

Children's and young person's guide to the inspection of children's homes



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Who inspects children's homes?

Children's homes are inspected by inspectors from Ofsted (this stands for the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills).

Why are children's homes inspected?

The law says that children's homes must do certain things so that the children and young people who live there are looked after and kept safe. There are some rules about looking after children that all children's homes must keep to. We inspect children's homes to make sure this is happening.

Can inspection make a difference?

Yes. We try to get many children's homes to do better and know that most want to do the best they can for children and young people. Our inspectors tell children's homes about anything they need to do better.

When are children's homes inspected?

We inspect each children's home twice a year. One of these is called a full inspection and the inspector normally visits for a couple of days. The other one is a shorter inspection called an interim inspection, when the inspector normally visits for one day.

All children's homes inspections are unannounced. This means they are 'surprise visits' and we do not tell anyone when we are coming to do the inspection. This way, when we turn up, we can see what the home is really like and what happens at the home on an ordinary day, and staff cannot prepare for our inspection.

Sometimes if we are worried about a home, we will visit more often or if we receive information that makes us concerned we will come again.

What happens during a children's home inspection?

On the day of the inspection, an inspector arrives at the children's home and shows their identification card so that everyone knows they are from Ofsted. The inspector talks to the children, young people and staff at the home, looks at what happens in there during the time they are there and looks at some of the records the manager and staff keep.

What does the inspector want to know?

Here are the things the inspector will be checking up on when they visit the home.

- We want to know if you are making progress in all areas of your life, like your health and your education.
- We want to know if you are able to enjoy hobbies and activities in the home and outside the home.
- We want to know if this is a good place to live, or come to stay.
- We want to know if there are adults including your social worker who help you to have good health and go to school or college.
- We want to know if staff help you to deal with difficult situations and help you get on well with other people and behave well.
- We want to know if you are able to see your friends and family, and how well staff help you to be able to look after yourself when you leave.
- We want to know how well you think you are cared for.
- We want to know if you know how to ask for help and have someone to talk to if you are unhappy or worried about anything.
- We want to know whether you feel listened to, and whether staff respect you and help you to feel secure and good about yourself.
- We want to know if everyone gets on with each other and if not what staff are doing about this.
- We want to know whether children and young people are safe, and feel safe. In particular we want to know what the staff do to keep you safe and protected, from being hurt, going missing, bad use of restraint or unsafe buildings. We want to know what the staff do when they think you are unsafe for example, that they come to look for you if you go missing.
- We want to know if your manager is able to manage the home well.
- Every home has a document called the Statement of Purpose. This sets out what how things in your home should work. Inspectors want to know that your home is following this document and has the right staff, with enough experience and qualifications, enough money, and the right equipment to look after you well.

What about the views of children and young people at the home?

It is really important that our inspectors find out what your home is like for you and the other children and young people who live there. The inspector will talk and listen to you during the inspection. It is important that you tell them what the home is like. If you have any worries about this, or about what the inspector will do with what they are told, you can talk about it to the inspector. Inspectors really like talking to children and young people as it helps them to understand what it is like to live at your home.

Once a year there is also an online questionnaire for you to fill in. It asks what everyone thinks about the home. The answers go directly to Ofsted and the inspector reads them to make sure they know what you think about the home. If you are asked to fill this in, it is really helpful to the inspector and if we think that something is worrying we can act on that straight away.

What happens after a children's home inspection?

After a full inspection (this is the longer inspection), the inspector writes a report about what the home is like. They will not put any names in the report. There is a shorter version of the report written for children and young people. Children and young people have told us what they want to read in your version of the inspection report and we try to do this. In the report the inspector will say how well they have decided the home is doing. They will say whether the home is:

- **outstanding** - this means that the care provided to you is very good, so good that we would want to tell other people how good it is
- **good** – this means that it is just that – good, and means you are being looked after very well
- **requires improvement** – this means that there are some things your home does well, but others things that are not good enough yet
- **inadequate** – this means we are worried about the care provided, it might mean we don't think that you are being looked after safely or that the manager isn't doing enough to make sure you do well.

After an interim inspection (this is the shorter inspection), the inspector writes a report about what has happened at your home since the last full inspection.

Usually after a full or an interim inspection, the inspector asks the home to make some changes to make things better. We will check that the home does this.

Further information

You can visit our website <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted> or you can contact Ofsted using the details below. You might want to do this if:

- you want to know more about what happens at an inspection
- you want to read a report about a children's home
- you want an inspector to check something at a children's home the next time they visit.

Contact details

You can call us on 0300 123 1231 and ask to speak to a social care inspector. If you know the name of your inspector and the name of your home that will help the person you speak to. Sometimes you might have to wait for someone to answer the phone so please hang on if you can.

Or you can email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk. Make sure you tell us the name of your home.

Or you can write to us at:

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And again please tell us the name of your home.