



Slough Early Years SEND Inclusive Environments Audit Tool 2025

Supporting your Inclusive Practice Journey.

An early year's inclusion audit is a reflective tool used by early years practitioners to evaluate and improve inclusive practice. These audits aim to ensure all children, regardless of their individual needs, abilities, or backgrounds, have equal opportunities to learn, develop, and thrive in a welcoming and supportive environment.

Benefits of conducting an inclusion audit

- Identifies strengths and weaknesses: Helps settings pinpoint areas where they excel in inclusion and areas needing improvement.
- Informs development plans: Provides valuable data to shape the setting's overall development plan, including identifying necessary training for staff.
- Prepares for inspections: Assists in preparing for inspections by external agencies like Ofsted, demonstrating a commitment to inclusive practices.
- Facilitates collaboration: Encourages collaboration with parents, carers, and other professionals, including area SENCos and specialist services.
- Promotes a positive learning environment: Creates an environment where all children feel valued, respected, and have a sense of belonging.
- Supports child development: Ensures children receive appropriate support tailored to their individual needs, fostering their overall development and well-being.
- Enhances parent partnerships: Encourages open communication and information sharing between the setting and parents/carers.

Key areas covered in inclusion audits.

Inclusion audits often cover a range of areas related to fostering an inclusive environment, including:

- Physical Environment: Ensuring the indoor and outdoor spaces are accessible and accommodating for all children, including those with physical and sensory needs. This might involve reviewing lighting, noise levels, resource accessibility, and the provision of quiet spaces.

- Resources and Materials: Auditing toys, books, creative materials, and other resources to ensure they are diverse, non-stereotypical, and represent a range of ethnicities, cultures, genders, ages, and abilities.
- Curriculum and Activities: Ensuring the curriculum is inclusive, relevant to the children's backgrounds, and adapted to meet diverse learning styles and interests.
- Staff Training and Development: Assessing the staff's knowledge and understanding of inclusion and special educational needs and identifying areas for further training.
- Parental Engagement: Examining how the setting communicates with parents, involves them in their child's learning journey, and supports families with additional needs, such as those with English as an Additional Language.
- Policies and Procedures: Reviewing the setting's policies related to inclusion, equality, diversity, and safeguarding, ensuring they are comprehensive and actively implemented.
- Key Person System: Evaluating the effectiveness of the key person system in building positive relationships with children and families and responding to individual needs.
- Assess, Plan, Do, Review (Graduated Approach): Ensuring the setting effectively implements the Graduated Approach for children with Special Educational Needs, involving parents and specialists as needed.
- Example resources for early years inclusion audits

Many local authorities and early years organizations provide resources and audit tools to support settings in evaluating their inclusion practices. These might include checklists, self-evaluation frameworks, or detailed toolkits.

In essence, early years inclusion audits are crucial for fostering a truly inclusive environment where every child feels valued, supported, and empowered to reach their full potential.

Inclusion of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in mainstream nurseries is a core principle. Mainstream nurseries must follow the SEND Code of Practice. The SEND Code of Practice (2015) is statutory guidance for early years providers, outlining how to identify, assess, and support children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). It emphasises a graduated approach, involving assessment, planning, action, and review, to meet individual needs. The Code also highlights the importance of collaboration between professionals, families, and other agencies to ensure children with SEND receive the necessary support. Settings are expected to adapt to individual children's needs and provide support accordingly. Unless specific circumstances prevent it, children with SEND should be included alongside their peers during activities.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25>

Here's a breakdown of key aspects:

1. Legal Framework and Principles:

- **SEND Code of Practice:**

All early year's settings, including school nurseries, are legally bound to follow the SEND Code of Practice.

- **Inclusion:**

A core principle is that children with SEND should be included in mainstream settings and activities, as long as it is feasible and does not impede their learning or the education of others.

- **Equality:**

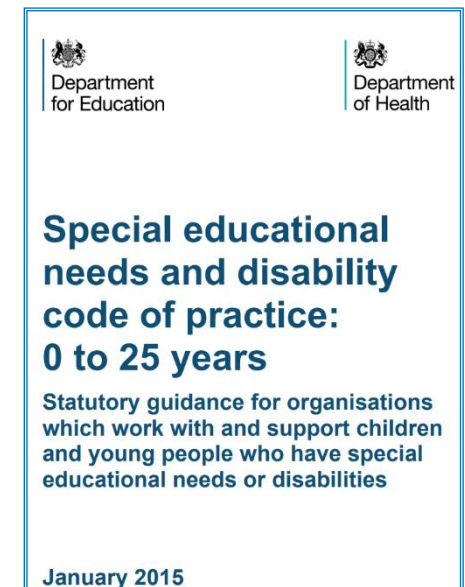
Mainstream nurseries should ensure that children with SEND have equal opportunities to participate and learn.

- **Individualised Support:**

Recognising that each child's needs are unique, nurseries should tailor support and provision to meet those specific needs.

2. Key Practices and Support:

- **Assessment and Planning:**



Nurseries should assess a child's needs, develop a plan in collaboration with parents and specialists, and implement strategies to address those needs.

- **SENCO:**

- A designated Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) is responsible for overseeing SEND provision within the setting.

- **Adaptations and Adjustments:**

This might include modifying the learning environment, providing adapted resources, and adjusting teaching styles to suit different learning preferences.

- **Positive Relationships:**

Building strong, trusting relationships with key adults is crucial for children with SEND to feel safe and supported.

- **Collaboration with Parents:**

Parents are key partners in the process and should be involved in planning and reviewing support for their child.

4. Key Considerations for Nurseries:

- **Create an Inclusive Environment:**

Adapt the physical environment, provide accessible resources, and ensure positive interactions among all children.

- **Focus on Strengths:**

Recognise and build on the child's strengths and capabilities.

- **Responsive Communication:**

Use effective communication strategies that support the child's individual needs.

- **Early Intervention:**

Address any emerging needs as early as possible to prevent them from becoming significant barriers to learning.

Mainstream nurseries play a vital role in providing an inclusive and supportive environment for children with SEND. By following the SEND Code of Practice, tailoring support to individual needs, and fostering positive relationships, nurseries can help children with SEND thrive alongside their peers.

What are reasonable adjustments?

Reasonable adjustments in early years settings aim to ensure all children, including those with disabilities or special educational needs, can fully participate and benefit from their learning environment. These adjustments can be small, practical changes or more significant adaptations, and they are tailored to the individual needs of the child.

<https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2023/04/what-are-reasonable-adjustments-and-how-do-they-help-disabled-pupils-at-school/>

Here are some examples of reasonable adjustments in early years settings:

Physical Environment:

- **Modifying the layout:**

Adjusting indoor and outdoor spaces to be more accessible, like creating ramps, handrails, or wider pathways.

- **Providing supportive seating:**

Offering comfortable seating options, including those that can be adjusted to meet specific needs, like comfortable chairs or cushions, or allowing children to sit on the floor if that is their preference.

- **Sensory Considerations:**

- Modifying lighting, temperature, reducing noise levels, or providing quiet spaces for children who are sensitive to sensory overload.

- **Modifying uniform policies:**

Allowing for variations in uniform or clothing to accommodate sensory sensitivities or other needs.

- **Making objects more stable:**

Using non-slip mats, suction cups, or sloped boards to help children with motor difficulties manipulate objects.

- **Creating quiet spaces:**

Providing a designated quiet area or sensory room where children can retreat when feeling overwhelmed.

Teaching and Learning:

- **Providing visual aids:**

Using visual timetables, picture cards, or other visual supports to help children understand routines and instructions.

- **Giving clear and concise instructions:**

Breaking down instructions into smaller steps and using simple language, potentially paired with visual cues.

- **Offering differentiated activities:**

Adapting activities and materials to match the child's developmental level and learning style.

- **Providing extra time:**

Allowing extra time for tasks or activities, especially for children who need more processing time.

- **Using assistive technology:**

Providing tools like adapted cutlery, pencil grips, or communication devices to support the child's participation.

- **Encouraging movement breaks:**

Allowing regular movement breaks to help children regulate their energy levels and focus.

Social and Emotional Support:

- **Quiet Spaces:**

Providing designated quiet areas where children can retreat if they need a break from the group or are feeling overwhelmed.

- **Social Stories:**

Using social stories to help children understand social situations and expectations.

- **Buddy Systems:**

Pairing children with a supportive peer to help them navigate social situations or activities.

- **Flexible Routines:**

Adapting routines to accommodate individual needs, such as allowing children to enter or leave activities at different times.

Individualised Approach:

- **Collaboration:**

Working closely with parents, caregivers, and other professionals to understand the child's specific needs and preferences.

- **Flexibility:**

Being open to adjusting strategies and approaches as needed based on the child's progress and changing needs.

Important Considerations:

- **The Equality Act 2010:**

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7e3237ed915d74e33f0ac9/Equality_Act_Advice_Final.pdf **Direct link to The Equality Act pdf**

The Equality Act requires early years settings to make reasonable adjustments to avoid putting disabled children at a substantial disadvantage.

- **Anticipatory Duty:**

Settings should proactively consider potential barriers and make adjustments in advance.

- **Individualised Needs:**

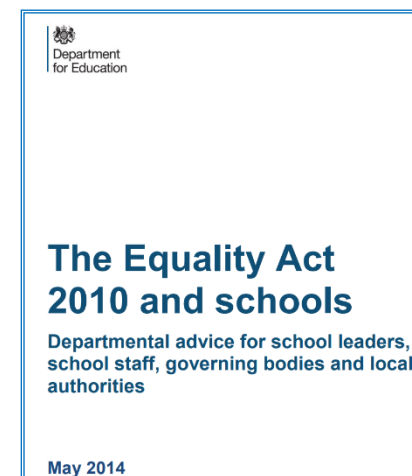
Adjustments should be tailored to the specific needs of each child.

- **Cost and Practicality:**

While adjustments should be effective, they should also be reasonable in terms of cost and practicality.

It's important to remember that reasonable adjustments are individualised and should be developed in collaboration with the child, their parents, and other professionals involved in their care.

By implementing these reasonable adjustments, early years settings can create a more inclusive and supportive environment where all children can thrive and reach their full potential.



First Impression		Yes	No	Comments/Action
Does the setting have “Welcome” signage that includes the Home Languages of the families in their setting and in their local community?				
Around the setting				
Do the pictures, photos and posters displayed for children reflect diversity of ethnicity, family groups and ability and do they show people in non-stereotypical situations and roles?				
Are the words and signs around the setting in the Home Languages of the children who attend?				
Do the images around the setting, including posters, signs and displays reflect diversity and ethnicity, family groups and ability?				
Is information that is provided written in plain English, without jargon and with visual images to support understanding?				
The Classroom Environment: A positive, supportive, and inclusive classroom environment for all learners without exception should be the aim. here we look at the strategies and approaches being used to help make this happen.		Yes	No	Comments/Action
The room is well organised with clearly defined areas of play. Multi-tasking areas is kept to a minimum (where necessary, tablecloths or other means are used to identify a change in activity, along with any visuals being used).				
Equipment and resources are clearly and consistently labelled with symbols/pictures, word, and object.				
Resources are well organised into containers for storage and have the right resources in the right containers.				

Resources are located for easy independent access and routinely kept in the same place.			
There is a varied selection of seating offered including - chairs, cushions, beanbags, movement cushions, gym balls etc.			
The learning environment is calm and with as few distractions as possible e.g., visuals and displays in the immediate area are not overly busy to minimise sensory overload.			
There is a quiet area for all learners to access; this could be a pop-up tent or a corner /area of the room developed to offer a retreat. This should be resourced with fiddle toys, sensory items, soft furnishings, and cushions etc.			
There are resources to hand that support learners with sensory seeking needs, such as chewy toys, fiddle toys, movement cushions, peanut ball, soft blankets and wraps etc.			
Consideration has been taken regarding the impact of lighting within the room, and where necessary adaptations are made e.g., window blinds, the use of natural light, classroom/activity arrangement.			
Consideration has been given for learners who are disproportionately impacted by smells, noise, and temperature and where necessary these are monitored and managed.			
The environment is secure with no potential for unsupervised access. Exits are easily monitored by staff.			
There is a multi-sensory approach to play and learning.			
Has consideration been taken with coat peg allocation for the children that find busy, noisy environments challenging e.g., end of the row closest to the exit?			
Learning experiences are set or can be easily moved between different level surfaces to meet differing mobility needs or physical comfort for the children that may need it?			
Are there books in the book corner that reflect diversity, ethnicity, and difference?			

There are opportunities for active play (providing movement, active area).			
Is there an indoor sensory pathway?			
Communication: You are looking for how staff use language to communicate with all children. You are also looking for environmental, non-verbal communication that supports understanding.	Yes	No	Comments/Action
Language being used by staff is accessible and at the right developmental level.			
Staff adapt their language for individual children, using reduced language, sequencing instructions, and allowing time for processing.			
Children's names are used first to gain their attention before any instruction is given.			
Gestures, prompts and modelling are used to support communication.			
Visual communication is built into everyday practice.			
A daily visual timetable is on clear display and accessible to all children. The timetable information is managed and accurate through the day.			
First/Then/Finished boards are used both generically and for individual children who require it.			
All children are taught and encouraged to interact with and use the visual communication on offer and children use the visuals on offer as an integral source of information.			
Visual keyring cards are worn by all staff and integrated into everyday use with all children as supportive communication.			
Communication boards are available for use in each themed area of play. Staff model the use of the boards with all children.			
Visual sequence strips are used in areas where tasks require multiple steps. The tasks are broken down into sequenced steps and placed at an accessible height			

for children. The sequence strips are modelled and referred to by staff for all children as a support strategy for learning (e.g., in the bathroom/toileting area)?			
Countdown strips and sand timers are used to support internal transitions as generic strategies.			
All resources stored in the play environment (drawers, baskets, boxes etc.) are labelled with a photograph, the written word, and object where possible. All containers have the right resources in them.			
Makaton is used along with kinaesthetic props at circle time, story time and wherever there is an opportunity to support and enhance communication with all children.			
Activities available offer opportunities for communication and interaction through shared play and turn-taking.			
Staff incorporate intensive interaction, play routines and guided choices to support interaction and communication.			
Is there continuity with the picture representations being used e.g. If a stop sign is being used with keyring cards, is the same stop sign used in other contexts i.e., around the room etc.			
Are children's coat pegs clearly identified with photograph and written word?			
Are the visuals that are present used consistently and by all staff?			
Individual pupil profiles are accessible for all staff members so that staff are aware of SEND children's communication and interaction needs, the profiles are kept up to date to reflect this.			

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Self-Audit Check list

This self-audit tool can be used to guide your settings inclusive practise journey. The check list specifically addresses your environment and communication and will also support the delivery of ordinarily available provision to support the varying needs (emerging or identified) of all children who attend or are looking to attend your provision. It is important to consider that whether your provision has children with an identified need or disability or not, these should all be aspects readily available to your children and families. Your ordinarily available provision can be further enhanced through any reasonable adjustments you may need to make to meet a child's individual needs.

Inclusive environment Audit check list		YES	IN PROGRESS	NO	Comments
Physical and sensory environment					
Space & layout:					
Sufficient space for the number of children, including dedicated areas for gross motor activities (indoors and outdoors) and quieter, private spaces.					
Clear pathways and room arrangements that allow for different kinds of play and easy independent movement.					
Well maintained and safe environment, regularly inspected for potential hazards. Secure with no potential for unsupervised access. Exits easily monitored by staff.					
Consideration given to elements such as ramps or different height tables to accommodate children with mobility issues or those using adaptive equipment.					
There is a varied selection of seating offered including- chairs, cushions, beanbags, movement cushions, gym balls etc.					
Sensory considerations:					
Using natural, dimmable lighting. Flickering sensation of fluorescent lights is reduced or diffused where possible. Blinds are in place on windows to control sunlight.					
Minimizing of noise by use of soft furnishings such as rugs, wall hangings, sound clouds.					
Designated quiet area/corner or pop-up tent resourced with sensory items and relaxation furnishings such as cushions, blankets and beanbags etc.					
Noise cancelling headphones available where necessary.					
There are resources to hand that support learners with sensory seeking needs such as chewy toys, fiddle toys, peanut ball, movement cushions, wraps etc.					
There is a multi-sensory approach to play and learning.					

	YES	IN PROGRESS	NO	Comments
Communication:				
Areas of play are clearly defined and are multi tasked as little as possible.				
Each play area is visually supported with a First/Then/Finished timetable and themed communication board.				
Resources are stored in containers that are labelled with picture, word and object where possible. The right resources are in the right containers.				
There is a generic daily visual timetable on display which is accessible to all children.				
Visual communication is built into everyday practise and used consistently by all staff.				
All children are encouraged to interact with and use visual communication. Children use the visuals on offer as an integral source of information.				
Visual keyring cards are worn by all staff and integrated into everyday use with all children.				
Visual sequence strips are used in areas where tasks require multiple steps. The tasks are broken down into sequenced steps and placed at an accessible height for children as a support strategy for learning (e.g., in the bathroom/toileting area.				
Countdown strips and sand timers are used to support internal and external transitions as generic strategies.				
Activities available offer opportunities for communication and interaction through shared play and turn-taking.				
Staff incorporate intensive interaction, play routines and guided choices to support interaction and communication.				
Children's coat pegs are clearly identified with photograph and written word.				
Outside play area:				
Outside play areas are clearly defined and clearly identify what activities happen where.				
Where possible there are visual pictures with the written word and object attached to storage containers.				
There is a generic visual timetable outside with current activities displayed.				
Individual First/Then/Finished folders are taken outside to support the children that need them and are used to support transitions, particularly back inside.				
Communication boards are in all clearly defined areas and are being used by all children and staff when there are opportunities.				

	YES	IN PROGRESS	NO	COMMENTS
There is a designated quiet area, resourced with fidget toys, sensory items, bean bags, cushions etc.				
There are plenty of opportunities for climbing, balancing, running and jumping.				
Learning experiences both inside and out are set or can be easily moved between different level surfaces to meet differing mobility needs or physical comfort for the children that may need it.				
Additional:				
There are books in the book corner that reflect diversity, ethnicity, and difference.				
Each child has a designated key person.				

Notes:

