

The framework for children's centre inspection

The framework for children's centre inspection shows how the general principles and processes are applied to these inspections in England. It sets out the statutory basis for inspection and summarises the main features of children's centre inspections from September 2011.

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Introduction

What is the purpose of children's centre inspection?

1. The inspection of a children's centre provides an independent external evaluation of its effectiveness and what it should do to improve, based upon a range of evidence including that from partner organisations, parents and prospective parents who use the centre and its services and first-hand observation.
2. Ofsted's children's centre inspection reports give a written summary of outcomes for young children¹ and their families, the quality of a centre's provision (especially the impact of integrated services on children and their families), the effectiveness of leadership and management and the centre's capacity to improve.
3. Ofsted's inspections of children's centres:
 - keep the Secretary of State for Education informed about the work of children's centres and their impact on improving outcomes for young children and their families
 - keep local authorities, as the responsible authorities, informed about the quality of their children's centres
 - provide parents and prospective parents in the community in which the centre is located with information about the centre. This informs their choices and preferences about the range and quality of provision of integrated services for young children and families and the effectiveness of the services offered by the children's centre that they and their children attend or may attend in the future.
4. The inspection of a children's centre promotes improvement by:
 - setting expectations: the criteria and descriptors set out in the inspection framework and guidance² illustrate the standards of performance and effectiveness expected of centres
 - increasing the children's centre's capacity for improvement by identifying areas where further development is needed
 - recommending priorities for future action by the local authority to improve the children's centre and checking subsequent progress at the next inspection

¹ Young children are those from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday.

² The judgements and grade descriptors are set out in the *Inspection of children's centres: evaluation schedule and grade descriptors* available at www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/100005.

- complementing the performance management carried out by local authorities by an external and independent view of the centre's performance.

The framework document

5. This framework document sets out the general principles and processes which underpin the inspections of children's centres in England. It sets out the statutory basis for inspection and summarises the main features of inspection. It has three sections:
 - **Part A: The children's centre inspection system.** This section sets out the principles and legal framework for inspection and provides information about the timing and frequency of inspections
 - **Part B: The focus of children's centre inspections.** This section summarises the evaluation schedule – the judgements that inspectors make
 - **Part C: The process of inspection.** This section explains how inspections are carried out.
6. More detailed guidance is available on our website (www.ofsted.gov.uk) in *Inspections of children's centres: Evaluation schedule and grade descriptors*. From time to time, further guidance is published to supplement or update this document.

Part A: The children's centre inspection system

The legal requirements for the inspection of children's centres

7. The Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 inserts new sections into the Childcare Act 2006. Part 5A establishes children's centres as a legal entity known as Sure Start Children's Centres. Part 3A gives Ofsted a duty to inspect each children's centre at prescribed intervals, and to provide a copy of the report to the local authority as the responsible authority for children's centres. Local authorities must produce a written statement or action plan in relation to the findings of the inspection.
8. Inspections must address the centre's contribution to:
 - facilitating access to early childhood services by parents, prospective parents and young children
 - maximising the benefit of those services to parents, prospective parents and young children
 - improving the well-being of young children.
9. Regulations³ that apply from 30 April 2010 set out the inspection interval. They also require the report to comment on the quality of leadership and management including whether:
 - the financial resources made available to the centre are managed effectively
 - young children, parents and prospective parents in the area served by the children's centre, who would otherwise be unlikely to take advantage of the early childhood services offered through the centre, are identified and encouraged to take advantage of those services
 - the needs of young children, parents and prospective parents who attend, or are likely to attend, the children's centre are identified, and early childhood services are delivered to meet those needs
 - appropriate policies, procedures and practices for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of young children who attend, or are likely to attend, the children's centre are adopted and implemented.
10. Statutory guidance⁴ sets out local authorities' roles in relation to the distribution of inspection reports and the timing and availability of the action plan each authority must produce.

³ The Children's Centres (Inspections) Regulations 2010, OPSI, 2010; www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2010/uksi_20101173_en_1.

⁴ *Sure Start Children's Centres Statutory Guidance*. DCSF (now the DfE), 2010;

<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DFE-00020-2011>.

11. The Education and Inspections Act 2006 requires Ofsted to carry out its work in ways which encourage the services it inspects and regulates to:
 - improve
 - be user-focused
 - be efficient and effective in the use of resources.
12. Ofsted inspects registered early years and childcare provision under sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006. Where the provision is managed by the children's centre, we intend to carry out the inspection of registered early years and childcare at the same time as the children's centre inspection. Where a children's centre has a formal agreement with registered provision that is managed by a private, voluntary or independent provider; or that provision is on the same site as a children's centre, we will try to carry out the inspections of the children's centre and registered provision at the same time but will produce a separate inspection report for each.
13. Schools are inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. Where a children's centre is managed by a school or is on the same site as a school, we will carry out the inspections at the same time wherever it can. In each case the school and the children's centre will receive separate reports.

The principles of children's centre inspection

Children's centre inspections will ensure that:

- the interests of children, parents and prospective parents are foremost
- the findings of inspection contribute to improvement
- full account is taken of Ofsted's policies on safeguarding, equality and diversity
- Ofsted's statutory duties are carried out.

The timing of a children's centre inspection

14. From April 2010, Ofsted must carry out at least one inspection of each children's centre in England by the end of August 2015 and thereafter on or before the fifth anniversary of the previous inspection.⁵
15. Ofsted has agreed with the Department for Education that it will not normally inspect any centre until it has been established for a period of three years; that is three years from the date of designation. This is to recognise the fact that a number of centres were designated before they began providing the full range

⁵ The Children's Centres (Inspections) Regulations 2010, OPSI, 2010; www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2010/uksi_20101173_en_1.

of services. Where centres are part of a cluster or hub and spoke system or where they share management, Ofsted may inspect them before the three-year interval to allow for inspection of the group of centres together.

16. Ofsted will inspect centres more frequently where:
 - they are judged to be inadequate
 - safeguarding and/or welfare concerns arising from information from parents or an inspection of a school or early years registered provision within or linked to a centre indicate that the centre should be inspected as a matter of priority.⁶
17. Children's centres are year-round provision and inspections can take place at any point during the year. Where it is possible to carry out inspections at the same time as inspections of schools or registered early years or childcare then inspections will take place at times when all of the provision is open.
18. In exceptional circumstances Ofsted may cancel or defer an inspection that has been scheduled.⁷ Normally, however, if the centre is operating and providing services, an inspection goes ahead even if, for example, the head of centre is out of centre or building work is taking place.

The relationship between inspection and performance monitoring by the local authority

19. Centres must review their performance and report on their success to the relevant local authority. Inspection does not replace the annual monitoring of centres' performance by local authorities. It does provide local authorities with an independent external view of each of its centres, and requires local authorities through the production of an action plan to improve the quality of its centres.
20. Ofsted encourages centres to evaluate their performance in line with the centre's own review process, including the system for performance monitoring by the local authority. Local authorities may prescribe the format in which they expect centres to report on their performance, including completion of a particular self-evaluation or performance monitoring form. Ofsted will accept any evaluation completed as part of this process as the basis of the centre's self-evaluation.

⁶ Ofsted has specific powers (under part 3 of the Childcare Act 2006 & section 11A-C of the Education Act 2005, as amended) to investigate certain complaints. Such complaints may be considered when deciding whether Ofsted should bring forward a early years/school's/children's centre inspection.

⁷ Ofsted's deferral policy is available at www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Forms-and-guidance/Browse-all-by/Other/General/Deferral-of-inspections-information-for-children-s-centres.

The relationship between self-evaluation and inspection

21. Self-evaluation provides the basis of the centre's planning for its performance, development and improvement. Inspection takes account of and contributes to a centre's self-evaluation.
22. Depending on their governance and management arrangements, centres may currently complete one or more written self-evaluations. Ofsted expects centres to evaluate their performance and provide written evidence they have done so. It will accept any written self-evaluation completed by a centre and does not expect them to produce more than one written document. It is important that centres do evaluate their performance but Ofsted is not prescriptive about how centres do this.
23. Ofsted has developed its own self-evaluation form that matches the judgements in the evaluation schedule for inspecting children's centres, and gives guidance on the evidence expected to support the judgements. Although centres may wish to use this as a tool to help them prepare for inspection, completion of the form is not mandatory and centres may choose to use different ways to evaluate what they do.
24. The self-evaluation is used by the lead inspector to plan the inspection. It is the basis for discussion with the children's centre's manager and senior team and, where possible, representatives from the local authority. Inspectors assess the accuracy of the centre's self-evaluation and, by doing so, contribute to its further improvement. The quality of self-evaluation is a good indicator of the calibre of the centre's leaders and managers and of the centre's capacity to improve.

Who inspects children's centres?

25. Children's centre inspections will be carried out by a lead inspector with knowledge of the wider range of services provided by children's centres, and an early years inspector. The lead inspector will be one of Her Majesty's Inspectors or an additional inspector. Additional inspectors are recruited, trained, assessed and employed directly, or contracted by, inspection service providers. These are independent commercial organisations contracted by Ofsted to provide inspection services, and they have responsibility for the administrative arrangements for inspections. Early years inspectors are employed or contracted by inspection service providers. Ofsted prescribes the qualifications and experience required by additional inspectors and early years inspectors, the initial and continuing training that they should receive, and the standards that they are required to meet.

Part B: The focus of children’s centre inspections

Inspection judgements

26. Inspectors make a number of inspection judgements when assessing the effectiveness of each children’s centre. These cover the broad range of a centre’s work, including the impact of a centre’s services in improving outcomes for users and the wider community, including outreach services; the quality of the centre’s provision; its leadership and management and capacity to improve, and also its overall effectiveness. Full details of the judgements and what inspectors look for are set out in the document *Inspection of children’s centres: evaluation schedule and grade descriptors*.⁸
27. All judgements are made using a four-point grading scale:
- grade 1: outstanding
 - grade 2: good
 - grade 3: satisfactory
 - grade 4: inadequate.
28. When making judgements inspectors weigh up the balance of evidence in a particular area and consider it against the grade descriptors set out in the evaluation schedule, taking into account the context of the particular centre being inspected. The judgements made are set out in the table below.

Overall effectiveness
The effectiveness of the children’s centre in meeting the needs of and improving outcomes for families
The centre’s capacity for sustained improvement
What does the centre need to do to improve further? Recommendations for further improvement

How good are outcomes for users?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them

⁸ *Inspection of children’s centres: evaluation schedule and grade descriptors* (100005), Ofsted, 2011
www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/100005.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and parents, including those from target groups, contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents, including those from target groups, are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment

<p>How good is the provision?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for families, including those in target groups
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups

<p>How effective are the leadership and management?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets, which secures improvement in outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The extent to which the centre supports and encourages families in the reach area to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision

The Early Years Foundation Stage and registered childcare

29. Some centres directly provide the Early Years Foundation Stage or childcare registered on the Early Years or Childcare Registers. Other centres work in partnership with schools or providers in the private, voluntary and independent sector to provide the Early Years Foundation Stage and/or registered childcare.
30. Judgements made about the Early Years Foundation Stage and compliance with the requirements of the Childcare Register will contribute to other judgements about the centre. In particular judgements will contribute to those for leadership and management and the outcome for enjoying and achieving.
31. There are more details of how Ofsted makes judgements about the Early Years Foundation Stage in *Using the Early Years Evaluation Schedule*⁹ for provision registered on the Early Years Register and in *The Evaluation Schedule for schools*¹⁰ where the Early Years Foundation Stage is provided by a school.
32. There are more details about how inspectors make a judgement as to whether the childcare meets the requirements of the Childcare Register in *Conducting Childcare Register Inspections*.¹¹

Part C: The process of inspection

Before the inspection

When are children's centres notified of their inspection?

33. Centres receive three working days' notice of an inspection. Either Ofsted or one of Ofsted's inspection service contractors informs the centre that it is to be inspected. Normally, lead inspectors make contact with the centre as soon as possible after notification (and always within 24 hours of the notification).
34. Ofsted has powers to inspect at any reasonable time and may arrange for an inspection of a centre to take place without notice where there are particular reasons, for example, connected to children's welfare.

⁹ *Using the early years evaluation schedule: guidance for inspectors of registered early years settings required to deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage* (080124), Ofsted, 2009;

www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/080124.

¹⁰ *Evaluation schedule of judgements for schools inspected under section five of the Education Act 2005, from September 2009* (090098), Ofsted, www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/090098.

¹¹ *Conducting Childcare Register inspections* (080174), Ofsted, 2010; www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/080174.

What information do inspectors use before the inspection?

35. Inspectors gain an understanding of the children's centre and the issues for the inspection before they start the inspection. Lead inspectors will normally do some of their preparation on site, especially where self-evaluation information is not available electronically. Lead inspectors begin by reading and analysing the centre's self-evaluation form and its performance monitoring data, taking full account of the centre's assessment of its own performance. This features strongly when the issues for inspection and plans for the deployment of the team are discussed with the centre. It does not limit the range of the inspectors' investigations should they have concerns about aspects of performance not raised by the centre.
36. The lead inspector will discuss with the centre leader the available evidence and the main issues to pursue during the on-site preparation and will finalise the inspection programme including the partners, managers and families that inspectors wish to talk with.
37. The lead inspector will consider evidence from:
 - any available data provided by the local authority and partner agencies broken down to locality or reach area level; this includes performance indicators identified as key for children's centres in their local authority performance monitoring form
 - any other relevant data such as participation rates and outcomes for the reach area of the centre
 - case study or life story evidence which demonstrates the impact of services on improving outcomes
 - any monitoring and evaluation of the services provided by the centre and its partners
 - any self-evaluation completed by the centre, including the self-evaluation of any school or registered early years provision linked to the centre; and the performance monitoring/self-evaluation produced by the centre for its annual challenge meeting with the local authority
 - inspections of the Early Years Foundation Stage of any early years setting provided directly or commissioned by the centre if carried out at the same time as the inspection of the children's centre or within the previous 12 months
 - information supplied by the local authority on their arrangements for children's centres.

How do lead inspectors contact the centre?

38. As soon as possible after notification and always within 24 hours of the centre being made aware that it is to be inspected, the lead inspector contacts the centre leader or, in the absence of the centre leader, the most senior member of staff that is available. Pre-inspection activities and telephone contact with the centre are intended to ensure that:
- good communication and effective working relationships are established with the centre
 - senior leaders, and staff including those from partner agencies, together with families using the centre are encouraged to engage with the inspection process so that they understand the judgements being made
 - the demands on the centre are kept to a minimum
 - pre-inspection evidence is analysed thoroughly and discussed
 - the issues for the inspection are identified and discussed
 - arrangements including the programme of inspection activities for the inspection are agreed.

How do inspectors seek the views of families and partner agencies about the centre's work before and during inspection?

39. Once informed that an inspection is to take place, centres are required to take reasonable steps to notify families using the centre and partner agencies. Centres should also notify the local authority. If a parent or prospective parent should ask to see an inspector, the team does all it can to accommodate such requests, within the constraints on their time. When parents, prospective parents, staff and partner agencies meet inspectors, they should be able to do so in private.
40. During the inspection, inspectors talk with families, including children, where appropriate. Inspectors aim to talk with parents including those holding representative responsibilities, for example as members of the centre's advisory board. These meetings are included in the inspection programme and may be in the form of one or more focus groups of parents or prospective parents. In addition, inspectors gather the views of families via other means, such as observing a range of activities and finding out from staff how they seek parents' views.
41. During the inspection, inspectors will interview front-line workers including representatives from across the partner agencies involved such as health visitors, colleagues from Jobcentre Plus, the person responsible for outreach work and the manager of any registered early years or childcare provision where applicable.

42. Lead inspectors also take account of any external views of the centre's performance. This includes the local authority's evaluation of the centre's performance against its targets. The responsible officer from the local authority will be able to meet with the inspectors should they wish to do so.

What happens during the inspection?

How many days do inspectors spend in the centre?

43. Inspections do not normally last longer than two days, but the number of inspectors and/or the number of days varies according to the size and nature of the centre and the services provided. This relates to the inspection of any linked school and/or registered early years or childcare provision at the same time as the children's centre.

How do inspectors use their time during the inspection?

44. The time allocated to on-site inspection is intended mainly for gathering first-hand evidence. It is not used for drafting the report. Lead inspectors ensure that:
- sufficient evidence is gathered so that judgements about the centre are secure and reliable
 - the main judgements about the centre are agreed by the inspection team
 - staff have opportunities for high-quality professional dialogue with inspectors
 - the centre leader and other senior leaders receive well-informed and helpful feedback about the overall effectiveness of the centre and the main findings of the inspection
 - the local authority is left with full and clear recommendations for improvement of the centre.
45. During the inspection, inspectors will spend time observing a range of activities taking place at the centre, in linked venues, in outreach sessions and in talking to families, other service providers/partners and other stakeholders. This will provide direct evidence for most aspects of the inspection judgements. It informs judgements about the outcomes for families, the effectiveness of provision, leadership and management and the centre's capacity for improvement. It is also a major focus for the inspectors when setting out their detailed recommendations for improvement.
46. While on site, inspectors may also 'track' potentially vulnerable children/families or particular target groups, such as Traveller families, children or parents with learning difficulties and disabilities, and looked after children. Inspectors give specific attention to: how the centre has identified these groups; how the centre has assessed their needs; the quality of services for different target

groups; and how services are improving outcomes for these groups. The particular groups to be tracked are identified in the pre-inspection briefing and/or through subsequent discussion with the centre and in response to any emerging issues, for example from discussions with front-line staff/other partners.

47. Other evidence gathered by inspectors includes interviews with: the centre's leadership and management, including any key partners; front-line staff including any key partners; parents; prospective parents; other users or service providers such as childminders; members of the advisory board; and if the local authority chooses to contribute directly, the local authority children's centre lead, as well as scrutiny of the centre's policies and procedures including, at every inspection, those for safeguarding.
48. Information held by the centre must be made freely available for inspectors, and the centre must cooperate in the inspectors' task of gathering evidence.

How is evidence recorded?

49. During the inspection, inspectors gather, analyse and record evidence and their judgements on evidence forms.
50. The evidence forms, together with any briefings, plans or instructions prepared by the lead inspector, contribute to the evidence base for the inspection. The lead inspector is responsible for compiling and assuring the quality of the evidence base.

How are judgements secured?

51. The lead inspector has the responsibility for ensuring that the inspection team corporately agrees judgements about the centre, and that these are supported convincingly by evidence. Judgements will be made based on the best fit to the grade descriptors in the evaluation schedule. Inspectors identify the strengths and weaknesses of the centre and what it must do to improve. Emerging findings are discussed with the centre leader and, where appropriate, senior staff, at regular intervals but as a minimum at the end of the first inspection day. The centre leader is given every opportunity to provide further evidence if they want to do so.
52. The overall judgements reflect all the evidence considered by the inspection team. Final judgements are made only when all first-hand evidence has been collected and considered. Final judgements represent the corporate view of the inspection team. They are subject to moderation prior to publication of the report.

How do the centre leader and senior staff engage in the inspection?

53. Inspection has the strongest impact on improvement when the centre leaders understand the evidence and findings that have led to the judgements. The lead inspector therefore ensures that the centre leader and senior staff:
- are kept up to date with how the inspection is proceeding
 - understand how the inspection team reaches its judgements
 - have opportunities to clarify how evidence is used to reach judgements
 - are given the opportunity to present additional evidence.
54. Centre leaders are invited to:
- give their views on the issues for inspection as part of the pre-inspection discussions
 - receive regular updates from the lead inspector
 - attend the inspection team meeting at the end of the inspection when final judgements are made
 - receive feedback at the end of each day of the inspection
 - discuss the inspectors' recommendations to ensure that these are understood.

What is the code of conduct for inspectors?

55. Inspectors are required to uphold the highest professional standards in their work and to ensure that everyone they encounter during inspections is treated fairly and with respect. These standards are assured through a code of conduct which is set out below.

Inspectors' code of conduct

Inspectors should:

- 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.

56. When inspectors meet families, staff, other service providers/partners and other stakeholders, every effort should be made to protect the origin of individuals' comments if they are used to pursue an issue further. However, there may be circumstances in which it is not possible to guarantee the anonymity of the interviewee. Additionally, inspectors have a duty to pass on disclosures which raise child protection or safeguarding issues and/or where serious misconduct or potential criminal activity is involved.

How should centre staff engage with inspectors?

57. To ensure that inspection is productive and beneficial, it is important that inspectors and centres establish and maintain an appropriate working relationship based on courtesy and professional behaviour. Inspectors are expected to uphold the code of conduct but Ofsted also expects centre staff to:
- 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 centre objectively against the 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 that the health and safety of inspectors is not prejudiced while they are 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
 - understand the need of inspectors to observe practice and talk to staff and users without the presence of a manager.

What feedback do inspectors give during the inspection?

58. Inspectors offer oral feedback to the centre leader and any staff the centre leader wishes to include, at the end of the first day. This feedback is to highlight any emerging key strengths and areas of weakness; and to identify aspects to follow up the next day. It is also an opportunity for the centre to present additional evidence to support their self-evaluation.

How is the quality of inspection assured?

59. All inspectors are responsible for the quality of their work. Lead inspectors ensure that inspections are carried out in accordance with the principles of inspection and the code of conduct. In addition, Ofsted monitors the quality of inspections through a range of formal processes. Some centres are visited by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors to assure the quality of the inspection. Their assessments are confidential to the inspectors concerned. In other cases, the inspection evidence base may be evaluated as part of quality assurance processes.
60. In exceptional circumstances, where an inspection report is judged by Ofsted to be seriously misleading, or an inspection is judged to be seriously flawed, the centre is notified. Ofsted may collect further evidence to conclude the inspection and may republish an amended report.
61. All centres are invited to take part in a post-inspection survey so that the views of the centre leader, centre staff, professionals who work in partnership with the centre and users are obtained and contribute to the development of inspection.

What happens after the inspection?

What feedback is provided to the centre?

62. Formal feedback is provided at the end of the inspection to the centre leader and any others the centre leader wishes to invite. The local authority responsible officer should be invited to this meeting, but the decision whether to attend is a matter for the local authority to decide. The judgements are discussed and any aspects that have been judged inadequate or outstanding (or where the judgement is different from that which the centre might have expected), are explained in the feedback.
63. Before leaving the centre, the lead inspector is required to ensure that the centre is clear:
 - about the grades awarded for each judgement required under the evaluation schedule
 - that the grades awarded may be subject to change
 - that the main points provided orally in the feedback will be referred to in the text of the report
 - about the recommendations for improvement
 - about the procedures leading to the publication of the report

- about the complaints procedure
- where relevant, about the implications of the centre being judged as inadequate.

What are the written outcomes of the inspection?

64. Following the inspection, the lead inspector writes a report about the main findings of the inspection. The findings should be consistent with those explained orally to the centre during the feedback. A summary for centre users is provided as an appendix to the report. The centre leader receives the report to comment on factual accuracy within ten days of the inspection.

How is the quality of inspection reports assured?

65. The lead inspector provides a first draft of the report to Ofsted's quality assurance team and, following editing, the team forwards the report to the centre for a factual check. One working day is allocated to the centre to comment on the draft, unless the centre receives an inadequate judgement, in which case five days are allowed for comments.

When is the report issued?

66. The report is published on our website (www.ofsted.gov.uk/reports) within 15 working days of the end of the inspection.
67. A copy of the children's centre report is sent to the local authority and to the centre leader.
68. In exceptional circumstances Ofsted may decide that the normal period for completion of the inspection report should be extended.

What must the local authority do when the inspection report is received?

69. The local authority may choose to send a copy of the inspection report to all relevant parties. There is no legal definition of relevant parties but statutory guidance suggests these may include partner agencies, members of the centre's advisory board and any other person who may have to take action as a result of the report.
70. The local authority, or another body appointed by the local authority, must prepare an action plan in response to the recommendations of the report no more than two months after the date the report was received.

How do children's centres complain about their inspection or inspection report?

71. Any concerns the centre has about the inspection should be raised with the lead inspector during the inspection and, where possible, resolved. Concerns may also be raised with a quality assurance inspector should one have been allocated to the inspection. If the concerns are not resolved by these means, or the person expressing the concern does not feel that due weight is being given to the concerns, or an independent view is sought, then the person raising the concern, or someone acting on his or her behalf, should contact the Ofsted helpline on 0300 123 1231.
72. Similarly, if the centre has any concerns about the inspection report these should be raised with the Ofsted helpline number as above.
73. If it has not been possible to resolve concerns raised then individuals or centres may decide to lodge a formal complaint. They must do this within three months of the inspection. The complaints procedures are available on our website, www.ofsted.gov.uk.