

Guidance on conducting head office audits of organisations in the National Provider Scheme: Early Years and Childcare Registers

The Early Years Foundation Stage and the Childcare Register legal requirements set out a number of policies and documents that childcare providers must hold in writing. Other policies and documents are a matter of choice for the provider but can give useful evidence of how providers meet legal requirements and/or contribute to inspection judgements on the quality of provision and on how well provision is led and managed.

Age group: Birth to five years

Published: September 2010

Reference no: 100158

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

No. 100158

© Crown copyright 2010



Contents

Background	4
Purpose of the audit	4
The head office audit process	4
The types of audit	6
Annex 1. The Early Years Register audit (full or partial)	9
Annex 2. Childcare Register audit	16
Annex 3. Staff records template	20

Background

1. The Early Years Foundation Stage and the Childcare Register legal requirements set out a number of policies and documents that childcare providers must hold in writing.¹ Other policies and documents are a matter of choice for the provider but can give useful evidence of how providers meet legal requirements and/or contribute to inspection judgements on the quality of provision and on how well provision is led and managed.
2. Ofsted has a scheme for national providers of early years or childcare services across England. Each provider usually has a set of policies, procedures and guidance documents unique to its organisation and used in all its settings. Where such providers are part of the National Provider Scheme within Ofsted, we carry out a head office audit of these documents.

Purpose of the audit

3. The purpose of the audit is to check that the organisation's policies and procedures meet requirements and regulations; and to establish which other policies, procedures and guidance the organisation has in place that might help inspectors to make judgements at inspection. It is an effective and efficient way of Ofsted making sure that registered provision meets certain requirements without having to check documents at each inspection.
4. The information from the head office audit is available for inspectors to use at all individual inspections of settings registered to that organisation through Sharepoint. It contributes evidence that the organisation's policies and procedures comply with legal requirements and can also provide evidence about the quality of leadership and management and about how well the provider meets the needs of the children who attend. It does not replace the outcome of individual inspections as each setting remains responsible for implementing policies and procedures and ensuring policy is put into practice. It is possible, even where an organisation's policies and procedures comply with regulations, that failures to implement them properly or consistently mean that individual settings fail to meet requirements.

The head office audit process

5. Ofsted will provide a schedule of head office audits for completion including the date by which each audit is needed and whether the provider/organisation provides services on the Early Years Register and/or the Childcare Register. The

¹ These are summarised in the factsheets *The requirements of the Early Years Register*: www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/080162 and *The Requirements of the Childcare Register: childcare on domestic and non-domestic premises*: www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/080143.

information provided will include whether the organisation has sought and received agreement from Ofsted to retain staff files off site at a central location.

6. The inspection service provider will call the provider to notify them of the date and time of the audit and follow up the call with a letter. During this phone call the inspection service provider should ask the provider to make available to the inspector a list of all their registered provisions and their unique registration numbers (URN). This list should be returned to the National Business Unit for a check that each provision is correctly linked to the national provider.
7. The type of audit provided will depend on whether staff files and information are held centrally or on site. Where such information is held centrally, then inspectors carrying out the audit will sample these staff files to make sure the organisation complies with requirements relating to suitable people. Inspectors should complete:
 - a **full audit** for organisations that provide services which are registered on the Early Years Register or both the Early Years and Childcare Registers and where the provider holds staff files centrally
 - a **partial audit** for organisations that provide services which are registered on the Early Years Register or both the Early Years and Childcare Registers and where staff files are not held centrally
 - a **Childcare Register audit only** where the provider has settings registered on the Childcare Register only (on either or both parts).
8. Inspectors should use the guidance in this document to carry out the audit. At the end of the audit the inspector must give feedback on the audit findings to the provider (or the person nominated to oversee the process) and explain that the provider will receive a letter confirming the outcome.
9. The audit findings are:
 - policies and procedures meet requirements
 - policies and procedures meet requirements but have recommendations for improvement
 - policies and procedures do not meet requirements and actions are needed to meet requirements.
10. The audit report and letter, and the list of registered provision, must be submitted to Ofsted within five working days of the audit visit. The audit report and letter will be made available to inspectors carrying out individual inspections of each setting registered to the organisation through Sharepoint.

The types of audit

A full audit

11. Inspectors must ask the national provider for access to all the centrally held policies and procedures and any templates used by individual settings across the company, for example templates for risk assessments, accident records or progress records. Inspectors must also establish if any policies, procedures or records are left to the discretion of the individual settings and note where this is the case.
12. The audit involves checking that the organisation holds all the required policies for the Early Years Register and, where applicable, the Childcare Register. Annexes 1 and 2 set out the policies and a format for recording whether providers meet them. Any policies that are a legal requirement are bolded. Other commonly held documents are listed and may provide additional evidence about how a provider meets a particular requirement or about the quality of provision. The list is not exhaustive and providers may hold policies under different names to those provided.
13. For each of the overarching requirements, inspectors must record a brief summary of whether the policies and procedures are in place; and if they are, whether they contain all the relevant detail. For each area, the inspector may make recommendations where policies and procedures can be improved or raise actions where policies and procedures do not meet the specific legal requirements.
14. These actions and recommendations must be carried forward into the letter to the provider so that they are clear about what they must do to improve.

Staff files held centrally

15. A full audit involves checking a sample of staff files where the provider has an agreement with Ofsted to hold these off site and they are held centrally. Inspectors should look at a random sample of one in 10 files or a minimum of 10, whichever is greater. The purpose of this check is to ensure that the organisation has robust systems in place to ensure that adults looking after children, or having unsupervised access to them, are suitable to do so. This contributes to whether the provider meets the legal requirement:

Providers must ensure that adults looking after children, or having unsupervised access to them, are suitable to do so.

16. Inspectors should ask for a list of staff employed to care for the children or who have unsupervised access to the children. They should select the appropriate number of staff files and ask for those files to be made available for scrutiny. These may include managers, as although Ofsted decides on the suitability of managers, the provider still has an important role to play in making the

employment decision for its managers. Inspectors should make sure the provider does not simply rely on the Ofsted decision.

17. The files should contain evidence of:
 - an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau disclosure, which must be handled in accordance with the Criminal Records Bureau's *Code of practice* and be compliant with Independent Safeguarding Authority arrangements when these are introduced
 - references, including one from the person's most recent employer, and systems to verify their authenticity
 - full employment history and a system to consider gaps in employment
 - qualifications
 - interview information
 - identity checks
 - a health declaration, including a declaration about the person's consumption of alcohol and other drugs and any mental illness.
18. The form at Annex 3 may be used to collate the evidence from staff files. To ensure confidentiality, inspectors should record staff members' information through a system that does not identify them, for example 'staff member A'.
19. Where the sample of staff files shows weaknesses in the recruitment and selection process, inspectors may need to sample further files to determine whether the weakness is systemic or a one-off omission.

Important note

20. The legislation requiring providers to make the suitability decision about staff (not including the person in charge/manager) came into force on 1 October 2005. Between 1 September 2001 and 1 October 2005, Ofsted made the suitability decision about all staff employed during that period. Provider files for these staff should contain a letter from Ofsted confirming the suitability of the person but may not contain verification of identity, copies of references, health declarations or evidence of Criminal Records Bureau disclosures. Where staff have been in place from before September 2001, inspectors may assume that these staff are suitable unless staff files reveal later information that suggests they are not. Ofsted agreed that all providers and their employees registered at the time of the transfer of regulation to Ofsted were suitable as their local authority had made the decision that they were.

A partial audit

21. A partial audit is the same as a full audit but does not contain a scrutiny of staff records as these are held by the individual settings. Inspectors will need to take

into account any centrally held policies relating to recruitment and suitability to come to a view about the legal requirement:

Providers must ensure that adults looking after children, or having unsupervised access to them, are suitable to do so.

Inspectors carrying out individual inspections will need to judge how well these are adhered to for individual staff members by checking for each person whether an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau disclosure is in place and sampling staff files for other information relating to suitability.

A Childcare Register audit

22. A Childcare Register audit involves inspectors checking that the provider has the relevant policies and procedures to meet the legal requirements relating to people, premises and provision. It may also include a check of staff files where these are held centrally, using the form at Annex 3. Inspectors should use the information in Annex 2 to carry out this audit. It should not include any recommendations or information relating to the quality of provision, as our role is only to check compliance with requirements for registration on this register.

Annex 1. The Early Years Register audit (full or partial)

Inspectors should refer to the *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage* for more details about the requirements.² Required policies are in bold; other policies and procedures that might provide evidence are non-bold.

Introduction

Outline the nature of the organisation – for example, how many settings and what type. Add here any information that you think may be helpful for an inspector when planning for inspections – for example, if the organisation uses a particular teaching method such as Steiner or Montessori.

The provider must take the necessary steps to safeguard and promote the welfare of children

Safeguarding children policy and procedures (to include the aspects listed on page 22 of the *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage*)

Parental information (to include the aspects listed on page 23 of the *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage*)

- Types of activities
- Daily routines
- Staffing
- Food and drinks provided
- Policies and procedures
- Complaints procedure
- Details of how to contact Ofsted
- Collection of children policy
- Lost and uncollected child policy

² The *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage* is available at: http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/node/151379?uc=force_uj.

Complaints procedure

Written record of complaints (kept for at least three years)

Risk assessment including outings (to include the aspects listed on page 24 of the *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage*)

A policy for equality of opportunities and for supporting children with learning difficulties and disabilities (to include the aspects listed on page 25 of the *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage*)

Admission policy (information gathered about health history, diet and dietary needs)

Developmental records for children

Outings policy

Arrival and departure procedures

Building security policy (may include door entry, visitors in settings, external and perimeter safety)

Inspector assessment to include whether requirements are met or not met, including any recommendations and actions

The provider must promote the good health of the children, take necessary steps to prevent the spread of infection, and take appropriate action when they are ill

Policy on administering medication to include parental written consent, the storage of medication and the system for recording its administration

Illness and infectious diseases procedure covering the procedures for excluding children who are ill or infectious and the protocol for contacting parents or carers if a child becomes ill or receives minor injuries in the provider's care

Record of accidents (this is a legal requirement – the head office audit may reveal a corporate template for doing this. Where it does it should include how parents are informed and that they sign to confirm they have been notified about accidents and incidents)

General hygiene policy (including hand washing, cleaning routines and sanitation)

Policy for caring for children under two years old (including preparation and storage of food, bottles and equipment)

Safeguarding policy (a requirement under the welfare requirement for safeguarding but can contribute evidence here)

First aid policy (including procedures for trips and outings)

No smoking policy

Pets policy

Food, drink and nutrition policy

Inspector assessment to include whether requirements are met or not met, including any recommendations and actions

Children's behaviour must be managed effectively and in a manner appropriate for their stage of development and particular individual needs

Behaviour management policy

Recording system for where physical intervention is used to manage a child's behaviour

Inspector assessment to include whether requirements are met or not met, including any recommendations and actions

Providers must ensure that adults looking after children, or having unsupervised access to them, are suitable to do so

Where staff records are kept at head office and a full audit is carried out, a record of Criminal Records Bureau disclosures including the unique reference number of Criminal Records Bureau disclosures and the date on which they were obtained

The agreement with Ofsted to keep staff records at a central location off site

Staff recruitment policies and procedures

Alcohol/substance abuse policy

Notifications to Ofsted policy/procedures

Visitor policy

Inspector assessment to include whether requirements are met or not met, including any recommendations and actions

Adults looking after children must have appropriate qualifications, training, skills and knowledge

Where a provider has sought agreement to hold staff files at a central location, a random sample of staff files to check qualifications and training plans

Training and development programmes

Induction, supervision, appraisal and training policies

Qualifications audit

Inspector assessment to include whether requirements are met or not met, including any recommendations and actions

Staffing arrangements must be organised to ensure safety and to meet the needs of the children

Caring for children under two policy (including play provision and protected areas)

Staff deployment procedures

Policy for contingency arrangements

Supervision arrangements

Overnight care policy

Inspector assessment to include whether requirements are met or not met, including any recommendations and actions

Outdoor and indoor spaces, furniture, equipment and toys, must be safe and suitable for their purpose

Risk assessment to include a record of aspects checked, when and by whom

Public liability insurance

Health and safety policy

Fire and emergency evacuation, to include checking of fire detection and control equipment

Safe caring practice policy

Maintenance of resources and equipment policy

Outdoor play policy

Inspector assessment to include whether requirements are met or not met, including any recommendations and actions

Providers must plan and organise their systems to ensure that every child receives an enjoyable and challenging learning and development experience that is tailored to meet their individual needs

Equality of opportunity policy

Observation, planning and assessment policy and/or templates for use

Key person policy

Gifted child policy

Special educational needs policy

Inspector assessment to include whether requirements are met or not met, including any recommendations and actions

Providers must maintain records, policies and procedures required for the safe and efficient management of the settings and to meet the needs of the children

Records on individual children (to include the aspects listed on page 38 of the *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage*)

Admission policy

Copies of certificates of registration

Staff records

Registers

Inspector assessment to include whether requirements are met or not met, including any recommendations and actions

Annex 2. Childcare Register audit

Inspectors should use the factsheet: *Requirements for the Childcare Register: childcare providers on non-domestic or domestic premise*. Required policies are in bold; other policies and procedures that might provide evidence are non-bold.

Welfare of the children being cared for

Fire and emergency evacuation policy

Lost/missing and uncollected children policies

First aid policy

Staff deployment policy

Staff records

Behaviour management policy

No smoking policy

Alcohol and substance misuse policy

<p>Inspector assessment of whether the requirements are met or not met, including any actions for compliance</p>

Arrangements for safeguarding children and the suitability of persons to care for or be in regular contact with children

Safeguarding policy (a written statement of the procedures to be followed to safeguard children)

Where staff records are kept at head office, a record of Criminal Records Bureau disclosures including the unique reference number of Criminal Records Bureau disclosures and the date on which they were obtained

Child protection policy

Inspector assessment of whether the requirements are met or not met, including any actions for compliance

Qualifications and training

Where a provider has sought agreement to hold staff files at a central location, a random sample of staff files to check qualifications and training plans

Training and development programmes

Induction, supervision, appraisal and training policies

Qualifications audit

Inspector assessment of whether the requirements are met or not met, including any actions for compliance

Suitability and safety of premises and equipment

Risk assessments (at least once a year)

Maintenance records

Standard agreement forms for parents

Building security policy

Inspector assessment of whether the requirements are met or not met, including any actions for compliance

How the childcare provision is organised

Contingency arrangements

Behaviour management policy

Equality and diversity policy

Special educational needs policy

Inclusion policy

Admissions policy

<p>Inspector assessment of whether the requirements are met or not met, including any actions for compliance</p>

Records to be kept and documentation including procedures for dealing with complaints

Complaints policy (a written statement of procedures to be followed in relation to complaints)

Complaints record/log

Summary of complaints within last 12 months

Accident records

Medication records

Children's records

Staff records

Public liability insurance

Notifications to Ofsted policy

Retention of documents and records policy

Copies of certificates of registration

Inspector assessment of whether the requirements are met or not met, including any actions for compliance

Providing information to parents

Information for parents (handbook or leaflets), including the requirements in regulations

Prospectus

Setting guide

Admissions policy

Inspector assessment of whether the requirements are met or not met, including any actions for compliance

Annex 3. Staff records template

Organisation:

Date:

Inspector name:

Staff member identified by number or initials	Criminal Records Bureau enhanced disclosure number	Date obtained for enhanced Criminal Records Bureau disclosure	Two refs including most recent employer and system to validate	Identification – photo or combination of other	Health declaration	Employment history and system to check gaps in employment	Job description and interview notes	Qualification if appropriate

Comments: