

[Home](#) > [Inspecting registered early years providers: guidance for inspectors](#)



Contents

[Notice period prior to inspections](#)

[Paperwork](#)

[During inspection](#)

[Grading and feedback](#)

[Risk assessment](#)

[Complaints](#)

Ofsted has produced this document to confirm the facts about our early years inspections and to dispel those myths that can sometimes result in unnecessary workload for registered child carers. It should be read alongside the [early years inspection handbook](#).

Inspection plays an important role in helping parents to make informed choices about the type of care available for their child, and advising parents and carers about the quality of care young children are receiving. Inspections are not designed to catch staff off guard, nor do inspectors prepare a list of trick questions to ask providers. Inspectors are qualified professionals, trained to evaluate the quality of an early years setting, highlighting both good practice and areas for improvement.

The purpose of Ofsted's early years inspections is to make sure that registered child carers are providing a good quality of care and education, as required by the [Early Years Foundation Stage Framework](#). We want to remove any misconceptions, ensure that the inspection process is as clear as possible and reduce anxiety. It's in everyone's interest that inspection helps deliver a good quality of care for all young children.

Notice period prior to inspections

1. Myth

Ofsted cannot carry out inspections without any notice.

Fact

Ofsted can carry out inspections without notice. No-notice inspections normally, but not exclusively, take place when someone has raised concerns about a setting.

Paperwork

2. Myth

Ofsted wants to see as much paperwork as possible. Paperwork should be stored in a folder marked 'Ofsted'.

Fact

Ofsted does not want to see a particular amount or type of paperwork during an inspection. Settings should use whatever approach to paperwork that suits them and are free to file it however they like. Each inspection is unique and inspectors will only ask to see evidence they consider appropriate to that individual setting, usually determined by their observations of teaching and learning. The paperwork most often requested is listed on pages 10 and 11 of the [Early years inspection handbook](#) but it's unlikely that an inspector will want to see all of these documents at every inspection.

3. Myth

Ofsted prefers to see paper assessments rather than those recorded electronically.

Fact

There is no prescribed way of conducting or recording assessments, as long as it is effective and helps children's learning, development and progress.

4. Myth

Ofsted is removing the self-evaluation form (SEF) from 1 April 2018 but will still expect leaders to make a written record of their self-evaluation.

Fact

Childcare providers do not need to produce any self-evaluation documentation, but managers and staff

should be able to discuss the setting with the inspector. Inspectors will ask staff about the quality of care and activities they provide, and how well the setting is meeting the learning needs of all children.

During inspection

5. Myth

During an inspection, Ofsted expects the manager to be available at all times to speak with the inspector.

Fact

Ofsted does not expect managers to be immediately available to speak with the inspector. Inspectors want to see settings operating as they would on any other day, and they will work around normal timetables. Meetings with managers will take place at a mutually convenient time during the inspection.

6. Myth

Ofsted inspectors may consider a cup of tea/coffee or biscuits as bribery. Or, they may expect a cup of tea/coffee even when a setting has a 'no hot drinks' policy.

Fact

Inspectors follow a strict code of conduct and all inspections are carried out without bias, regardless of any refreshments offered. Staff can offer inspectors hot drinks if that is their normal visitor protocol. If a setting has a 'no hot drinks' policy, inspectors will not expect the rules to be broken on their account.

Grading and feedback

7. Myth

Only managers can attend the feedback session at the end of an inspection.

Fact

It is not true that inspectors will only give feedback to managers. The feedback session is confidential until the final report is published, but other staff can be included where it is feasible.

8. Myth

A childcare setting cannot achieve a judgement more than one grade above its previous inspection outcome, and can never get an 'outstanding' grade at its first inspection.

Fact

A setting can improve by more than one grade. If Ofsted finds during the inspection that a setting has improved by more than one grade, the inspector will judge it accordingly. Inspectors use the [Early years inspection handbook](#) grade descriptors at every inspection, including the first one following registration. If a provider meets the grade descriptors for 'outstanding', this is how the inspector will judge it.

Risk assessment

9. Myth

Ofsted has a list of things providers must do to assess risk and keep children safe, such as using gloves when changing babies' nappies and covering all electrical sockets.

Fact

The [Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage \(EYFS\)](#) says you must take steps to assess and manage risk. But how you do that is up to you. So Ofsted does not have a preferred way for you to manage any dangers associated with electrical sockets and equipment or promote good health and hygiene.

Complaints

10. Myth

Making a complaint about an inspection will go against a childcare setting the next time it is inspected.

Fact

Ofsted does not take into account any past complaints lodged by a setting when making inspection judgements. Inspectors act fairly and without bias at all times, and their judgments are based solely on evidence. Inspection reports are also quality assured by other inspectors before they are finalised, to confirm that judgements are firmly supported by evidence.

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