

How a Primary School Teacher Uses the **Everyday Spaces Checklist** in Her Classroom Every Day

Space:

- *How can children and young people feel safe to express their views?*
I use comfortable, familiar spaces and follow the rules of circle time, with Talking Ted as our ‘talking object’. We agree on talking rules before children share their thoughts to ensure that they feel safe to give their views.
- *Have you allowed enough time to listen to and hear their views?*
We have a ‘welcome meeting’ each morning, during which I outline the day’s timetable. I let them know what topic we will be discussing in our ‘talking time’. This gives the children time to gather their thoughts and opinions on the topic and empowers them to share their views.
- *How do you make sure that all children and young people are heard?*
We use an ‘ideas box’ into which they post ideas on our talking topic (in writing or drawing). The idea box helps reluctant talkers and allows controversial opinions to be shared anonymously. At the end of each day, the idea box is opened and each idea is further addressed ensuring that all voices are heard.

Voice:

- *How are children and young people provided with the support they need to give their views and be heard?*
I give children information on the talking topic before the conversation starts. We use books in the library on the general topic, explore the topic in a variety of ways during Aistear or visit the physical space/activity being discussed.
- *How can they raise the things that matter to them?*
We use a flip chart to note ideas that come up during the day that they would like to explore in more detail. I find this a way of acknowledging and respecting children’s ideas and a clever way of banking topics that are important to children.
- *How are they offered different ways of giving their views?*
I try to make sure each child is heard by using a variety of media. I find that different ways of sharing inspires children to think about topics in new ways (drawing, photography, map-making, puppets, voice recording apps, book creator app).

Audience:

- *How do you show that you are ready and willing to listen to children and young people's views?*

I always show respect by listening with my ears, eyes and face. I often repeat back what I have heard to show that I have been listening and to ensure that I have heard their views correctly.

- *How do you make sure they understand what you can do with their views?*

Recently I asked the children how we could improve our school yard. They took photographs of things they would like to change, things that could be improved and things they would like to stay the same. I explained that their opinions would result in changes, but that not all ideas could be implemented, such as having a zoo in the yard!!!

Influence:

- *How will children and young people know how much influence they can have on decisions?*

I explain that all their opinions are important and will be listened to. I am careful to inform children how much influence they can have on decisions. I ensure that children understand exactly what areas they can influence and in what way.

- *How will you give them feedback?*

I always give the children feedback in the same medium they gave their views. For example, if they used photographs to represent their views I use photographs to present feedback to them.

- *How will you share with them the impact of their views on decisions?*

I give children information about how the audience received their views. I let them know what decision was made and how their views influenced the decision.

- *How will you explain the reasons for the decisions taken?*

I am very honest with children about the reasons for the decision taken. In my experience, children appreciate being given the reasons for decisions taken.