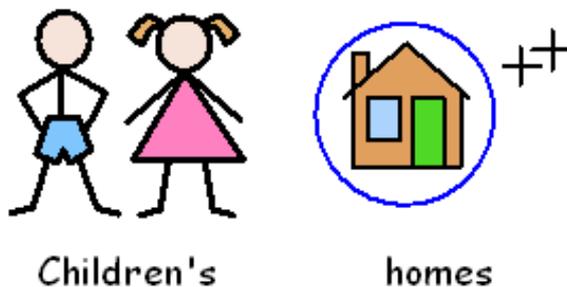


# Inspections of children's homes

Framework for inspection

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This document sets out the framework and guidance for the inspections of children's homes. It should be read alongside the evaluation schedule for the inspection of children's homes.



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**361**

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## Introduction

1. This document sets out the framework for Ofsted's inspections of children's homes. The evaluation schedule and the judgements made on inspection are underpinned by the regulations and the national minimum standards and are intended to test compliance and support improvement. Inspectors will evaluate the outcomes for children and young people. The programme of inspections will be carried out by suitably experienced inspectors from Ofsted.
2. The framework for the inspection of children's homes shows how the principles and processes underlying all Ofsted inspections are applied; sets out the statutory basis for inspection; and summarises the main features of the inspection process.<sup>1</sup> Supplementary guidance about how this framework will be applied to the inspection of secure children's homes will be published before 1 April 2011.
3. More detailed guidance is available on Ofsted's website in *The evaluation schedule for the inspection of children's homes* and *Conducting inspections of children's homes*.<sup>2</sup>
4. Ofsted's general principles of inspection and regulation are to:
  - support and promote improvement
  - be proportionate
  - focus on the needs of service users
  - focus on the needs of providers
  - be transparent and consistent
  - be accountable
  - demonstrate value for money.
5. This framework and guidance remain subject to periodic review.

## Legal basis for inspection

6. The powers to regulate and inspect children's social care services including children's homes transferred to Ofsted under section 148 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. The Education and Inspections Act requires Ofsted to carry out its work in ways which encourage the services it inspects and regulates to:
  - improve

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<sup>1</sup> *Inspections of children's homes – Framework for inspection* (100195), Ofsted, January 2011; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/100195](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/100195).

<sup>2</sup> *The evaluation schedule for the inspection of children's homes* (100193), Ofsted, January 2011; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/100193](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/100193).

- be user-focused
  - be efficient and effective in the use of resources.
7. The legal basis for the regulation of children’s homes is set out in the Care Standards Act 2000 (the Act) and regulations made under section 22 of the Act.<sup>3</sup> The Act sets out a definition of a children’s home and Ofsted’s powers to register, inspect and, where necessary, enforce compliance with the Act and relevant regulations.
8. In inspecting children’s homes, Ofsted will give consideration to:
- the Care Standards Act 2000
  - the relevant regulations
  - the national minimum standards for children’s homes
  - Department for Education statutory guidance
  - knowledge and understanding gained from previous inspections.

## Frequency of inspection

9. The frequency of inspection is set out in regulations.<sup>4</sup> All registered children’s homes will have two inspections a year (between 1 April and 31 March, the ‘inspection period’). Newly registered homes which register between 1 April and 30 September will receive at least one inspection between 1 October and 31 March. Newly registered homes which register between 1 October and 31 March will receive their first inspection between 1 April and 30 September of the following inspection period.
10. The timing of any inspection will be influenced by an assessment of:
- the outcomes of previous inspections
  - any current complaints or enforcement action
  - notifications received from the home
  - other relevant information received by Ofsted.
  - where a children’s home has been judged inadequate, the home will be re-inspected within three to six months.

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<sup>3</sup> *The Care Standards Act 2000*; [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/14/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/14/contents).

<sup>4</sup> Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Education, Children’s Services and Skills (Fees and Frequency of Inspections) (Children’s Homes etc) (Amendment) Regulations SI 2007/694, as amended

## Types of inspection

11. The following types of inspection will be carried out by Ofsted in children's homes:
  - a **full inspection**: will be carried out at least once annually. This inspection will inspect against the full evaluation schedule and will result in a set of graded judgements
  - an **interim inspection**: will focus on progress in improving quality of care and outcomes for children and young people since the most recent full inspection. The judgement will be made on a three-point scale: good progress; satisfactory progress; or inadequate progress.
12. Within each inspection period, every children's home will have two inspections. At least one of these will be a full inspection.
13. There are also other more specific inspections related to particular children's homes as outlined below.

Where the children's home provides education we conduct:

- a **single-event full inspection**. These will be carried out at least once every three years in children's homes that provide education. These are inspections of both social care and education provision.

Where the children's home is certified as a refuge we conduct:

- a **licence as a refuge inspection**. In addition to the full inspection, inspectors advise the Secretary of State as to whether the home should be, or continue to be licensed as, a refuge. This will be carried out at least once every three years.

If there is an incident, complaint or concerns we conduct:

- a **monitoring inspection**.: These will take place if there has been an incident or complaint that becomes a compliance investigation enquiry (CIE) case. They may be undertaken at the same time as a statutory inspection. Monitoring visits could also be carried out to review any building work, to ensure that the design and layout remains suitable for the purposes of achieving the aims and objectives set out in the home's statement of purpose; or where we wish to gather information on a particular aspect of care or service provision.

To support our survey work we conduct:

- **survey inspections**. These are inspections to gather evidence on a particular theme, issue or aspect of best practice which Ofsted is examining with the intention of publishing a report on the findings. These could be conducted as part of either a full or interim inspection or separately as part

of Ofsted's programme of surveys. We will not conduct a thematic inspection at the same time as a monitoring inspection.

## Notice given for inspection

14. All inspections will be unannounced except survey inspections.

## Inspectors

15. Suitably experienced social care inspectors inspect children's homes. Inspections of children's homes are normally undertaken by a single inspector. Where the children's home provides education, or is also registered with the DfE as a school, the educational provision is inspected by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI), Education at the same time as a full inspection.

## Full inspections

### Evaluation schedule for full inspections

16. The evaluation schedule is set out in a separate document which outlines the judgements which inspectors will make on a full and an interim inspection. The schedules also outline the grade descriptors that inspectors will use in arriving at their judgements. The inspector will gather evidence across the evaluation schedule.
17. For a full inspection, the inspector will normally be on site for up to two days.
18. The summary evaluation schedule for the full inspection is set out below. Inspectors will make judgements on:
  - overall effectiveness including areas for development
  - outcomes for children and young people
  - quality of care
  - safeguarding children and young people
  - leadership and management
  - equality and diversity.
19. Equality and diversity is a critical aspect across the evaluation schedule and will be reported on throughout the inspection report and taken into account across all judgement areas. Given the importance of this aspect of practice, inspectors will make a summary equality and diversity judgement.

### Making judgements at full inspections

20. Inspectors are required to weigh up the balance of evidence in a particular area and to consider it against the descriptors for outstanding, good, satisfactory or

inadequate before making a judgement. Examples of practice may be used to support more than one judgement. Judgements are made on a carefully balanced consideration of the impact on children and young people and not on a formulaic approach. The descriptors are hierarchical; a good service should also meet the descriptors for a satisfactory service and so on.

21. Children’s homes are expected to meet statutory requirements, in particular those in the regulations, and to take account of the national minimum standards and statutory guidance. However, failure to meet all the requirements in full will not necessarily result in a judgement of inadequate. The seriousness of the failure and its potential impact on outcomes for children and young people is considered carefully to determine how it should impact on the overall judgement. Inspectors’ professional judgement is used to weigh the impact of any breach against other aspects of the service.

### Grading full inspection findings

22. Inspectors will make judgements against the evaluation schedules using a four-point scale.

Outstanding	A service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements
Good	A service that exceeds minimum requirements
Satisfactory	A service that meets only minimum requirements
Inadequate	A service that does not meet minimum requirements

### The approach following an inadequate overall judgement

23. An overall effectiveness judgement of inadequate is made where there are failures to comply with requirements and, as a result, the outcomes for children and young people looked after are inadequate or their welfare is not safeguarded.
24. In all cases where a children’s home is judged inadequate, the inspector will set requirements so that the registered person/s meet the requirements of the Care Standards Act 2000 and the Children’s Homes Regulations 2001.<sup>5</sup> They may also make recommendations to help the registered person/s to improve the quality and standards of care further. Recommendations should always relate to particular national minimum standards.

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<sup>5</sup> See note 3 and *The Children’s Homes Regulations 2001*; [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2001/3967/contents/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2001/3967/contents/made).

25. On making a judgement of inadequate, the inspector must consult with the Compliance, Investigation and Enforcement team and instigate a case review where:
  - there is evidence of any immediate risk to children and young people, breach of regulations which constitutes an offence, or breach of any conditions placed on the registration or
  - the last inspection resulted in a judgement of inadequate overall effectiveness.
  
26. The inspector should also consider consultation with the CIE team where there is any history of:
  - previous inadequate inspection judgements within the past two years
  - complaints against the children's home which have not been dealt with in a satisfactory way
  - failures to comply with regulations and/or National Minimum Standards which have not been dealt with in a satisfactory way
  - failures to take satisfactory action to meet requirements/actions and recommendations which call into question the suitability of the registered person and registered manager.
  
27. The purpose of the case review is to consider whether any enforcement action should be taken. The Compliance, Investigation and Enforcement handbook has more information about the criteria for instigating a case review, the enforcement options available, and the arrangements for following up enforcement activity.<sup>6</sup>
  
28. In all instances of inadequate provision, the next inspection must take place within three to six months. It will take place sooner if any further significant concerns arise during this period or if earlier inspections necessary to meet statutory requirements.
  
29. Where a judgement of inadequate progress is made at an interim inspection, the inspector should consult with the Compliance, Investigation and Enforcement team and instigate a case review where the criteria in paragraph 25 are met.

## Reporting findings at full inspections

30. A single report will follow each full inspection.
31. The report will set out the inspection findings using text and grades, organised under the headings below.

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<sup>6</sup> *The CIE handbook*, Ofsted, 2010; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/ciehandbook](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/ciehandbook).

## Report contents

<b>About this inspection</b>	Information about the legal basis for the inspection
<b>Service information</b>	Brief contextual information about the service
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Grade
<b>Areas for improvement</b>	No grade
<b>Outcomes for children and young people</b>	Grade
<b>Quality of care</b>	Grade
<b>Safeguarding children and young people</b>	Grade
<b>Leadership and management</b>	Grade
<b>Equality and diversity</b>	Grade

32. The draft full inspection report will be sent, within 10 working days of the end of the inspection, to the registered provider, for a factual accuracy check.
33. The registered provider or representatives must return the draft full inspection report with any comments on factual accuracy within five working days. The final report will be published on the Ofsted website within 20 working days of the end of the inspection (irrespective of appeals or complaints).

## Interim inspections

### Making judgements at the interim inspection

34. All children's homes will have one interim inspection per year. This inspection will focus on progress in improving quality of care and outcomes for children and young people since the most recent full inspection. This will include consideration of progress made in addressing any requirements or recommendations made at the previous inspection. The judgement will be made on a three-point scale: good progress; satisfactory progress; or inadequate progress.
35. For an interim inspection, the inspectors will normally be on site for one day.

## Grading interim inspection findings

36. Inspectors will make their judgements using a three-point scale.

<b>Good progress</b>	The children's home has demonstrated continued improvement in quality of care and outcomes for children and young people and where appropriate has addressed all requirements and the large majority of recommendations that were raised at the previous inspection.
<b>Satisfactory progress</b>	The children's home has maintained quality of care and outcomes for children and young people and where appropriate has addressed all requirements and the majority of recommendations that were raised at the previous inspection.
<b>Inadequate progress</b>	The children's home has failed to address one or more requirements and/or has not met the majority of recommendations and/or the quality of care and outcomes for children and young people have declined since the last full inspection.

## Reporting findings at interim inspections

37. A single report will follow each interim inspection.

38. The report will set out the inspection findings using text and a grade, organised under the headings below.

## Report contents

<b>About this inspection</b>	Information about the legal basis for the inspection
<b>Service information</b>	Brief contextual information about the service
<b>Overall progress</b>	Grade
<b>Areas for improvement</b>	No grade

39. The draft interim report will be sent, within 10 working days of the end of the inspection, to the registered provider, for a factual accuracy check.

40. The registered provider or representatives must return the draft interim report with any comments on factual accuracy within five working days. The final report will be published on the Ofsted website within 20 days of the end of the inspection (irrespective of appeals or complaints).

## Inspection activity at full and interim inspections

41. Inspectors will undertake activities that focus on evaluating the outcomes for children and young people and the quality and impact of services in helping to improve outcomes.
42. In preparation for inspection, inspectors will look at the information that Ofsted already holds about the service which includes:
  - previous inspection reports
  - the home's statement of purpose
  - concerns and complaints received
  - notifications of significant events received
  - Regulation 33 reports received
  - quality assurance reports received under Regulation 34 (including monitoring by the registered person of any incident when a child accommodated in the home goes missing)
  - any changes to registration, including change of manager
  - any current or recent enforcement activity.
43. In addition, on arrival on site at a full inspection, inspectors will request specific information from the registered manager/ person in charge, to inform the inspection (see annex A).
44. Inspection activities will include:
  - listening and talking to children and young people
  - observing staff interactions with children and young people
  - observation of key activities such as handovers of information between staff
  - gathering views from partners and stakeholders such as parents, social workers and teachers
  - case file reading
  - examination of records
  - inspection of premises, facilities and health and safety arrangements
  - discussions with managers and staff.

The inspection will specifically focus on gathering evidence against the evaluation schedule. The detail of activities undertaken and discussions held may vary depending on the lines of enquiry for each individual inspection.

## User and partner views and surveys

45. In this context, users are the children and young people who are supported by the home or setting, and their parents or carers.
46. Inspectors will take account of the extent to which service providers have sought and acted on the views of children, young people and parents or carers in reviewing and improving services and outcomes. They will also consider the views of those users and partners they speak to during on-site evidence gathering.
47. For each inspection, surveys of children will be carried out at points in time across the inspection year so that inspectors can access recent experiences from children and young people looked after at the home or setting.

## Communication and feedback

48. Inspectors will provide regular opportunities for dialogue and feedback during the inspection. Oral feedback about draft findings, including strengths and weaknesses in practice, will be given to the registered manager/person in charge at the end of the inspection. Requirements to be set and recommendations to be made will be clearly stated.

## Confidentiality

49. Ofsted will take all appropriate steps to ensure that information provided to inspectors remains confidential, as required by statute. However, evidence gathered during inspections may be subject to disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, although the identity of named individuals will not be disclosed. Where Ofsted considers that any information provided by children indicates the likelihood of harm, the necessary information will be passed to the local authority children's services for action.

## Quality assurance

50. Quality assurance is the action taken to ensure that an inspection is of the quality needed and expected by users, providers and Ofsted itself. We will ensure inspectors are suitably experienced in the areas they are inspecting and ensure quality assurance managers are suitably experienced and skilled to undertake this aspect of work. The inspector has responsibility for ensuring all evidence gathered is robust, reliable and secure.
51. To ensure national consistency, some inspections will be visited by an inspector from Ofsted to support the quality assurance process. During these visits, the visiting inspector will speak to the inspector, managers and other staff, and where possible users. The inspector will always seek views from the staff at the children's home on the conduct of the inspection and sample the way evidence is being gathered and used.

52. Ofsted will ask the manager of the children's home to complete a short evaluation form following each inspection, which will be used to improve the quality of inspections.
53. All inspection reports will be subject to quality assurance procedures.

## **Conduct during the inspection**

54. Inspectors must uphold the highest professional standards in their work, and ensure that everyone they encounter during inspections is treated fairly and with respect. The code of conduct requires inspectors to:
  - evaluate objectively, be impartial and inspect without fear or favour
  - evaluate provision in line with frameworks, national standards or requirements
  - base all evaluations on clear and robust evidence
  - have no connection with the provider which could undermine their objectivity
  - report honestly and clearly, ensuring that judgements are fair and reliable
  - carry out their work with integrity, treating all those they meet with courtesy, respect and sensitivity
  - endeavour to minimise the stress on those involved in the inspection
  - act in the best interests and well-being of service users
  - maintain purposeful and productive dialogue with those being inspected, and communicate judgements clearly and frankly
  - respect the confidentiality of information, particularly about individuals and their work
  - respond appropriately to reasonable requests
  - take prompt and appropriate action on any safeguarding or health and safety issues.

## **Expectations of providers**

55. In order that inspection and regulation are productive and beneficial, it is important that inspectors and providers establish and maintain a professional working environment based on courtesy and professional behaviour. Inspectors are expected to uphold the code of conduct but Ofsted also expects providers to:
  - be courteous and professional
  - apply their own codes of conduct in their dealings with inspectors
  - enable inspectors to conduct their visit in an open and honest way

- enable inspectors to evaluate the provision objectively against the standards/framework
- provide evidence that will enable the inspector to report honestly, fairly and reliably about their provision
- work with inspectors to minimise disruption, stress and bureaucracy
- ensure the health and safety of inspectors while on their premises
- maintain a purposeful dialogue with the inspector or the inspection team
- draw any concerns about the inspection to the attention of inspectors promptly and in a suitable manner
- respect that inspectors will need to observe practice and talk to staff and users without the presence of a manager or registered person.

## Complaints

56. The great majority of our work is carried out smoothly and without incident. If concerns do arise during an inspection, they should be raised with the lead inspector immediately so that they can be resolved while the inspection is taking place.
57. Normally, a complaint can be made at any stage during an inspection or up to 30 calendar days from the date of publication of any report or letter. Lodging a complaint will not normally delay publication of the report.
58. All complaints will be initially assessed by a designated Ofsted representative and early contact will be made in order to resolve any complaints without delay. Where this is not possible, complaints will be investigated in accordance with Ofsted's published complaints procedure. The complaints procedure, which sets out how providers or users can complain about their inspection and what will happen to their complaint, is available at:  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/070080](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/070080).
59. Complaints should be made in writing (including by email to [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)) to:  
  
Sue Aldridge  
Principal Officer, Complaints  
Ofsted National Business Unit  
Royal Exchange Buildings  
St Ann's Square  
Manchester  
M2 7LA.

## Further information

60. We hope that you find this document useful in helping you prepare for your inspection. If you have any queries about your inspection, please discuss them with your lead inspector when they contact you.
  
61. If you have any other general queries about the inspections of children's homes, please contact Lisa Pascoe on 0300 123 1231 or [socialcare@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:socialcare@ofsted.gov.uk).

## Annex A. Request for information at a full inspection

Name of children's home:

Name of person completing this information:

Signature of person completing the form:

Date:

	Information required from last inspection	Number
1	Number of complaints from children and state number of children involved	
2	Number of complaints from others and state number of children involved	
3	How many complaints were resolved at the informal stage	
4	Number of allegations made against staff and state number of children involved	
5	Number of child protection referrals to children's social care teams	
6	Number of times when children went missing and state number of children involved	
7	Number of incidents of restraint	
8	Number of children involved in these incidents	
9	Number of staff who have left since the last inspection	
10	Number of new staff since last inspection	
11	Number of agency staff employed	
12	Number of staff at the children's home have a first aid qualification	
13	Number of sanctions given since the last inspection	
	<b>Short breaks only</b>	
14	Number of children receiving a service at the time of inspection	
	<b>Dates of checks</b>	
15	Date of gas installations check	
16	Date of electrical installations check	
17	Date of Health and safety risk assessment	
18	Date of last health and safety check of the premises	
19	Date of fire risk assessment	
20	Date of protocol with the police regarding missing children	
Please list staff training since the last inspection:		