

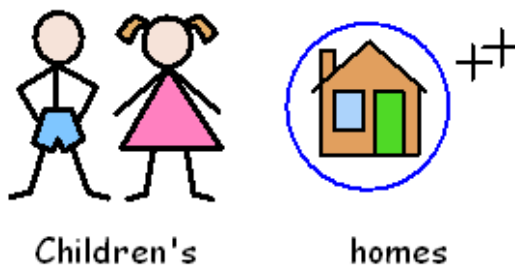
# Inspection of children's homes

Framework for inspection

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This document sets out the framework and guidance for the inspection of children's homes.

It should be read alongside the evaluation schedule for the inspection of children's homes.



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**Age group:** 0–18

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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. It sets out: how we apply the principles and processes of all our inspections; the statutory basis for inspection; and a summary of the main features of the inspection process.
2. 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.
3. The framework and the inspection judgements are underpinned by the regulations and the national minimum standards. The inspections are intended, not only to test compliance, but also to raise standards and drive improvement in the sector. This will require a greater focus on improving outcomes for children and young people and inspectors will evaluate how the service contributes to delivering these improved outcomes.
4. There is more detailed guidance in *Inspections of children's homes: Evaluation schedule and grade descriptors*<sup>1</sup> and in *Conducting inspections of children's homes*.<sup>2</sup>
5. This framework and guidance remain subject to periodic review.

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<sup>1</sup> *Inspections of children's homes: evaluation schedule and grade descriptors* (100193), Ofsted, 2012; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/100193](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/100193).

<sup>2</sup> *Conducting inspections of children's homes* (100194), Ofsted, 2012; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/100194](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/100194).

## 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.<sup>3</sup> It requires Ofsted to carry out its work in ways that encourage the services it inspects and regulates to:
  - improve
  - 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,<sup>4</sup> and regulations made under section 22 of the Act. It sets out Ofsted's powers to register, inspect and, where necessary, enforce compliance with the Act and relevant regulations. It also defines a children's home.
8. When inspecting children's homes, Ofsted gives consideration to knowledge and understanding gained from previous inspections, and:
  - the Care Standards Act 2000
  - the Children's Homes Regulations 2001<sup>5</sup>
  - *Children's homes: national minimum standards*<sup>6</sup>
  - *Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations volume 5: children's homes* (and other statutory guidance from the Department for Education).<sup>7</sup>

## Frequency of inspection

9. The frequency of inspections is set out in regulations.<sup>8</sup> All registered children's homes will have a minimum of two inspections in a year (between 1 April and 31 March – the inspection period).

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<sup>3</sup> The Education and Inspections Act 2006; <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/40/contents>.

<sup>4</sup> The Care Standards Act 2000; <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/14/contents>.

<sup>5</sup> The Children's Homes Regulations 2001; <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2001/3967/contents/made>.

<sup>6</sup> *Children's homes: national minimum standards*, DfE, 2011; <https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DFE-00030-2011>.

<sup>7</sup> *Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations volume 5: children's homes*, DfE, 2011; <https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DFE-00024-2011>.

<sup>8</sup> Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (Fees and Frequency of Inspections) (Children's Homes, etc.) (Amendment) Regulations S1 2007/694, as amended.

10. Newly registered children's homes that register between 1 April and 30 September will receive at least one inspection between 1 October and 31 March. Newly registered children's homes that register between 1 October and 31 March will receive their first inspection between 1 April and 30 September of the following inspection period.
11. 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 a children's home
  - other relevant information received by Ofsted.

## Types of inspection

12. The following types of inspection are carried out by Ofsted in children's homes.
  - A **full inspection** is carried out at least once annually. This inspection is conducted against the evaluation schedule and will result in a set of graded judgements. The inspector will normally be on site for up to two days.
  - An **interim inspection** focuses 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. The inspector will normally be on site for one day.
13. Within each inspection period, every children's home will have at least two inspections. At least one of these will be a full inspection.
14. Also, there are other more specific inspections related to particular children's homes.

Where the children's home provides education, we conduct **an inspection of their educational provision** once every three years. This will take place at the same time as a full inspection where it is sensible and practical to do so, but will always result in a separate report.

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

- a **monitoring inspection**. These take place at the same time as a statutory inspection, if there has been an incident or complaint that becomes a compliance investigation enquiry case. 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 children's 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 gather evidence on a particular theme, issue or aspect of best practice that Ofsted is examining with the intention of publishing a report on the findings. They 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

15. All inspections will be unannounced, except for survey inspections.

## Inspectors

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

## Full inspections

### Evaluation schedule for full inspections

17. The evaluation schedule is set out in a separate document. It outlines the judgements that inspectors make on a full and an interim inspection, and the grade descriptors that they use to arrive at their judgements.
18. Inspectors 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.
19. Equality and diversity is a critical aspect across the evaluation schedule, which inspectors will take into account across all judgement areas and report on throughout the inspection.

## Making judgements at full inspections

20. Inspectors must evaluate all the evidence in a particular area and consider it against the descriptors for outstanding, good, adequate or inadequate before making a judgement. Examples of practice may be used to support more than one judgement. Judgements are made on 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 an adequate service and so on.

Examples of practice may be used to support more than one judgement. Judgements are made on carefully balanced consideration of the impact on children and young people, and not on a formulaic approach.

21. Children’s homes must meet statutory requirements as set out in the regulations, and must take account of the national minimum standards and statutory guidance.

However, failure to meet all the statutory requirements in full does 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 use their professional judgement to assess the impact of any breach against other aspects of the service provided.

## Grading full inspection findings

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

<b>Outstanding</b>	a service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements
<b>Good</b>	a service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements
<b>Adequate</b>	a service that only meets minimum requirements
<b>Inadequate</b>	a service that does not meet minimum requirements

## The approach following an overall judgement of inadequate

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 are inadequate or their welfare is not safeguarded.



24. Where a children's home is judged inadequate, the inspector will set requirements to achieve compliance with the Care Standards Act 2000 and the Children's Homes Regulations 2001. The registered person/s must meet these requirements as set out in regulation.

Inspectors may also make recommendations to help the registered person/s to improve the quality and standards of care further. Recommendations always relate to particular national minimum standards or statutory guidance.

25. The inspector, in consultation with their team manager where necessary, is responsible for making the judgement of inadequate.
26. Any judgement of inadequate overall effectiveness at an inspection of a children's home will lead to an urgent CIE case review. There will also be an urgent case review where there is a judgement of inadequate progress at the interim inspection of a children's home and where the previous full inspection was judged no more than adequate for overall effectiveness.
27. The case review will consider whether statutory enforcement action is required in relation to the establishment or agency and, where there is a registered manager, the registered manager. The case review will consider all the enforcement options available. The Compliance, Investigation and Enforcement handbook<sup>9</sup> has detailed information about the enforcement options available, and the arrangements for following up enforcement activity.
28. The timing and nature of any subsequent inspection and monitoring visits following an inadequate judgement will be determined through the oversight of improvement on a case-by-case basis, but it is likely that we will complete a further full inspection within six to eight weeks of an inadequate judgement. It will take place sooner if any further significant concerns arise during this period, or if earlier inspection is necessary to meet statutory requirements or to safeguard and protect the welfare of children and young people.
29. The first inadequate judgement is an 'amber rating'. If, at this second full inspection, the home is judged inadequate for overall effectiveness this will flag a 'red rating' and the case review must consider cancellation of the provider's registration.

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<sup>9</sup> Compliance, Investigation and Enforcement handbook, Ofsted, 2012;  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/compliance-investigation-and-enforcement-handbook-childrens-social-care](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/compliance-investigation-and-enforcement-handbook-childrens-social-care)

## Reporting findings at full inspections

30. Each full inspection is followed by a single report that sets out the inspection findings using text and grades, organised under the headings below.

### Report contents

<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>About this inspection</b>	Information about the legal basis for the inspection

31. The full inspection report is sent to the registered provider for a factual accuracy check within 10 working days of the end of the inspection.
32. The registered provider or representatives must return the 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

### Grading interim inspection findings

33. For interim inspections, inspectors make their judgements using a three-point scale. 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.

<b>Good progress</b>	The children's home has demonstrated continued improvement in quality of care and outcomes for children and young people. Where appropriate, it 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. Where appropriate, it 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

34. Each interim inspection is followed by a single report that sets out the inspection findings using text and a grade, organised under the headings below.

#### Report contents

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

35. The interim report is sent to the registered provider for a factual accuracy check within 10 working days of the end of the inspection.
36. The registered provider or representatives must return the 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

37. Inspectors focus their inspection activities on evaluating the outcomes for children and young people, and the quality and impact of services in helping to improve outcomes.
38. In preparation for inspection, inspectors consider the information that Ofsted has about the service. This 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 where a child accommodated in the home goes missing)
  - any changes to registration, including change of manager
  - any current or recent enforcement activity.
39. Also, when inspectors arrive on site at a full inspection, they will request specific information from the registered manager or person in charge (see Annex A).
40. Inspection activities will include:
  - listening and talking to children and young people
  - observing staff interactions with children and young people
  - observing 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
  - examining records
  - inspecting premises, facilities, and health and safety arrangements
  - discussions with managers and staff.
41. The inspection specifically focuses 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 questionnaires**

42. In this context, users are the children and young people who are supported by the home or setting, and their parents or carers.
43. Inspectors take account of the extent to which service providers have asked for and acted on the views of children and young people, and their parents or carers in reviewing and improving services and outcomes. Inspectors also consider the views of those users and partners they speak to during on-site evidence gathering.
44. We will use online questionnaires to gather the views of children and young people, parents and families, staff and other interested parties, such as placing social workers, Independent Reviewing Officers, and health, police and education colleagues. These questionnaires will be used at the beginning of the inspection year.

## **Communication and feedback**

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

## **Confidentiality**

46. Ofsted takes all appropriate steps to ensure that information provided to inspectors remains confidential, as required by statute. Although evidence gathered during inspections of children's homes is not subject to disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, any personal data it contains may still be disclosed to relevant individuals under the Data Protection Act 1998. Ofsted may also be required to disclose the evidence to other bodies (for example, the Independent Safeguarding Authority) under other legislation, and may disclose evidence on a discretionary basis (for example, to the registered person or to provide assistance to another public authority).
47. Where Ofsted considers that any information provided indicates the likelihood of harm, we pass the necessary information to the local authority children's services for action.

## **Quality assurance**

48. Quality assurance is the action that we take to ensure that an inspection is of the quality needed and expected by users, providers and Ofsted. We will ensure that inspectors are suitably experienced in the areas they are inspecting and that quality assurance managers are suitably experienced and skilled to undertake this type of work.

49. The inspector has responsibility for ensuring that all the evidence gathered is robust, reliable and secure.
50. Ofsted asks the manager of the children's home to complete a short evaluation form following each inspection, which is used to improve the quality of inspections.
51. For national consistency, some inspections include an Ofsted inspector whose role is to quality assure the inspection process. During these visits, the visiting inspector speaks to the inspector, managers and other staff, and, where possible, service users. S/he always seeks the views of staff at the children's home on the conduct of the inspection and samples the way that evidence is being gathered and used.
52. All inspection reports are subject to quality assurance procedures. These may result in changes to provisional judgements.

## **Conduct during the inspection**

53. 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 that 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

54. For inspection and regulation to be productive and beneficial, inspectors and providers must 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
  - allow inspectors to conduct their visit in an open and honest way
  - allow 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 need to observe practice and talk to staff and users without the presence of a manager or registered person.

## Complaints

55. The great majority of Ofsted's work is carried out smoothly and without incident. If concerns do arise during an inspection, they should be raised with the lead inspector as soon as possible during the inspection visit. This provides an opportunity to resolve the matter before the inspection is completed. Any concerns about the factual accuracy of the findings in the report can be raised after the inspection.
56. If it has not been possible to resolve concerns through these means, a formal complaint can be raised under Ofsted's complaints procedure: [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/130128](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/130128).
57. Complaints can be submitted to Ofsted at any stage during an inspection and should be submitted no more than 10 working days after publication of any report or letter. We do not normally withhold publication of an inspection report or withdraw a published inspection report while we investigate complaints.
58. Complainants must send their concerns using the online complaints form available on the Ofsted website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk/onlinecomplaintsofsted](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/onlinecomplaintsofsted)

59. If there are special circumstances that prevent the submission of a complaint online, complaints can be sent in writing to:

Ofsted  
National Complaints Team  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

Email: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

## More information

60. We hope that you find this document useful in helping you to 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<sup>10</sup>

Name of children's home:

**Signature/name of person completing the form:**

**Date:**

	Information required since last inspection	Number/Date
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	Number of allegations made against staff and state number of children involved	
4	Number of referrals to children's social care teams	
5	Number of times when children went missing <sup>11</sup> and state number of children involved	
6	Number of incidents of restraint	
7	Number of children involved in these incidents	
8	Number of staff who have left since the last inspection	
9	Number of new staff since last inspection	
10	Number of agency staff employed	
11	Number of staff at the children's home who have a first aid qualification	
12	Number of sanctions given since the last inspection	
13	Total number of staff (employed on the day of the inspection): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ number of staff qualified to NVQ 3/Diploma level 3</li> <li>■ number of staff undertaking these qualifications</li> <li>■ number of auxiliary staff</li> </ul>	

<sup>10</sup> Information required since the last inspection.

<sup>11</sup> As defined in statutory guidance.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ number of volunteers</li> <li>■ number of agency staff.</li> </ul>	
	Please list staff training since the last inspection:	
14	For organisations and partnerships: Names of the current directors, secretary and other officers of the organisation or names of current partners of the company (please attach details to this form as applicable).	
15	Please list all placing authorities of children currently in placement	
	<b>Secure children's homes only</b>	
16	Number of all single separations occurring	
Type		
Type		
Type		
	<b>Short breaks only</b>	
17	Number of children receiving a service at the time of inspection	
	<b>Dates of checks</b>	
18	Date of gas installations check	
19	Date of Portable Appliance Testing (PAT) check	
20	Date of health and safety risk assessment	
21	Date of last health and safety check of the premises	
22	Date of fire risk assessment	
23	Date of last fire drill – day and night	
24	Date of protocol with the police regarding missing children	
Please provide contact details for social workers and Independent Reviewing Officers:		