

Handbook on the Internal Review Process for Childcare Centres

Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE)

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1. Purpose of handbook

In 2021, the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE) launched the *National Standards for Early Childhood Education and Care Services (0-3 Years)* and the *Registration Criteria for Early Childhood Education and Care Services (0-3 Years)* to reflect the recent developments in the ECEC sector (0-3 years) within the Maltese context. Both documents are fundamental tools which guide childcare centres towards providing quality learning and care provision.

This handbook is another tool designed to guide centres to plan for improvement. It provides a structure which can be used by centres to improve the quality of their work through a self-evaluation process. This process, referred to in this document as the internal review process, helps centres to evaluate their policies, practices, and progress, identify their strengths and determine what still needs to improve.

During the internal review process, the legally responsible person (LRP), the centre manager, childcare educators, and other stakeholders, including parents, evaluate the quality of the learning and care provided by the centre. These aspects are addressed in Quality Area 2: The Quality of Learning and Care, of the document *National Standards for Early Childhood Education and Care Services (0-3 Years)*. This area includes the quality of the learning programme and environment, the quality of care and support, the leadership and management, and parental partnership and collaboration.

This handbook is organised into two parts: the first has been designed to guide centres through the various steps of the internal review process; the second is an appendix section with templates which centres can use to develop their own data-gathering tools. It is recommended that centres develop their own data-gathering tools based on their context and needs.

Terminology

The use of 'we' in this handbook is a conscious choice that was made to emphasise an inclusive approach to the internal review process where all stakeholders in the centre are encouraged and given the opportunity to participate.

To support the fluency and readability of the handbook:

- The term 'centre/s' is used throughout when referring to 'childcare centre/s'.
- 'Babies', 'toddlers' and 'young children' are all referred to as 'children'.
- 'Parent/s' refers to anyone who is the primary carer of the child.

2. Internal and external review processes

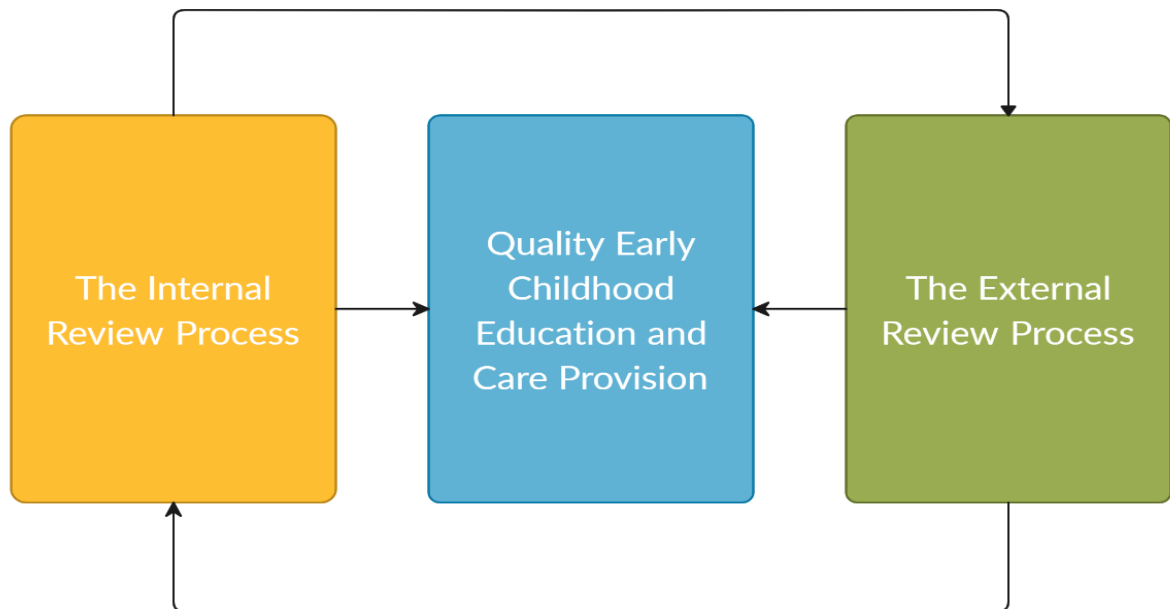


Figure 1. A holistic approach towards quality childcare education and care.

The Internal Review Process

An [internal review process](#) is undertaken internally by all members of staff at the centre to evaluate its practices and procedures. This needs to be carried out at appropriate points in time to assess what is and is not working and what needs to improve, and then to determine what changes need to be made. Furthermore, the internal review process aims at finding out to what extent the educational vision of the centre is being realised, whether set goals are being achieved, and what progress is being made. Real quality improvement comes from the inside, that is, from within the centre and is not imposed from outside. A culture of self-evaluation is what really pushes forward quality.

An effective internal review process involves members of staff asking questions related to the learning and care experiences of children. Such questions may include:

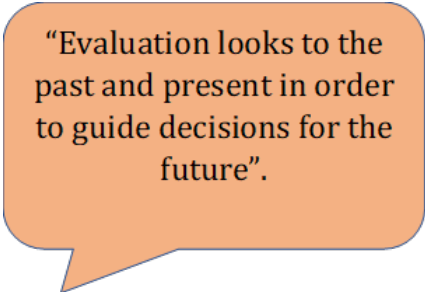
- Are all our children benefitting from the learning, care and experiences at our centre?
- Which initiatives taken by the centre are making a difference? How did they make a difference?
- How can we improve the quality and effectiveness of our practices and what further actions may need to be taken?

The External Review Process

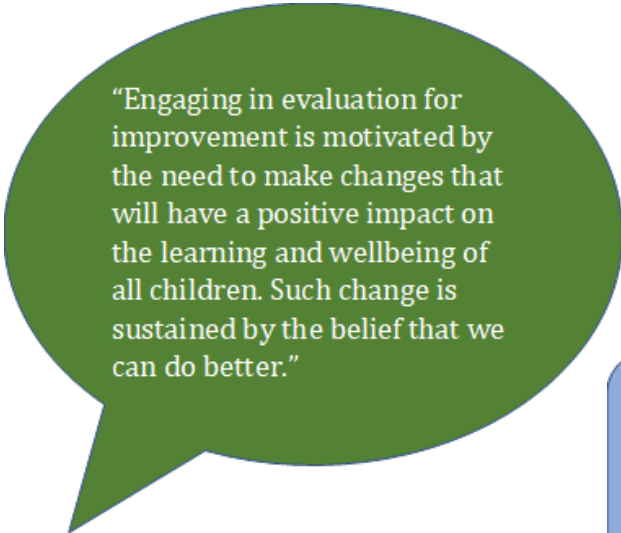
The [external review process](#) involves an external body, that is the DQSE, that evaluates the quality of the learning environment and the quality of the learning and care provided by the centre. DQSE officials bring an outsider perspective to the process. They review, monitor, evaluate and regulate centres through an external review visit, followed by a written report grounded in the [National Standards for Early Childhood Education and Care Services \(0-3 Years\)](#). The external review process helps service providers to reflect, focus and manage the centre's internal review exercise and guides them to meet the expected standards.

Evaluating the practices carried out at the centre is important. Internal and external evaluation go hand in hand. They are complementary review processes which enable us to improve our practices. Both types of evaluation share a similar purpose. They help us to identify:

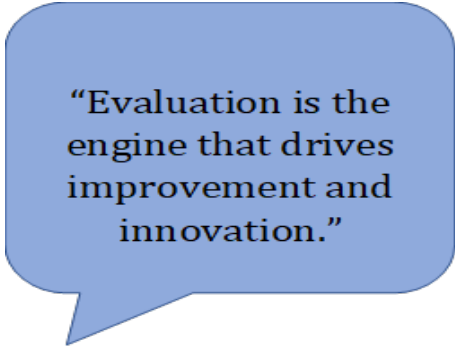
- The aspects of our practice we are doing well in.
- The aspects we may need to improve.
- The actions that should be taken to see improvement.



“Evaluation looks to the past and present in order to guide decisions for the future”.



“Engaging in evaluation for improvement is motivated by the need to make changes that will have a positive impact on the learning and wellbeing of all children. Such change is sustained by the belief that we can do better.”



“Evaluation is the engine that drives improvement and innovation.”

3. What to evaluate during the internal review process

The starting point of the internal review process is a willingness to initiate change. The process of evaluation is spread on two levels:

- Continuous self-evaluation of the members of staff working at the centre.
- Continuous evaluation of the structures, policies, processes, and practices of the centre by all stakeholders involved with the centre.

During the internal review process, we evaluate the quality of the learning and care provision in our centre, that is, aspects that have a direct or indirect impact on our children's experiences, well-being, and development. These include the relationships between members of staff and children, the integrated approach to learning and care, day-to-day pedagogical practices, and parental involvement. These aspects are addressed in Quality Area 2: The Quality of Learning and Care, in the document *National Standards for Early Childhood Education and Care Services (0-3 Years)*.

4. Different steps that make up the internal review process

At the heart of the internal review process are the following three questions to help the centre reflect in a broad manner:

- How good is our centre?
- How do we know this?
- What can we do to improve?

To answer these questions, we need to break down the internal review process into six steps.

1: Reflect

Reflect on current practices at the centre vis-à-vis the requirements of the six standards found in Quality Area 2: The Quality of Learning and Care.

2: Gather evidence

Choose the right tools to evaluate the quality of learning and care at the centre.

3: Analyse

Look closely at the data collected and identify areas for improvement.

4: Prioritise

Choose the priority areas that need to be focused on.

5: Take action

Draw up an action plan with clear steps.

6: Monitor and Evaluate

Monitor and evaluate the implementation of the action plan.

4.1 REFLECT

Reflect and evaluate current practices at our centre vis-à-vis the requirements of standards 2.1 – 2.6, found in Quality Area 2: The Quality of Learning and Care of [the *National Standards for Early Childhood Education and Care Services \(0-3 Years\)*](#) (see Appendix 1).

4.2 GATHER EVIDENCE

Choose the right tools to evaluate the quality of learning and care at our centre (see Appendices 1, 2, 3 and 4).

There are several ways that can be used to gather feedback about the quality of the learning and care at our centre. These help us form an objective picture of the quality of our centre, as well as to understand how our service can improve. These include:

- Observations of staff and children during activities.
- Collecting feedback from members of staff, and parents, through questionnaires, interviews and focus groups, amongst others.


- Various forms of pedagogical documentation including activity plans and outcomes from staff meetings.
- The outcomes from the external review report.





Feedback from members of Staff

Questionnaires, one-to-one interviews, professional discussions and outcomes from staff meetings are important tools which can be used to investigate the opinions, feelings, and attitudes of the various members of staff towards the quality of learning and care in the centre. It is important that all members of staff participate in these various feedback and evaluation exercises as they can have a positive impact on the quality of work carried out in the centre.




Feedback from Parents

Receiving positive or negative feedback from parents is important. Both types of feedback are crucial to help form an objective picture on the learning and care provision that children experience at the centre.

There are several ways how we can obtain feedback from parents:

- Having a comment/feedback box where parents can add their feedback or suggestions about any area which they feel needs to be tackled.
- Carrying out one-to-one interviews or asking them to fill in a questionnaire. These can be done online or in person.
- Gathering information from day-to-day communication with parents.



Feedback from Children

Children's feedback is valuable and essential as it allows us to understand their experiences at the centre and ensure that their needs are being met. It is important to listen to what the children share with us, respect their ideas, questions, and opinions and document this information as part of the internal review process. We can become more aware that we need to stop, 'hear', acknowledge and be responsive to what they are telling us. Incorporating children's voice requires creativity and patience

but it can give us a true and holistic picture of the centre's practices.

We can incorporate children's voice, especially those who can communicate verbally, by: Observing and interacting with them during their daily activities. We can ask age-appropriate questions and engage in conversations with them to understand their likes, dislikes and feelings.

Encouraging them to draw pictures or tell stories regarding their experiences at the centre. We can interact and talk with them during these activities and ask open-ended questions such as, 'What do you like about our centre?' or 'Is there anything you would like to do in the centre?' or 'Is there anything that you do not like?'

Creating child-friendly feedback boards or boxes where children can place drawings, toys, emotion stickers to convey their feelings and experiences.



Documentation

Pedagogical documentation is the practice of collecting, recording, and creating evidence of learning and making it visible. The evaluation of these documents, all of which relate to the children's learning process, allows us to monitor and reflect on our practice. They also give us the opportunity to interpret and reinterpret first, the process of children's learning and, secondly, the quality of our intervention and interaction with them during this process. Pedagogical documentation can include:

- **Observations and written notes on individual/groups of children.**

It is highly recommended that we devote time to observe children exploring the environment, interacting with adults during care routines and while playing. The following questions can be asked:

- What is the child doing?

- How does s/he react and respond to members of staff and other children?
- What are his/her emerging skills, interests, and needs?
- How does s/he interact with the different resources and learning invitations?

It is useful to build our own observation skills and develop different ways to document and interpret our observations. It is also important that we observe and document observations throughout different times of the day, try out different approaches to see what works and feels right, while ensuring that all this does not interfere with our interactions with the children.

- **Observations and written notes on individual childcare educators.**

One of the responsibilities of the centre manager is to monitor and guide the progress and quality of work of childcare educators. One way of doing this is to observe childcare educators during their interactions with the children. The centre manager can observe childcare educators and the way they organise the learning environment, their planning and implementation of the learning activities, the children's level of engagement, the way childcare educators communicate with the children, and the way language is used.

- **Photos, videos, and audio recordings.**

These tools allow us to see and hear ourselves during our interactions with children. They also offer us an opportunity to analyse children's engagement in individual and group activities, the way in which children use the available resources, and the way we interact and talk with children and with each other. They can also give us an insight into how children think and solve problems and the way in which we encourage and strengthen these activities. With the parents' consent, taking photos, short videos, or audio recordings is most effective when paired with written notes that help explain images, video clips, and/or audio recordings.

- **Children's work and records.**

This may include samples of children's work and records of their developmental progress, interests, experiences, as well as their participation and engagement in the

learning opportunities provided. These can take the form of learning journeys/journals/portfolios.



External Review Reports

The outcomes of the external review visit are included in a report which is sent to the LRP. The report is made up of the *Findings* of the visit, which includes good practices, the *Required Actions* and *Actions to be Given Priority*.

It is strongly suggested that the *Required Actions*, and *Actions to be Given Priority*, related to the quality of learning and care feature in the internal review process. These give a clear insight of the areas for improvement that the centre needs to act upon and therefore should be included as priorities in the centre's action plan.

4.3 ANALYSE

We are now in a position to:

- Look closely at the data we have gathered (from feedback from childcare educators, parents and children, various forms of documentation and required actions found in the external review report regarding the quality of the learning and care experience).
- Identify aspects of our practice which we are doing well and thus positively impacting on the children's learning and care experiences.
- Identify aspects we need to improve.

This is quite a challenging step since we need to make judgements about what we are doing well and what we might need to improve. It is important that this step is carried out collaboratively, that is, childcare educators together with the centre manager (and, if possible, the LRP), and that our judgements are informed by the evidence that we have gathered from the review process. This step is most effective when we have a shared vision

of what we want from our centre, the team works well together, and all members of staff are committed to improvement.

The table below can help the centre organise the collected data in two sections: *Areas of Strengths* and *Areas for Improvement*.

Areas of Strength	Areas for Improvement
<i>(e.g. practices we are doing well, policies that are being followed, progress that our children are making...)</i>	<i>(e.g. practices that need to be improved, policies that are not being followed, our learning programme which needs to be more child-centred....)</i>
1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.

4.4 PRIORITISE

The priority areas that we are going to focus on in the coming months are selected from the *Areas for Improvement* that we have listed in Step 4.3. It is recommended that few priorities for improvement are chosen (ideally two or three priorities). The table below provides an example of how we can identify priority areas.

Example:

Baby Childcare Centre is holding its internal review process. The centre manager has collected feedback from different stakeholders (parents and childcare educators) and sources (interviews and observations). The table below indicates the four areas that need improvement:

Areas for Improvement

1. Learning experiences offered to children are not based on children's evolving and emerging interests.
2. Childcare educators have difficulties assessing children's progress and development.
3. Parents do not collaborate with members of staff.
4. More resources need to be bought to increase children's engagement.

Members of staff decided to focus on Standard 2.3 and choose Areas for Improvement 1 and 2 since they are still having major issues when planning the learning experiences and assessing the development of the children attending the centre.

Priorities

Priority 1: Planning learning experiences that are based on children's evolving and emerging interests.

Priority 2: Assessment practices that notice, recognise children's learning, and respond to it.

4.5 TAKE ACTION

After selecting our priorities, we now need to draw up an **Action Plan** with clear steps to determine how these priorities are going to be addressed. The priorities and the steps should be reachable, specific, and clearly expressed. The LRP and the centre manager should ensure that the required resources (financial, organisational, human) are available so as to address the priorities.

Finally, it is important to keep a record of all actions taken and the steps being followed. Such evidence may include childcare educators' notes and observations, photos, children's portfolios (learning journals/journeys) and audio recordings, amongst others.

Below is an example of an Action Plan drawn by *Baby Childcare Centre* to address its priorities, as mentioned in the previous table.

ACTION PLAN			
Priority 1: Planning learning experiences based on children's evolving and emerging interests. [Standard 2.3]			
Action	Steps to be taken	Timescale	Monitoring and Evaluation
Organise Training re planning and observations	Centre manager organises professional training for childcare educators regarding: - planning that is based on children's emerging interests	October to December	<p><i>The centre manager needs to monitor and evaluate on a regular basis that the various steps are carried out in the established time frame.</i></p> <p>The training was organised on 15th May 20XX by XXX ECEC agency titled: "<i>How to plan learning opportunities based on children's</i></p>

	- carrying out ongoing observations and keeping short records		<i>interests and following childcare educators' observations".</i> Another session will be organised should there be staff turnover.
Observe, record and Develop Learning Activities	Childcare Educators observe children and take notes on their emerging interests and needs, and their progress and development. Childcare educators develop a project and plan various learning experiences based on the interests of the children in their group	January	The centre manager checks activity plans and learning experiences and provides feedback before implementation.
Implement planned activities	Childcare educators carry out activities according to plans.	February to June	The centre manager observes the activities and takes notes to give feedback to childcare educators. Feedback is shared either individually or as a group.
Evaluate and Decide on Future Measures	Meeting is held to discuss and evaluate the benefits that resulted from the initiatives taken.	June	Following the discussion, the centre manager decides the way forward and shares it with all Childcare Educators.

4.6 MONITOR AND EVALUATE

The internal review process continues through the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the Action Plan. This is needed so that the LRP and/or centre manager can ensure that the priority area/s for improvement are achieved. It is possible that one of the priorities is not achieved during the stipulated period. In this case, the steps might need to be redefined and new timeframes set.

5. Conclusion

Internal evaluation makes us think deeply about the impact of what we do. It makes us reflect on our structures, policies and practices, and encourages us to focus on the children, as well as the learning and care experiences they benefit from when attending our centre. An effective review process has the potential to transform what we do and enhance our practices and the overall service we offer our children.

Disclaimer

The DQSE retains the right to make necessary technical adjustments or updates to this Handbook from time to time. The most up-to-date version of the Handbook will be available on the DQSE website.

6. Appendices

Appendix 1: Prompts for reflection for centre managers and childcare educators

Standard 2.1

The effective leadership skills, knowledge and abilities of the centre manager support the provision of education and care that meet regulated standards.

Indicators	Prompts for reflection for the centre manager:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The manager effectively fulfils the responsibilities defined in the role description outlined in Standard 1.1.• The manager actively promotes the centre’s philosophy, ensures that it reflects national legislation, policies, standards, strategies, and that respects the holistic development of the child.• The manager ensures there is a clear vision for the centre with clearly defined aims and objectives that are shared with all stakeholders.• The manager promotes an ethos of professionalism, transdisciplinary and collaborative teamwork.	<p>To what extent:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Am I ready to accept well-intentioned complaints/suggestions about work?b) Do I encourage open discussions about the quality of our work?c) Do I feel trusted by the LRP and members of staff?d) Am I an effective leader and manager?e) Do I reflect and evaluate my work on a daily basis?f) Am I contributing towards achieving the centre’s priorities?g) Am I satisfied with the way I communicate/collaborate with the LRP, with members of staff and with parents?h) Do I promote and share the centre’s vision?i) Do I encourage teamwork?j) Do we deal with problem situations as a team?k) Am I supporting members of staff to continually improve their practices?

-
- The manager maintains clear lines of responsibility in day-to-day management.
 - The manager is aware of the strengths and challenges of the centre and inspires commitment to continual improvement.
 - The manager ensures that effective internal review processes are in place and are used to inform improvement in the quality of the service provision.
 - The manager promotes reflective practice and supports all practitioners, including new members of staff, to continually improve their practice.
 - The manager regularly reflects on their own practice and consults with the different stakeholders, acting upon the feedback received.
 - The manager establishes collaborative partnerships with parents, practitioners, other professionals and the general community to safeguard and promote the rights of the child and their holistic development.
 - The manager ensures the effective planning and implementation of the DQSE's recommendations.
-

I) Am I overseeing that recommendations listed in the external review report are being implemented?

-
- The manager maintains oversight of children's overall progress in line with curricular expectations.
-

Standard 2.2

All children are welcomed and included in a child-friendly and play-based environment that nurtures their learning and development.

Indicators	Prompts for reflection for the centre manager and the childcare educators:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The centre’s commitment to welcoming all children irrespective of race, colour, gender, language, religion, ethnicity, disability, or any other status is abundantly evident.• The centre provides a play-based learning environment.• The centre ensures that all children have equitable access to the learning opportunities offered.• The centre ensures that the necessary scaffolding is in place to eliminate barriers that might restrict access to learning opportunities.• Children are treated as competent human beings, who can communicate, exercise agency and make choices.• Childcare educators monitor and keep track of each child’s overall learning, development and progress to enhance strengths, address risk factors and provide support as needed.	<p>To what extent:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Are we actively promoting equity and diversity?b) Do all members of staff fully understand the centre’s policy towards inclusion?c) Can the centre strengthen its ethos and culture of inclusion?d) Is the learning environment in our centre inclusive?e) Do all children and their parents feel welcomed and included?f) Does our learning programme meet the needs of different groups of children?g) Do childcare educators have access to effective professional development so that they can support the diverse needs of children?h) Do we involve parents and external professionals (e.g. Early Intervention Practitioners) to ensure all children benefit from the right support at the right time?i) Are we identifying and overcoming barriers to children’s participation in the learning experiences?j) Is the designated childcare educator system effective in your centre?k) Are transitions tailor-made for each child?

-
- The centre provides opportunities for all children to learn about, through and within a digital environment.
 - The centre fosters partnership relationships with parents and other centre stakeholders ensuring smooth transitions that respect the individual characteristics of the child.
 - The centre operates a designated key carer system. Childcare educators take responsibility of the overall wellbeing and individual needs of each child entrusted in their care. Members of staff demonstrate a supportive approach with one another in implementing the designated key carer system.
 - The centre fosters links with external professionals and/or agencies where appropriate, with a view of optimizing support for the benefit of all children.
-

Standard 2.3

The curriculum helps children to progress in their learning and achieve the desired learning outcomes at their own pace.

Indicators	Prompts for reflection for the centre manager and the childcare educators:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● The five broad learning outcomes of the Early Years Cycle guide the childcare educators' pedagogy and the centre's curriculum.● The five broad learning outcomes of the Early Years Cycle guide the childcare educators' pedagogy and the centre's curriculum.● Childcare educators implement a curriculum that is designed to:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ observe and respond to the children's diverse interests, strengths and capabilities;○ provide a positive learning environment that respects the holistic development of each child;○ reflect an understanding of learning and development that is consistent with current research, theory and practices in quality ECEC.● Play is the central medium through which children learn and develop.● The centre's curriculum is informed by authentic assessment practices that notice, recognise children's	<p>To what extent:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Do childcare educators support children to take responsibility for their own learning and progress?b) Are children developing a positive attitude to learning?c) Are we motivating and engaging all children?d) Are all children making progress in their learning?e) Are our processes for planning, assessment and reporting effective in improving our learning programmes?f) Do childcare educators understand the purpose of observation/documentation of the child's learning process?g) Are we planning and implementing learning activities that are relevant and engaging for all children?h) Are we planning and implementing learning activities that encourage children to work independently and collaboratively?i) Are the five broad learning outcomes being used as a guide during the planning, implementation and record keeping processes?

learning and respond to it fostering further learning:

- planning that is informed by childcare educators' observations of the children;
 - planning that is based on recognition of different children's interests, needs and strengths;
 - planning that is flexible and responsive to children's evolving and emerging interests, diverse ideas and dispositions.
- Childcare educators reflect on and evaluate their practice to:
 - identify what has been successful and whether the expected learning has taken place;
 - scaffold, modify or extend learning experiences to meet the needs of each child in meaningful and relevant ways.

Standard 2.4

The environment and resources support children's play, learning and development.

Indicators	Prompts for reflection for the centre manager and the childcare educators:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Good use is made of the opportunities afforded by the physical environment to ensure children:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ have access to noisy play areas, as well as quiet spaces where the children can withdraw to rest or nap,○ experience stimulating and enriching learning spaces that invite children to inquire, experiment and explore a range of resources and materials,○ have opportunities to engage, communicate, create and learn through age-appropriate digital technology,○ benefit from both indoor and outdoor spaces to extend and vary learning experiences according to the evolving interests of the children.● Indoor and outdoor resources are accessible and used effectively to stimulate, consolidate and extend children's learning.● Resources should include natural and/or recyclable materials to stimulate children's creativity and	<p>To what extent:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Are our indoor and outdoor areas equipped to fulfil the needs of all the children?b) Are our indoor and outdoor areas stimulating and enriching enough that they invite children to inquire, experiment and explore?c) Is our centre equipped with a wide variety of resources, including books, magazines, paper and writing materials, block activity materials, fine and gross motor activity materials, sand/water activity supplies, role play resources, music and movement resources, art and craft supplies?d) Are the indoor and outdoor resources accessible and used effectively to stimulate, consolidate and extend children's learning?e) Do our learning environments support different types of play eg. independent play, parallel play, pretend play, constructive play?f) Is children's work creatively displayed in a way that is accessible to children and parents?

imagination and promote a mindset of sustainability.

- Children's achievements are creatively displayed in modes that are accessible to children and parents.
-

Standard 2.5

Childcare educators nurture meaningful relationships and engage in high-quality, enjoyable, and stimulating interactions to enhance children’s well-being, learning and development.

Indicators	Prompts for reflection for the centre manager and the childcare educators:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Childcare educators foster an environment of respectful, caring and secure relationships with children.• Childcare educators provide nurturing care when interacting with children. They are sensitive, responsive, predictable and warm during physical care routines. They listen to children, value what they say, and stimulate verbal communication at all times.• Childcare educators promote positive interactions amongst the children to nurture peer relationships.• Childcare educators minimise sources of stress in the children’s daily lives at the centre and help them to cope with it through maintaining a calm and respectful environment.• Childcare educators foster a language-rich environment that supports children’s bilingual development in Maltese and English	<p>To what extent:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Are we developing an environment of respectful, caring, and secure relationships with children?b) Do we use conversations and interactions with children during care routines as enjoyable and meaningful learning opportunities?c) Are we sensitive, responsive, predictable and warm during care routines?d) Do we listen to children, value what they say, and stimulate verbal communication?e) Do we foster a language-rich environment that supports children’s bilingual development in Maltese and English?f) Do we promote positive attitudes towards children’s home languages?g) Do we adopt positive strategies to address challenging behaviour in ways that respect the dignity of children?

and promotes positive attitudes towards children's home languages.

- Childcare educators adopt a Whole Centre Positive Behaviour Approach to address challenging behaviour, in ways that respect the dignity of the young child.
- Childcare educators encourage independence during all physical care routines. During mealtimes, childcare educators join in with the children and, if help is needed, they assist in the best way that meets the children's individual needs.
- Childcare educators guide and support children to gain self-care abilities and increasing independence.
- Childcare educators strengthen children's core life skills and support their ability to focus, plan for and achieve outcomes, adapt to changing situations and resist impulsive behaviour.

h) Do we encourage independence during all care routines?

Standard 2.6

The centre welcomes parents and fosters collaborative partnership to support children’s wellbeing, learning and development.

Indicators	Prompts for reflection for the centre manager and the childcare educators:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The centre welcomes the presence and active involvement of parents especially during the initial stages of their child’s settling in period at the centre.• The centre provides opportunities for both informal experiences and planned events that involve and engage parents as partners in their child’s educational journey, fostering a learning community.• Childcare educators regularly share and discuss with the individual parents the progress of their child’s learning and holistic development in a spirit of mutual respect. Formal one-to-one meetings are held at least twice yearly.• Any concerns about the child’s overall development are to be discussed with the parents concerned through the involvement of the Centre Manager.• Members of staff provide parents with information about the child’s daily routine at the centre.• The centre promotes and cultivates continuity of learning and	<p>To what extent:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Do we consider collaboration with parents as an important aspect of our work?b) Are we satisfied with our collaboration with parents?c) Do we have an open and reciprocal exchange of information with parents about their children?d) Does our centre offer support/upskilling opportunities for parents?e) Do we have practices in place to ensure that all parents have regular discussions with their child’s designated childcare educator to review their progress and development?f) Do we have effective processes that help new children become familiar with the centre and to develop positive relationships between the parents and the childcare educators?g) Do we work with parents to ensure transitions are personalised, planned in advance, and sensitively handled?

development ensuring smooth transitions for each child.

- Parents are encouraged to provide healthy and nutritious food and drinks for their children to support the centre in the promotion of a healthy diet and in line with National and Centre policies.
- The centre promotes the use of technology to strengthen relationships among parents, families, the centre and the young children.

Appendix 2

Questionnaire to parents for feedback

	Indicate your views with a ü in the column you feel is most suitable. Then fill in the open-ended section below.	Agree	Not Sure / Sometimes	Disagree
1	Members of staff make me feel welcome at the centre and listen to any concerns I may have.			
2	The centre's physical environment is warm, welcoming, and appealing to children.			
3	The centre premises are clean and well-maintained.			
4	My child is safe at the centre.			
5	My child's behaviour is managed effectively.			
6	The manager is available when needed.			
7	My child is making good progress at the centre.			
8	I know who the childcare educator primarily responsible for my child is.			
9	The childcare educator knows my child as an individual.			
10	The centre offers a variety of learning experiences that promote the learning and development of my child.			
11	I am satisfied with the information I receive about my child's progress and development.			
12	The centre provides opportunities in which my child and I can participate together.			
13	My child is happy at the centre.			
14	Would you recommend the centre to other parents? Yes _____ No _____ Why?			

Appendix 3

Questions for childcare educators to give feedback during one-to-one meetings/focus groups or through questionnaires.

1. What do you enjoy most about working in this childcare centre?

2. What do you find most challenging about being a childcare educator in this childcare centre?

3. What needs to be improved in the following areas: *Leadership, Inclusive Practices, the Learning Programme, the Environment, Interactions and Relationships, Collaboration with Parents?*

4. In what areas do you need more professional learning?

5. Any other comment:

Appendix 4

Observation Sheet

(Centre manager observing childcare educator during a learning and care opportunity)

Date	Number of children in the group	Age of children
Name of designated childcare educator		
Description of learning/care experience	<i>Examples: physical play outdoors, creative messy play, nappy changing, feeding</i>	
Observe the physical environment	<p><i>How is the physical space organised?</i></p> <p><i>Are there accessible resources and/or books?</i></p> <p><i>Is the physical space organised in such a way that it encourages children to inquire, experiment and explore a range of resources and materials?</i></p>	
Observe the planning of the childcare educator	<p><i>Has the childcare educator planned for the learning experience?</i></p> <p><i>Is the planning of the learning experience a reflection of the children's interests?</i></p> <p><i>Is planning linked to specific learning outcomes?</i></p> <p><i>Did the childcare educator prepare resources specific to the learning experience?</i></p> <p><i>Did the childcare educators plan so that the physical environment is linked to the project being developed?</i></p>	
Observe children's level of engagement	<p><i>Are children involved in the learning/care experience?</i></p> <p><i>To what level are they engaged?</i></p> <p><i>Are children engaged for most of the time of the activity or part of the time?</i></p> <p><i>How are they involved? Is it a routine activity or a creative activity?</i></p> <p><i>Are children concentrated on activity or are they easily distracted?</i></p>	
Observe the way the childcare educator communicates with the children	<p><i>How well is the childcare educator communicating and interacting with the children?</i></p> <p><i>Is it two-way communication i.e. both the childcare educator and the children talking to each other?</i></p> <p><i>Does the educator find opportunities to extend the conversation with the children?</i></p>	
Observe the language being used by the childcare educator and by the children	<p><i>Which language is being used throughout the learning/care activity?</i></p> <p><i>Is the childcare educator using one language throughout the learning/care experience in an effective way?</i></p> <p><i>How does the childcare educator communicate and interact when a child's home language is not Maltese or English?</i></p>	
WAY FORWARD	Strengths of childcare educator during learning/care activity:	
	Areas for improvement:	

Signature of Centre Manager

Signature of Childcare Educator