

Standard 6: Play

Promoting play requires that each child has ample time to engage in freely available and accessible, developmentally appropriate and well-resourced opportunities for exploration, creativity and 'meaning making' in the company of other children, with participating and supportive adults and alone, where appropriate.



Component 6.1

The child spends a significant amount of time in the setting at play/exploration, and these and other playful activities are central to the daily routine.

Component 6.2

When the child is engaged in play/exploration, the equipment and materials provided are freely available and easily accessible to her/him.

Component 6.3

The opportunities for play/exploration provided for the child mirror her/his stage of development, give the child the freedom to achieve mastery and success, and challenge the child to make the transition to new learning and development.

Component 6.4

Each learning area and each activity in the setting has plenty of equipment and materials for the child.

Component 6.5

Play opportunities provided for the child encourage her/him to explore, to be creative and to use her/his previous learning to make new meanings.

Component 6.6

The child has opportunities for play/exploration with other children, with participating and supportive adults and on her/his own, as appropriate.


Component 6.7

Opportunities for play/exploration are devised in conjunction with planning for curriculum/programme implementation, and are adapted to meet changing learning and development requirements.

Component 6.1

The child spends a significant amount of time in the setting at play/exploration, and these and other playful activities are central to the daily routine.

→ Signposts for Reflection General

- 6.1.1 What proportion of the daily routine is given over to play, whether structured activities, adult or child initiated, indoors or outdoors, etc?  See 2.5 / 2.6



Think about: (e.g.)

- Play with concrete materials
- Interactive story-time
- Singing and rhyming
- Dance and music
- Symbolic play
- Creative play
- Games (e.g., auditory, visual, etc.)
- Ensuring that time for play is maximised within your daily routine
- Routine activities which could be done in a playful manner (e.g. break times, lunch time, tidy up times, etc.)


→ Birth - 18 months

- 6.1.2 For very young babies, how do you incorporate playful activities into your care routines?
- 6.1.3 What does play mean for babies and young children?

Component 6.2

When the child is engaged in play/exploration, the equipment and materials provided are freely available and easily accessible to her/him.

→ Signposts for Reflection General


- 6.2.1 How do you arrange your storage so that any materials and equipment provided for a particular session are within reach of the child?  See 2.2
- 6.2.2 Once you provide a particular set of equipment and materials, are they available to all children?
- 6.2.3 Once you make the equipment and materials available, can the child use any item in any of the activity areas you provide (e.g., bring the tea-set to the sink, etc.)?
- 6.2.4 What specific arrangements are necessary for the child with special needs, particularly a child with a physical disability, to ensure availability of and accessibility to the equipment and materials provided?

→ Birth - 18 months

- 6.2.5 How does the child who is not mobile access the available equipment and materials?



Think about: (e.g.)

- Play gyms
- Play mats
- Baskets of appropriate toys/materials within reach
- Mobiles of everyday objects  See 2.2

Component 6.3

The opportunities for play/exploration provided for the child mirror her/his stage of development, give the child the freedom to achieve mastery and success, and challenge the child to make the transition to new learning and development.

→ Signposts for Reflection General

6.3.1 What kind of play is the child currently engaging in?



Think about: (e.g.)

- Functional play
- Construction play
- Symbolic play
- Imaginative play
- Socio-dramatic play

6.3.2 What range of opportunities are you providing for the child so that she/he can fully explore this type of play?

See 2.5 / 2.6 See 5.1 See 7.4

6.3.3 How are these opportunities giving the child a sense of control and of being competent? See 1.2

6.3.4 Given the child's current developmental stage, what fine-tuning of the current opportunities will give the child the chance to achieve further development and learning?

Component 6.4

Each learning area and each activity in the setting has plenty of equipment and materials for the child.

→ Signposts for Reflection

6.4.1 How do you ensure that each play/exploration area has plenty of the relevant play items and materials for each child there? See 2.5 / 2.6 / 2.7



Think about: (e.g.)

- Identifying resources which do not have to be bought
- Providing outdoor play equipment

Component 6.5

Play opportunities provided for the child encourage her/him to explore, to be creative and to use her/his previous learning to make new meanings.

→ Signposts for Reflection General

6.5.1 What open-ended play items do you provide which leads the child to explore different properties in the environment, both indoor and outdoor?



See 2.5 / 2.6 / 2.7




Think about: (e.g.)

- The role of open-ended play in your practice

Standard 6: Play

- Encouraging the child to recreate and replicate the learning that has taken place in one play area in another
- Prompting the child to draw on her/his previous learning in a new context  See 5.4
- Finding out the extent of the child's previous learning  See 7.6


→ Birth - 18 months

- 6.5.2 What kinds of sensory stimulation do the child's play opportunities provide?
- 6.5.3 How are you adding to the learning potential of those opportunities in the way you interact with the child?  See 5.3 / 5.5
- 6.5.4 What open-ended, real world (heuristic) materials, both bought and sourced in the environment, are suitable for the child?
- 6.5.5 How can the child be enabled to explore the outdoor environment?

→ 12 - 36 months

- 6.5.6 6.5.2-6.5.5 ↩

Component 6.6

The child has opportunities for play/exploration with other children, with participating and supportive adults and on her/his own, as appropriate.  See 5.1 / 5.2 / 5.3 / 5.4

→ Signposts for Reflection

- 6.6.1 How often do you participate in play with the child?
- 6.6.2 What form does your participation take?



Think about: (e.g.)

- Listening
- In role
- Observer
- Joint attention
- Feedback
- Enabling
- Offering choice
- Prompting the child to extend her/his thinking
- Encouraging and sustaining interest

6.6.3 What strategies can be used to support and enable the child who may have difficulties 'gaining entry' to and sustaining play with other children, or who may be consistently excluded from play?


6.6.4 Can you think of a situation in which a child wished to play alone?




Think about: (e.g.)

- Facilitating the child to play alone, if appropriate
- Circumstances in which it is not appropriate for a child to play alone

Component 6.7


Opportunities for play/exploration are devised in conjunction with planning for curriculum/ programme implementation, and are adapted to meet changing learning and development requirements.  See 7.1


→ Signposts for Reflection General

6.7.1 How does planning for learning through play accommodate the individual child, setting, local context and specific needs?  See 7.6



Think about: (e.g.)

- Special needs
- Disadvantage
- Cultural context  See 14.2 / 14.3
- Linguistic needs

6.7.2 How often is planning for play and curriculum/ programme implementation undertaken?  See 7.5



Think about: (e.g.)

- Daily/weekly/fortnightly/monthly
- Term/season/annual

6.7.3 How is the documentation and review of planning managed?  See 7.5



Think about: (e.g.)

- Methods of documenting planning
- Keeping track of changes to planning in light of practice/ impact of spontaneous learning opportunities
- Relationship between planning and what happens in practice
- Challenges involved in planning for the young child's learning and development
- Integration of play and curriculum/programme implementation