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Guidance

Summary of changes

Updated 12 June 2026

Applies to England

Contents

[September 2026](#)

September 2026

Early years inspection toolkit

In this update, we have made the following changes to the early years inspection toolkit:

- additional information provided outlining a practitioner's responsibilities to protect children from harm
- update to the grading standards to reflect that providers must meet the toolkit standards as well as the relevant early years foundation stage (EYFS)

requirements

- additional text added to outline what an inspector should consider in settings where there are provider exemptions from the learning and development requirements of the EYFS in place
- update to clarify that reference to vocabulary is English vocabulary
- evidence-gathering prompt added to clarify the standard relating to teaching mathematics explicitly
- removed the evaluation prompt for inspectors to consider future impact where there are no children who are disadvantaged, or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), or who are known (or previously known) to children's social care, or who may face other barriers to their learning and/or wellbeing
- additional information about children with personal education plans in the evidence gathering prompts for inclusion
- additional detail around gathering evidence about settings' understanding and implementation of statutory guidance for babies' safe sleeping arrangements, weaning and safer eating
- additional standard in children's welfare and wellbeing relating to safer sleeping, eating and weaning arrangements
- additional clarity to safeguarding not met statements to include where the quality of care is such that children have been harmed or are at risk of harm
- removed a grading standard which was replicated across two evaluation areas

Early years inspection operating guide for inspectors

In this update, we have made the following changes to the early years inspection operating guide:

- updates to inspector conduct to highlight the responsibility of the inspector and provider to align duties with the Equality Act 2010 with a link to additional guidance
- included a link to the [Ofsted: explore an area](#) tool
- update to consider group settings that do not operate regularly when determining the most suitable day for inspection

- included additional guidance for inspectors when a setting has no children on roll or present within the 5-day inspection timeframe
- update to prompt inspectors to also ask any inspection team members if they require reasonable adjustments and adaptations
- update to clarify that, when reviewing key information about a setting, inspectors must explicitly confirm that the nominated individual (NI) agrees to receive electronic communication, including routine communications and any legal notices
- clarification about inspector use of mobile phones during inspection
- update for inspectors to align their use of mobile phones during inspection with the setting's mobile phone use policy
- updates to reflect that inspectors will speak to the person acting as special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) and consider speaking to other relevant leaders with inclusion roles
- updates to provide clarity on case sampling
- additional prompt that inspectors may speak with any virtual school head(s) or their delegate(s) who have responsibilities for current or previously looked-after children, children with or who previously have had a social worker, and those in kinship care arrangements
- removed requirement for a setting to provide a photograph of the inspector(s) to help prepare children for who they will see
- update to call the duty desk if there are any issues with access to the inspection site
- update to review the DBS records as a priority and discuss the arrangements for recruitment and paediatric first aid
- additional clarity when applying standards if children at these settings receive their main EYFS experience elsewhere, and have not yet started in Reception Class
- update to reflect that inspectors must check that settings are implementing statutory guidance for babies' safe sleeping arrangements, weaning and safer eating
- additional clarity that during the notification call the inspector must remind the setting that they can contact a senior Ofsted leader using the number provided as part of the notification process to raise any issues and concerns or seek clarification

Early years inspection information

In this update, we have made the following changes to the early years inspection information page:

- updates to the overall inspection focus, to reflect that inspectors will engage with relevant leaders for inclusion
- included a link to the [Ofsted: explore an area](#) tool
- updated line to ensure inspectors ask providers to confirm who will attend the end-of-day reflection and grading meetings and set out expectations for these meetings
- updates to reflect that inspectors will speak to the person acting as special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) and consider speaking to other relevant leaders with inclusion roles
- update to reflect that inspectors must check that settings are implementing statutory guidance for babies' safe sleeping arrangements, weaning and safer eating

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