

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The physical environment plays a crucial role in helping to shape the behaviour and development of children. The quality of the environment determines the level of involvement of the children and interaction between adults and children.

Indoor Area

Ventilation

Good ventilation helps to maintain the indoor environment at a comfortable level and can contribute positively to the children's learning.

- All rooms are well-ventilated by means of windows that can be opened, a working air-conditioning system/coolers or fans
- Exhaust fans are used to provide better ventilation in toilets, diaper changing areas and the kitchen



Rooms with low windows (at children's eye level) provide children with opportunities to look out and enjoy the view outside.

Lighting

The quality and quantity of light influence the moods and feeling of the children and staff within the environment.

- The lighting effect is enhanced with use of pastel coloured paints on walls
- The room lighting is adjustable with the use of curtains, blinds or dimmer switches
- Having different forms of lighting (such as fluorescent and incandescent lights) allows for a variety of effects on various play areas and activities



Natural light is adequate and complemented by artificial light which allows for a range of lighting conditions.

Noise

Sounds maintained at a comfortable level enhance children's moods and concentration during learning.

- Noise levels in the classroom are minimised with sound-absorbing materials such as ceiling boards, rubber or foam tile flooring and solid doors
- Space is organised such that areas with similar noise levels are next to each other. For example, the block corner is located next to the dramatic play area but away from the quiet reading corner.
- Where space is a constraint, noisy and quiet activities are scheduled at different times to minimise noise levels



Noisy activities are conducted in multi-purpose areas or outdoors.

Utilisation of Space

- Dividers are used to delineate areas within a classroom into learning centres. They also serve to create paths for smoother traffic flow and organise children within the area.
- These dividers are safe and do not obstruct the view of staff who need to supervise the children



Traffic paths are created to ease transition between activities.

The layout of the space and placement of materials allow for quiet moments of reflection as well as active physical exploration.





All available space is utilised for interactive learning by the children.
This includes partitions, walls and floors.



Facilities for Staff

Comfortable areas are allocated for staff to attend to their personal needs and to interact with each other and parents.



Staff room at a private premises



Staff room at a HDB void deck centre



Creativity is encouraged in the use of space. The provision may include the following:

- adequate storage for personal belongings and resource materials of staff;
- adult-sized furniture and toilets;
- space available for :
 - meetings and conferences;
 - meals/snacks or breaks; and
 - programme planning and administration.

Maintenance of Furnishings/Fittings and Equipment

Creating a clean and safe environment is a top priority in child care centres.

- ★ All indoor and outdoor equipment and materials allow children to develop their skills safely without risk of injury.
- ★ Well-organised, clean rooms create an environment which is more pleasant and conducive to learning.

- The use of lamination or formica/other non-toxic materials is preferable for shelves and cabinets for ease of cleaning



Materials and equipment in child care centres are safe, attractive and durable. When purchasing equipment, durability, flexibility and ease of maintenance are considered.



Materials are organised and accessible to children. For example, containers and storage bins on low shelves are labelled with names, symbols, pictures or words to show children where everything belongs. This will help the children to retrieve and clear them, thereby enhancing their self-help skills.



Learning Environment

Learning centres support children's developmental needs and interests as they interact with the materials, peers and adults within the environment.



Varied resources are available to provide children with both concrete and abstract learning experiences.

A good learning environment has:

- a wide variety of materials and equipment that meets the developmental needs and skills of the children; and
- equipment and materials added or changed periodically to stimulate children's curiosity and extend their interest by providing elements of surprise, novelty, success and satisfaction.

Open-ended equipment allows children to set their own tasks and create new ways of using the equipment.



Mirrors are used to encourage children to familiarise themselves with various views of their postures.



Aesthetically appealing materials such as wind chimes, scented materials and flowering plants can add colour, variety and life to the learning environment.



Textures, shapes and colours are used with care and thought to provide enjoyment, stimulation and relaxation.





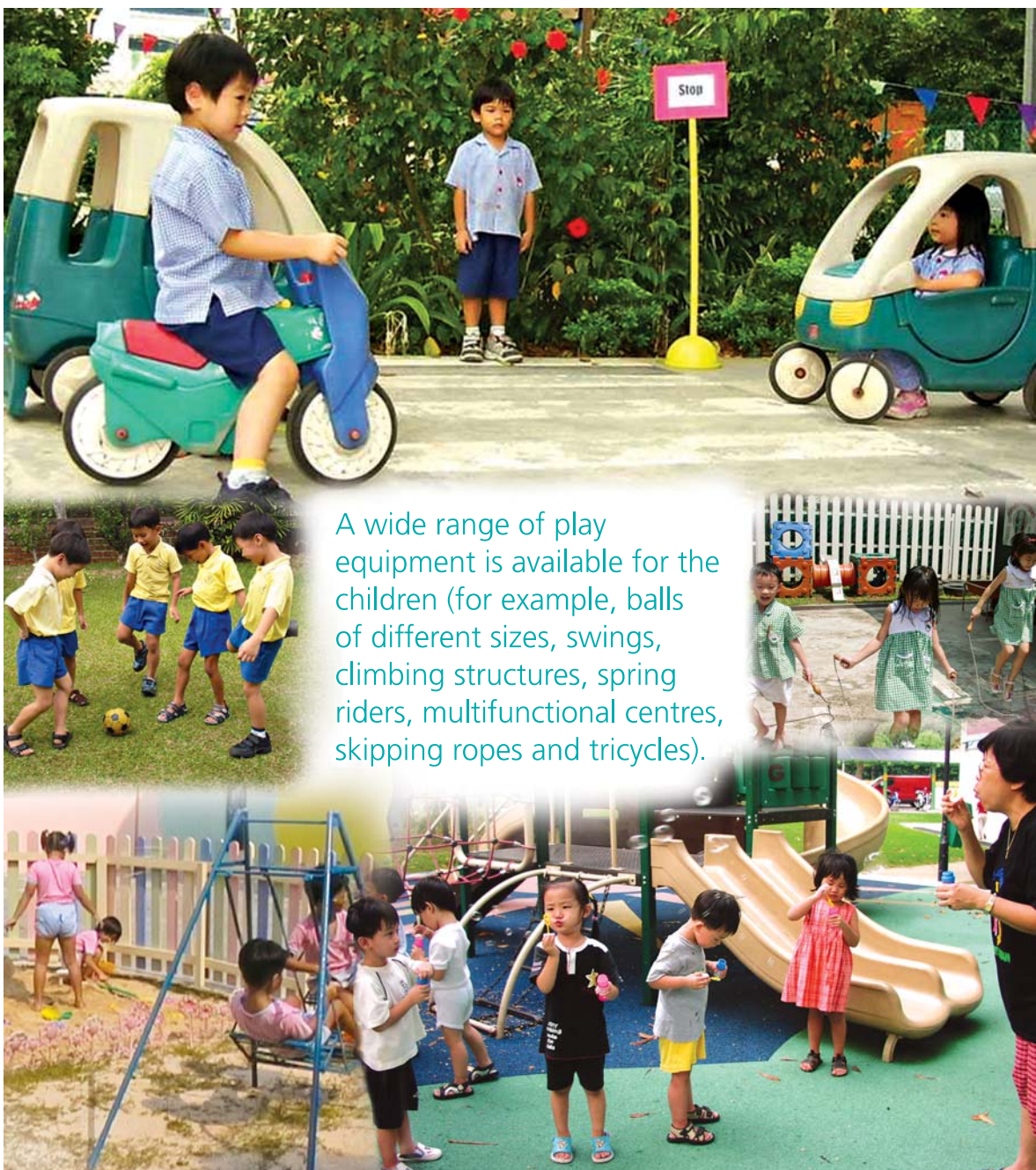
A good learning environment is designed to support diversity; for example, children are introduced to the cultures of the different ethnic groups.



The learning environment reflects and extends the children's joy and growth.

Outdoor Area

The outdoor area is more than a place where children can exercise their muscles. A well-planned outdoor environment promotes socialisation, cognitive and language development, sensory exploration, creative expression and appreciation of nature.



A wide range of play equipment is available for the children (for example, balls of different sizes, swings, climbing structures, spring riders, multifunctional centres, skipping ropes and tricycles).



Outdoor play equipment is safe and in good repair.
Playground facilities are challenging and inviting to sustain children's play.





- Shady spaces are made available with the use of trees, canopy or umbrellas
- Outdoor storage space is available for portable equipment



A gardening area in an outdoor environment offers children the experience of a natural environment.

Provision for Children with Special Needs

Accommodating children with special needs requires careful attention and planning.

Physical adaptations are specially constructed to accommodate children with special needs. These adaptations include ramps and stationary bridges to help disabled children access the indoor classroom and outdoor play equipment.

