing water for washing up/making tea etc.
- Include electronic play items that 'work' by battery, for example, a television, microwave oven, toaster, and kettle.
- Include reading materials such as catalogues, story books, newspaper, recipe books.
- Ensure 'writing' materials and supplementary resources are in the role play area, such as a notice board to display 'notes' or clipboards.

- Include resources supporting number recognition, eg. calculator, clock, diary, calendar and phone directories.
- Label storage with pictures and words so children can return items to the correct place after use.
- Ensure equipment is well cared for and are replaced when they show signs of wear.
- Provide resources for den making indoors and outdoors.
- The quality of the resources is important.
- The amount of resources should be varied but limited in quantity.
- Role play props can be added as enhancements to any area of provision eg. helmets can be added to the block play in the construction area.
- Dressing up resources should be attractive and child influenced. They should not be gender or role specific but be suitable for open ended play e.g. fabric pieces, tabards, capes, hats, scarves.
- There should be hooks or boxes for children to easily access and return dressing up resources.
- Encourage children to explore their cultural heritage and the diversity of the community through role play.

Adult Role

- To create role play areas which reflect children's interests and are within children's experiences.
- To invite children to help plan and set up the areas using their ideas.
- To allow children to take resources to other parts of the room, and from other parts of the room to support and extend their play.
- To model a variety of roles and experiences through the play.
- To value the children's play and wait to be invited into the story they are developing.
- To model and encourage respect for the resources provided including tidying away.
- To regularly risk assess this area of provision.

Creative

Learning

Learning across all six areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum can take place in the creative area.

It is an area that offers opportunities for children to:

- develop confidence and autonomy through self-selecting resources and using them independently;
- begin to make marks on a small and large scale;
- refine the mathematical skills of repeating, continuing and devising patterns. Exploring space and shape;
- develop awareness of aspects of knowledge and understanding of the world as they experiment with a wide variety of materials;
- explore joining materials;
- use ICT resources;
- develop physical skills through the use of assorted tools.

Key Points

- Situate resources in a designated/defined area.
- Position near water, preferably on washable flooring.
- Store resources in suitable, visible, clearly labelled, attractive containers.
- Store at child height for independent access.
- There should be vertical and horizontal display surfaces near the area and designated space on surfaces and boards for the children to display their work.
- Give opportunities for painting, at an easel, on a table top, on the floor.
- Resources should be available inside and outside.
- Templates, pictures to colour, ready drawn outlines and worksheets should not be used as they can limit the children's creativity.
- Make resources available for use in other areas of the setting both indoors and outdoors, for example, use a trolley to transport resources outdoors.

Resources

- Provide a variety of mark making materials.
- Provide quality materials that are regularly updated and changed which should include natural and recycled materials in addition to commercial items.
- Offer small amounts of materials and regularly replenish them.
- Offer opportunities for the children to select their choices 'buffet style', such as choosing collage items in a basket, and returning what they do not use.
- Offer opportunities to mix paint, pour glue and choose how to fix and join materials.
- Include items such as masking tape, Sellotape, staplers, scissors, hole punches and child friendly glue containers and spreaders. Water and large brushes can be used outside on fences, walls or sheds.
- Provide pencils that are regularly sharpened.
- Add coloured crayons, biros, glitter pens, highlighters and felt pens that work.
- Provide a range of paints that includes powder paints; block paints in addition to bottles of paint and containers such as palettes and pots.

- Have a selection of good quality brushes and other items such as rollers, combs, corrugated card.
- Position aprons at child height, hung on hooks and regularly cleaned.
- Provide malleable materials e.g. clay, dough, gloop (different types, textures, smells).
- Make sure a camera is available to capture the process and the product.
- Use Inspirational materials such as glass beads, feathers, sequins, pebbles, shells as enhancements. These can be displayed in a variety of storage baskets and boxes.
- Different types of paper and cardboard such as tissue paper, sugar paper, wrapping paper, crepe paper.
- Displays of the children's work should include some documentation.
- 'Work in Progress' signs used to enable continuation of an ongoing project, building upon previous ideas and work.
- Displays used as stimulus with thought given to lighting, use of mirrors, photographs and interesting objects that can be touched and handled.

Adult Role

- Value the PROCESS as well as the PRODUCT.
- Practitioner role is that of an enabler not director.
- Practitioners teach skills and techniques, for example, using glue sticks.
- Allow children to freely explore and experiment with resources.
- Allow access to resources at all times.
- Allow children to decide how much or how little of the resources they need to make their finished article.
- Encourage the children to document the process as well as the finished product using a camera.
- Allow children to take the resources into all areas of the environment.
- Resist the temptation to draw for the children, even if they ask for this. Instead, encourage and support their interpretations.

Sand and Water

Learning

Learning across all six areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum can take place in sand and water.

They offer opportunities for children to:

- work as part of a group, take turns and co-operate, negotiate;
- develop skills to use a variety of tools and equipment;
- explore and experiment using all the senses;
- observe and experience change;
- develop gross and fine motor skills;
- develop creativity;
- have conversations and discussions to develop the language of thinking;
- mark make;
- become familiar with the properties of materials, for example, explore and compare dry and wet sand;
- use ICT to record the process.

Key Points

Ideally there should be sand and water always available to the children, which should be:

- situated in a designated/defined area where resources are kept but can happen anywhere in the environment;
- on suitable flooring;
- available inside and outside;
- on a variety of surfaces such as on the floor, a table, in the role play area;
- sand and water can be presented to children without the addition of resources.

Resources

- A variety of containers both large and small such as building trays, washing up bowls, tarpaulin, small trays.
- Aprons at child height hung on hooks and regularly cleaned.
- Inspirational materials e.g. glass beads, feathers, sequins, pebbles, shells, bubbles, colour, ice balloons/cubes can be added to the sand/water.
- Tools such as cooking utensils, combs, containers, sieves, mark making tools.
- Combine resources from other areas of the setting such as small world equipment.
- Quality materials that are regularly updated and changed should include natural and recycled materials in addition to commercial.
- Camera to be available for documenting processes.
- Resources to encourage the exploration of capacity, for example, different sized buckets and cups.
- Wheels, funnels, guttering and objects that float and sink.

Adult Role

- Allow children access to sand and water indoors and outdoors.
- Practitioners teach skills and techniques such as making sandcastles, using water wheels, filling and emptying containers.
- Allow children to take the resources into all suitable learning areas of the environment.
- Ensure that the resources are well maintained and safe.
- Encourage children to freely explore and experiment with resources.
- Support children to solve problems and find answers to their own questions.
- Encourage children to talk and use their imaginations.
- Ask open ended questions to encourage discussion.
- Introduce new vocabulary and model language appropriate to the play scenario.
- Consider adding additional resources daily to stimulate fresh ideas and interest.

Malleable and Messy

Learning

Learning across all six areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum can take place in malleable and messy play.

It offers opportunities for children to:

- work as part of a group, take turns and co-operate, negotiate;
- develop skills to use a variety of tools and equipment;
- explore and experiment using all the senses;
- observe and experience change;
- develop gross and fine motor skills;
- develop creativity;
- have conversations and discussions, and extend their vocabulary, opportunity for mark making;
- become familiar with the properties of materials;
- develop the language of thinking;
- use ICT to record the process.

Key Points

Ideally there should be a malleable and messy experience daily.

- Situated in a designated/defined area where resources are kept but can happen anywhere in the environment.
- Near hand-washing facilities and on washable flooring.
- Available inside and outside.
- It can be on the floor, on a table or in the role play area.

Resources

- Quality materials that are regularly updated and changed should include natural and recycled materials in addition to commercial.
- A variety of containers both large and small such as builder's trays, washing up bowls, small trays.
- Aprons at child height hung on hooks and regularly cleaned.
- Malleable and messy materials can include clay, dough, gloop, shaving foam, baby lotion (different types, textures, and smells).
- Natural materials such as gravel, compost, sand.
- Food stuffs such as lentils, pasta, jelly, porridge or cornflour,
- Recycled materials such as shredded paper.
- Inspirational materials such as glass beads, feathers, sequins, pebbles, shells, glitter, essential oils, colour.
- Storage could be varying sizes of baskets, boxes, tubs or jars.
- Tools such as cooking utensils, clay tools, combs, containers, sieves or mark making equipment.
- Combine resources from other areas of the setting such as small world equipment.
- Camera to be available for documenting process.

Adult Role

- Allow children to freely explore and experiment with resources.
- Value PROCESS not PRODUCT.
- Adult role is that of an enabler not director.
- Practitioners teach skills and techniques such as rolling clay.
- Local artists should be used to develop techniques, rather than impose their ideas.
- Provide children daily access.
- Allow children to decide how much or how little of the resources they need.
- Allow children to take the resources into all suitable learning areas of the environment.
- Ensure that the resources are well maintained and safe.
- Encourage children to talk and use their imaginations.
- Ask open ended questions to encourage discussion.
- Introduce new vocabulary and model language appropriate to the play scenario.
- Make sure there are a wide variety of malleable and messy resources to stimulate fresh ideas and interest.
- Use a camera to encourage the child to document the children's creative process.

Books and Story Telling

Learning

Books and story telling support learning across all six areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum and can be used in all areas of the setting.

They offer opportunities for children to:

- develop their physical skills as they learn to handle books and turn pages;
- develop turn taking and sharing skills as they listen to stories as part of a small group with a practitioner, or look at books with friends;
- extend their communication, language and literacy skills by sharing books;
- explore and experiment with sounds, words and texts in comfortable, non-threatening situations;
- use their knowledge of language patterns in stories to retell narratives in the correct sequence of events;
- retrieve information from non-fiction texts, and begin to ask and answer questions about where, who, why and how;
- explore fictional and non-fictional ideas;
- use ICT to access stories.

Key Points

- Ensure it is an area that is comfy, warm, quiet, cosy, light (preferably natural), that is not a thorough-fare, and is defined by drapes, cushions, units or other appropriate furnishings.
- The area can be extended by enticing, inviting, enchanting enhancements such as fairy lights, drapes, cushions, a folded duvet, puppets and other props.
- Comfortable seating for practitioners and children such as bean bags or cushions should be available.
- An area should also be made available outside, maybe using a pop up tent, blankets and cushions or rug.
- Books should be used to enhance other learning areas.
- Books should be used as part of displays throughout the setting.
- Storage must be appropriate, easily accessible and not overcrowded. This could be baskets, book racks or low shelving.
- A location near a power point is needed so that a CD player can be used in the area.
- Books can be used to introduce a provocation to the children.

Resources

- Organise library visits and boxes.
- Provide fiction, non fiction, flaps books, comics, poetry books and picture books.
- Ensure books are linked to children's current interests such as superhero, bugs, space, pets or fairytales.
- Use multi-sensory books, big books or tiny books.
- Home made books, photo albums, catalogues (linked to visits or events) should be included.
- Ensure positive and inclusive images of the community and the wider world are reflected in books.
- Provide core books such as books that have memorable texts that feature repetition, encourage prediction, have strong illustrations and include rhythm and rhyme.
- Use audio books, CD player with headphones and dictaphones.

- Provide books with texts in other languages.
- Ensure old fashioned books are removed unless they are being used for a specific purpose.

Adult Role

- Monitor quality of books that are to be placed in the book area.
- Be part of a shared input on choice of books.
- Manage the quantity of books available at any time.
- Be available to share books with children throughout the session.
- Plan quality story time for small groups of children.
- Be available to tell stories and become involved in story telling times.
- Be able to use story props effectively.
- Support children by exploring and experimenting with sounds, words and texts as they share books and stories with children.

Mark Making

Learning

Mark making occurs across all six areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum and can be experienced in all areas of the setting.

It can offer opportunities for children to:

- develop fine and gross motor skills;
- select and use resources independently;
- make marks and begin to write for different purposes;
- select from a widening range of tools and approach to suit their needs;
- express and communicate their ideas, thoughts and feelings through drawing and mark-making;
- begin to handle mark making resources and tools such as paint brushes, biros, scissors, staplers with increasing confidence and control;
- develop ICT skills.

Key Points

- Position the mark making area to enable children to access resources easily. They should be able to select resources and take them to a nearby table or any other preferred learning space.
- Provide opportunities for mark making inside and outside.
- Consider having mobile as well as static areas such as a concertina toolbox or rucksack or briefcase.
- Always include resources for writing in the role-play area, for example, shopping lists, diaries, phone pads, post-its.
- Consider variation in scale such as a roll of wallpaper or tiny notebooks.
- Include display space for children's mark making at child height.
- Allow children to create their own displays, for example, pin boards, notice boards, magnetic boards.
- Provide message boxes / posting boxes.
- Provide accessible, labelled storage for resources.
- Encourage collaborative mark making efforts.
- Provide opportunities for painting, at an easel, on a table top or on the floor.

Resources

- Ensure a stimulating, exciting variety of mark making resources and remember not to put out too much at any one time.
- Make sure the resources are well presented, clean and organised.
- Ensure a range of tools are provided, for example, stapler, hole punch, glue sticks, sticky tape on a dispenser, mini stapler, scissors, paper clips, treasury tags, rulers, calculators, stamps, envelopes, stickers, inkpads and stamps.
- Add old diaries, card, coloured paper or clipboards.
- Laminated name cards with child's photo will support children who are beginning to make marks for their name.
- Whiteboards, laminated white paper, magic boards, dry wipe pens and slates are a good addition.
- Include magnetic letters, abc frieze, picture dictionaries (but not templates).

- Provide pencils, which need to be regularly sharpened.
- Add coloured crayons, biros, glitter pens, highlighters and felt pens that work.
- Ensure there is a core of basics, but add special items periodically, to maintain interest.
- Provide chalks, inside and outside and water and large decorating brushes can be used outside on fences, walls or sheds.
- Provide messy resources in trays, for example, cornflour, shaving foam or sand.
- Provide different paints, different size brushes, and different sized paper.
- Have media linked stationery such as Ben 10 or Barbie to reflect children's interests.

Do not include stencils, worksheets or other commercial or practitioner templates.

Adult role

- Involve children in real writing opportunities throughout the day.
- Draw attention to letters within names without pressuring children into forming and writing letters before they are developmentally ready.
- Create and then model meaningful mark making opportunities in role-play situations.
- Display and celebrate the process of children's mark making.
- Value all mark making at whatever stage of development.
- Develop parent awareness of developmental stages of mark making. Encouraging them to value their child's marks.
- Support, model and direct.
- Model handwriting correctly, indicating entry and exit points.
- Provide a variety of letter formation experiences, for example, in dry sand, cornflour, writing letters on each others backs.

It is inappropriate to ask children to write over highlighted words or dot to dot as this devalues the child's own emergent writing and may lead to poor letter formation that will need to be unlearned.

Exploration and Investigation

Learning

Learning across all six areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum can take place in exploration and investigation play.

It offers opportunities for children to:

- explore and experiment using all the senses;
- understand how things work;
- become familiar with the properties of materials;
- identify features of living things, objects and events;
- look at similarities, differences, patterns and change;
- discover and learn about their community and the world;
- respond to different stimuli;
- develop gross and fine motor skills;
- develop skills to use a variety of tools and equipment;
- use resources and tools with increasing confidence and control;
- develop their questioning skills and language of thinking;
- have conversations and discussions, and extend their vocabulary;
- make connections in their learning;
- develop creativity and critical thinking;
- mark make for a purpose;
- learn about and use ICT;
- work as part of a group, take turns and co-operate and negotiate.

Key Points

- Exploration and investigation should be available inside and outside.
- Resources and materials need to be presented in various ways such as toy bugs in the sand, magnifying glasses to look at different objects inside and outside, using stethoscopes to listen to different sounds when rubbing across different textures.
- Offer time and space for children to revisit and continue their investigations.
- Create a space for displays to show the processes and results of children's explorations, through real objects, annotated photographs which identify learning and document children's questions and comments.
- Store equipment in a designated accessible area as part of your continuous provision.

Resources
- Provide open ended equipment and materials to maintain interest and provide challenges such as guttering, blocks, tyres.
- Offer a range of materials to support explorations and investigation such as textured materials.
- Provide resources that support different schemas such as things to throw for a child who is exploring a trajectory schema.
- Provide everyday objects that children can investigate such as an egg whisk, torch, pulley, clocks, keys and locks.
- Provide a variety of treasure baskets to support early exploration, some of which may be themed.
- Explore the elements of the outdoors by providing wind chimes, streamers, windmills, bubbles and mirrors.

- Provide opportunities to observe things closely using a range of resources such as magnifying glasses, light box.
- Create explorer kits which contain a variety of resources.
- Provide mark making tools and clip boards so that children can record their findings.
- Use your surrounding area to explore both the man made and natural environment such as a trip to the local shops, park, supermarket or the beach.
- Make available a variety of ICT equipment such as cameras, computers, laptop, CD player, Beebots and smoothie makers should be available.

Adult Role

- Provide time for children to fully explore and investigate resources.
- Practitioners need to be enablers not directors.
- Facilitate the teaching of skills and techniques such as using tools appropriately.
- Provide information that will increase the children's knowledge.
- Provide children daily access to materials that they can explore and investigate.
- Encourage children to combine resources to investigate the properties of materials.
- Allow children to take the resources into all suitable learning areas of the environment.
- Ensure that the resources are accessible, well maintained and safe.
- Ask open ended questions to encourage children to speculate why something occurred or what might happen.
- Introduce new vocabulary and model appropriate language.
- Consider adding additional and different resources daily to stimulate fresh ideas and interest.
- Find out about children's interests from parents and develop provision to support these.

Construction

Learning

Learning across all six areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum can take place in construction play.

It offers opportunities for children to:

- work as part of a group, taking turns and co-operate;
- interact with others, negotiate and discuss plans;
- use mathematical language to describe solid 3D shapes, position and size;
- design and modify as they build and construct with a wide range of resources;
- pre plan and record their constructions;
- enhance their role play and imaginative activities, by building, for example, space ships or homes from Lego ;
- develop their skills in using a range of small and large construction equipment safely;
- use ICT to record the process.

Key Points

- The designated area should have enough space for children to become involved in large construction activities.
- It should not be a 'walk through' area for reaching other parts of the setting.
- Resources need to be presented in various ways, for example on a carpeted area, on a table top, on blankets, mats, textured fabric or on grass.
- There should be time and space for children to revisit and continue their constructions (Use 'Work in progress' notices.) where possible.
- Create a display space nearby to show annotated photographs of the children's construction process, plans and models.
- Construction materials should be available inside and outside daily.

Resources

- There should be a sufficient quantity of construction materials so that children are not arguing over equipment (although they still need to learn it is fair to share).
- Resources should be stored in a designated area and easily accessible to children so they can select what they need and make choices. Clear boxes labelled with words and pictures will encourage this. Children should learn they need to return items to the appropriate place.
- Have a camera nearby to encourage children to record the process and end result of their models with photographs. These can be laminated and used for future 'inspiration'.
- Laminated instruction cards will help develop children's language skills. They begin to understand sequences and that instructions can be visual.
- Equipment should be age appropriate. Children need opportunities to continue to develop physical skills and their imagination.
- A large quantity of wooden blocks should always be provided.
- There should be a selection of both commercially produced materials such as Lego, Mobilo, Meccano, and also recycled resources. Using blankets, sheets, tyres, planks, pieces of fabric, milk crates, all sizes of cardboard boxes, tubes and so on will provide open ended experiences for children.
- Large scale materials, such as guttering and crates, are especially good to use outside.

- A mixture of media can be used, for example Playmobil figures along with wooden blocks.
- Small laminated photographs of the children themselves (and made 3D with small stands) can be incorporated into construction play.
- Provide children with opportunities for woodwork activities using real tools.
- Have laminated name cards available for children to place next to their model.

Adult Role

- Value and provide children time for exploration. The journey towards making a construction is more important than the product; what children will learn along the way is more important than the end result.
- If there is not enough space to display all of the construction resources introduce a system so that the children can request any of the equipment that is available. For example, place a photographic book of all the resources in the construction area for the children to select from.
- Provide resources that reflect children's current interests and developmental needs.
- Offer children real experiences as far as possible, for example, small bricks and wet sand can be provided to support role play of a building site.
- Scribe children's descriptions for their models and/or the process to display or photograph.
- Model how to join construction sets and materials.
- Ensure that all the materials and construction sets are clean and well maintained and include the children in this as they enjoy helping to wash resources.

Small World

Learning

Learning across all six areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum can take place in small world play.

It offers opportunities for children to:

- work as part of a group, take turns, co-operate and negotiate;
- have conversations and discussions, and extend their vocabulary;
- use mark making skills in context;
- count and use mathematical language in meaningful situations;
- become familiar with the properties of materials through their imaginative play;
- engage in a wide range of skills as they use a range of small-world resources;
- develop creativity;
- develop concentration;
- use ICT to enhance play;
- make sense of their lives and the world around them.

Key Points

- Offer opportunities for small world play inside and outside.
- Small world play can happen in the sand tray, the water tray, the builder's tray or box.
- It can provide an additional dimension to construction play or role-play.
- It can take place anywhere in the setting. Sometimes the floor is much more conducive than a table top, which places limits on the play.
- There should be systems in place for children to save their small world play to return to later or to record play they are proud for example by taking photographs.

Resources

- Provide photographs, posters and information books to enhance small world play.
- Provide animals from different habitats including wild animals, domestic animals and pets, farm animals, sea creatures and dinosaurs.
- Provide small people of different genders, ages, ethnic backgrounds and those with disabilities.
- Provide puppets, including finger puppets.
- Provide plastic trees, hedges, gates and fences to enhance scenes.
- Include natural objects, for example leaves, logs, branches, cones, shells, plants, pebbles, compost, gravel, soil, sand, ice and snow.
- Provide recyclable resources such as yoghurt pots, tissue boxes, kitchen roll tubes.
- Ensure assorted trays are available as bases such as a builder's tray, 'grow bags', a small potting tray, a sand tray, a water tray.
- Offer resources for specific small world play such as a hospital or a vet's surgery.
- Provide scenarios for imaginative play such as railway track and trains, a garage and vehicles, an airport with aeroplanes and helicopters, a harbour and boats, houses with furniture, a wooden village, a castle, a palace or fort, space crafts with aliens or a desert island.
- Cameras should be available to record scenes.

Adult Role

- Provide the resources and space for the children to create their own world.
- Provide additional resources to enhance and extend the play and stimulate fresh ideas and interest such as a treasure chest for the children to add to the desert island.
- Spend time observing play that is child led and offer support to extend the play if it is appropriate.
- Following the children's interests, plan stimulating enhancements that will develop children's creative and imagination.
- Add new challenges that need to be solved.
- Play alongside children and provide story lines to your play to model narrative language.
- Become a play partner to engage in sustained shared thinking.
- Be a receptive audience for children to talk through their play and use their imaginations.
- Ask open ended questions to encourage discussion.
- Introduce new vocabulary and model language appropriate to the play scenario.
- Ensure that the resources are well maintained and safe.

Music and Singing

Learning

Learning across all six areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum can take place within music and singing.

It offers opportunities for children to:

- develop all aspects of physical development;
- develop turn taking and collaboration skills;
- explore a variety of instruments of different cultures, commercial and home made;
- explore and express different emotions;
- distinguish sounds and rhythms using instruments and natural sounds such as patting knees, clapping, drumming on a table and voices;
- discover and learn about other cultures;
- engage in sensory exploration;
- respond to different stimuli;
- use their imagination;
- develop care and respect for resources;
- use ICT as a tool.

Key Points

- Ensure access to musical instruments as part of continuous provision.
- Provide daily opportunities for nursery rhymes and singing.
- Singing supports the development of phonological awareness. This may happen in a variety of ways and will include songs and games from 'Letters and Sounds'.
- Provide an area that entices children to sing and explore instruments.
- Provide musical resources outside as well as inside.
- Value children's own singing and music making.
- Constant background music should be avoided as it can distract from children's involvement.
- Background music should only be used when it has a clear purpose to meet the needs of the child or group of children, for example as soothing music in the quiet area.

Resources

- Provide a variety of quality instruments and music from different cultures.
- Encourage the use of natural resources to make sound.
- Use recyclable materials such as pots, pans, tin cans, bicycles wheels to make music.
- Use instruments that children have made for themselves.
- Store instruments in a designated accessible area with opportunities to transport them to a preferred area.
- Use photographs to give visual cues of how to play the instruments.
- Make recordings of children singing and using instruments for children to listen to and enjoy.
- Use prompts such as puppets, visual cues or books to inspire singing songs and rhymes.
- Use the 'Rhythm and Rhyme' materials.
- Use Letters and Sounds games within music and singing experiences.
- Provide ICT equipment such as a CD player, computer, music mats.

Adult Role

- Model and encourage children to respond to music and singing.
- Sing regularly with small groups or individual children.
- Sing rhymes and favourite songs when changing nappies, getting children to sleep or during play.
- Respond to natural events with appropriate songs and rhymes such as 'Row, Row, Row your Boat' when a child sits in a container and sways.
- Provide opportunities for children to use instruments when singing songs and rhymes.
- Allow children to experience different types of music.
- Develop the language of sound and music such as crash, tinkle or whoosh.
- Use the 'Rhythm and Rhyme' resource to support singing in the setting and encourage home learning in partnerships with parents.
- Ensure preschool children have access to 'Letters and Sounds' materials.
- Support children to have respect for the resources.
- Model the correct way to play instruments.
- Use correct language to name instruments.

Problem Solving and Mathematical thinking

Learning

All resources can be used for problem solving and mathematical thinking in all six areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum and from all areas of the setting. There will, however, be some specific mathematical resources that are needed such as dice, balances and games that involve number.

All resources can offer opportunities for children to:

- Sort, classify and order objects, noticing similarities and differences;
- explore shape, size and number;
- refine and consolidate developing mathematical ideas to solve practical problems;
- develop fine motor skills as they sort and use small equipment;
- select from a range of tools and resources to suit their needs;
- select and use resources independently;
- use ICT to support mathematical learning.

Key Points

- The specific mathematical resources need to be stored together so that they are easily accessible to the children.
- Provide accessible labelled storage for resources so that children can help themselves and tidy away.
- Ensure opportunities and resources are available for problem solving and mathematical thinking outdoors and indoors.
- Provide displays to show the different ways that children develop mathematical understanding, for example den making and block play.
- Provide displays that show the process and result of children's problem solving and mathematical learning by annotating photographs and adding children's comments.

Resources

- Ensure access to a variety of resources for sorting and counting including natural materials such as shells, pebbles, cones and baskets are available.
- Provide reference and story books about numbers, shapes etc.
- Display vertical and horizontal number lines / pegs, washing line.
- Provide numbers in lots of forms such as magnetic, laminated, sponge.
- Have clipboards, paper and writing tools available for tallying, writing numbers and drawing plans.
- Make use of number rhyme props such as puppets and story props.
- Ensure there is a variety of equipment that supports the exploration of shape, such as block play and puzzles of different types and complexity.
- Have calculators, sand timers, dice and stop watches readily available.
- Provide scales and balances to explore light and heavy items.
- Provide items to measure with such as rulers, sticks and tape measures.
- Provide collecting bags and bowls for counting, collecting and sorting items.
- A till and real money are essential in the role play areas such as the shop, vet or restaurant.

Adult Role

- Encourage problem solving and mathematical thinking during play and daily routines such as snack time, sand, water, self registration, tidying up.
- To introduce the correct mathematical language through play and group work.
- Encourage children to solve problems and communicate mathematical ideas.
- Include daily opportunities for number rhymes and songs using props.
- Support children to take turns and develop mathematical knowledge by playing number games.

Physical – fine and gross motor

Learning

Physical development is an integral part of learning in all areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum.

It offers opportunities for children to:

- Develop gross and fine motor skills;
- develop co-ordination skills;
- develop strength and stamina;
- experiment with different ways of moving;
- experience sequencing, patterns and exploring space;
- understand how to stay healthy; and how physical activity affects their bodies;
- engage in sensory exploration;
- work as part of a group to develop turn taking, collaboration and negotiation skills;
- explore and express different emotions;
- understand how to keep safe yet able to take calculated risks;
- use ICT as a tool (fine motor) such as calculators, Beebots or CD players.

Key Points

- Space to move is required both indoors and outdoors. Indoor spaces can be created by moving furniture and being flexible. Large outdoor spaces can be in the garden, on the decking, and in the local environment such as at the beach, park, woodland or field.
- Fine motor experiences can be accessed indoors and outdoors across all areas such as planting seeds, pegging washing on a line, using chopsticks to pick up rice.
- Children need to build body strength through gross and fine motor play as pre-cursors to handwriting.
- Movement is crucial for brain development.
- Value children's own movement and dance.
- Respect children's preference not to engage in physical play.

Resources

Gross motor:
- Throwing and catching resources such as an assortment of balls, frisbees, bean bags, foam rockets, feathers or sycamore seeds.
- Rolling resources such as hoops, marbles and mats for rolling their bodies.
- Climbing and stretching resources such as climbing frames and slides.
- Kicking resources such as different sized balls.
- Twisting and spinning resources such as hula hoops, scarves, music for moving to and mats for twisting and spinning their own bodies.
- Running resources such as cones, ropes, markers for marking tracks or obstacle courses.
- Balancing resources such as space hoppers, stepping stones, beams, crates and construction toys.
- Hitting resources such as bats and balls.
- Aiming resources such as bean bags and buckets, marked out targets and hoopla games.
- Pushing and pulling resources such as prams, logs, tubes, push along toys, pulleys, cardboard boxes, trucks, cars and trains.

- Digging resources such as spades and buckets, gardening tools, forks, spoons, and trowels.
- Wheeled toys such as tricycles, scooters and cars.
- All resources should be of good quality and updated regularly.

Fine motor:
- Mark making and painting resources (this can also be gross).
- Messy and malleable resources (this can also be gross).
- Small world toys.
- Snack such as knives, forks, spoons, fruit, jugs.
- Sand and water such as jugs, tubes, scoops (this can also be gross).
- Construction toys such as Lego, Mobilo.
- Puzzles.
- Books and puppets.
- Heuristic play and treasure baskets.
- Woodwork and tools (this can also be gross).
- Cooking utensils and equipment.
- ICT equipment such as computers and programmable toys.

Movement and dance:
- Ensure there is a range of music from different countries and genre such as classical, folk, hip-hop, meditative or jazz for movement and dance.
- Use scarves, pom-poms, ribbons, streamers, balls, hoops to enhance experiences in movement and dance.
- A role play area could be use to stimulate movement and dance such as a dance studio, disco or theatre stage.
- Store resources in designated, accessible area.
- Ensure a CD player and CDs are available for the children to self select music.
- Provide photographs or DVD clips of movement and dance.
- Use a video recorder to record video movement and dance to show parents using an interactive display.

Adult Role

- Offer children physical challenges within a safe environment.
- Support children to manage risk.
- Allow children to freely explore and experiment with resources, using their bodies.
- Provide experiences that challenge children to stretch their physical capabilities.
- Teach skills and techniques such as kicking, aiming and catching.
- Provide children opportunities for physical play throughout the day, both indoors and outdoors.
- Ensure that the resources are well maintained and safe.
- Encourage children to talk about what they are doing.
- Introduce and model the use of vocabulary to describe movement and skills.
- Offer regular opportunities for children to experience different types of movement and dance.
- Model movement and dance.
- Support children to respond to different sounds and music by making connections between movement and sound and moving in different ways.
- Document your observations of children's physical exploration and achievement using a camera or video.

Preferred Learning Styles/Schemas

Children do not all learn in the same way. As practitioners it is good to be aware of the different ways children learn. When observing children, their different learning styles and schemas are something to bear in mind.

Learning Styles

Learning styles are simply different approaches or ways of learning. Some children may have a preference but some may not. There are several learning styles and children may have more than one.

The most commonly recognised styles are:

- Visual – they may think in pictures and learn best through seeing things such as real objects, story props, body language and facial expressions;

- Auditory – learn best through what they hear;

- Tactile/kinaesthetic – learn best through a hands on approach actively exploring the physical world around them. They may find it hard to sit still for long periods and may become distracted by their need for activity and exploration.

Schemas

Schemas are patterns of repeatable behaviour which can often be noticed in young children's play. Although children may show particular schemas in their play, not all children do. Some show one particular schema strongly and some show several at once.

Some easily identifiable schemas are:

Schema	Examples of possible behaviour	Some problems you may have
Trajectory: horizontal, vertical and diagonal movement of things and of self	Dropping things from their high chair, playing with running water, kicking/throwing objects, making towers, jumping off furniture, mark making – lines.	Pushing things off tables, flicking paint, spitting, things flying through the air, running children.
Enclosure: containing things inside	Climbing into boxes, sit in tunnels, filling containers of all kinds.	Lost and hidden objects, taking bags everywhere, wearing too many layers.
Rotation: circles, rotating objects	Enjoys spinning around and being spun around, things that turn, exploring curved lines.	Turning dials – heaters, washing machines, volume controls.
Transporting: moving things about	Carrying objects from one place to another in a bag, pushing a friend in a buggy, usually has full hands.	Lost objects, losing all the sand from the tray and finding it elsewhere.
Enveloping: covering things over	Wrapping things, getting into boxes and closing lids, wrap things in blankets, covering their painting with one colour, hiding things.	Lost objects, using a lot of tape, hiding themselves in the environment.
Connection: joining things together	Spending time focussing on the joining rather than creating an end product, holding hands, give and take objects repeatedly from a practitioner, daisy chains.	Tripping over joined items, tying things up, creating knots.
Transforming: combining and changing things	Combining substances such as sand into water, colour to cornflour, dressing up, cooking experiences.	Adults disapproving of mess or needing to change children's clothes frequently.

The Importance of Play

"Children's play reflects their wide ranging and varied interests and preoccupations. **In their play children learn at their highest level.**"
EYFS 4.1 Play and Exploration

"Play is freely chosen by the child, and is under the control of the child. The child decides how to play, how long to sustain the play, what the play is about, and who to play with."
Learning, Playing and Interacting

Through play children:

- develop the foundations for future learning;

- develop self-esteem, confidence and perseverance through controlling their own play and following their own lines of enquiry;

- develop involvement by playing with something that interests and motivates them;

- learn to make choices, make decisions and develop greater independence;

- develop the skills of co-operation and collaboration through negotiating, turn taking, sharing and understanding the need for rules;

- try things out and solve problems;

- develop knowledge and skills by revisiting and practising;

- explore and investigate;

- build up ideas;

- make sense of their world;

- relive experiences;

- make connections;

- be inventive, think creatively and imaginatively;

- express their feelings and explore their fears;

- communicate their thoughts and ideas;

- develop fine and gross motor skills;

- can choose to be alone, alongside others or in a co-operative group;

- explore their own limitations, take risks and make mistakes.

Wellbeing and Involvement

What is Well-being?
When observing children's well-being, the factors you need to look out for include:

• **Enjoyment** – having fun, taking pleasure in interacting with others and in activities. The children look happy, smile or laugh easily, engage spontaneously in chatting or even singing.

• **Relaxing and inner peace** – children give a relaxed impression. They do not feel threatened in any way. Their facial expression is open, there is no sign of tension or restlessness, and their muscles are relaxed.

• **Vitality** - This can often be read from children's faces: the look is lively and expressive. They radiate. Their posture also gives a lot away: not shrunk or with hanging shoulders but upright, not afraid to take the space they are entitled to.

• **Openness** – children have an open attitude towards the world around. Whatever comes in they are ready to experience it. They are also accessible and approachable to others. They are happy with the attention they receive: a hug, a compliment, a word of comfort, encouragement or help.

• **Self confidence** – can occur when one feels strong. Self assurance, self confidence, a sense of self value make one less anxious or stressed. This can be noticed in a posture expressing a certain pride, literally feeling "big". Positive self-image is the foundation of resilience. Children then do not allow others to walk all over them, they are assertive.

• **Being in touch with oneself** – when a child does not suppress feelings but remains in touch with his/her emotions, it is enjoyable and they will also recover more easily from difficult experiences.

Why Well-Being Is Important

Well-being indicates that one is doing well emotionally, is feeling comfortable with oneself as a person. A low level of well-being signals that a child does not succeed in fulfilling his/her basic needs.

The Basic Needs

1. Physical needs (need to eat, drink, move, sleep, etc.).

2. The need for affection, warmth and tenderness (being hugged, physical contact, receiving and giving love and warmth).

3. The need for safety, clarity and continuity (need for a more or less predictable environment, need to know where you stand, what is allowed and what is not allowed and being able to count on others).

4. The need for recognition and affirmation (feeling accepted and appreciated by others, meaning something to others, being part of a group and belonging).

5. The need to experience oneself as capable (feeling that you can do something yourself, master something, experience how to push the limits of your capabilities, experience success).

6. The need for meaning and (moral) values (feeling a 'good' person and feeling connected with others and the world).

- Of course, not every form of discomfort is automatically a problem. Frustrations are inevitable. But a low level of well-being in the long-term often causes psychological problems.
- A child loses contact with him/herself and with his/her feelings. The child can behave extremely listless, anxious or aggressive or seems to take a step back in his/her development.
- Because the foundation of a personality is laid during the first stages of life one cannot pay enough attention to signals indicating a low level of well-being.
- Also in older children these signals tell us that their social-emotional development is threatened.
- In short, well-being is about the 'quality of life'. It refers to an optimal relation between the child and its environment.

Taking Action

- Improving the level of well-being is not equal to spoiling children and simply giving them everything they want. Children play an active role in getting to real satisfaction in life. Adults can help children by nurturing their self-confidence, by helping them to express what they feel, by teaching them how to deal with other children, by letting them experience success, by developing their talents and entrepreneurship, etc.
- Well-being generates energy and ensures that the child remains in touch with him/ herself and gains inner strength. That is why we should invest in well-being for the present child and the future adult.

Excerpt from SiCs (ZiKo)

The Scale for Well-Being

Level	Involvement	Signals
1	**Extremely Low**	The child clearly shows signs of discomfort: • Whines, sobs, cries, screams; • Looked dejected, sad or frightened, is in panic; • Is angry or furious; • Wriggles feet, throws objects, hurts others; • Sucks thumb, rubs its eyes; • Doesn't respond to the environment, avoids contact, withdraws; • Hurts him/herself: bangs head, throws him/herself on the floor.
2	**Low**	The posture, facial expression and actions indicate that the child does not feel at ease. However, the signals are less explicit than under level 1 or the sense of discomfort is not expressed the whole time.
3	**Moderate**	The child has a neutral posture. Facial expression and posture show little or not emotion. There are no signals indicating sadness or pleasure, comfort or discomfort.
4	**High**	The child shows obvious signs of satisfaction (as listed under level 5). However, these signals are not constantly present with the same intensity.
5	**Extremely high**	During the observation episode, the child enjoys, in fact it feels great: • It looks happy and cheerful, smiles, beams, cries out of fun; • Is spontaneous, expressive and is really him/herself; • Talks to itself, plays with sounds, hums, sings; • Is relaxed, does not show any signs of stress or tension; • Is open and accessible to the environment; • Is lively, full of energy, radiates; • Expresses self-confidence and self-assurance.

Excerpt from SiCs (ZiKo)

What is Involvement?

When observing children's involvement the factors you need to look out for include:

Motivation
- Children will really enjoy an activity and are truly interested and driven to engage in it.
- Children cannot achieve a high level of involvement if they do things only because others ask them or force them to do it. Their motivation must come from within.

Intense mental activity
- Involvement means that the children will be completely open to experiences. Bodily sensations and movements, colours and sounds, smells and tastes will have a certain range and depth that is not there otherwise. When involvement is low the sensations are not really lived through and remain superficial.

Satisfaction
- Children spontaneously take initiatives to get into this particular state. Play is the place where this satisfaction can be found. If involvement is lacking, children will become bored and get a feeling of emptiness and frustration.

Exploratory drive
- If children are involved they have the urge to discover or explore, the urge to experience the world, to use their senses, to get a grip on reality. Initially, this 'getting a grip' should be taken literally: touching and grabbing everything that comes within range. Gradually 'grasping' means 'understanding' and gets less concrete.

At the limits of your capabilities
- Involvement is only possible when children are challenged by an activity, when it is not too easy and not too difficult. Children with a high level of involvement operate at the very limits of their capabilities. They fully address their skills; they give their best themselves – whether they are babies or adults, children who are delayed in their development or highly gifted children.

Why Involvement is important

Involvement is something very special. When you observe it in children you are amazed. You sense intuitively that you cannot disturb their play. When children are involved, we know that they address their capabilities and that they are 'developing':
They learn at a deeper level, they become more competent. If involvement is lacking, there is reason for concern. Chances are that their development will stagnate. That is why we should do everything we can in order to create an environment in which children can engage in a wide variety of activities.

Before you begin an observation of a child it is important that you familiarise yourself with the signals for well-being and involvement as well as the scales for well-being and for involvement. Make sure you have a clear understanding of each signal as these will form the basis of each observation. This will enable you to build up an accurate portrait to be used in future planning.

Excerpt from SiCs (ZiKo)

The Scale for Involvement

Level	Involvement	Signals
1.	Extremely Low	Child shows hardly any activity. • No concentration, staring, day dreaming; • An absent, passive attitude; • No goal orientated activity, aimless actions, not producing anything; • No signs of exploration, interest; • Not taking anything in, mental activity
2.	Low	The child shows some level of activity but which is often interrupted: • Limited concentration: looks away during the activity, fiddles, dreams; • Is easily distracted; • Action only leads to limited results.
3.	Moderate	The child is busy the whole time, but without real concentration: • Routine actions, attention is superficial; • Is not absorbed in the activity, activities are short lived; • Limited motivation, no real dedication, does not feel challenged; • The child does not gain deep level experience; • Does not use his/her capabilities to full extent; • The activity does not address the child's imagination.
4.	High	There are clear signs of involvement, but these are not always present to their full extent: • The child is engaged in the activity without interruption; • Most of the time there is real concentration, but during some brief moments the attention is more superficial; • The child feels challenged, there is a certain degree of motivation; • The child's capabilities and imagination to a certain extent are addressed in the activity.
5.	Extremely High	During the episode of observation the child is continuously engaged in the activity and completely absorbed in it: • Is absolutely focused, concentrated without interruption; • Is highly motivated feels strongly appealed by the activity, perseveres; • Even strong stimuli cannot distract him/her; • Is alert, attention to details, shows precision; • Mental activity and experience are intense; • The child constantly addresses all its capabilities; imagination and mental capacity are in top gear; • Obviously enjoys being engrossed in the activity.

Excerpt from SiCs (ZiKo)

Every Child A Talker

What is Every Child a Talker?

Every Child a Talker (ECAT) was designed to help Early Years practitioners create a developmentally appropriate, supportive and stimulating environment in which children can enjoy experimenting with and learning language. It can be implemented whether children are in early years settings, with a childminder or at home with their parents. Through everyday, fun and interesting activities which reflect children's interests practitioners can encourage early communication, speech and language development right from the outset. Then by extending children's vocabulary and helping children to build sentences children can develop the skills to become confident and skilled communicators.

Improving practice in Early Years settings is important, but providing lots of opportunities for language learning in the home is vital – it makes the biggest difference to how well a child goes on to achieve. So as well as practitioners talking expressively to children as a matter of routine in the setting, Early Years practitioners should be encouraging the same practice by parents at home.

Practitioners can provide parents with ideas that will support early language development such as using activities and songs, suggest different books to be enjoyed at home or suggest other talking opportunities where parents can share time and experiences with their child.

The ECAT resources help to give all early years practitioners the skills and confidence to support parents more effectively by making good links between play and learning in the setting and play and learning at home.

The approach promotes and encourages practitioners to talk regularly with parents about how well their child's language is developing and through the sharing of their child's learning journey work collaboratively and proactively with the child's parents so that they can jointly support the child's learning and development.

To access a full set of Every Child a Talker materials please go to:
Instalment 1 http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/node/153355
Instalment 2 http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/node/158181
Instalment 3 http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/node/277287

The ECAT evaluation tools are intended to allow all practitioners to reflect on aspects of their Early Years setting and their own role within it. They are improvement tools designed to help identify your settings strengths and needs in supporting children's speech, language and communication.
The evaluation tools are divided into four activities relating to the themes of the EYFS, two questionnaires and a monitoring tool and can be found on the Toolkit CD Rom.