



**Subject Leadership Audit -
Design and Technology**
Laying the Foundations



**Subject Leadership Audit -
History**
Laying the Foundations



**Subject Leadership Audit -
Art**
Laying the Foundations



This tool is designed to support both reflection and evaluation of your curriculum offer.

The sections and reflection points act as prompts to guide discussion with senior and leadership staff to enable practitioners to celebrate successes and identify areas for further development. When using the tool, consider the following:

- **Reflect** on the whole provision; the tool should not be used to focus on individual classes or members of staff.
- **Use** the reflection questions to shape discussion within each section.
- **Be** realistic and honest in your reflections. Consider your strengths and areas for development, along with the evidence that supports your judgements.
- **Record** strengths (what is working well) that should be celebrated as well as any next steps for development as part of your cycle of self-evaluation.

SAMPLE



There are seven areas of learning and development that shape educational programmes in early years settings, and all areas are important and interconnected. Three areas are particularly significant in building secure foundations that ignite children’s curiosity, enthusiasm for learning, positive relationships and overall wellbeing. These are the **prime areas**:

- **Communication and language**
- **Physical development**
- **Personal, social and emotional development**

Alongside these areas, children should demonstrate the **Characteristics of Effective Learning (CoEL)**. According to the *EYFS Statutory Framework (2025)*, practitioners must consider the different rates at which children develop and adapt their practice appropriately. The three characteristics of effective learning are:

- **Playing and exploring** – investigating, experiencing and ‘having a go’
- **Active learning** – concentrating, persevering and taking pride in achievement
- **Creating and thinking critically** – developing ideas, making connections and problem solving

These characteristics help us to recognise when children are learning. Children who are learning well they are:

- **Engaged**
- **Motivated**
- **Thinking**

Subject leaders for any curriculum area should first ensure that the prime areas and the CoEL are securely embedded, before identifying opportunities that prepare children for future subject specific learning.

Ofsted emphasises that strong foundations in the early years are essential to children’s long-term success and their ability to access the Key Stage 1 curriculum. Their *Strong Foundations in the Early Years of School* report highlights that securing early language, communication, early literacy, numeracy, and social development is critical for ensuring that all children—particularly the most vulnerable—are ready for the next stage of learning and able to progress confidently through Key Stage 1.

Additionally, Ofsted identifies “*making sure all children have the best start in life*” as a key strategic priority, noting that high quality early education lays the groundwork for later academic achievement, wellbeing and lifelong learning.



Consider these opportunities to secure prime area development first, alongside your EYFS staff

Communication and Language

- Children engage in high quality back and forth interactions that strengthen their language, communication and cognitive development. These sustained exchanges form a core part of building the strong foundations needed for future learning.
- Adults create a language rich environment where conversations are purposeful, responsive and woven throughout the day. Interactions are not incidental but an essential part of teaching and supporting early language development.
- Practitioners comment on what children are doing or interested in and sensitively extend their talk. By echoing children's words and introducing richer, more ambitious vocabulary, adults support effective vocabulary acquisition and deepen children's understanding of the world.
- Reading is a frequent and intentional part of practice. Adults read to children often, draw on story and world knowledge, revisit texts and use books throughout the day to support language, comprehension, and secure early literacy foundations.
- Children are encouraged to share their ideas with confidence. Adults model language, scaffold responses and use sensitive, well-crafted questions that encourage children to explain, think deeply and elaborate—supporting their ability to reason, communicate and make meaning.

Physical Development

- Adults provide purposeful games and well-planned opportunities for physical play both indoors and outdoors. Through this, children develop essential foundations such as core strength, stability, balance, spatial awareness, coordination and quality play skills that support later learning across the curriculum.
- Children have regular access to a broad range of high-quality equipment that promotes the progression of both gross and fine motor skills. These opportunities ensure that all children, including those who may need more targeted support, can build the physical competencies needed for increasing independence and readiness for Key Stage 1.
- Children experience repeated and varied opportunities to explore and practise physical skills through small world play, construction, puzzles, arts and crafts, and the use of small tools. With timely feedback and sensitive adult support, they develop increasing proficiency, control and confidence. This reflects the principle that young children need sufficient time and practice to embed foundational skills. Supporting physical development is not left to chance but is intentionally and thoughtfully supported.

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

- Adults and children build strong, warm and supportive relationships that help children understand their own feelings and recognise the emotions of others. Through guided interactions with their peers, children learn how to form positive friendships, cooperate, and resolve conflicts calmly and respectfully.
- Children are supported to manage their emotions, develop a positive sense of self, and set simple, achievable goals. They are encouraged to believe in their own abilities, to persevere when challenges arise, to work patiently for what they want, and to direct and sustain their attention as needed.
- Through consistent adult modelling and gentle guidance, children learn how to look after their bodies, make healthy choices, and develop independence in managing their personal needs.



Considerations for History Subject Leaders

Focus	Yes	Partly	No	Comments
Unique Child - things you might see the children do				
Children show curiosity and follow their own interests, asking questions about familiar aspects of their environment such as their home, community, or the natural world.				
Children talk about their past experiences and share them regularly, including events that happen routinely within their lives—for example, seasonal changes, daily routines, special occasions, and celebrations.				
Children recognise their family as an important part of their personal history. They engage with different generations and enjoy opportunities for family members to visit and share experiences.				
Children explore and discuss similarities, differences, and changes within their environment, materials, objects, or people.				

Focus	Yes	Partly	No	Comments
Positive Relationships - things you might see the adults do				
Adults read to children frequently, including books that feature people and events from the past. Children are encouraged to compare characters and discuss their experiences across time.				
Adults help children develop an awareness of change over time by engaging them in activities such as growing plants or looking at photographs from earlier stages of their lives, and encourage them to distinguish between past and present.				
Staff model and extend language, encouraging investigative thinking through purposeful questioning such as: “What do you think?”, “Tell me more about...”, “What will happen if...?”, “What else could we try?”, “What could it be used for?”, “How might it work?”				
Adults ensure that children learning English as an additional language have opportunities to express themselves in their home language where appropriate.				
Adults encourage children to talk about past and present events in their own lives and in the lives of family members or friends.				
Adults use vocabulary to support children’s understanding of time—such as <i>yesterday</i> , <i>old</i> , <i>past</i> , <i>now</i> , and <i>then</i> —and ask questions like “What happened next?” when exploring stories or sequences of events (e.g., getting dressed, planting a seed, making a sandwich).				



Considerations for Art Subject Leaders

Focus	Yes	Partly	No	Comments
Positive Relationships - things you might see the adults do				
Adults encourage children to have their own ideas by inviting them to choose materials and explain what they plan to create.				
Adults introduce descriptive vocabulary by modelling rich language such as “smooth,” “bumpy,” or “shiny” as children explore materials.				
Adults talk to children about colours, patterns and shapes by commenting on what they notice, such as “I can see you’ve used zig-zag lines and warm colours.”				
Adults ask open ended questions by prompting thinking with phrases like “What might happen if you try a different tool?”-ended questions by prompting thinking with phrases like “What might happen if you try a different tool?”				
Adults point out changes in the properties of media by drawing attention to effects such as paint becoming lighter when mixed with white.				
Adults widen children’s range of artistic ideas and influences by sharing artwork, photos or objects that inspire new creative possibilities.				

SAMPLE



Focus	Yes	Partly	No	Comments
Enabling Environments - things that might be available for the children				
A range of tools accessible to the children, for example glue, tape, scissors, hole punches, paper clips and fasteners.				
A range of materials of varying sizes and textures to cut, stick, fold and rip, for example tracing paper, newspaper, envelopes, foil and tissue paper.				
Resources available for mixing colours, for example paint at the art easel or food colouring in the water area.				
A range of mark making resources including but not limited to; large paper, small paper, card, pencils, crayons and chalk.				
Malleable materials such as dough or clay.				
Mark making resources in the outdoor area such as large paintbrushes and buckets of water to 'paint' the walls or chunky chalk for drawing in the ground.				
Displays that celebrate children's creative efforts.				
A place where work in progress can be kept safely and returned to later on.				
Open ended resources such as recycled tubs, boxes and tubes.				
Different surfaces for children to work on, for example pavement, easel or floor.				
A range of construction materials such as blocks, crates, fabric, rope and plastic tapes.				

SAMPLE

