



Overview:

Children are immersed in technologically rich environments, both in their homes and in the world around them. Therefore they should be encouraged to talk about ICT in the wider world and have opportunities to use ICT appropriately in their play to increase their knowledge and understanding of the world. They should be involved in planning the role play areas and making ICT play resources such as, cash point machines, parking pay stations, airport scanners, photocopiers, computers, etc.

When setting up role play areas, consideration needs to be given to the technology that would be evident in real life and ensure that ICT resources reflect relevant and current technology. In Early Years at least one of the role play areas is usually a Home corner which could include programmable machines such as washing machines, dishwashers, microwaves, televisions, remote control handsets, DVD players as well as push button telephones, mobile phones, MP3 players, etc. These can be either *real* or *made* resources and adults should model appropriate use. Pupils should be encouraged to imitate what they observe and later should be observed spontaneously using the resources as a natural part of their play, showing some control in their use of tools and equipment.

As children develop and gain more knowledge of the world, the role play areas should not only reflect new situations and offer opportunities to develop and learn about a wide variety of situations but also be appropriate to their stage of development. Offices, Estate agents, Chinese restaurants, airports etc. can be created and encourage children to write and handle money as part of their play as well as introduce new vocabulary and opportunities to learn about other cultures. Role play areas should be stimulating and inviting to both boys and girls and well organised to promote autonomy and independence.

In long term role play areas the resources can be changed, developed or increased over a period of time to enhance, enrich and extend play opportunities for the children. Topics and themes will give children opportunity for specialised play experiences and can be brought to life by setting up new role play areas to support and extend children's knowledge and understanding such as, shops, cafes, vets, doctor's surgery, Post office, builder's yard etc.

Although there should always be role play areas indoors, consideration needs to be given to developing role play outside. The outdoor environment provides unique opportunities for role play such as, garden centres, science explorers, road traffic incidents, road works, car wash, fire station, breakdown service etc.

Whilst the indoor role play areas will be planned and constructed for longer periods of time, the very nature of outdoor provision makes it difficult to create long term role play areas. An outdoor Wendy house is a flexible resource and can be made into a variety of play situations depending on themes/topics or spontaneous interest/opportunities that may arise. Role play boxes give other flexible options. The contents should spark interest and encourage pupils to play and explore real and/or imaginary events by stimulating specific play situations. For example, a road traffic incident box could include: Road signs, traffic lights, police dressing up clothes, fluorescent jackets, walkie-talkies, note pads and pencils, measuring equipment, digital camera, incident tape, medical kit, etc.



Resources:

Ensure there is a varied range of ICT devices in continuous and enhanced provision that reflect children's everyday lives. Encourage children to use these toys as part of their play e.g. setting the answer phone with messages, using walkie-talkies or two way headsets for communicating in play, using defunct mobile phones and cameras, security keypads for entry, ticket machines, cash machines, bar code scanners, security cameras, digital tills, chip and pin devices and weighing machines, to name but a few. Not all of these need cost large amounts of money, use of defunct equipment can help, or work with the children to make their own, for example cardboard bar code scanners, ticket machines, cash dispensers and photocopiers etc. Be sure to teach the children the skills they will need for understanding and using these resources. Find opportunities across children's experiences to build fine motor control so that they are able to manage and control the tools around them.

Try taking an ICT walk with children identifying ICT and related uses in the environment, such as street lights, traffic signals, automatic doors, and ticket machines. It can be quite an eye-opener and can stimulate setting-up outdoor role-play areas, such as car parks, back at the setting. Photographs can be taken on the walk and used on an IWB to aid recall and talk about the experience and also act as a stimulus for the children to make their own road signs or props for role play.

Practical activities and first-hand experience will support children's understanding and skills with using ICT tools and software. There is a vast range of resources that will help reflect the real world children live in and give them opportunities to experiment, practise and build competence in using ICT tools for themselves.

Put the computer in the role-play area and discuss its uses and purposes within different role-play settings. Support the role-play with appropriate software e.g. At the Doctors, KidDesk or Graphics package for purposeful mark making, emergent writing or writing and printing text.

Some suggested Role Play areas:



School Office
Shop or Post Office
Estate Agents
Cafe or Restaurant
Doctors Surgery
Vets
Hospital

Garage
Car Wash
Airport
Train or Bus Station
Builder's Yard
Garden Centre
Car Park

