



Guidance Registered early years providers

Updated 16 August 2021

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

Early years foundation stage (EYFS) reforms

Will Ofsted want to see as much paperwork as possible? Should providers store their paperwork in a folder marked 'Ofsted'?

Ofsted does not want to see a particular amount or type of paperwork during an inspection. Paragraph 2.2 of the [EYFS framework](#) sets out the requirements on paperwork related to assessment. Assessment should not entail prolonged breaks from interaction with children, nor require excessive paperwork. Practitioners should draw on their knowledge of the child and their own expert professional judgement and should not be required to prove this through collection of physical evidence.

Settings should use whatever approach to paperwork suits them. They 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. This is usually determined by their observations of teaching and learning. The paperwork most often requested is listed in paragraph 59 of the [early years inspection handbook](#), but it is unlikely that an inspector will want to see all of these documents at every inspection.

From September 2021, the revised EYFS framework no longer includes the requirement for providers to seek permission from Ofsted to keep any records securely off site. However, it is for providers to ensure that they comply with data protection obligations.

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 settings assess children's progress. Our inspection handbook outlines how we will gather evidence through observation and discussion on inspection.

Inspectors will want to find out about the story of a child, including:

- what they knew and could do when they started at the provision
- what they can do now and how you got them there
- what your plans are for that child so that they are ready for their next stage of learning

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' providers have in place for the assessment of young children shouldn't take adults away from those important interactions.

As outlined in our handbook and in our myth-busting work, 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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How will Ofsted inspect the curriculum? Do providers need to produce a curriculum map?

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 know how leaders design an ambitious and well-sequenced curriculum that prepares children well for the next stage of their education. Providers will be asked what they want children to learn and why, how they are helping children know more and remember more, and how they measure this success.

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. There is no need to produce a 'curriculum map'. 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 the setting.

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 setting's early years provision. From 1 September 2021, Ofsted inspections will be in line with the requirements set out in the revised EYFS framework for all early years providers.

Covid-19 (coronavirus) pandemic

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

No, we will not judge settings negatively on how they delivered their provision during the pandemic. We know that some providers will have changed how and what they delivered during this time.

However, we will seek to understand how a provider 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 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 providers have previously relied on the disapplications so we are able to understand the context of where they are now. We will not judge providers on what they were doing previously, even if they were 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 setting. We will look at what the provider 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 providers 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 [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. Our 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.

Inspection practice

How does Ofsted prioritise inspections?

On-site inspections of registered early years providers under the education inspection framework (EIF) began again on 4 May 2021. We will prioritise providers:

- judged less than good at last inspection (including those who received an interim visit in the autumn term)
- that registered recently but have not been inspected
- whose first inspection is overdue
- that were not inspected in the last inspection cycle due to the pause in routine inspection

We will continue to carry out urgent inspections if we have significant concerns about a provider.

Can Ofsted carry out inspections without any notice?

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

During an inspection, will Ofsted expect the manager to be available at all times to speak to the inspectors?

Ofsted does not expect managers to be immediately available to speak to the inspectors. 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.

Is it only managers who can attend the feedback session at the end of an inspection?

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.

Can a registered early years setting achieve a judgement more than one grade above its previous inspection outcome?

A setting can improve by more than one grade. The early years inspection handbook sets out how inspectors will use their professional judgement to weigh up the evidence gathered for each key judgement, considered against the grade descriptors to reach fair and reliable judgements that reflect the quality of provision. If inspectors find during the inspection that a setting has improved by more than one grade, they will judge it accordingly.

Will making a complaint about an inspection go against a childcare setting the next time it is inspected?

Ofsted does not take into account any past complaints and lodged without a set 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. Our quality assurance and complaints procedure is clearly outlined in our [inspection handbook](#).

We want to, and remove any misconceptions, ensure that the inspection process is as clear as possible, and reduce any anxiety. It's in everyone's interest that inspection helps deliver a good quality of care for all young children.

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