

In Síolta, under Standard 2 Environments, Component 2.6, one aspect of providing ‘a range of developmentally appropriate, challenging, diverse, creative and enriching experiences for all children’ involves the Book Area where it is suggested the following be considered’:

A ‘quiet area of the room, natural light, comfortable seating, carpeted sections, cushions, display units, puppets for story-telling, books available in a variety of languages, large books in a variety of formats, a system of borrowing, cardboard and other durable books, links to local library, etc.’

In Aistear, under the theme of Communication, the learning experiences for children include ensuring young children experience ‘a print-rich environment’ and fostering young children’s love of, excitement in, understanding of, and use of books.

A book area that is well-used by children and adults can play a valuable role in developing children’s communication, wellbeing and a love of stories and books. Whether you have lots of space or very little, this audit will help you to evaluate your current book area and give you tips and ideas on how to improve it.

Síolta: The National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education
Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework

Instructions for completing the Book Area audit

1. Make a copy of the Book Area Audit
2. Read each of the headings in turn e.g. ‘Staff involvement in the book area’. Read the columns headed ‘Level’ and ‘Description’.
3. Decide the level your setting is at: ‘Not yet developed’, ‘Developing’ or ‘Enhancing’. Tick the corresponding box in the ‘Insert tick’ column.
4. Next, read the ‘Activities to be undertaken’ corresponding with the ticked box.
5. When you have completed the audit, share your findings with the staff. Discuss the activities to be undertaken which correspond with the boxes you ticked.
6. Discuss the ideas with parents and ask the children what they would like to see happen to make their book area better .
7. Decide whether you will make major changes straight away, or focus on changing one aspect of the area at a time and seeing what happens. Decide on when you will review the changes e.g. after 6 months, in Term 3.
8. Write in changes you make under the column headed ‘Evidence of change and comments’. Comments might include why you made the changes, any challenges you found to making the changes, what you plan to do next.
9. Review the audit at the time decided. Make a fresh copy of the blank Book Area Audit. Complete the audit as before - compare the levels and the evidence with your first audit and celebrate the improvements!
10. The book area audit should be undertaken at regular intervals - you, the staff, parents and children will come up with new ideas to improve the book area.



Name of Service:

Contact Person:

Contact Number: _____

Setting Type (Please tick):

- Full Day Care
- Sessional Crèche
- Sessional Pre-school
- Other – Please specify _____

Total Number of Children attending the setting: _____

Age Range of Children: _____

Staff involvement with the book area				
Insert tick	Level	Description	Activities to be undertaken	Evidence of change and comments
	Not developed yet		<p>Discuss with staff the value and purpose of having a dedicated book area and how this can be promoted.</p> <p>Agree book area will be used only for book-related activities</p> <p>Draw up a weekly staff rota for spending time in the book area with the children.</p> <p>Provide tips for what staff can do with children.</p>	
	Developing	Most members of staff understand the importance of the book area, they use it regularly to share books with children and encourage children to use it at other times.	<p>At a staff meeting discuss how books can be shared with children</p> <p>Ask a member of staff who is confident about sharing books to provide other staff with tips for sharing books.</p> <p>Plan for two members of staff to learn from one another by sharing books with the children together.</p> <p>Provide additional resources that help staff to bring stories to life, such as story sacks.</p>	
	Enhancing	All members of staff understand the value of the book area, they use it regularly, incorporate it as part of their planning, and use creative ways to ensure that all children are involved in using it.	<p>At a staff meeting/with groups of children, ask each staff member to say what their favourite book was when they were a child. Share results with the children.</p> <p>Make a display to go in the book area, with photos of staff reading their favourite book.</p> <p>Ask each adult to share this book in the book area with the children - provide toys or objects to go with the story.</p>	

Children's engagement with the book area				
Insert tick	Level	Description	Activities to be undertaken	Evidence of change and comments
	Not developed yet		<p>During one session observe which children visit the book area and who doesn't go there. How long do children stay there, and what do they do? Do they look at books, or do they use the space to do other things e.g. role play, "chilling out", hiding from adults, or even to sleep?</p> <p>Do any adults spend time there, what do they do and how long do they stay?</p>	
	Developing	The book area is well used by most of the children, but some do not spend very much time there and their level of engagement with books needs to be developed.	Think about turning your book area into a role-play area, for example, a bookshop, a bookshop for babies or a library.	
	Enhancing	All children spend time in the book area sharing and looking at books with adults, many go there on their own initiative or to share books with friends.	Plan for named adults to be involved with sharing books with children each day.	

Involvement of families and volunteers in the book area				
Insert tick	Level	Description	Activities to be undertaken	Evidence of change and comments
	Not developed yet		<p>At the introduction/induction to your setting show all staff, families and volunteers the book area and emphasise its importance.</p> <p>Let parents/carers know when visiting the setting they are welcome to use the book area with their children.</p> <p>Provide tips for parents on how to engage children and make a book come to life.</p> <p>At a staff/parents meeting ask a staff member to discuss why sharing books is so important, and to give tips for doing so.</p>	
	Developing	The importance of the book area is emphasised to parents and carers. Family members are encouraged to visit and use the book area on a regular basis. Volunteers are also sometimes involved.	<p>Find out what parents, grandparents and older brothers and sisters like to read at home.</p> <p>Ask parents to donate magazines that reflect the family's interests: language e.g. fishing, football, culture</p> <p>Make a display: "What we like to read at home".</p>	
	Enhancing	Parents and carers are regularly involved in the activities and development of the book area; the area has information available for parents to encourage them to share books with their children.	<p>Have a "bring a favourite book from home week" - ask the parents to bring their child's favourite book from home.</p> <p>Each day take it in turns to share one or two of the children's favourite books with the group asking the child what they like about it.</p>	

Variety and suitability of books				
Insert tick	Level	Description	Activities to be undertaken	Evidence of change and comments
	Not developed yet		<p>Think about the age and stage of the children in your setting, how individual children relate to books and what the children are interested in.</p> <p>Get a balance between stories, rhyming and information books.</p> <p>Match your books to the needs and interests of the children.</p>	
	Developing	The book area contains books suitable for all ages, covering a good range of topics and interests; it includes some information books as well as story and rhyme books.	<p>Spend time as a staff looking at the books - divide them into storybooks, rhyming books (many of these will be storybooks as well) and information books.</p> <p>Spend time in the book area, and note what books, magazines and comics children enjoy most.</p> <p>Start to provide the books that the children particularly enjoy reading.</p> <p>For children with English as an additional language (EAL) include books in children's mother tongue from the library or home.</p>	
	Enhancing	The book area contains a carefully planned selection of books, chosen based on the ages and stages of development of the children, their special interests and their backgrounds; there is a good balance between story and rhyme books and information books.	<p>Further divide the books into ages and stages.</p> <p>Ask the children what kind of books they like reading. Share these with the children.</p> <p>Take photos of children with their favourite book, and make a display in or near the book area.</p> <p>Observe children at play, and note what they enjoy playing with most e.g. trains, buses, role play. Introduce books on these subjects while they are playing and then add them to the book area.</p> <p>Make personalised photo books - books with photographs of themselves, books with children's faces and names, taking part in various activities in the setting, on outings, and in family photos.</p> <p>Put books and comics in the book area that feature children's TV and film characters (laminated pages from comics, as they will get a lot of wear!).</p>	

Additional resources				
Insert tick	Level	Description	Activities to be undertaken	Evidence of change and comments
	Not developed yet		<p>Remove any teddies, puzzles etc. that are not specifically linked to books. Tip: Place basket on a small table in the book area to draw attention to it</p> <p>Introduce a basket of toys or objects that are linked to a book or set of books, e.g. if you have displayed several dinosaur books, put some dinosaurs in the basket.</p> <p>Make time to be in the book area to introduce and share the new books and toys with the children.</p>	
	Developing	The book area has some additional resources such as toys, puppets, story sacks and story boxes which are used to enhance children's enjoyment of books.	<p>After you have shared a book with the children using finger or glove puppets, leave the book and puppets in a basket in the book area so the children can go back and play with them on their own.</p> <p>Create a story sack: Choose a popular story and collect objects and toys linked to the story. Use the objects to illustrate and extend the story. Allow the children to look at and handle the objects whilst listening to the story.</p>	
	Enhancing	There is an extensive collection of well-chosen resources such as toys and puppets, story sacks and story boxes which are regularly used to enhance children's enjoyment of books.	Develop sets of toys, puzzles, information book, song sheet related to the themes of a book. Put these in a small plastic crate or wooden box with a lid, and share with the children before and after you have shared a story.	

Condition and format of books				
Insert tick	Level	Description	Activities to be undertaken	Evidence of change and comments
	Not developed yet		<p>As a staff team, look at the condition of the books. Replace any books that are torn, dirty, with pages missing or that have been drawn on.</p> <p>Involve children in sorting out and repairing books, showing them how to care for them.</p>	
	Developing	The book area contains a good variety of books in different sizes, materials and shapes; it includes some noisy, pop-up and touchy-feely books and the condition of the books is generally good.	<p>Check how varied the format and types of books are: large and small books, books that make noises, touchy-feely books, pop-up books and books made in different materials.</p> <p>Make a list of any areas that are underrepresented, for when you next purchase books.</p>	
	Enhancing	The book area contains a well-thought out variety of books in different sizes, materials and shapes, including a good selection of noisy, pop-up and touchy-feely books and a selection of magazines and leaflets; all books and materials are in good condition and are regularly checked and maintained.	<p>Put "special" books on display, but out of reach, so children need to ask for them e.g. for young children books with buttons to press and pop-up books.</p> <p>Have large format books for reading to groups or for children to look at together.</p> <p>Have comics and magazines e.g. nature magazines, car or boat magazines and magazines with horses or dogs - ask parents to bring in magazines from home.</p>	

Display and storage				
Insert tick	Level	Description	Activities to be undertaken	Evidence of change and comments
	Not developed yet		<p>You can have too many books! As a staff team, take a good look at how many books are on display in your book area.</p> <p>Experiment with putting out just a few books.</p> <p>Remove books that children never look at.</p> <p>Only display as many books as the children can comfortably put back into the containers or racks.</p>	
	Developing	<p>Some thought has gone into the storage and display of books to make it attractive to the children. Books are displayed so that children can easily find and choose books; the amount of books on display is about right and there is some display material aimed at attracting children into the area.</p>	<p>Make sure storage is appropriate, so that any child can find the book they want, and can put books and toys away with the minimum of support.</p> <p>Store books for babies low enough for them to reach.</p> <p>Include some displays in the area, at the children's eye level, to attract children in and to keep their interest while they are there.</p> <p>Laminate any pictures so that children can touch them without them getting spoiled.</p> <p>Experiment with photos of children with books. Put up the displays with the children. Ask them what pictures they would like to have there.</p> <p>Involve the children in how the books are displayed and stored. Ask children at the beginning of the week what books they would like to look at. Ask children about their favourite books, and where they would like to put them so that everyone can know.</p> <p>Adults should always be involved with supervising tidying up as it is a good time to listen to children's questions and find out more about what they think of the book area.</p>	
	Enhancing	<p>The storage and display of books has been carefully planned and is reviewed on a regular basis; the bookcases and other storage units make it easy for children to choose books by themselves. Display material is carefully planned to fit in with special themes and children's interests and is changed on a regular basis.</p>	<p>Include an interactive display linked to a current theme or children's interests. e.g. if your children have a favourite book, display it on a table in the book area, with a basket of toys linked to the book and a laminated sign saying, "Come and read our favourite book and play with the toys."</p>	



Source: National Literacy Trust, UK

Overall impressions		Evidence of change and comments	
Insert tick	Level	Description	Activities to be undertaken
	Not developed yet		Location, location! Choose a location for your book area easy to find for children and parents? Is it quiet enough for listening to stories and concentrating? Is it well-lit, preferably with natural light?
	Developing	The book area is clean, tidy and attractive, there is comfortable seating for children and adults to share books and the furniture and flooring is suitable for babies as well as older children and adults.	<p>Be clear that the book area is mainly for sharing books. Create as much space as possible by removing objects that are not linked to books.</p> <p>Make sure there is comfortable seating for both children and adults: you could be there for a long time!</p> <p>Floor coverings need to be clean - if you have a nice rug, encourage the children to take their shoes off.</p> <p>Tip: Put a basket or "welcome" mat for children's shoes, just outside the book area.</p>
	Enhancing	The book area is very welcoming and attractive: furniture, flooring and lighting has been carefully chosen to make it appealing and to maximize comfort for children of all ages and adults.	<p>Make sure displays in the book area are there for the children to look at and interact with.</p> <p>Use large, clean sheets of coloured card for backing.</p> <p>Laminate pictures and signs and place at eye level for children to look and read.</p>



Tips for Parents

Decide with your child if you will read or talk about the book.

When you read, you lead

- Get your child to sit and listen.
- Get your child to join in where phrases are repeated
- Ask your child to make sounds that are in the story e.g. the noise of animals, cars driving (brmm, brmm)

When you talk, your child leads, so...

- Don't open the book and ask lots of questions!
- Wait for your child to talk. After a few minutes, if he hasn't said anything, you say something about the book.
- Listen to what your child says.
- Repeat back words and sentences he says correctly. This way he hears good examples.
- Sometimes when you repeat back, add extra words or ideas. This helps develop his language.
- Sometimes, ask a question about what he has said. Remember – your question must follow on from what your child has said.



Borrow a Book

Child's name:

Name of Book

Comment

(e.g. I read the story;
He talked about the story;
She liked it)

**Parent's
signature**

Name of Book

Comment

(e.g. I read the story;
He talked about the story;
She liked it)

**Parent's
signature**