



**Early
Childhood
Ireland**

Síolta Standards and Components of Quality

Early Childhood Ireland Explainers

Síolta, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education was designed to define, assess, and support the improvement of quality across all aspects of practice in Early Years provision where children from birth to six years of age are present.

The Síolta standards and components of quality define quality practice within the framework and are what Early Years settings will be assessed on. Each standard has a range of associated components and signposts for practice to enable educators to identify aspects of practice relevant to the standard and also to differentiate for different ages.

Rights of the Child

Ensuring a child's rights are met involves ensuring he/she has opportunities to make choices, is enabled to make decisions, and has his/her choices and decisions respected. It also involves ensuring each child has opportunities and is allowed to take the lead, initiate activity, be appropriately independent, and be supported to solve problems. Children must also be enabled to participate actively in the daily routine, activities, conversations, and all other appropriate situations. They must also be considered as partners by the adult.

Environments

It is important for indoor and outdoor environments to be well planned and laid out to accommodate the needs of all children and adults in the setting. The environment, as well as equipment and materials, must be adaptable for and accessible to all children and adults within the setting. Indoor and outdoor environments also need to be well maintained, which ensures comfortable and pleasant surroundings for children and adults. Indoor and outdoor environments need to promote safety for both children and adults and should also provide a range of challenging, creative, and enriching experiences. An appropriate amount of equipment and materials are required for use by individual children and groups of children. The environment should also be suitable for the safe management of food consumption.

Parents and Families

Staff and parents should have both informal and informal opportunities to communicate and share information about the child. There should also be a series of opportunities for parents to be involved in activities within the setting, considering the range of parents' interests and time constraints. Staff should be responsive and sensitive when providing information and support to parents in their critical role in the learning and development of the child. The setting should also have written records of all policies and procedures regarding the involvement of parents and should make them available to all stakeholders.

Consultation

Settings should invite contributions from a range of interested stakeholders to decision-making processes and strategies for the development and delivery of their service. Settings should also act upon these contributions where appropriate.

Interactions

Children should be allowed to interact with their peers and with children of different ages in pairs, small groups, and, to a lesser degree, large groups. They should also receive appropriate support to allow them to interact positively with other children. Adults ought to use all aspects of their daily routine to interact sensitively and respectfully with the child. Adult interactive style should be focused on process instead of outcomes. The interactive style should be balanced between talking and listening, offer the child a range of responses to choose from, and encourage an expanded use of language. It should also follow the child's lead and interests, as well as challenge the child where appropriate. Communication between adults should be seen as a model of respect, support, and partnership for the child. The setting should also have a clear written policy and associated procedures which underpin interactive practice.

Play

Children should spend a significant amount of time in the setting playing or exploring, and these activities should be central to the daily routine. When the child is playing or exploring, the equipment and materials provided should be made freely available and easily accessible. Opportunities provided to children for play and exploration should mirror their stage of development, give them the freedom to achieve mastery and success and challenge them to transition to new learning and development. Every learning area and activity that is in the setting should have plenty of materials and equipment for the children. Play opportunities should also encourage children to explore, be creative, and use their previous learning. Children should have opportunities to play with other children, along with participating and supportive adults, as well as on their own.

Curriculum

Children's learning and development are holistic experiences and play is integral to learning development, as well as to the implementation of a curriculum or programme. A well-referenced curriculum or programme should be in place and should be based on

established principles of child development. The curriculum should be reflected in and implemented throughout the child's daily routine, learning opportunities, and activities. The implementation of a curriculum or programme can be achieved through a range of adult strategies, supportive relationships in the settings, and making a diverse range of experiences available to the child. Any activities from the curriculum that are implemented should be documented and this documentation should be available and in use. Planning the implementation of the curriculum should be based on the child's individual profile, which is set out through systematic observation and assessment of learning.

Planning and Evaluation

Every standard of practice should be reviewed regularly through processes of observation, planning, action, and evaluation. Settings should have established and documented review structures and a mechanism should be in place to make sure that reviews lead to changes. Outcomes of reviews need to be recorded, stored, and shared.

Health and Welfare

Settings need to have a range of fully implemented policies and procedures to prevent the spread of infectious diseases, reduce exposure to hazards, and deal effectively and efficiently with medical situations. Settings should aim to promote the health of all children and adults. Settings need to implement guidelines from [Children First](#) and [Our Duty to Care](#) regarding child protection. Settings need to be proactive in supporting the development of healthy eating habits in children whilst also supporting their enjoyment of eating as a positive social experience. Providers should make significant efforts to ensure that the child's need for rest, quiet time, and privacy is catered for and respected. Settings should make arrangements to ensure that the child can form relationships with adults, siblings, and other children.

Organisation

Settings need to develop a comprehensive statement that describes the vision, values, and principles that underpin their service and informs all aspects of practice. Settings also need to have a range of documented policies and procedures that cover all aspects of practice, and these should be developed and shared with all stakeholders. Managing the setting's financial resources should be effective, efficient and ensure the sustainability of the service. All adults working in the setting should feel valued, supported, and encouraged in their roles and responsibilities. Settings should have a strong ethos of teamwork that is clear to see. Settings also need to keep relevant and accurate administration records while maintaining levels of confidentiality. Documented, well-developed, and functioning management structures are also required in settings, alongside processes that support the implementation of a setting's philosophy.

Professional Practice

All adults working within the setting need to be able to provide evidence that they have achieved the levels of skills and knowledge appropriate to their role and responsibilities. They should also endorse a core set of principles that inform all aspects of their practice. Providers should support and promote regular opportunities for practitioners to reflect upon and review their practice and contribute positively to the development of quality practice. Setting staff should also be encouraged and resourced to engage in a range of regular and ongoing professional development.

Communication

Settings should collect relevant information on all children in their care and store it in a safe manner. They should also be proactive in sharing information, in the best interest of the child, with other stakeholders. Confidentiality is critical when staff record, store, and share information in the best interest of children. Settings should also have written records of all policies, procedures, and actions concerning communication within the setting. This should be made available to all stakeholders.

Transitions

Providing consistent key relationships within the setting is important when facilitating smooth transitions. Smooth transitions are also promoted by ensuring that there is an appropriate liaison within the setting and between settings. Parents, children, and relevant professionals should be consulted and involved in ensuring smooth transitions are made. Settings should keep written records of all policies, procedures, and actions concerning transitions with the setting, and make them available to all stakeholders.

Identity and Belonging

Settings should have written records of all policies, procedures, and practices concerning the promotion of positive identities, and a strong sense of belonging within the setting. These records should be made available to all stakeholders. Settings should also promote a confident self and group identity by way of providing an appropriate environment, experiences, and interactions within the setting. In this way, settings should also be able to support the positive understanding and regard for the identity and rights of others.

Legislation and Regulation

Settings must meet or exceed all relevant legislation and regulations.

Community Involvement

Settings should gather a range of information on resources at local, regional, and national levels, and this should be made available. They should also establish links that could potentially extend and develop their involvement in the wider community. Settings should be connected and integrated with their local, regional, and national community. They should also promote the citizenship of children in their local regional and national community.