

An introduction to the importance of creating an inspiring environment.



Let's make a start!

A rich & varied environment supports children's learning & development. It gives them the confidence to explore & learn in a secure & safe, yet challenging, indoor & outdoor space.

Children's learning experiences come from their interactions & engagement with their environment & the people around them. Your environment, your set up & use of space, your choice of equipment, materials & resources all contribute to children's learning outcomes & engagement with your curriculum.



Your FDC service is a unique environment that includes the buildings & structures, the natural environment, your equipment, furniture & furnishings, as well as the materials & resources that you use & provide. It is important to consider how this environment & everything in it can best support children's learning & development.

Quality Area 3 : Physical environment

The National Quality Standard Area 3, focuses on the physical environment & ensuring that it is safe, suitable & provides a rich & diverse range of experiences that promote children's learning & development.



Quality Area 3: Standards and elements

Standard 3.1	The design and location of the premises is appropriate for the operation of a service.	
	Element 3.1.1	Outdoor and indoor spaces, buildings, furniture, equipment, facilities and resources are suitable for their purpose.
	Element 3.1.2	Premises, furniture and equipment are safe, clean and well maintained.
	Element 3.1.3	Facilities are designed or adapted to ensure access and participation by every child in the service and to allow flexible use, and interaction between indoor and outdoor space.
Standard 3.2	The environment is inclusive, promotes competence, independent exploration and learning through play.	
	Element 3.2.1	Outdoor and indoor spaces are designed and organised to engage every child in quality experiences in both built and natural environments.
	Element 3.2.2	Resources, materials and equipment are sufficient in number, organised in ways that ensure appropriate and effective implementation of the program and allow for multiple uses.
Standard 3.3	The service takes an active role in caring for its environment and contributes to a sustainable future.	
	Element 3.3.1	Sustainable practices are embedded in service operations.
	Element 3.3.2	Children are supported to become environmentally responsible and show respect for the environment.

Notes for Improvement from our A&R visit

- The service is encouraged to further consider the physical facilities of each residence & how the amount & the arrangement of indoor & outdoor spaces can impact on children's learning.
- The service is encouraged to further reflect on how the provision & organisation of quality natural & built resources engage children & how the spaces can be used flexibly in response to children's individual needs, development, self-initiated play & exploration.

Including sustainability

- The service is encouraged to continue to develop understanding around sustainable practices & environmental awareness in an effort to ensure sustainability is consistently promoted across the program.
- You play a vital role in teaching children about their environment. Your choice & use of sustainable materials & resources is another way to support their learning.

Setting the scene.

The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) & the National Quality Standard (NQS) do not make distinctions between indoor & outdoor locations. Instead the focus should be on the learning that occurs & asks us as Educators to think more deeply about how, what & when children learn in the early childhood setting.

The EYLF asks us to reflect on & rethink the way we provide resources for learning, with an emphasis on meeting the individual needs of all children & working in partnerships with families.

The NQS highlights environments for learning in various Quality Area's.

- QA1 – Educational Program and Practice
- QA2 – Children's Health and Safety
- QA3 – Physical Environment

Materials & equipment that support learning.

While watching the video think about:

- The kind of materials & resources that children can access.
- What is natural? What is man made? What can only be used one way? What can be used in many ways? What can only be used by one child at a time? What can be used by a few children or by a larger group of children?

Features of a good environment

Learning environments are welcoming spaces when they reflect & enrich the lives & identities of children & families participating in the setting & respond to their interests & needs (EYLF).

Good learning environments provide:

Well defined spaces for

- Quality interactions between educators and children
- Exploration and investigation
- Relaxation
- Opportunities for noisy and active play
- Creativity including music and movement
- Small group play

Adequate & meaningful resources, materials & equipment that:

- Reflect the interests, needs, lives & identity of the children
- Support open ended experiences to build & extend children's learning.

Welcoming spaces for families.

Opportunity for risk taking & challenge.



Good environments reflect your philosophy & are visually pleasing. Think of your environment as supporting the learning taking place & children's engagement. Interactions with their environment helps them construct their own learning.

The physical environment for children can directly affect the quality & quantity of play, which in turn affects their development.



Supporting the learning outcomes.

Reflect on how your environment currently promotes the elements of the five learning outcomes.

Think about the impression that your environment creates for children in your care, families & prospective visiting families.

- What do you notice on entry to your environment?
- What does it look, sound & smell like?
- Is your environment set up in an inviting & engaging way, that encourages children to explore, learn & make sense of their world?

These are all questions that should be thought about on a daily basis.

Video

Learning Environments



Creating welcoming & inclusive spaces for all children.

- The environment needs to support all children to feel safe & secure.
- The play spaces in your environment need to provide opportunities for all children to make choices & take control, therefore helping to develop children's sense of agency.
- As the educator, you need to ensure all children feel recognised, included & valued. This enables the child to feel positive about themselves & their achievements.

Reflective Questions

1. What is your vision for creating a welcoming & inclusive environment for all children?
2. What are you already doing well that you will continue to do?
3. What changes might you slowly make into the future to improve your environment?

Conclusion

Put thought & care into the way you design & set up your learning environment & involve children in your planning.

Be creative in making the best use of what you have & plan for:

- Well defined spaces
- Adequate & meaningful resources, materials & equipment
- Welcoming spaces for all children & families
- Opportunities for risk taking & challenge

Lets embrace the process & not the end product! Let's enjoy moments of creativity & learning with children more!