

Early Years 360° Environment Audit



This enabling environment audit is designed to provide a framework with which to evaluate the current environment from all perspectives and focus attention on areas that require improvement. Current research has proved that the environment can have a significant impact on well-being as well as children's learning and development. The audit reflects areas highlighted in EYFS guidelines and also aspects from innovative pedagogies such as the Reggio Emilia approach.

When completing the audit take time to observe the environment, try to imagine viewing it for the first time and from different perspectives; as a teacher, a child, a parent/carer compiling a 360° view. To aid observation also take images –and from different heights (child/ adult). Consult with children, parents and governors to also get their opinions and input. Having children take photographs can be a useful tool to support this. When you review images together they are likely to be much more communicative that if asked direct questions. Please feel free to share this document.

In order to allow children to develop their creativity we need to allow children to construct their learning, make discoveries, make connections. We need to offer them real experiences. They need to spaces in which they can communicate, stretch their thinking and spaces of quiet reflection. The environment needs to offer many varied opportunities for children to express their imagination and creativity.

The environment needs to be conducive to emotional well-being and learning – the audit looks at a wide range of aspects from aesthetics and stimulation to physical factors such as noise levels and light quality. It is crucial that we also ensure the outdoor area also supports growth and learning – research has shown that children can learn even more effectively outdoors.

When we want to implement change it can at times seem overwhelming. It is important to agree on priorities, set achievable objectives and then implement improvements on a realistic timescale.

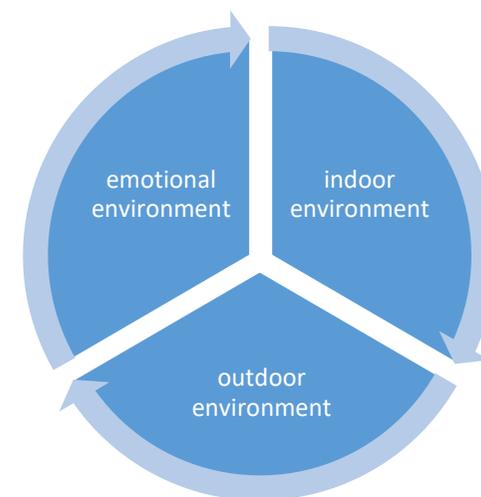
The audit starts by looking at general aspects affecting wellbeing, then looks at the aspects that affect the indoor environment followed by the outdoor environment. It is essential to consider how children can also be consulted and contribute their ideas in this audit process.

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Area	Observations	Aims
<p>Welcoming environment: Is the first impression warm and welcoming? External appearance of setting. Entrance to buildings, Entrance hallway Welcoming for families and visitors. Information available. Visuals sharing learning. Pictures of staff. Are aspects of “home” brought into the setting – feeling less institutional? Spaces for parents/ families to meet and talk. How is the entrance “flow” Space for parents to meet with teacher</p>		
<p>Value: Children have a right to nurturing environment Does the environment make the children feel valued and respected? Children won’t feel valued by a shabby school, poorly kept buildings etc. Do you like spending a large part of <u>your</u> week in the learning environment? Do we value the impact the environment can have on health and wellbeing? Staff valued: Separate, secure staff room with food prep facilities. Relaxing environment. Also contains stimulating books and articles.</p>		
<p>Beauty & Aesthetics: Elements that elevate the soul. Elements that provide aesthetic stimulation. Do we have inspiring art, arrangements, uplifting details, pockets of beauty? Is there something magical, curious and of wonder? Things to discover. Inspirational quotations. Monitor/ projections with stimulating material</p>		
<p>Clutter: Is the environment clutter free? Is there enough storage to enable this? Are there materials that are no longer used taking up valuable space? Are surfaces clear? Is the room well organised and inviting to walk into? Does the space “feel” calm?</p>		

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<p>Maintenance: Is the setting in a good state of repair Peeling paint on walls / ceiling Rough damaged floors Stained carpets</p>		
<p>Furniture: Ergonomic chairs and tables Most furniture child sized Sturdy and in good repair Do children with disabilities have adaptive furniture? Open shelving to allow easy access Soft furnishing for relaxation/ comfort, upholstered furniture, cushions, rugs, beanbags Cosy area</p>		
<p>Flow: (movement of children and parents/carers) How does the “traffic” work? Drop off/ collection? Moving around the building? In the class room? Outdoors? Are there any bottle necks? Is there enough security?</p>		
<p>Natural Materials: Are there opportunities to explore with natural materials, wood, stone, shells etc? Can we find the natural world within the school? Plants, natural objects? Can the outside environment be seen from within? Can we introduce more natural materials into the fabric of the classroom /school? Natural fabric drapes, artefacts, wood panelling, hessian notice boards Can we transport landscape and natural world into the classroom with visuals and objects?</p>		

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<p>Senses: Are there elements that stimulates the senses? Sound /touch/taste/ sight - multi sensory environment Sensory garden, Sound garden Different textured floor surfaces</p>		
<p>Distinct spaces: A place for withdrawal, quiet, rest, recharging, cosy – also outdoors? Space for sleep. A place for reading, A place for speaking and listening. A place of investigation and exploration. Some opportunity for physical play indoors. A space for creative role play, costume props puppets etc Appealing writing area, with resources for writing /mark making A studio, workshop, laboratory area to test ideas, to experiment. Spaces Encourage independent usage. Non-defined – open possibility space. Flow/ connection between areas</p>		
<p>Spaces to encourage communication: Spaces that promote communication and language Environment that facilitates speaking and listening Indoors and outdoors Spaces that encourage 2 children to communicate, small spaces with provocations Protected from intrusion, readily accessible. More than one quiet space.</p>		
<p>Resources: Do the children have easy access to high quality open ended resources that promote creative thinking and exploration? Intelligent materials. Can they be independent in their learning and follow their interests. Stimulate inquiry based learning. Is independence in learning encouraged? Real resources not only toys Are the recourses visible or well labelled? Multiples of popular resources Are our resources presented beautifully – making them irresistible - and easily accessible? Are children overloaded with too much choice?</p>		

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<p>EYFS development areas: Are there opportunities to reach all areas of the curriculum within the classroom? Are all 7 areas of learning reflected within the indoor and outdoor (where applicable) environment and well used by the children? PSED, PD, CL, L, M, UW, EAD</p>		
<p>Connectivity: Wifi for contemporary learning Skype other schools around the world. Opportunity to search info online with adult to help extend thinking/answer questions? Does the environment have an IT area children can access – computer and printer.</p>		
<p>Space for large scale work: Is there enough floor space to encourage larger scale work - acting out stories, drawing on large paper. Can the room be adapted to create/ accommodate large scale work?</p>		
<p>Rearrangement – Changing the classroom: Can/Is the classroom environment be changed from time to time? Fresh – wow factor! Move resources around. Different arrangements to excite and engage the children. Change location of regular activities so children explore new surroundings with their bodies and their minds. What changes have you made this year responding to current cohort’s abilities and interests?</p>		

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<p>Documentation: What is on the walls?...Display, learning stories, notices, rules... What is at their height? Is documentation of learning process prioritised? Documentation vs. Display Digital presentation - screens. Is documentation current and relevant– relating to current children</p>		
<p>Exhibition/ Gallery space: Is there a space where achievements can be celebrated? Could we create a gallery space in a different environment? Are achievements celebrated? Are they regularly changed? 3d work as well as 2d work displayed Displayed work is individualised and referenced to learning process.</p>		
<p>Cultural diversity: Does the environment reflect our cultural diversity? What messages are there that we are inclusive? Signage in different languages Artwork from different cultures Items from different cultures, bowls, blankets etc Prayer room</p>		
<p>Responding to gender: Do children equally access areas/ resources Do we encourage children to go beyond stereotyped roles – how could the environment support this Changes to encourage boys/ girls to engage in other areas – eg: mark making in dens/ under tables.</p>		

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<p>Accessibility: Is the learning environment inclusive? Children with impaired vision, wheelchair/ walkers accessibility etc Are we responding to needs of current cohort? Ramps/ handrails</p>		
<p>Light: Is there as much natural daylight in the classroom as possible (Uplifting effect on well being and health) Are the windows clear of notices and displays? Are blinds open as much as possible? Natural light controllable – blinds/ curtains –for bright sunlight Lights on only when need to be on? Opportunity to crate dark space? Experiment with different lighting - e.g. fairy light to create different atmosphere or candles Use of projection, light boxes, other lighting. OHP projection.</p>		
<p>Sustainability: Are we conscious of sustainability when we make changes to our environment, low carbon footprint products etc. Responsibility sourced materials etc. Green environment. Utility suppliers etc visible meters, transparent tubes with water run off. low maintenance. Appliances turned off. Lights low energy. Recycling. Bike/Scooter storage. Eco school status.</p>		
<p>Cleaning: Are we aware of what products are used? Are these compliant? No voc's/ carcinogens/ irritants? Children spend a lot of time on the floor. Is the building cleaned adequately? Is the outdoor area cleaned?</p>		

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<p>Air quality: Are the windows open regularly? Can ventilation can easily be controlled Ventilating fan can be used by staff</p>		
<p>Acoustics: Speech intelligibility and classroom acoustics What are the classroom acoustics like? Is it necessary to make any improvements? What impact do noise levels have?</p>		
<p>Temperature: Can this be regulated from room to room? How is temperature monitored?</p>		
<p>Colour: Colour can create mood and effect atmosphere and performance Subjective? Does the colour scheme promote a calm and relaxed feeling? Are brightly coloured walls/ carpets jarring?</p>		

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<p>Outdoor environment – physical development: Are there opportunities and challenges to extend and develop children’s physical development in a wide variety of ways? In good repair and much variety. Age appropriate. Such as bikes, balance, movement, height, tunnels, hula hoops, stepping stones, swings, climbing rope, blocks, wheelbarrows etc. Balls, skittles etc. skipping Are children getting enough exercise and variety of physical activity Large and small apparatus? Climbing, crawling...throwing, catching. Are bikes restricted rather than used every day where they dominate space and play?</p>		
<p>Outdoor environment – creative opportunities: Variety of role play opportunities – play house/ stage Dressing up costumes with mirrors. Arts activities, Painting, placing and arranging Access to “intelligent” materials – “loose parts”. Woodworking. Sound exploration Dens, tents, stage area</p>		
<p>Outdoor environment – mark making/ literacy/communication: Signs, letters Variety of mark making materials, chalk, water/ brushes, mud, paint... Phones, megaphones, voice tubes Benches, seating, cosy areas, reading</p>		
<p>Outdoor environment – opportunities for investigation: Mathematical thinking/ Scientific thinking Numbers/ shapes Pulleys, buckets, measuring equipment, scales Water exploration, drainpipes & guttering, Sand exploration, fire pit. Gardening, vegetables,, flowers, scarecrow, trees Wildlife area, pond, mini beast hotel, bird feeder</p>		

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<p>Outdoor environment – general: Overall “feel” – well cared for – Beauty, planting, tidy, - a valued space. Rich learning opportunities. Many opportunities for exploration? Outdoor documentation. Quiet, private spaces. Are wellies, macs and umbrellas provided for children to use outside in rainy weather? Are there other areas that offer shade? Is there a covered area/canopy (dry) outside? Separation of spaces for bikes, climbing, balls etc.</p>		
<p>Outdoor classroom: Is there opportunity to use different areas outside as an outdoor classroom or for small group work – in all weathers?</p>		
<p>Risk: Do children have opportunity to encounter and manage risk? Experience risk in a controlled environment What are our limits...tree climbing/ ladders/ climbing frame, swings, woodwork?</p>		
<p>Staffing outside: How do you ensure that the deployment of staff is flexible enough to respond to the flow and movement of children between indoors and outdoors? Do observations/ documentation also focus on outdoor explorations? How is the outdoor area tidied?</p>		

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<p>Outdoor access: Is there free flow between the classroom and the outdoor environment For what length of time are children able to access the outdoors If restricted are the times that the outdoors is used working?</p>		
<p>Do children get opportunity experience other environments: Get out to woods, parks etc. What are the possibilities for experiencing different environments? Spiritual buildings, libraries, galleries, theatre, seaside.... Forest school experience?</p>		
<p>Time: Time can impact on the way we experience the environment Are we flexible with the schedule and routines Do we allow time for extended explorations that last over days/ weeks Can we give the children more control over how they spend their time Do children have enough time to be creative, problem solve, to think, master skills Does the rhythm of the day allow mix of active/ quiet? Calm atmosphere – unhurried</p>		
<p>Child consultation: Children also to evaluate their environment What do they like, where do they spend time? Do we ask children what they want to see in the classroom? Are children involved in rearranging the classroom – contributing their ideas Do we ask children what they want to see in the outdoor area? Children’s photography of environment.</p>		

Other:	Observations	Aims

Notes