

## Standard 2: Environments

Enriching environments, both indoor and outdoor (including materials and equipment) are well-maintained, safe, available, accessible, adaptable, developmentally appropriate, and offer a variety of challenging and stimulating experiences.



## Standard 2: Environments

### Component 2.1

The indoor and outdoor environment is well planned and laid out to accommodate the needs of all children and adults in the setting.

### Component 2.5

The outdoor environment provides a range of developmentally appropriate, challenging, diverse, creative and enriching experiences for all children.

### Component 2.2

The environment (including equipment and materials) is adaptable for, and accessible to, all children and adults within the setting.

### Component 2.6

The indoor environment provides a range of developmentally appropriate, challenging, diverse, creative and enriching experiences for all children.

### Component 2.3

The indoor and outdoor environment is well maintained and ensures comfortable and pleasant surroundings for children and adults.

### Component 2.7

There is an appropriate amount of equipment and materials within the setting (both indoors and outdoors) for use by individual children and groups of children.

### Component 2.4

The environment promotes the safety, both indoors and outdoors, of all children and adults.

### Component 2.8

The environment provides for the safe management of food consumption.

## Component 2.1

The indoor and outdoor environment is well planned and laid out to accommodate the needs of all children and adults in the setting.

### → Signposts for Reflection General

2.1.1 How does the layout of the indoor environment meet the needs of children and adults within the setting?



Think about: (e.g.)

- Safety
- Privacy (e.g., staff room, etc.) See 9.5
- Personal care needs
- Sleep and rest facilities
- Heating/lighting/décor
- Organisation of learning space
- Facilitating free movement

2.1.2 In what way is space provided for each child's belongings within the setting? See 1.2



Think about: (e.g.)

- Changing bags
- Buggies
- Toiletries
- Coat hooks at the child's level
- Symbols/pictures as labels
- Cubby holes/shelving for personal belongings

2.1.3 How are visitors directed into and around the setting?



Think about: (e.g.)

- Group sign outside
- Bell/intercom
- Welcoming notice
- Directional signs (in English, Irish and other languages, as appropriate) See 14.2
- Signage at children's height
- Signs for adults with literacy difficulties and visual impairment



Birth - 18 months

2.1.4 What facilities are available for nappy-changing?

2.1.5 What facilities do you have available for feeding young babies?



Think about: (e.g.)

- Privacy for breastfeeding mothers



12 - 36 months

2.1.6 2.1.4-2.1.5 ↩

2.1.7 How is the indoor and outdoor space designed to accommodate children individually, in small groups and in large groups?

2.1.8 How does the indoor environment allow for opportunities for children and adults to move around freely?



2½ - 6 years


2.1.9 2.1.7-2.1.8 ↩

## Component 2.2

The environment (including equipment and materials) is adaptable for, and accessible to, all children and adults within the setting.


### → Signposts for Reflection General

2.2.1 How does the planning of the setting allow for free movement from one area of the setting to another?

2.2.2 If applicable, how do you ensure that the setting (indoors and outdoors) is accessible to all children and adults with special needs?  See 14.2



Think about: (e.g.)

- Ramps
- Wide doors
- Handrails
- Changing facilities for all children
- Accessible storage areas
- Parking
- Outdoor/indoor play spaces
- Signage  See 2.1
- Visual aids


2.2.3 How are the toilet/changing facilities made accessible to all children and adults within the setting?



Think about: (e.g.)

- Adequate number of toilets
- Child-friendly toilets

- Separate adult toilet facilities
- Disabled access
- Changing facilities for disabled children
- Bathroom supplies (bins, paper towels, liquid soap dispensers, storage for supplies, toiletries)
- Washable walls and floors
- Space and privacy


2.2.4 Could you give an example of how the environment is appropriate to the needs of children of different abilities and cultural backgrounds?  See 14.2 / 14.3



Think about: (e.g.)

- Providing opportunities for all children to be outdoors
- Criteria when buying materials and equipment to ensure that they are adaptable and accessible to all children
- Ensuring that all children, including babies, are able to access natural and homemade materials (e.g., cardboard boxes, pine cones, leaves, homemade play dough, etc.)?

### → 12 - 36 months

2.2.5 How do you ensure that children can use the equipment and materials independently?  See 6.2



Think about: (e.g.)

- Storage on low shelves
- Open shelving
- Labelling (e.g., pictures, symbols, etc.)

### → 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> - 6 years

2.2.6 2.2.5 ↩

## Component 2.3

The indoor and outdoor environment is well maintained and ensures comfortable and pleasant surroundings for children and adults.

### → Signposts for Reflection

2.3.1 How is the environment made comfortable and pleasant?



Think about: (e.g.)

- Bright and inviting environment for children and parents
  - Lighting appropriate to the range of activities
  - Provisions for ventilation, especially in the sanitary areas
  - Suitable seating for adults engaged in a range of activities with children (e.g., bottle feeding, sharing books, etc.)
  - Heating is thermostatically controlled to ensure an appropriate temperature is maintained
  - Maintenance of indoor and outdoor space
  - Regular review of the environment

2.3.2 How is the cleaning of the setting organised?

See 9.1 / 9.2



Think about: (e.g.)

- Cleaning rotas displayed
- Cleaning checks by a designated person
- Dressing up clothes are regularly washed
- Sand is regularly cleaned/replaced
- Hand washing notices are displayed in all toilets

- Personal hygiene routines are in place for all staff and children
- Pest control
- Waste disposal
- Laundry

## Component 2.4

The environment promotes the safety, both indoors and outdoors, of all children and adults.

See 9.1

### → Signposts for Reflection General

2.4.1 What procedures/routines do you have in place to regularly ensure that the outdoor play area is clean and free from hazards?

2.4.2 How is the outside area secured and maintained to ensure children's safety and protection from harm?



Think about: (e.g.)

- Covering (e.g., ponds, pits, sheds, etc.)
- Fencing
- Child-proof gate for entry
- Perimeter fence
- Gate latches

2.4.3 How do you ensure that your setting remains free from health hazards?



Think about: (e.g.)

- Storage of cleaning materials/chemicals/poisons
- Storage of waste materials

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- Storage of medication

**2.4.4** In what way is the indoor environment/equipment designed to reduce risk of injury to children?



Think about: (e.g.)

- No sharp corners on furniture or fittings
- Heaters guarded from children to ensure that they are not at risk of burns
- Water temperature in the bathrooms maintained at a suitable temperature (below 40° Celsius)
- Passageways are free of obstacles
- Electrical sockets are out of reach/covered
- Floor coverings are secured
- Stair gate is used where necessary
- Choking hazards are removed
- Finger guards on doors and cupboards
- Non-slip flooring
- Safety devices on windows and doors
- Safety glass
- Appropriate safety symbols
- Removal of trailing flexes from children's reach
- Cords of blinds and curtains are inaccessible
- Removal of broken/damaged equipment

**2.4.5** Are all exits accessible and fully functioning in the case of an emergency?



Think about: (e.g.)

- Dual language signage (and other languages, as appropriate)
- Visual aids

- Evacuation procedures See 9.7

**2.4.6** Is the water source verified to be safe for human consumption?

**2.4.7** In what way does your storage of materials and equipment ensure safety within the setting?



Think about: (e.g.)

- Storage areas for indoor equipment
- Storage areas for outdoor equipment
- Secured storage areas for children's records See 10.6 See 12.1
- Locked cupboard for the storage of hazardous/toxic materials
- Secure store for cleaning equipment
- Suitably high shelving
- Top heavy shelving is bolted or secured to the ground/wall

**2.4.8** Do you have a fully stocked first aid kit that is easily accessed and available in each area of your setting?

**2.4.9** What system is in place to ensure that smoke detectors, fire extinguishers, fire alarms and fire blankets are in working order and are serviced regularly?


### → Birth - 18 months

**2.4.10** How do you ensure that there are safe areas for babies outdoors?



### → 12 - 36 months

**2.4.11** How do you ensure that there are safe areas for toddlers outdoors?

## Component 2.5

The outdoor environment provides a range of developmentally appropriate, challenging, diverse, creative and enriching experiences for all children.  See 14.2


### → Signposts for Reflection General

- 2.5.1 How does your setting provide and promote opportunities for the child to experience the outdoor environment?  See 6.3 / 6.5  See 7.3 / 7.4



Think about: (e.g.)


- Provision of an outdoor space
- Regular access to this space
- Maximising opportunities for all children to be in the outdoor space
- Challenges and barriers you face in providing access to the outdoors
- Strategies to overcome some/all of these challenges
- Encouraging the use of the outdoor environment all year round
- Variety of outdoor experiences provided
- Opportunities for challenge and 'safe risk'
- Arrangement of the environment to keep children in view at all times
- Variety of surfaces to enhance the experiences of the child in the outdoor environment

- Opportunities for all children to visit other outdoor environments beyond the immediate setting (e.g., parks, playgrounds, shops, etc.)  See 16.3

- 2.5.2 How does the range of outdoor equipment match the needs and abilities of the developing child?



Think about: (e.g.)

- Communication
- Interactions  See 5.1 / 5.2
- Collaboration

### → Birth - 18 months

- 2.5.3 What range of experiences does the outdoor equipment promote for babies?



Think about: (e.g.)

- Sensory stimulation
- Crawling
- Climbing

### → 12 - 36 months

- 2.5.4 2.5.3 ↩

- 2.5.5 Does each child have access to toilet facilities from the outdoor area?

- 2.5.6 What range of experiences does the outdoor equipment promote?




Think about: (e.g.)

- Creativity and problem-solving
- Running
- Climbing
- Balancing

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- Riding
- Jumping
- Pouring
- Swinging
- Dramatic play
- Block building
- Manipulative play
- Art activities
- Crawling
- Scooting
- Digging and planting

2.5.7 How do you ensure that the child has sufficient space outdoors to foster curiosity and exploration and to allow the flexibility of individual or group play?  See 6.6

→ 2½ - 6 years

2.5.8 2.5.5-2.5.7 ↩

## Component 2.6

The indoor environment provides a range of developmentally appropriate, challenging, diverse, creative and enriching experiences for all children.  See 14.2

### → Signposts for Reflection General

2.6.1 How do you provide for visual display?



Think about: (e.g.)


- Notice boards

- Display areas/boards
- Project area
- Child's eye-level display
- Posters/pictures/photos
- Real life images
- Children's work (e.g., paintings, drawings, constructions, etc.)
- Storing children's work until ready to be brought home
- Rotating visual displays

2.6.2 How does the environment facilitate and support the development of social activities and interaction?

 See 5.1

### → Birth - 18 months

2.6.3 What different areas/spaces within the setting are offered to the child?  See 6.4



Think about: (e.g.)

- Floor area (e.g., carpeted section, adequate storage for equipment [e.g., soft toys, baby toys, ball pool, trucks, farm animals, trains, blocks, etc.]
- Book area (e.g., 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, system of borrowing, cardboard and other durable books, links to local library, etc.)
- Sensory stimulation area (e.g., wide variety of musical instruments, reflecting a variety of cultures, equipment [tape recorders, tapes], different types of music [classical, opera, pop, traditional], wall-mounted mirrors, treasure basket, scented materials, suitable storage, traditional nursery rhymes, etc.)



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2.6.4 How are these areas/spaces easily distinguished through, for example, furnishings, decoration and equipment?

→ 12 - 36 months

2.6.5 What different areas/spaces within the setting are offered to the child?



Think about: (e.g.)

- 2.6.3 ↩
  - Water area (e.g., suitable temperature, tools and equipment for water, aprons, change water daily, appropriate floor covering, etc.)
  - Sand area (e.g., different types of sand [fine sand, wet/dry sand], containers, tools and equipment for sand, dustpan and brush, aprons, sand regularly replenished and replaced, etc.)
  - Paint area (e.g., daily free painting, tables, easels, brushes, variety of colours, variety of paper [colour, shape, texture, size], equipment for group activities [rollers, sponges, finger paints], etc.)
  - Collage/junk art materials (e.g., storage unit, large selection of materials gathered by children, scissors, glue and pastes, brushes, staplers, paper clips, etc.)
  - Graphics/writing area (e.g., selection of paper, chalks, charcoals, crayons, pencils, pens, markers, examples of written materials, appropriate tables and chairs, etc.)
  - Play dough area (e.g., table and chairs, variety of colours, suitable and plentiful equipment and tools, aprons, etc.)
  - Table top toy area (e.g., child-sized tables and chairs, low level storage areas, wide range of equipment [jigsaws, threading toys, grading toys, shape sorters], etc.)

- Home corner (e.g., well-defined from other areas, inviting and appealing, low level furniture [cooker, cooking utensils, fridge, table and chairs, dressing up clothes, books and magazines], equipment reflects children's home lives [dolls, tea-sets], etc.)
- Role play (e.g., hairdressers, post office, Gardaí, teacher, nurse, fire fighter, doctor, shop, restaurant, library, etc.)
- Other special theme/interest areas (e.g., clay, computer area, nature, science, woodwork, cooking, etc.)

2.6.6 How are these areas/spaces easily distinguished through furnishings, decoration and equipment?

→ 2½ - 6 years

2.6.7 2.6.5-2.6.6 ↩

## Component 2.7

There is an appropriate amount of equipment and materials within the setting (both indoors and outdoors) for use by individual children and groups of children. See 6.4

→ Signposts for Reflection

2.7.1 What range of developmentally appropriate equipment and materials is available for all children within the setting to support the child's learning and development?



Think about: (e.g.)

- Sensory materials (e.g., sand, water, play dough, paint [non-toxic], blocks, etc.)
- Physical activities (e.g., walking on, climbing, moving through, pushing, pulling, etc.)
- Containers of objects for exploring, emptying and refilling

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- Furniture (e.g., tables, chairs, sleeping mats, etc.)

**2.7.2** How do the equipment and materials ensure that the changing learning needs of each child are met?

 See 7.6



Think about: (e.g.)

- Sufficient amounts of equipment and materials
- Regularly inspected and replaced/repared when necessary
- How the equipment and materials support the implementation of the curriculum or programme of activities
- Provision of equipment and materials for children with special needs to ensure access to the curriculum/ programme of activities
- Use of television/video/DVDs/computers to initiate interest, develop ideas and extend learning
- Reflecting the diversity of the wider society within the setting  See 14.2

**2.7.3** How do you ensure that the furniture is at a comfortable height for all children within the setting?

**2.7.4** How do you use television/video/DVDs/computers to initiate interest, develop ideas and extend learning?

**2.7.5** How do the equipment and materials appeal to multiple senses and consist of both natural and manufactured products?



Think about: (e.g.)

- Hard and soft textures
- Objects with smell and taste
- Objects made of wood, fabric, metal, paper, liquid, etc.

 See 6.5

## Component 2.8

The environment provides for the safe management of food consumption.  See 9.4

### → Signposts for Reflection

**2.8.1** How do you ensure good hygiene practice in all places where food is stored, prepared and consumed?



Think about: (e.g.)

- Surfaces are clean
- Hygienic cloths are used
- Floors are swept clean

**2.8.2** How is the kitchen, food preparation and storage area maintained as a safe and hygienic area within the setting?



Think about: (e.g.)

- Expressed breast milk
- Bottles
- Baby formula and food
- Fridge is clean, well maintained and temperature is correct
- Food and storage cupboards are cool, ventilated, clean and hygienic
- Food is carefully labelled
- Utensils are washed and stored hygienically
- Refuse is stored in containers with closefitting lids and disposed of regularly

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- Accessibility to unsupervised children
- Cooker and kettle guard
- Knives and other sharp objects are out of children's reach
- Safe storage of cleaning materials
- Washable walls and surfaces
- Systems to dispose of body fluids and waste materials

