



Guidance The EYFS in schools

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We've split the questions up into groups for easy reading. They should be read alongside the [school inspection handbook](#).

Early years foundation stage (EYFS) reforms

Will Ofsted expect to see curriculum maps for every area of learning in the early years?

We are keen to bust this myth! We don't know where the idea of a 'curriculum map' has come from, but we are clear that what children learn in the early years is incredibly important for their future success.

Inspectors will want to understand how schools design the curriculum in early years to give children the foundational knowledge and understanding they will need for key stage 1 and for the rest of their schooling. Our inspection handbooks for both registered early years providers and schools make it clear that curriculum planning does not need to be in any specific format. It is up to providers to determine the format of their planning, and it is up to leaders to justify these plans based on what they want children to encounter, explore and learn in school.

Will Ofsted expect providers to show the progress of a child tracked against the revised non-statutory guidance, 'Development matters'?

Ofsted does not have a preferred method of how schools assess children's progress. Our school inspection handbook outlines how we will gather evidence on inspection.

Getting to know children and finding out what they know and can do is something we know early years practitioners are skilled at. This is what is important. Whatever 'system' schools have in place for the assessment of young children shouldn't take adults away from those important interactions.

As outlined in our handbook, inspectors do not expect to see documentation other than that set out in the EYFS framework. They will use the evidence gathered from discussions and observations to judge the overall quality of the curriculum provided for children.

Will Ofsted prefer to see paper assessments rather than those recorded electronically?

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

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What impact will the recently introduced EYFS reforms have on Ofsted inspections?

Ofsted inspects in line with the principles and requirements set out in the statutory EYFS framework to evaluate the overall quality and standards of a school's early years provision. From 1 September 2021, Ofsted inspections will be in line with the requirements set out in the new EYFS framework for all early years providers, including Reception Year in schools.

Inspection practice

When carrying out deep dives, will inspectors want to see national curriculum subjects, rather than EYFS areas of learning, being taught in Reception?

The EYFS framework sets out the statutory requirements for learning and development for children up to and including Reception Year.

During this time, their curriculum should cover the 7 areas of learning and early years leaders need to ensure that children experience a curriculum that is broad and ambitious and that prepares them for their next stage of learning.

When carrying out deep dives in subjects, inspectors will not specifically look for or expect discrete lessons or teaching in those deep dive subjects. But they will be looking at foundational knowledge in that subject that forms a natural part of some of those 7 areas of learning. This is the foundational knowledge that prepares children for learning in that subject from Year 1 onwards.

Does Ofsted expect the national curriculum in a primary school to start when children first join in the early years?

Even though the 7 areas of learning do not map precisely to the national curriculum subject areas, inspectors will want to understand how the curriculum in the early years is built on in key stage 1. They will also want to understand how knowledge builds from the moment children join the school to the time that they leave.

For example, when an inspector is looking at history, they will also look at what foundational knowledge children learn about the world around them and about the past, in the Reception Year. While inspectors wouldn't expect to see a 'history lesson', they might ask leaders and teachers about their plans for children to learn the foundational knowledge, such as 'castle' and 'king', to enable understanding in history from Year 1 onwards. Conversations with leaders and teachers in the EYFS might direct inspectors to look at how the choices of stories that are read to children and the nursery rhymes and books that are shared with them give children an insight into foundational historical concepts for access to history lessons in key stage 1. Discussions might also shine a light on concepts that children learn during circle times, such as the nature of change and ageing when talking about family members; for example, children knowing about how families are constructed enables their learning about 'royal families' later on.

As outlined above, we set no expectations or requirements for planning or paperwork. This is up to schools to determine.

How does the education inspection framework apply to the teaching of early reading in schools that have an exemption from the learning and development requirements of the EYFS?

The formal teaching of reading may be delayed by [an exemption from the learning and development requirements of the EYFS](#). In these cases, inspectors will hear children from Years 5 to 6 read instead of Years 1 to 3. They will listen to pupils read from unseen books appropriate to their stage of progress to see whether they have the reading knowledge and skills, including the phonic knowledge, appropriate for a child in Years 5 to 6. This will inform the quality of education judgement. Further information is available in the [non-association independent schools inspection handbook](#) (paragraphs 359 to 362).

Covid-19 (coronavirus) pandemic

Will Ofsted negatively judge schools for having a 'stripped-back, COVID-safe provision'? For example, a provision with no soft furnishings, dressing-up clothes, pillows or cosy spaces, and no sand or water.

No, we will not judge schools negatively on how they delivered their EYFS provision during the pandemic. We know that some schools will have changed how and what they delivered during this time. However, we will seek to understand how a school adapted and prioritised what it did to get the best results for children throughout this period. Inspectors will also want to see the extent to which leaders have designed an ambitious and well-sequenced early years curriculum, how they are addressing any disruption, and how they are ensuring that any gaps in knowledge are closed so children are prepared for their next stage of education.

Modifications/disapplications of the EYFS

How will Ofsted consider the temporary EYFS disapplications that were previously in place?

Ofsted will continue to inspect in line with the principles and requirements of the EYFS framework. We will want to know whether schools have previously relied on the disapplications so we are able to understand the context of where they are now. We will not judge schools on what they were doing previously, even if they are disapplying or relying on modifications. We will look at whether any previous reliance on the disapplications or modifications is having an impact on the provision and on the children who attend the school. We will look at what the school is doing to get back on track, how it's addressing any gaps in learning and how it's ensuring that the children are ready for their next stage of education.

We do not expect to see any paperwork or 'evidence' about why or how providers relied on the disapplications.

Are there flexibilities in place for schools that have high numbers of staff needing to self-isolate, and will Ofsted take this into consideration when inspecting?

Paragraph 3.30 of the EYFS framework states:

" Exceptionally, and where the quality of care and safety and security of children is maintained, changes to the ratios may be made."

The Department for Education (DfE) has been clear in its [guidance](#) that it considers the COVID-19 pandemic to be an exceptional temporary circumstance in which the staff-to-child ratios set out in the EYFS framework can be changed if necessary. Early years settings and schools, however, remain responsible for ensuring the safety and security of children in their care. Inspectors will want to understand how providers are continuing to meet this requirement if temporarily using the existing ratio flexibilities set out in the EYFS framework.

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