



**Office for Standards
in Education**

Guidance on inspecting funded nursery education

HMI 2152

April 2004

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Document reference number: HMI 2152

Web site: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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Contents

Introduction	5
SECTION 1: EVALUATION SCHEDULE	7
Combined Inspection Evaluation Schedule	9
SECTION 2: Managing the inspection.	11
Planning and carrying out the inspection	13
Before the inspection	13
Combined inspections:	15
Document request	16
Gathering and recording evidence	17
SECTION 3: MAKING JUDGEMENTS	23
Making judgements about the six areas of learning	25
Personal, social and emotional development (PSED)	26
Communication, language and literacy (CLL)	30
Mathematical development (MA)	35
Knowledge and understanding of the world (KUW)	39
Physical development (PD)	43
Creative development (CD)	46
Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	49
How well are the children taught?	52
How well is the setting led and managed?	61
How well does the setting work in partnership with parents and carers?	67
General guidance on making summary judgements	72

What has improved since the last inspection?	74
What is being done well?	75
What needs to be improved?	75
What needs to be done next?	76
Making overall judgements for the outcome of the inspection	78
Judging unacceptable provision	81
SECTION 4: COMMUNICATING JUDGEMENTS	85
Communicating judgements	87
Oral feedback	87
Checklist for oral feedback (combined inspections)	90
Writing the report	92
Report sections	94
How effective is the nursery education?	95
What has improved since the last nursery education inspection?	97
What is being done well?	98
What needs to be improved?	99
The six areas of learning	100
What needs to be done next?	102
Checking your nursery education report	104
Annex A	107
The process of a combined inspection	109
Annex B	111
Information for providers	113
Next steps after educational provision is judged to be unacceptable	113

Introduction

This guidance is to assist you when inspecting nursery education either as part of a combined inspection or as a 'stand alone S122' nursery education inspection.¹

The purpose of the inspection is to identify the strengths and weaknesses in funded nursery provision for three and four year olds so that settings can improve the quality of the nursery education that they offer. The inspection should help providers know what they need to do to plan activities and experiences that meet the diverse needs of all children, so that most will achieve, or exceed, the standards expected by the time they reach the end of the Foundation Stage.²

You must judge what the children do in relation to the stepping stones and early learning goals set out in the *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage*.³

The report published after the inspection provides information for parents about the quality and standards of the setting. Inspection findings also contribute to Her Majesty's Chief Inspector's Annual Report and form the basis of advice to the Secretary of State for Education about funded nursery education.

Examples of notebook evidence and report extracts are included throughout this guidance. They do not represent the full range of evidence or inspection findings to support the judgements they are intended to illustrate.

¹ 'S122' refers to section 122 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998. This legislation gives HMCI the power to inspect and report on the quality of funded nursery education.

² The Foundation Stage applies to children from three years of age to the end of the reception year in primary school.

³ Published by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), May 2000.

SECTION 1: EVALUATION SCHEDULE

Combined Inspection *Evaluation Schedule*

The Combined Inspection *Evaluation Schedule* is the basis for inspecting both the standard of care and the quality of the educational provision for three and four year old children.⁴ It sets out the specific requirements for evaluating and reporting on the work of a setting. Only Parts 1 and 3 apply when carrying out 'stand alone' inspection of funded nursery education.

1. What sort of setting is it?

Inspectors must report on:

- the characteristics of the provision.

2. How good is the day care/childminding?

Inspectors must evaluate and judge:

- the quality and standard of day care or childminding, with regard to the National Standards

and report on:

- the extent to which the childminder/registered person meets these National Standards
- how the setting/childminding has improved
- what the setting/childminder does well
- what needs to be improved
- the conditions of registration.

The report must include:

- an overall judgement about the outcome of the inspection of day care or childminding
- any actions which the childminder/registered person must take by a given date
- any recommendations which the childminder/registered person should have addressed by the time of the next inspection.

⁴ For advice on inspecting the standard and quality of care, please refer to *Inspecting Quality: supplementary guidance for inspectors* (Ofsted, HMI 1702), August 2003.

3. How good is the nursery education?

Inspectors must evaluate and judge:

- the quality and standard of funded nursery education

and report on:

- how effective the nursery education is
- what is being done well
- what needs to be improved
- what has improved since the last nursery education inspection.

The report must include:

- a statement of children's progress towards the early learning goals in each of the six areas of learning
- judgements about the quality of the educational provision including:
 - the quality of teaching
 - leadership and management
 - the partnership between the provider and parents or carers
- an overall judgement about the outcome of the inspection of funded nursery education
- a recommendation for the timing of the next nursery education inspection
- what the provider needs to do next in order to improve the nursery education further.

SECTION 2:MANAGINGTHE INSPECTION

Planning and carrying out the inspection

It is important to plan the inspection efficiently. This will help you to cover the full range of inspection activities and to gather sufficient evidence to substantiate your judgements.

Before the inspection

To make the best use of your time:

- check whether you are working independently or with a colleague. If you are working with a colleague make sure responsibilities are clear and duplication of work is avoided
- contact the provider to find out as much as you can about the setting. You may refer to the telephone checklist and document request to guide your questions (*page 15-16*)
- review pre-populated information in section 1 of the electronic notebook or Update Form, and the previous S122 report (where applicable)
- plan the inspection carefully, but remember that your plan should be flexible to accommodate changes in the provider's programme.

Before you start the inspection, remember to check that funded three and four year old children are still on the register. If there are no funded three or four year old children on roll, the inspection of the nursery education must **not** go ahead. If, however, funded children are on the register but are absent on the day(s) of the inspection, then the inspection of nursery education can take place. In either case, in combined inspections, the Children Act inspection may proceed as planned.

If you find that a provider has only recently become part of the nursery education scheme and has had insufficient time to implement a full programme of nursery education, you should discuss rescheduling the nursery education inspection with your team manager.

During your initial contact with the provider, establish whether the education of the funded children is fully integrated with care. If it is, as it is in most cases, then explain that evidence will be gathered from the full range of activities and experiences throughout the day. Very occasionally a full day care provider may insist that s/he offers education as a discrete element for two and half hours within the day. In these instances, you should gather evidence relevant to that particular period. This does not mean that you may only stay at the setting for those two and half hours; you may stay as long as it takes to gather the necessary evidence.

Once you have found out all you can, it is good practice to:

- draw up an inspection timetable. Include time for: discussion with staff and parents; observations of children and staff; looking at children's work, displays, resources and documents; and preparing and providing oral feedback. Don't try to do too much at once; for example if the setting is large break up the discussion time
- plan your discussions by making a list of common questions to help you find out what you need to know. For example, 'Who is involved in the planning?' 'How are your plans informed by what children know and can do?' 'How do you plan for children's different needs?' You could give a copy of your questions to the provider when you arrive
- draft the 'Information about the setting' section of the report. Give a copy to the provider when you arrive so they can make sure that it includes no factual inaccuracies. This will save you time at the oral feedback.

Combined inspections:

Telephone checklist and document request

Suggestions of some general points/questions:

- Introduce yourself and ask to speak to the appropriate person.
- Explain reason for phone call and check that it is a convenient time to talk.
- Outline the time period when the inspection is likely to take place.
- Check that funded three or four year olds will be on the register. How many?
- Give information on any colleagues who will join you on the inspection.
- Give information about the purpose and process of the inspections.
- Any questions?
- Ask how the children are organised, for example altogether or in group rooms?
- How are the staff deployed? Who works with funded children?
- Ask details of children with special educational needs or English as an additional language (EAL).
- Get as much information about the timetable(s) of the day.
- Agree best time to:
 - arrive
 - talk to key managers/staff (agree who)
 - talk to parents
 - feedback (who will be there? difficulties including key personnel?)
- Ask what documents will be available (see document request list below)
- Are there any special factors to be taken into consideration, for example new children or staff, or building work?

-
- Any significant changes since the previous inspection in care or education?
 - Any support from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership? (courses? advisors?)
 - Directions to setting (if not known).
 - Is there anything else the provider would like to know?
 - Need to ring again? When?

Document request

The following is a list of documents that might be useful to see during the inspection – if available. During your phone call, ask the provider to make a note of these so that the documents are available for you and preferably in one place. The provider should not produce extra documents especially for the inspection.

- Information for parents, for example prospectus, newsletters, reports, leaflets, etc.
- Any policies that contribute towards the setting's operational plan (check what is available).
- Action plan drawn up following the previous S122 inspection.
- Curriculum plans.
- Assessments and records of children's progress towards the early learning goals.
- Registers of attendance.
- Any other evidence the settings choose to present, for example photos, videos, samples of work, etc.

Gathering and recording evidence

To gather and record sufficient evidence to judge the quality of the nursery education, you must be familiar with the *Evaluation Schedule* and the *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage*.

Remember: the focus of the inspection is on how well the provision enables children to make progress towards the early learning goals. Do not become side-tracked with funding requirements; this is matter for the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and for the local education authority (LEA).

Gathering the evidence

You will find out about the quality of nursery education by:

- observing what the staff and children say and do
- discussing with children, staff and parents what and how learning takes place
- scrutinising documents, including children's work, to check the range and quality of experiences provided and what staff and children know and understand.

Try to:

- place yourself off centre of activities, where you can see or hear what's being done
- train yourself to write notes at the same time
- follow up activities which are adult-led and where the purpose isn't clear
- talk to children about what they can do
- talk to adults about what children can do
- spend time with documents which the setting has put aside for you to look at
- check policies and plans are effectively put in place.

If there are no funded children present at the time of the inspection, you should gather evidence by checking:

- plans, assessments and records of children's progress towards the early learning goals

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- dated, annotated samples of children's work
 - photographs of funded children taking part in worthwhile activities
 - the range and organisation of resources
 - the organisation of space
 - staff's understanding of the Foundation Stage
 - staff's interactions with other three and/or four year olds
 - that the activities you observe are typical of those offered to funded children when present
 - comments by parents of funded children, for example through questionnaires, home/setting diaries with dated comments.

Using the notebooks

Notebooks have two purposes: the first is to help you collect and organise your evidence before and during the inspection; and the second is to provide a clear record of the evidence on which you have based your judgements.

During the inspection you may use your electronic notebook to record all your inspection evidence, but you are more likely to record evidence in a hard copy nursery education notebook (together with the Children Act notebook for combined inspections). You should agree with your team manager:

- when to submit for checking a full electronic notebook or
- when to submit a notebook which includes only summary judgements
- arrangements for retaining hard copy notebooks.

The nursery education notebook is set out to help you judge:

how well children are learning in the areas of:

- personal, social and emotional development
- communication, language and literacy
- mathematical development
- knowledge and understanding of the world

-
- physical development
 - creative development.

as a result of:

- the quality of teaching
- the quality of leadership and management
- the quality of partnership with parents and carers
- improvement since the last inspection (if applicable).

How you organise your notebook it up to you, but it is good practice to:

- indicate to which cluster of early learning goals or inspection criteria evidence relates
- note the source of your evidence, for example direct observation (obs), discussion (disc), plans, assessments.

Having enough evidence

There are no hard and fast rules about the type and quantity of evidence that must be recorded. The guiding principle is that your notebook must contain sufficient evaluative evidence so that anyone reading it, for example your Team Manager, should reach the same judgements as you.

This does not mean that you need evidence for every numbered cluster in the notebook to support the summary judgement for an area of learning. For example, there may be little evidence observed of physical play because it did not take place on the day of inspection. This is acceptable providing that other evidence, including that from looking at plans, is sufficient to support the summary judgement for physical development. However, evidence that focuses on just one or two clusters is unlikely to be enough for a subsequent reader to see how you reached a judgement.

It is not necessary for you to record evidence twice. For example, it is perfectly acceptable to record evidence for teaching alongside that for the six areas of learning or in the Children Act notebook where there are obvious overlaps, providing the evidence is cross referenced and identified by an understandable abbreviation such as QT (Quality of teaching).

Evaluative evidence

Your evidence should not merely describe what has been seen or said. This does not help other readers to understand judgements. For example, a list of resources may help a reader to form a view about the range of equipment, but not how these are used or organised to enable children to make progress towards the early learning goals. A certain amount of description adds illustration to judgements, but this should be balanced with enough evaluation to understand how the judgements have been reached.

Your evidence should include:

- **evaluative comments** about the quality of the learning and teaching such as 'good', 'respond well', 'limited range'. These should be backed up with brief **examples** from your observations and other inspection activities to illustrate the reasons for your judgements
- **highlight** significant differences between the teaching and learning for three and four year olds.

Remember: the clusters of early learning goals in each of the areas of learning are there to guide the collection of evidence. They reflect the expectations for children at the end of the Foundation Stage, **not** of three or four year olds.

Recording evidence for teaching in combined inspections

Some evidence of teaching can be recorded under the National Standards, as well as in the nursery education part of the notebook. For example, you can record how well the staff:

- know and understand the Foundation Stage and the stepping stones *under Standard 1*
- use time, resources and accommodation *under Standard 2*
- are trained *under Standard 2*
- put planning into practice, challenge children, use assessments to help children make progress *under Standard 3*
- provide and use suitable equipment *under Standard 5*
- include children and use effective teaching methods *under Standard 9*
- cater for children with special educational needs (SEN) *under Standard 10*

-
- manage children's behaviour *under Standard 11*
 - inform and involve parents *under Standard 12*
 - use documentation to help them teach *under Standard 14*.

If you are working with a colleague, you should combine your evidence to come to consistent judgements about how well the children are taught. In the nursery education notebook you should note where any additional evidence for teaching can be found.

Recording evidence if there are no funded children present when the inspection takes place

It is important to record in your notebook that there are no funded children present and to be clear about your sources of evidence.

Notebook extracts

The funded 4YO absent during inspection (chicken pox). But five other 4YOs present. Staff say that they are following same routines and activities as funded child would if she were present. Interactions with these chl'n are good. E.g. encourages chl'n to use imagination when playing outdoors with large blocks – develops into extended, purposeful 'fire fighters' play. Staff offer suggestions and ask questions which challenge chl'n to think and develop their ideas – 'What do you need to put the fire out?' 'What could you use?' 'What will do if someone is hurt? Join in with play but don't take over. Warm relationships.

Plans are thorough – relate to 6 areas of learning, show broad/balanced range of activities and how resources are used and what chl'n should learn.

Funded child's record shows steady progress towards the elgs – includes annotated, dated photos of trip to park (KUW) and samples of her work, including birthday card which includes precisely cut shapes (PHYS) and recognisable letter and number shapes in 'birthday card' – unaided (CLL and MA).

Identifying key strengths and weaknesses

Once you have finished gathering your evidence you need to decide the key strengths and weaknesses:

- in each of the six areas of learning:
 - ask yourself in which aspects are the children making the greatest strides in their learning? In which aspects are they not achieving as much as they could?

-
- of teaching, leadership and management, and partnership with parents and carers:
 - ask yourself which features of teaching, leadership and management, and partnership with parents and carers are having the greatest positive impact on children's learning? What features need improving? Why?

Remember: the impact of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching, leadership and management, and partnership with parents and carers should be clearly traceable to your findings in the six areas of learning.

Record the key strengths and weaknesses clearly in the appropriate sections of your notebook and make sure you have enough examples to substantiate them.

There will be no weaknesses in the areas you judge to be very good. Occasionally, there may be very minor shortcomings which you may, or may not, mention during the oral feedback or as a *point for consideration* in the report.⁵

SECTION 3: MAKING JUDGEMENTS

Making judgements about the six areas of learning

When making your judgements in the six areas of learning you must take account of children's progress towards the early learning goals. To do this, observe what the children are doing, how worthwhile it is, whether they respond well and are keen to learn, and the quality of learning opportunities provided for them.

You should refer to the stepping stones towards the early learning goals in the *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage* when gathering evidence and reaching judgements on how well children are learning in each of the six areas.

This section provides guidance to help you reach those judgements. It is set out under the following headings:

- **Inspection focus** (these are the most important things to concentrate on)
- **Guidance on evaluating children's progress towards the early learning goals**

Personal, social and emotional development (PSED)

Inspection focus

Young children's successful personal, social and emotional development is a pre-requisite for their achievement in all other areas of learning. Their development depends on their feeling secure and at ease in the setting and developing a positive sense of themselves. It involves important aspects of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, including the development of personal values such as honesty, fairness and respect. Children's progress in their personal, social and emotional development is likely to be generally good or better when staff help them to feel secure, encourage and support them, respect their initiatives and have high expectations of what they can achieve. Staff should take children's particular religious and cultural beliefs into account when planning their play and learning, and when encouraging good relationships, racial harmony and tolerance. They should also promote independence, and the successful social and emotional development of all children, including those with special educational needs and whose first language is not English. This area of learning should permeate the whole curriculum.

Guidance on evaluating children's progress towards the early learning goals

Dispositions and attitudes (cluster 1 in the notebook):

- continue to be interested, excited and motivated to learn
- be confident enough to try new activities, initiate ideas and speak in a familiar group
- maintain attention, concentrate, and sit quietly when appropriate.

Once they become familiar with a setting, most children will start to acquire new skills, want to learn more, and become increasingly self-assured. You should note how well children take a lead in activities, and how keen they are to demonstrate to others what they know and can do. Evaluate children's level of curiosity, persistence, and involvement in activities. Expect to see them sometimes pursuing an activity without interruption, perhaps concentrating quietly on their own. Take into account whether staff provide a positive role model through their own enthusiasm for learning.

Notebook extract

Group of 3YOs at art table show little interest, sit passively waiting for adult direction. 4YOs show little initiative, e.g. in role play (repetitive and plotless, short-lived dressing up) (obs.)

Contributes to judgement that children's progress in PSED has significant weaknesses or is poor.

Self-confidence and self-esteem (cluster 2 in the notebook):

- respond to significant experiences, showing a range of feelings when appropriate
- have a developing awareness of their own needs, views and feelings and be sensitive to the needs, views and feelings of others
- have a developing respect for their own cultures and beliefs and those of other people.

You may see young children exhibiting strong feelings and powerful emotions, shown, for example, through temper tantrums. Observe whether adults acknowledge children's feelings as they work with them to resolve conflicts and help them learn to respond to the feelings of others. Consider whether more mature children are becoming aware of their feelings and learning how to control them. Determine how responsive children are to music, art and stories. Consider whether they are beginning to talk about their feelings and to empathise with the feelings of others. Take into account whether staff help them to do this by, for example, sharing their own feelings with the children.

Assess whether children's self-confidence is increased through having a sense of belonging. Take into account whether staff know the children well and give them opportunities to contribute their experience, knowledge and ideas. Evaluate how children learn to show care and concern for themselves and begin to cope with their own needs.

Take account of how staff support children to develop and respect their own culture, for example in encouraging children to talk about their home and community life.

Making relationships (cluster 3 in the notebook):

- form good relationships with adults and peers
- work as part of a group or class, taking turns and sharing fairly, understanding that there needs to be agreed values and codes of behaviour for groups of people, including adults and children, to work together harmoniously.

When young children first join a setting, you may see that they stay close to one adult and gradually learn to participate in a group and relate to other adults. You should observe whether adults respond promptly and with interest to children's discoveries, information and news. Check whether staff enable children to begin to relate to other children in the setting, for example by encouraging them to work together in different groups. Note how older children begin to show their social skills by having regard for other children as they play, listening to each other, sharing equipment and understanding the agreed rules for working together.

Behaviour and self-control (cluster 4 in the notebook):

- understand what is right, what is wrong, and why
- consider the consequences of their words and actions for themselves and for others.

Determine whether children are learning to manage their behaviour through working and playing in an environment that sets, explains and maintains clear and consistent limits. Take into account how they are supported to learn to show care and concern for others, living things and their environment. Consider whether older and more mature children begin to understand the effects of what they say and do for themselves and others. Find out how the setting assists children to develop moral behaviour, for example through the use of well-chosen stories and sensitive discussions of incidents that arise in the course of everyday events. You should note whether children are starting to become self-disciplined rather than simply 'doing what they are told'.

Self-care (cluster 5 in notebook):

- dress and undress independently and manage their own personal hygiene
- select and use activities and resources independently.

Evaluate whether during work, play and daily routines children are developing personal independence, for example, in matters of dressing and hygiene. Note if children are given time and encouragement to become proficient, for example in putting on shoes, and to practise more difficult skills, such as tying. Consider the extent to which adults structure the environment to enable children to take initiative and become increasingly self-sufficient in choosing activities and selecting resources for themselves. Evaluate how much children can do for themselves in all areas of learning.

Notebook extract

All chd. show gd. levels of independence in dressing and personal hygiene. Older chn. help younger e.g. changing clothes, shoes for physical activity. 3YOs select activities/resources during 30 min period at end of session (obs) but 4YOs' day is entirely directed by adults – structured timetable, no free choice except playtimes. (plans and obs)

Contributes to judgement that children's progress in PSED has significant weaknesses.

Sense of community (cluster 6 in notebook):

- understand that people have different needs, views, cultures and beliefs, which need to be treated with respect
- understand that they can expect others to treat their needs, views, cultures and beliefs with respect.

You should expect to see children joining in activities and talking with each other about experiences from different parts of their lives. Younger children should have opportunities to develop a sense of themselves as a member of different communities, for example their family and the setting. Consider whether the materials and images used and displayed in the setting are accurate and non-stereotypical.

Evaluate how well children are beginning to understand that people have many things in common as well as being different. Note how the staff enable older and more mature children to acknowledge positively other cultures and beliefs. It is important to note whether children are tolerant of others.

Notebook extract

Chd. attending are from different racial and cultural backgrounds. Lots of conversation about what they do at home/with families. Many books have multi-cultural focus. Staff use these very well to promote discussion of different customs and values. Parents make gd. contribution e.g. food/dress.

Contributes to judgement that children's progress in PSED is very good.

Communication, language and literacy (CLL)

Inspection focus

Communication, language and literacy depend on learning and being competent in a number of essential skills. This is at the heart of young children's learning. Sufficient time and opportunities should be given for children to develop and practise the four elements of speaking, listening, reading and writing, with the emphasis on learning through talk. Notice the way staff use language to further children's thinking. For example, how they engage children by talking to them, repeating children's phrases, rewording, questioning and feeding in new vocabulary.

You must consider how well the setting provides for children whose first language is not English and for those with special educational needs. Note what support is given to them and how they are helped to understand what is being read or discussed.

Guidance on evaluating children's progress towards the early learning goals

Language for communication (cluster 1 in notebook):

- interact with others, negotiating plans and activities and taking turns in conversation
- enjoy listening to and using spoken and written language, and readily turn to it in their play and learning
- sustain attentive listening, responding to what they have heard by relevant comments, questions or actions
- listen with enjoyment, and respond to stories, songs and other music, rhymes and poems and make up their own stories, songs, rhymes and poems
- extend their vocabulary, exploring the meaning and sounds of new words
- speak clearly and audibly with confidence and control and show awareness of the listener, for example by their use of conventions such as greetings, 'please' and 'thank you'.

Observe how readily children interact with others, and whether they are becoming confident to initiate a conversation. In addition, observe how children use language in their play. They will be progressing from single-word responses or statements to more complex sentences and questions. Older children will probably be able to take turns in a conversation and pay attention to what others say. They will be learning how to give clear instructions and will know how to use some common expressions, for example for greeting or thanking people. Clarity of speech will

depend on the individual's stage of development, but three and four year olds will generally persevere in making themselves understood.

Relate your evaluation of children's ability to use talk to negotiate to your evidence for making relationships under personal, social and emotional development.

All children should listen and respond with enjoyment and attention to favourite stories, songs and rhymes, and make up their own. The younger children, or those with special needs, are more likely to be able to listen in small groups or one to one. Older children will be making up their own stories.

You should evaluate the extent to which children show interest in words and enjoy using new ones. Some of the new vocabulary may come from books or from significant experiences.

Language for thinking (cluster 2 in notebook):

- use language to imagine and recreate roles and experiences
- use talk to organise, sequence and clarify thinking, ideas, feelings and events.

You should note how children talk about what they are doing. They are likely to be quiet in some activities and talkative in others, but where they know the language concerned with an activity - for example, constructing a model - they are more likely to talk about their ideas. Younger children will tend to stick to the 'here and now' and explain through action as well as words, but increasingly they will use language to recall past experience, to think about the future, and to connect ideas. They will use language in their imaginative play to try out new roles and experiences. Note whether staff ask children to say what they are going to do or to explain how things work and if children are encouraged to predict what might happen and why they think this.

Notebook extract

4YO not encouraged to explain what he was trying to do – unsuccessful attempt to complete construction; no discussion of what else to try. (obs)

v. little opp. for children to speculate or to reflect on past events e.g. no discussion after visit to the park

Contributes to judgement that children's progress in CLL has significant weaknesses or is poor.

Linking sounds and letters (cluster 3 in notebook):

- hear and say initial and final sounds in words, and short vowel sounds within words
- link sounds to letters, naming and sounding the letters of the alphabet
- use their phonic knowledge to write simple regular words and make phonetically plausible attempts at more complex words.

Even the youngest children will show their enjoyment of rhyme and rhythm. During activities designed for other purposes, for example music, they will be listening and discriminating between sounds. They will recognise the rhythm in words and older children will enjoy making up nonsense rhymes. You should evaluate whether children are helped to become aware of sounds in words, and to know which letters represent some of the sounds. Towards the end of the Foundation Stage most should recognise initial and final sounds in words and begin to recognise middle sounds within words.

Reading (cluster 4 in notebook):

- explore and experiment with sounds, words and texts
- retell narratives in the correct sequence, drawing on language patterns of stories
- read a range of familiar and common words and simple sentences independently
- know that print carries meaning and, in English, is read from left to right and top to bottom
- show an understanding of the elements of stories, such as main character, sequence of events, and openings, and how information can be found in non-fiction texts to answer questions about where, who, why and how.

You should evaluate the extent to which children share and enjoy a wide range of stories, poems and information books. In doing so, take into account whether staff have provided an environment which reflects an interest in print of all kinds, and whether they encourage children to pay close attention to the features and purpose of written language in their surroundings. You should note whether the children are helped to talk about some of the features in stories such as the main characters and events, or typical beginnings and endings. ('Once upon a time...' 'They lived happily ever after.')

Children should be handling books confidently. Younger children will look through simple information texts (for example books or computer programmes) with

interest and talk about the pictures. Older children will begin to use them to find things out. They will be beginning to recognise familiar words, such as their names, signs such as 'exit', or the words of favourite stories. You should take into account whether staff plan opportunities to do this in an environment which reflects an interest in print of all kinds.

Notebook extract

More able 4YOs recognise first names on coat pegs (records indicate they could do this on entry). But can't find their friend's or one with the letter that begins their name; can't read labels around room. Show little interest in print; adults don't draw attention to it. No children observed turning to books for pleasure – reading corner uninviting and unused by children and staff. Two children with EAL v. much on side-lines; rarely spoken to directly – little attempt to draw them into conversations.

Contributes to a judgement that progress in CLL is poor.

Writing (cluster 5 in notebook):

- use their phonic knowledge to write simple regular words and make phonetically plausible attempts at more complex words
- attempt writing for different purposes, using features of different forms such as lists, stories and instructions
- write their own names and other things such as labels and captions and begin to form simple sentences, sometimes using punctuation.

You should note whether children are using their growing literacy skills for real purposes, such as writing and receiving letters. Take into account whether adults give them the opportunity to see people writing, talk about what they are doing, and experiment with writing for themselves. Young children will use marks and letter shapes as part of their play, for example, making lists or cards, and sometimes explain what their message says. Consider the extent to which older children attempt to use writing to communicate without prompting. They may begin to use their phonic knowledge and match the sounds of words to letters. They might begin to write their name and may have a go at writing other simple words. Consider whether staff create real reasons for doing this, such as making simple books, signing lists, or writing captions for photographs.

Handwriting

Early learning goal (cluster 6 in notebook):

- use a pencil and hold it effectively to form recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed.

You will need to evaluate how effectively children are supported in developing the skills needed for forming letters. Younger children should have opportunities to manipulate objects, to make free movements with large brushes and practise repeating patterns of movement in games. They should have plenty of opportunity to write letter shapes as they develop more control. Take into account whether these activities have meaning for the child and do not rely on mindless copying.

Notebook extract

Children form letters in sand and foam. Write first name on their painting. Older children are making an alphabet book but not helped to hold pencils correctly.

Contributes to a judgement that progress in CLL is generally good.

Mathematical development (MA)

Inspection focus

Mathematical development, including numeracy, depends on children becoming competent in learning and using several key skills. Mathematical learning will take place during many different activities; those which focus on mathematics and those from which mathematics can be drawn out. Much of the work will involve numbers, but children should have a balanced programme with work on shape and measures, patterns, making connections and seeing relationships. They should be using mathematical language in all of these activities. Problem solving skills and the idea of 'pattern' run through the different aspects of mathematics should be developed across a range of activities. Children with difficulties in understanding and communicating in spoken English should be given time and support to understand and develop specific mathematical language. Children are likely to make good progress in this area of learning when they develop their skills through a wide variety of enjoyable, practical activities including stories, songs, games and imaginative play, puzzles, patterns and solving problems.

Guidance on evaluating children's progress towards the early learning goals

Numbers as labels and for counting (cluster 1 in notebook):

- say and use number names in order in familiar contexts
- count reliably up to 10 everyday objects
- recognise numerals 1 to 9
- use developing mathematical ideas and methods to solve practical problems.

You should evaluate whether young children are encouraged to show an interest in numbers and counting. They should enjoy and join in number rhymes and songs; counting up and back. Take into account how effectively staff ask questions that model and encourage the use of number language.

Assess whether children are beginning to show confidence with numbers by initiating or requesting number activities. Note how effectively children are supported in developing the skills needed for counting. You should expect to see children attempting to count independently. Younger children should be helped to begin saying numbers in the correct order and recognise the number of objects in a small group. Determine whether older children are beginning to use one number name for each item they count. Take into account whether these activities have some meaning for the child.

At an early stage children will notice where numbers are used in daily life and begin to recognise their form. Take account of whether they increase their understanding by exploring and handling numerals. Note whether children see numbers as labels in their environment, through charts or friezes, price lists in a 'shop', etc. You should evaluate whether older children are beginning to represent numbers using fingers, marks on paper or pictures. Older and more mature children should begin to select the correct numeral to represent a number of objects.

You will need to evaluate whether children who are confident in number are using mathematical ideas to solve problems.

Calculating (cluster 2 in notebook):

- in practical activities and discussion begin to use the vocabulary involved in adding and subtracting
- use language such as 'more' or 'less' to compare two numbers
- find one more or one less than a number from one to 10
- begin to relate addition to combining two groups of objects and subtraction to 'taking away'.

Calculating at this stage is about using numbers in practical contexts, talking about numbers in everyday activities and beginning to make logical deductions about these numbers. You should look for such activities as they underpin the skills of subtraction, addition, division and multiplication.

You should evaluate whether children can sort items according to different criteria and recognise when they have the same number or a different number. Note language such as 'more', 'same', 'less' and 'fewer'. Judge whether children are beginning to use their knowledge to solve simple number problems. Younger children may, for example, compare the number of children and the number of chairs to see if there are enough for everyone. Take account of how older children are supported to increase these skills, for example to begin sharing out a group of objects, including groups where some objects are left over.

Note if children are beginning to learn to record what they have done, for example, by drawing or tallying. Take into account whether this recording is purposeful and does not rely on a mechanical completion of worksheets.

Assess if children who are secure in the order of numbers are beginning to count on from numbers other than one, and can identify a number that is one more, or one less, than a given number. Note if children start to predict how many will be left when one or two are taken away. Evaluate whether older and more mature children begin to use the language of adding and subtracting in practical activities and begin to relate addition to combining groups of objects and subtraction to taking away.

Notebook extract

Chn. confidently identify one more/less in number songs – e.g. how many monkeys left on the bed? 'One elephant went out to play'. 4YO's count on from number 5 (chn in group) when two more join in. Begin to add/subt and record numbers in practical activities e.g. adding and taking away 1p and 2p pieces when paying in shop; adding together the number of cars and of vans in (setting's) car park.

Contributes to a judgement that progress in MA is very good.

Shape, space and measure (cluster 3 in notebook):

- use language such as 'greater', 'smaller', 'heavier' or 'lighter' to compare quantities
- talk about, recognise and recreate simple patterns
- use language such as 'circle' or 'bigger' to describe the shape and size of solids and flat shapes
- use everyday words to describe position
- use developing mathematical ideas and methods to solve practical problems.

Most young children show an interest in shape. You should expect to see them taking notice of shapes in the environment. They should begin to show awareness of similarities and differences in shape and size, for instance when sorting and matching everyday objects.

Assess if children are starting to use language such as, 'ball shape', 'box shape', 'in', 'under' and 'big' and 'little', to describe shape, position and measures in many situations. Evaluate whether children increase their awareness of shape and space by taking part in sustained construction activities.

As they explore, children begin to arrange shapes to create pictures and patterns. You should expect to see young children match shapes by recognising similarities and orientation, for instance in a shape puzzle. Note if older children use descriptive language, such as 'same because' and 'different because' and later begin to use some mathematical names for solid and flat shapes. Assess if children are beginning to use this knowledge to look for patterns around them, such as those on brick walls, floor tiles, carpets and clothes, as well as patterns in nature.

Children should be developing an understanding of measure in practical activities. Note if they are helped to make comparisons by using uniform, non-standard units of measure, for example interlocking cubes or sticks of the same size.

Notebook extract

Children are not developing an awareness of measure when filling and emptying containers in sand/water (not encouraged to recognise or describe full/empty). Neither 3YOs nor 4YOs confident in comparing the lengths of scarves when dressing up. No support to help them to do so.

Contributes to judgement that progress in MA has significant weaknesses.

You need to evaluate whether children who are confident in shape, space and measure are using mathematical ideas to solve problems such as making a bed that is suitable for a particular doll or instructing a programmable toy.

Knowledge and understanding of the world (KUW)

Inspection focus

The early learning goals covered in this area of learning contribute to children's social and cultural awareness and help them to make sense of the world. They provide them with the important skills, knowledge and understanding that are the foundation for later work in history, geography, science and technology. Children are likely to achieve well in this area of learning when they work and play in an interesting environment, learning to observe, explore, question, gather information and satisfy their curiosity through first-hand experiences.

Guidance on evaluating children's progress towards the early learning goals

Exploration and investigation (cluster 1 in notebook):

- investigate objects and materials by using all of their senses as appropriate
- find out about, and identify, some features of living things, objects and events they observe
- look closely at similarities, differences, patterns and change
- ask questions about why things happen and how things work.

Evaluate whether children are given the time and encouragement to use all their senses to investigate a wide range of materials. Consider whether they have opportunities to play with, talk about and use collections of objects that have different features, and whether they are able to work in different ways. Take into account whether adults model investigative behaviour and raise open-ended questions that encourage children to seek explanations. Find out if children have opportunities to talk about features of objects seen in photographs or visits to the local area.

You need to assess whether children are developing the skills of focused observation. Evaluate to what extent children begin to comment on similar and dissimilar properties in objects and if older and more mature children observe change over time. Note if children are beginning to use questions to find out why things happen, gather information about how things work and suggest answers. They should be starting to describe and record their own observations, for example in drawings, models, photographs or writing.

Notebook extract

Children explore living things and objects – caterpillar, wormery, fir cones and conkers; know their names; describe 'fuzzy' caterpillar / 'prickly' fir cone. Look closely at worms and comment on pattern of pathways they have made. Plenty of time given to child with SEN (limited small muscle control) to look and handle objects.

Contributes to a judgement that progress in KUW is very good.

Designing and making skills (cluster 2 in notebook):

- build and construct with a wide range of objects, selecting appropriate resources, and adapting their work where necessary
- select the tools and techniques they need to shape, assemble and join materials they are using.

Experimentation is essential for children to develop construction skills. Assess whether children have sufficient time, space and appropriate materials to explore different ways of cutting, joining and building for their own purposes. As children progress they should learn to discuss the purposes for a design and use new techniques to refine their construction. You should expect to see children increasingly selecting their own resources.

Information and communication technology (cluster 3 in notebook):

- find out about and identify the uses of everyday technology and use information and communication technology and programmable toys to support their learning.

Evaluate whether children's attention is drawn to the use and importance of technology in our everyday lives. You should expect to see children showing an awareness of the technology around them, for instance, telephones, lights, washing machines and cash registers. Take account of whether younger children learn simple skills such as switching equipment on and off, while older or more mature children begin to use technological equipment, for example programmable toys, electronic learning aids or computers, to support their learning.

Notebook extract for a playgroup

Children play with till, telephone and mock conveyor belt in supermarket role play – show awareness of how these are used, following visit to supermarket.

Contributes to a judgement that progress in KUW is generally good or better.

A sense of time (cluster 4 in notebook):

- find out about past and present events in their own lives, and in those of their families and other people they know.

Notice whether children talk about significant things that have happened to them. Consider whether adults show an interest in the children's lives and experiences and use appropriate vocabulary in conversations to support children's understanding, for example 'yesterday', 'old', 'now' and 'then'.

Evaluate the extent to which older children begin to differentiate between past and present. From the children's play and teacher-directed activities, judge children's confidence and ability to examine and talk about, for example, photographs, books, objects and so on, which remind them of past events in their own lives and the lives of others in the community.

A sense of place (cluster 5 in notebook):

- observe, find out about and identify features in the place they live and the natural world
- find out about their environment, and talk about those features they like and dislike.

Assess the extent to which children's natural curiosity about their surroundings, families, homes and communities is supported by the staff. Take into account whether outdoor activities enable children to explore the natural world. Visits and/or photographs of the local area should be used to help children learn to talk about features of their environment and local community. Find out if younger children are beginning to use appropriate vocabulary; for example, 'house', 'flat', 'town' to help them make distinctions in their observations. Note whether older children are beginning to use words such as 'busy', 'quiet', 'noisy' to express their opinions about environments. You should expect to see, for example, young children applying their knowledge to create their own 'small world' environments. Older children should be increasing their skills, for instance by recording their observations in drawings or creating simple maps and plans.

Notebook extract

Staff make little attempt to explain the simple map-making activity of the local area. No discussion of where each child lives/shops/school etc. No vocabulary about place and position introduced. Children unclear about the purpose of the task.

Contributes to a judgement that progress in KUW has significant weaknesses or is poor.

Cultures and beliefs (cluster 6 in notebook):

- begin to know about their own cultures and beliefs and those of other people.

Evaluate whether children are involved in discussions and investigations to increase their knowledge about special events in their own lives and cultures and to gain an awareness of beliefs and cultures outside their immediate experience. They may, for example, look at books, including those which show different languages, and handle a variety of artefacts. Consider whether the setting increases children's awareness, for instance by inviting visitors from a range of religious and ethnic backgrounds into the setting.

There is no requirement for children to celebrate specific festivals. Settings should, however, ensure that children are developing respect for a range of cultures and beliefs.

The evaluation of this early learning goal should relate to your evaluation of children's sense of community which is within the area of personal, social and emotional development.

Physical development (PD)

Inspection focus

Young children learn through being active, so their physical development is part of all other aspects of their learning.

This area focuses on children developing physical control of the way they move their bodies and the way they handle tools and equipment. The skills they learn will form the foundation for developing their attitudes and sporting skills in the future. Children should enjoy physical activities so that they develop positive attitudes to exercise and a growing awareness of the importance of physical exercise to stay healthy. Children are likely to achieve well in this area of learning when they are regularly offered appropriate physical challenges in a safe, well-planned environment, and are given sufficient time to use a range of equipment. Children who lack confidence, or have physical disabilities, should be given additional support to develop their skills and become increasingly independent.

Some settings may not have immediate access to outdoor play space. You will need to consider the arrangements made to enable children regularly to use a range of small and large equipment. Provision may be made indoors. Arrangements may include regular visits to the park, sharing play space with another setting, or visiting an indoor area with climbing and balancing equipment or 'soft play' facilities.

If the weather is poor during your visit and children are unable to use the outdoor area, you may have difficulty in assessing some aspects of this area of learning. You will need to discuss with the staff what they normally do, scrutinise the planning and consider whether there is sufficient alternative physical activity.

Guidance on evaluating the progress children make in the early learning goals

Movement (cluster 1 in notebook):

- move with confidence, imagination and in safety
- move with control and co-ordination
- travel around, under, over and through balancing and climbing equipment.

Inspectors should evaluate how children control their movements through activities such as musical statues, simple movement games and moving to music. You should note whether they have sufficient opportunities to discover the many different ways of moving their bodies and expect to see specific guidance from staff. Many skills will be improved through opportunities for children to practise. Note whether children have sufficient time to repeat and become confident in their actions and persevere with their efforts. As children use and play with the

equipment you should see adults suggesting to children how they could use familiar equipment in different ways, such as balancing along a beam sideways or approaching the climbing equipment from a new angle. You should also note whether children can avoid obstacles and control their speed when they are moving freely.

Notebook extract

Limited planning and resources. No apparatus for climbing and balancing outdoors, only very small toddler slide indoors – used occasionally, no visits to other play areas. Only bikes are used outdoors. Outdoor play is timetabled, but don't seem to go out very often. Fine today, not too cold (but staff say it is). Video today instead.

'Language activity' – children roll ball to each other and say names, but very little phys. skill dev – not main focus.

4YOs cutting out circles, triangles use scissors skilfully. Clear progress from samples of random and irregular cutting in chln's work folders.

Contributes to a judgement that progress in PD has significant weaknesses or is poor.

A sense of space (cluster 2 in notebook):

- show awareness of space, of themselves and of others.

Evaluate children's awareness of each other as they move around, whether they can work out how much room they will need, and whether they can negotiate using the space successfully when they are playing together.

Health and bodily awareness (cluster 3 in notebook):

- recognise the importance of keeping healthy and those things which contribute to this
- recognise the changes that happen to their bodies when they are active.

Observe if the children have a growing awareness of what happens to their bodies when they are active, such as feeling hot, being out of breath, their heart beating faster, needing a drink and needing a rest. Note whether they talk about simple health issues such as washing hands, getting enough sleep, and so on. Some of this evidence may come from children's role-play.

Take account of how adults are helping children to understand the importance of keeping healthy – for example, explaining why they should wash their hands before eating and after going to the toilet. Take account, too, of whether adults show sensitivity towards varying family and cultural expectations.

Notebook extract

3YOs enjoy running up and down a small grassy slope. Adult develops this into a game of 'follow the leader'; other children join in, do hopping, skipping, jumping and lots of arm actions. Lots of fun, children laughing. After a while they all sit down for a rest and talk about all the things their bodies can do. Adult asks children how they feel. 'Tired', 'hot'. They feel their hearts beating.

Contributes to a judgement that progress in PD is very good.

Using equipment (cluster 4 in notebook):

- use a range of small and large equipment.

The equipment and the way adults encourage children to use it should provide sufficient challenge for children at different stages of development. Children should be able to use large equipment in imaginative ways. For example, you should expect to see them constructing with large materials, and showing increasing control in using slides and swings, etc. Expect to see such things as trolleys and prams to push and pull, and wheeled toys to ride. Note whether children use a range of small equipment frequently; for example, beanbags, balls and hoops.

Using tools and materials (cluster 5 in notebook):

- handle tools, objects, construction and malleable materials safely and with increasing control.

Evaluate children's control and hand-eye co-ordination in using tools and other materials. Note if staff show children how to use equipment safely and independently. Children should be using a range of malleable materials both with and without tools.

Creative development (CD)

Inspection focus

Creativity is fundamental to successful learning. The aspects covered in this area of learning include art, music, dance, role play and imaginative play. Being creative enables children to make connections between one area of learning and another and so extend their understanding. Children are likely to achieve well in this area when they experience a rich environment in which creativity is valued; when staff teach children how to use materials and tools; and when staff provide a range of opportunities to allow children to use these skills imaginatively and in their own way. All children, including those with physical disabilities or who find it difficult to communicate through spoken language, should be encouraged to explore, experience and respond through all their senses.

You are unlikely to be able to see the full range of music and movement, drama and role play during the inspection visit. Discussion with staff can establish how regularly they provide time for creative activities and whether there is a sufficient range of experiences. Children sometimes take home their art work, but there may be samples that have been saved or photographs of displays as well as evidence from plans and records.

Guidance on evaluating children's progress towards the early learning goals

Exploring media and materials (cluster 1 in notebook):

- explore colour, texture, shape, form and space in two or three dimensions.

Inspectors should consider what opportunities there are for children to learn through their senses, for example by feeling the textures of different fabrics, being encouraged to smell plants and flowers or look at a picture. You should evaluate how far children are exploring colour and texture, for example in mixing paints themselves or choosing materials for a collage. You should also take into account whether they are working in two and three dimensions and on both a large and small scale.

Notebook extract

Children opening broad bean pods with great excitement, feeling the inside. Staff stimulate imagination – 'all soft like a blanket, like a little bed', 'smells like grass' – and change programme to allow children plenty of time to explore. Extended in dance session – climbing beanstalks.

Contributes to a judgement that progress in CD is very good.

Music (cluster 2 in notebook):

- recognise and explore how sounds can be changed, sing simple songs from memory, recognise repeated sounds and sound patterns and match movements to music.

Children will become familiar with sounds and music by being encouraged to listen carefully to a varied repertoire and to respond in their own way. Initially their movements to music and use of instruments are likely to be random and uncontrolled. With increasing practice they will learn to move rhythmically and use instruments to make sounds in different ways. Evaluate how confident and inventive children are when exploring sounds, how sensitive they are to mood, and whether they are acquiring a wide repertoire of songs.

Imagination (cluster 3 in notebook):

- use their imagination in art and design, music, dance, imaginative and role play and stories.

At first young children will engage in role play based on their own experiences. Note when children move on from this and introduce a story line or different story characters into their imaginative play or dance. Take account of how successfully the adults fire children's imagination through exposing them to a range of stimuli and providing appropriate materials. Observe whether the children are helped to talk about their experiences and feelings, and whether they are encouraged to act out their own narratives as part of a group.

Notebook extract

3YOs having a teddy bears picnic, talking to bears and passing pretend cups. Staff play records and help set out tablecloth but tend to take over – this prevents children using their own ideas and curtails their play. Drift away.

Contributes to a judgement that progress in CD has significant weaknesses.

Responding, expressing and communicating ideas (cluster 4 in notebook)

- respond in a variety of ways to what they see, hear, smell, touch and feel
- express and communicate their ideas, thoughts and feelings by using a widening range of materials, suitable tools, imaginative and role play, movement, designing and making, and a variety of songs and musical instruments.

Initially most young three year olds will be interested in exploring different media for its own sake. After exploration, and once they have learnt basic art and design skills, children will paint, draw, and make constructions to reflect their own ideas. Consider how familiar children are with different resources such as paint, crayons, glue and adhesive tapes, and if they use them for their own purposes. Evaluate if children have sufficient time and freedom to explore their own ideas and whether they are given sensitive support when they meet problems that frustrate them.

When they experience a range of stimuli, some three year olds may find it difficult to express their response in words. Older children should be able to respond to these experiences, through their comments and play, and in their drawing, paintings and models. Note how well children communicate their experiences and in what depth and detail they do this.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Inspection focus

Young children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC) should be cultivated throughout the whole curriculum. The values that contribute to the successful fostering of SMSC are closely related to children's personal, social and emotional development. Evidence should be sought across all relevant early learning goals and in the quality of teaching. Use your professional judgement to evaluate the impact of weaknesses in teaching in terms of the development of children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. If you judge that key weaknesses in teaching mean that one or more of the four aspects of SMSC is unsatisfactory, then your overall judgement will be that SMSC 'is not fostered'. This may have implications for the overall judgement about the acceptability of the provision.

An overall judgement about children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development must be recorded in the 'Inspection findings' section of your notebook and reported at the end of the report section for the six areas of learning. The reasons for the judgement should be implicit in the strengths and weaknesses that you identify, particularly for personal, social and emotional development.

Spiritual development

Children's spiritual development is closely related to the early learning goals for: confidence and self-esteem; language for thinking; cultures and beliefs; and responding, expressing and communicating ideas. Spiritual development involves the child's early search for the meaning and purpose of life. In some settings, religious education will play a significant part. However, spiritual development does not depend on a religious programme. Consider whether children show wonder, for example when looking at insects. Children should be able to reflect and have tranquil moments, for instance when listening to music. Take into account how staff help children share their beliefs and feelings, and recognise that others may think differently.

Moral development

Children's moral development is closely related to the early learning goals for behaviour and self-control. Children should be learning to manage their behaviour. Older children should behave considerately most of the time and show caring attitudes when others are upset. Evaluate how children are encouraged to share their understanding about right and wrong, for example in discussion arising from stories. Consider how children are beginning to recognise the difference between an accidental and deliberate act of wrong-doing.

Social development

Children's social development is closely related to the early learning goals for making relationships. Consider how children are encouraged to relate to adults and other children, for example by working with different adults and in different sized groups. Note how children are encouraged to engage in conversation during social situations such as snack times. Evaluate whether children of different religions and cultural backgrounds are encouraged to relate to each other and work together.

Cultural development

Children's cultural development is closely related to the early learning goals for sense of community, cultures and beliefs, and to how children respond, express and communicate ideas. Consider how children's immediate family customs and religious beliefs are shared. Evaluate how well children broaden their experiences, for example by listening to music, looking at pictures, or visiting places of worship in the local community. Note how children are encouraged to show appreciation of other cultures and beliefs, for example by investigating different foods and drinks, looking at books, or handling a range of cultural items.

Examples of notebook extracts for PSED

Majority of children are from local Turkish and Pakistani communities.

Child just back from visit to relations in Pakistan. Staff briefly refer to this at group time. Child's photos shared with others but no questions about places seen or people met – no encouragement for children to talk and share experiences.

No resources available that reflect the cultural background of children. e.g. books, music, role play equipment. Staff say they lack understanding and confidence in this aspect. (disc)

Contributes to a judgement that SMSC is not fostered appropriately.

Staff recreate a calm atmosphere with many moments of quiet reflection – listening to music, stories and sounds e.g. of the sea. Chln's awareness of own culture promoted well – discussion, themes and stories related to naval life in which many of families are involved. Concerns about absent parents and uncertainties handled v. sensitively. Lively discussion about a large cruiser currently in dock which chln had visited. V. excited. Plenty to say – describe size and features (xref CLL and MA).

Contributes to a judgement that SMSC is fostered appropriately.

Children behave considerately at all times. They share resources and negotiate whose turn it is next, without adult intervention. They have a good awareness of expected codes of behaviour, such as being quiet in the book corner. Introduced to songs that reflect the wide range of cultures within the group. Children sing with joy and enthusiasm. (x ref. CD) They are encouraged to reflect on how others live e.g. through visitors such as a trainer of guide dogs for people whose vision is impaired.

Contributes to a judgement that SMSC is fostered appropriately.

Children's behaviour is poor. Staff at a loss to know how to help the most disruptive children negotiate to resolve arguments about equipment, so chln. are not learning to share or develop an understanding of right and wrong. Sit quietly at snack time but this prevents them from developing social and conversational skills. (x ref. CLL) Disruptive behaviour by younger children prevents four year olds from listening quietly during circle time.

Contributes to a judgement that SMSC is not fostered appropriately.

How well are the children taught?

Inspection focus

The teaching children receive is fundamental to the quality of educational provision. It is the main means through which children will be positively inclined to learn, progress and attain or exceed the early learning goals. The staff in any setting will have different kinds of experience and training in working with young children, and will hold different qualifications. Whatever their background and the teaching methods they use, your evaluation must be based on how well the inspection criteria for teaching are met. Your judgements about teaching must relate to your judgements of how well children progress toward the early learning goals in each of the six areas of learning. In other words, you must evaluate what it is about the teaching that contributes to how well the children are learning and making progress in a particular area of learning.

When evaluating the quality of teaching in the setting you should concentrate on:

- whether the teaching is meeting the needs of all children
- what effect the teaching has on the way the children respond, behave, how well they learn and what progress they make
- which aspects of teaching work best or least well.

The following guidance is to help you make a judgement about each of the teaching criteria. Having done this you will then need to consider how good the teaching is, taking into account all your evaluations.

Have a good knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage

Evaluate the extent to which staff are familiar with the stepping stones and early learning goals. Consider whether they recognise important factors about how young children learn, for example through practical and immediate experiences. Take into account whether they are aware that children learn at different rates and need time to explore and apply their learning.

Find out:

- what steps the staff have taken to become familiar with the QCA's *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage*
- how well they plan for and teach the content of the six areas of learning following the guidance, the stepping stones and the early learning goals
- how well they build on what children know already

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- how well they use their knowledge of how children learn when presenting them with new experiences or information.

Plan the curriculum to promote progress towards the early learning goals and the inclusion of all children

Check whether curriculum plans ensure that all six areas of learning are covered. They should give a clear understanding of the purpose of the activities, that is, what the children are intended to learn. Good quality plans will include what children are to do, how they will be grouped, how staff are to be deployed and the resources needed. Plans may show how children's knowledge, understanding and skills can be extended and the activity adapted to suit children who learn at different rates or who have particular needs.

Consider whether plans include information about:

- what the children are intended to learn, what they are to do, how they will be grouped, how staff are to be deployed and the resources needed
- how the activity can be adapted to suit children of different ages who learn at different rates or who have particular needs
- how the inclusion of all children is planned and monitored.

If written plans are limited, discuss with staff how they ensure coverage of the six areas of learning. For example, in small settings staff may agree orally in pre-session meetings what they intend children to learn. In this event, it is helpful to attend the meeting. Note how these intentions match the written programme of activities.

You need to evaluate whether the inclusion of all children is carefully planned and monitored. Children come to the setting with a range of religious, cultural, social and ethnic backgrounds which should be acknowledged and valued.

Notebook extract

(Staff discussion): Staff expect every child to take part in all activities, but are unaware of the need to monitor their participation or plan ways to involve timid three year olds. They know older children are often unruly and disrupt activities. Boys dominate construction play and rarely use the book area. Staff seem to be resigned – say little that they can do about it.

Contributes to a judgement that teaching is poor.

Challenge children and expect the most from them

Observe and note:

- how staff provide opportunities to encourage children to think and to demonstrate what they know and understand
- how well teaching takes account of children's different attainments and reflects high expectations for each child to progress further
- whether staff provide sufficient challenge, for example for older/more able children.

Observations of children, and discussions with them, will indicate the extent to which they understand the activities they are doing and whether they are sufficiently challenging.

Use methods that help all children to learn effectively, taking account of their age, capability, special educational needs, home language and other relevant factors

Observe the extent to which children are truly interested in what they are doing. Consider whether the teaching is helping them to become focused, able to resist distractions and persist for some time. Take into account if these productive times for learning are extended, where appropriate, with an adult working alongside.

Check whether staff help children to acquire new skills that enable them to progress towards an early learning goal, for example holding a paintbrush, or cutting with scissors. You also need to assess whether teaching increases children's knowledge and understanding to further their progress towards these goals. Take into account how staff encourage children to try new experiences. Evaluate whether they intervene sensitively to provide explanations or ask challenging questions that make children think.

Evaluate how well staff:

- build easy and trusting relationships with children
- encourage children to try new experiences
- use varied and suitable teaching methods, for both three and four year olds which include effective interaction in children's play to give clear explanations and offer challenging questions
- provide a learning environment that reflects the community the children come from and the wider world

- promote racial harmony and respect for each child's skin colour
- use materials which reflect diversity and are free from discrimination and stereotyping.

Notebook extract

Staff: Adult explains to three able 4YOs the purpose of a shopping list; shows them her own list – points out clearly how words are organised and letter shapes. Encourages children to 'write' own lists for a party – offers good support to a less confident child. Helper notes on planning chart some points to follow up with this child.

Writing session links well to shopping trip – children 'read' their lists and each child purchases 2 items (each child's shopping list to be filed in their records, dated with brief comment about progress in early literacy).

Contributes to a judgement that the quality of teaching is very good.

All settings in receipt of funding for nursery education must have regard to the *Special Educational Needs Code of Practice*.⁶ You need to evaluate whether a setting fulfils this requirement with the arrangements they put in place for children with special educational needs (SEN).

Take account of how well:

- any management group works with the setting's practitioners to determine the policy and approach to provision for children with SEN
- the person with responsibility for the day-to-day management of the setting works with the special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) and keeps the management group informed about the provision for children with SEN
- all practitioners are involved in the development of the SEN policy and aware of the procedures for identifying, assessing and making provision for children with SEN
- the SENCO works with the manager and colleagues to coordinate the provision for children with SEN to identify particularly through Early Years Action and Early Years Action Plus.

⁶ Published by the DfES (November 2001). You should familiarise yourself with the content of the Code, particularly Chapter 1: 'Principles and Policies', and Chapter 4: 'Identification, Assessment and Provision in Early Years Settings'.

Notebook extract

Good staff deployment – four children with SEN have regular support from one adult. Integrated well within the setting. These children make particularly good progress, e.g. play board games such as snakes and ladders, which they insist on playing right to the end (involves them in concentrating, taking turns and counting).

Contributes to a judgement that the quality of teaching is generally good or better.

Where children are learning English as an additional language consider:

- how accurately any assessment has identified their abilities
- how well staff support these children.

Notebook extract

5 Kosovan children with EAL make good progress in spoken language. Children spend part of session sharing stories with bilingual helper who uses visual clues and gestures very effectively to increase children's understanding.

Contributes to a judgement that teaching is generally good or better.

Manage children well and have high expectations for behaviour

Evaluate how well adults help children understand what is expected of them in terms of acceptable behaviour. Older four year olds should show that, on most occasions, they are able to share, take turns and take part in a group activity. Younger children may find this more difficult, but should show signs of developing this behaviour. Consider whether children respond to the boundaries of behaviour set; not only to demonstrate compliant behaviour, but also to begin to understand the need for self-discipline and consideration for others.

Watch to see whether staff

- use positive behaviour strategies
- help children understand what is expected of them in terms of acceptable behaviour
- give children opportunities to initiate or choose an activity for themselves

-
- help children respond to the boundaries of behaviour set; not only to demonstrate compliant behaviour, but also to begin to understand the need for self-discipline and consideration for others.

Make effective use of time and resources, including accommodation

Observe whether the staff

- work directly with children for much of the time
- provide an inviting environment that is organised to help children to be independent
- make effective use of what is available, using indoor and outdoor accommodation as well as the resources for teaching, to enable children to attain the early learning goals.

Use assessments of children's progress to guide their planning and teaching

Find out whether:

- staff make regular assessments that identify children's achievements, any learning difficulties they may have and their progress over time
- assessments are systematic, informative, objective and sufficiently linked to the stepping stones and early learning goals
- the information gained from assessments is used to help children move to the next stage in their learning.

Pitching your judgement for teaching

The following guidance illustrates where to pitch your summary judgement on teaching. **This does not represent a formula**, but includes some key features that might characterise the judgements. Your summary judgement for how well the children are taught should reflect the overall balance of strengths and weaknesses.

Very good

Children are confident and secure in the setting and considerate of others. They enjoy the activities and make rapid strides in learning. They are achieving their potential as young learners because the staff have an excellent understanding of the stepping stones and early learning goals, and a firm grip on how young children learn. The staff have an easy rapport with the children and warm relationship with them. They are enthusiastic, committed and use varied and often exciting methods, to introduce new skills and knowledge. They consistently

pitch questions at the right level for each child. Questions encourage children to think, communicate, and help them move on in their learning. Staff observe and assess aspects of children's behaviour and learning regularly; they use this information to plan what children need to learn next. Activities are presented at a level which enable three year olds and immature four year olds to participate, and challenge older and more able children. Sessions are very well organised to allow children to learn effectively in different sized groups. Resources and accommodation are used very effectively to promote all children's learning.

Generally good

Children enjoy their activities and respond appropriately to stated boundaries of behaviour. They make reasonable progress because all staff have sufficient understanding of how children learn, although some staff, such as those who are less experienced, are unsure of the stepping stones in some areas, for example mathematics. Relationships are secure; adult-led activities are clearly introduced and staff question children to ensure that they have understood aspects of new learning. Staff make satisfactory use of their time, giving individual help to children who are having difficulty learning. They sometimes leave older children too much to their own devices. Assessment is inconsistent. Staff keep pertinent records for the three year olds and these are used well to give children support. Assessment and planning for older and more able children is less systematic. Expectations of children's learning are not always sufficiently high. Staff use the resources and accommodation appropriately to promote all children's learning.

Teaching will have **significant weaknesses** if children are making limited progress towards the early learning goals and **more than one** of the following are present. Teaching will be **poor** if several of these are happening:

- staff's knowledge and understanding is not good enough to promote progress towards the early learning goals
- the range of activities is too narrow to promote the progress towards the early learning goals in the six areas of learning
- activities are poorly planned and organised, and their purpose is unclear to children
- staff are unable to manage children well and have unclear expectations of behaviour
- staff have low expectations of children and offer little challenge
- teaching methods are inappropriate and fail to engage all children and hinder their progress
- insufficient use is made of staff, time, resources and the accommodation
- assessment is weak and staff fail to take account of children's knowledge, skills and interests when planning the next steps in learning.

Examples of report extracts

The children make rapid progress because the teaching is **very good**. Staff understand how to involve all children and are very well acquainted with the requirements of the Foundation Stage. They arrange the outdoor area, playrooms and resources imaginatively to encourage the children to make decisions and to be independent. Children's interest is captured because staff provide many varied and exciting activities. They pay particular attention to encouraging children who lack confidence and are skilled in supporting those who find it difficult to behave appropriately. Staff plan very well-balanced opportunities for the children to practise previously acquired skills, and help them to develop new ones. They explain things clearly and use questions that encourage children to think.

Staff are deployed well, and use their time effectively to support children in their learning. They observe and assess aspects of children's development and learning regularly and frequently. They draw on these detailed assessments in planning what children need to learn next.

The quality of teaching is **generally good**. Most staff understand how three and four year old children learn and are familiar with the stepping stones and early learning goals. They translate them effectively into practice, with the exception of mathematics. In this area, staff are less aware of the importance of helping children to learn about number and mathematical ideas through practical activities and daily routines.

The staff have good relationships with the children and high expectations for children's behaviour. The organisation of the sessions and management of the children is a particular strength of the teaching. Children experience a good balance of activities; they work in different-sized groups with an adult or alone. Staff regularly assess and record children's progress towards the early learning goals, but much of the information is not used to plan the daily activities, other than for those with special educational needs.

Teaching has **significant weaknesses**, which hinders the progress of the four year olds in aspects of their learning. All staff have good relationships with children and have high expectations of their behaviour. They make imaginative use of the limited space and organise resources to encourage children's choice and independence. Activities enable the three year old children to follow their interests and acquire new skills. Staff are particularly successful at promoting children's social and linguistic skills, and their eagerness to explore and find out more.

The teaching of the four year olds is less effective and too little is expected of them. Staff provide a broad range of activities linked to the six areas of learning, but are unsure of the knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes the children need to acquire. Consequently, they do not make the most of activities or ask questions which challenge children to develop their own ideas or to solve problems. Staff use tick charts to record the four year olds' participation in activities and occasionally note what they have achieved. However, little use is made of this information to plan what children need to learn next. This results in repetitive activities and limits the children's progress in mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world and creative development.

Teaching is **poor**. Staff list and lay out activities and resources according to the six areas of learning, but lack understanding of what children are expected to learn from them. They rarely offer explanations or guidance, and many activities are too sedentary and undemanding. As a result, children acquire few new skills; they drift between activities and their behaviour deteriorates. Those children who are learning English as an additional language are reluctant to join in and are given insufficient help and support to do so. Assessment is haphazard and the simple progress records which have recently been introduced are incomplete.

How well is the setting led and managed?

Inspection focus

Good settings are led and managed for the benefit of the children. Your inspection must focus on the extent to which leadership and management create an effective and improving setting where children are safe, feel good about themselves and make progress towards the early learning goals. You must look beyond what policies and procedures are intended to achieve and evaluate their actual effects on children's well being and learning. Your judgements on the effectiveness of leadership and the efficiency of management will include ones you make about staff working with the children as well as those of the Manager/Proprietor's role. **These also must make sense when set against your judgements on teaching and learning.** In most cases your judgement for leadership and management will be the same as that for teaching. This is because strengths and weaknesses in the quality of leadership and management impact on teaching. Where judgements differ, you **must** explain the reasons for this in your report.

The following guidance is to help you make a judgement about each of the leadership and management criteria. Having done this you will need to take account of all your evaluations to reach an overall judgement on the quality of leadership and management.

The leadership of the setting

You should gather evidence from a range of sources to inform your judgement about the quality of the leadership of the setting. Useful sources include:

- the aims stated in the operational plan
- the information given to parents
- discussions with the proprietor, manager, staff
- job descriptions
- notes of appraisals
- records of courses attended
- observation.

Evaluate how well:

- the registered person's and/or manager's vision of the quality of child care and nursery education steer the work of the setting

- the aims reflect a commitment to good relationships and equality of opportunity for all, and how these impact on teaching and learning
- the aims and values of the proprietor/senior staff inspire the work of other staff and influence the quality of their teaching and the children's learning
- the aims are successfully reflected in practice
- the proprietor/senior staff help other staff to teach effectively
- staff understand their roles and responsibilities in developing children's learning
- staff are helped to work together to help all children make progress toward the early learning goals
- the professional development of staff is managed so that teaching and learning is improved.

Notebook extract

Aims stated straightforwardly in operational plan - incl. helping chln. make progress towards the elgs. Beyond this, plan basic and general – staff roles, purpose of each room & some resources. Staff know broadly what they are to do and manager gives clear directions for specific activities. She monitors plans and observes teaching but does not give staff clear points for improvement. (Staff with 3YOs are not making full use of some routines and activities to promote children's dev. and learning – QT)

Contributes to judgement that leadership and management is generally good.

Evidence from a range of sources can be cross referenced to inform your judgement about how effectively the setting fulfils the remaining three criteria.

These may include:

- discussion with staff and parents
- minutes of staff meetings
- action plans
- notes of any monitoring or visits e.g. from external advisors, senior staff or committee members
- observation.

The setting's assessment of its own strengths and weaknesses

Find out whether:

- the setting reviews the effectiveness of what the proprietor/staff/children do
- any evaluations are used to make improvements to teaching and learning
- feedback from parents is gathered and used
- weaknesses identified in previous inspections have been tackled
- the proprietor and senior staff know what is going on throughout the setting, and who is doing a good job.

The setting's monitoring and evaluation of their provision for nursery education

Take account of how well:

- the setting monitors the progress children are making towards the early learning goals
- staff know what works with particular children, especially those with SEN
- all aspects of the provision for nursery education are evaluated and areas for improvement are identified and acted on
- successful teaching strategies are shared and adopted by other staff.

Notebook extract

Staff assess chn's progress – tick charts and post session discussion – not informing planning. No notes for 3YO with SEN.

What chn do is not monitored – some not getting balance of activities – two 4YO boys spent almost all morning in physical play area and constrn play – no individual adult interv.

Contributes to a judgement that leadership and management has significant weaknesses or is poor.

The setting's commitment to improving care and education for all its children

Evaluate how well:

- the setting demonstrates that they have high expectations of the staff, children and their families
- the proprietor and senior staff know what most needs improving
- any improvement made since previous inspections has affected the quality of children's care and learning.

Pitching your judgement for how well the setting is led and managed

The following guidance illustrates where to pitch your summary judgement on leadership and management. **This is not a formula**, but includes some key features that might characterise the judgements. Your summary judgement for how well the setting is led and managed should reflect the overall balance of strengths and weaknesses **and** your judgement for **teaching**.

Very good

Leadership and management are well-established, dynamic and have a very positive impact on children's progress. The setting fulfils its vision to provide high-quality care and education for all children. Well-articulated aims are achieved in practice because the staff are skilful and work very well as a team guided by confident and well-informed management. They have a shared purpose and collaborative approach to children's care and education based on the principles of the *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage*. There is a strong commitment to improvement, and training and the professional development of staff. They recognise that self-evaluation is the key to continuous improvement and rigorously monitor and assess their provision, practice and children's progress. They know their strengths and weaknesses and act on their evaluations to make improvements. They set clear and realistic targets, are clear about how progress will be assessed and evaluate the actions taken for their impact on children's well-being and learning.

Generally good

Leadership and management are competent and effective. Clear and appropriate aims for children's care and education are reasonably understood by practitioners. These are achieved in practice to ensure the provision is good overall and to enable children to make generally good progress towards the early learning goals. Most staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities for children's well-being and learning. They work well together to ensure that the setting runs smoothly. Staff have access to guidance, support and relevant training. They review the quality of their provision, practice and children's progress and take steps to address identified weaknesses.

Leadership and management is likely to have **significant weaknesses** where **more than one** of the following features are present. Leadership and management will be poor if several of these are happening:

- leadership and management have little effect on improving teaching and children's learning
- the setting is disorganised and lacks direction
- the leader and/or manager are complacent or lack confidence and the ability to act decisively
- aims and policies are not understood or achieved consistently in practice
- teamwork is weak
- staff are unsure of their roles and responsibilities
- there is little or no monitoring of the provision and children's progress
- there is a lack of commitment to training and staff development
- teaching has significant weaknesses or is poor.

Examples of report extracts

The manager gives excellent direction for the care and education of the three and four year olds. She is unfailingly positive and highly organised. Both the manager and deputy have worked hard to lead staff in achieving significant improvements in teaching since the last inspection. There is a strong team spirit and staff have well-established systems to review and develop the provision for nursery education. Their teaching is regularly monitored by the manager and her deputy and ways forward agreed. The manager also leads fortnightly review and planning meetings. The common goals identified in these meetings effectively guide staff in planning activities which meet the needs of all the children.

Contributes to an overall judgement that leadership and management are very good.

The play leader ensures that staff and parent helpers know what is expected of them and how children are to be cared for. She takes responsibility for planning educational activities for older children and involves and guides other staff in contributing to this work appropriately. Staff are aware of the aims for children's learning and regularly discuss aspects of the provision for nursery education. But too little attention is given to planning how inconsistencies in practice can be resolved through more clearly focused training and support.

Contributes to an overall judgement that leadership and management are generally good.

The pre-school has appropriate aims for children's care and learning. Many of these are achieved in practice because the staff are experienced and have a generally good understanding of the needs of young children and how they learn. They plan and provide an appropriate range of activities and experiences and keep brief records of children's progress. However, the supervisor has not established any system to regularly monitor and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of teaching or children's learning. The lack of a systematic review of practice means that staff are unaware of weaknesses in the provision for mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world, and creative development. They take advantage of training opportunities that interest particular individuals but do not have any way to link these to the improvements needed in teaching and learning.

Contributes to an overall judgement that leadership and management has significant weaknesses.

Management of the nursery is left to key staff who have responsibility for each room. The manager spends most of her time on administrative tasks such as maintaining records of attendance and collecting fees. She does little to support and develop the professional and management skills of key staff. Although there is an orderly atmosphere throughout the nursery there is no common purpose or understanding of what the children should learn or how they should be taught. Consequently children's progress towards the early learning goals is poor. When children move from toddler room to pre-school room they not only experience a change of staff but also a change of routine and inconsistencies in approaches to individual children. Although staff want to improve they rely on their own intuition to judge what is working well. They all lack experience in monitoring how effectively the activities and routines provided are contributing to children's sense of well being and learning.

Contributes to an overall judgement that leadership and management are poor.

How well does the setting work in partnership with parents and carers?

Inspection focus

Parents are children's first and most important educators. When parents and practitioners work together in early years settings, the results have a positive effect on the child's development and learning. The setting is most likely to achieve a successful partnership when there is a two-way flow of information, knowledge and expertise.

When evaluating the quality of the partnership with parents and carers you should concentrate on how well the setting:

- provides parents with relevant information about the setting and children's progress
- seeks the views of parents and values their observations about their child's learning; and works with them to plan the next steps in learning
- works with parents to support children's learning at the setting and at home.

The following guidance is to help you make a judgement about each of the criteria for partnership with parents and carers. Having done this you will need to take account of all your evaluations to reach an overall judgement on the quality of the partnership.

Parents are provided with good quality information about the setting and its provision

Evaluate how well the setting:

- takes account of the needs of all parents to help them understand the Foundation Stage and that funded children should be helped to make progress towards the early learning goals
- informs parents about policies, routines and activities and how these help children learn.

Parents are well informed about their child's achievements and progress

Evaluate how well the setting:

- establishes effective informal and formal channels of communication with parents to discuss children's progress and any concerns
- maintains and shares records of children's learning with parents.

Parents are encouraged to share what they know about their child

Evaluate how well the setting:

- forms successful relationships with parents
- finds out about the child's family, faith, racial and cultural heritage so that familiar experiences, interests and needs can be used as starting points for care, teaching and learning
- seeks and values parents' observations of their child and acts on them
- maintains on-going contact with parents to talk about children's responses to activities in both the family and the setting.

Parents are encouraged to be involved with their child's learning

Evaluate how well the setting:

- eases the transition from home to the setting through effective settling-in procedures
- welcomes parents into the setting
- provides opportunities for parents to share their expertise and knowledge with the children
- encourages parents to continue some play and learning activities at home.

Notebook extract

Discussion with parents of 3 4YOs

Good 'settling-in' arrangements/ stayed with child for several sessions until confident in nursery. Able to talk with key worker on daily basis, usually when collecting child/ can arrange specific time if particularly concerned. 'Home books' really useful for passing on information, e.g. 'Had a late night', 'now knows story of "Hungry Caterpillar" – told me at tea time!' Also discuss how can help at home with a specific target, e.g. sharing toys, listening to a story, cutting out a shape. Discusses development records every half term with key worker. Parents know a lot about how child is getting on.

Contributes to a judgement that partnership with parents is very good.

Notebook extract

Parents unable to stay to settle children, same system used for all – one visit with child then leave them for the session/day. One parent said that it took daughter a long time to settle, felt staff knew best though she's fine now. One new child (w/o parent) distressed (obs)

Most parents work/ not able to join in sessions; few other strategies to involve them in setting. Parents informed by newsletter of topics and activities, but their purpose is not explained. Asked to collect 'junk' for art or boxes for the shop, send in items for interest table. Not given ideas as to how they can help children learn at home. 'They do it all here' (parent of 4YO).

Contributes to a judgement that partnership with parents has significant weaknesses or is poor.

Pitching your judgement about how well the setting works in partnership with parents and carers

The following guidance illustrates where to pitch your summary judgement on partnership with parents. **This is not a formula**, but includes some key features that might characterise the judgements. Your summary judgement for how well the setting works in partnership with parents to promote learning should reflect the overall balance of strengths and weaknesses.

Very good

The setting works very effectively with parents to support children's learning. Parents feel a strong sense of partnership based on mutual trust and confidence in the staff and the setting as a whole. Information about the setting and its provision for nursery education is of high quality, comprehensive and accessible to all parents. Parents and staff value the successful settling-in procedure and the on-going two-way sharing of observations and assessments of children's interests, play and learning which inform planning for the next step in learning. Records of children's progress are of a high standard and systematically shared with all parents. Parents speak confidently and knowledgeably about the setting and what the children are taught. They are actively involved in their children's learning and well informed about how to support this at home.

Generally good

The setting works well with parents to support children's learning. Communication is clear and keeps most parents well informed about the setting and its provision. Parents are satisfied with the settling-in procedures which generally work well. There are regular opportunities for them to speak to staff and share their observations of their children's interests, play and learning although limited use is

made of these comments to plan the next steps in learning. Detailed records of children's progress in all areas of learning are shared with parents. Parents speak positively about the setting. Many are involved in their children's learning in the setting and support this at home.

The partnership with parents is likely to have **significant weaknesses** where **more than one** of the following features are present. Partnership with parents will be poor if several of these are happening:

- relationships between staff and parents are friendly but rarely move beyond social exchanges to work in partnership
- channels of communication are mostly informal, and are not well focused on children's learning and progress
- written communication is infrequent and, at best, is limited to announcing forthcoming topics and fundraising events
- parents are made aware of routines and activities, but are given little information about the Foundation Stage
- records are kept, but may be of poor quality; the system of sharing them with parents is haphazard and not well focused on informing them of their child's progress towards the early learning goals
- the setting pays only superficial attention to parents' observations and comments about their child's learning
- little attempt is made to involve parents with their children's learning; where they are included this is limited, for example, to fundraising for resources and contributing items related to topic work
- parents express some concerns with the provision; some may be dissatisfied.

Examples of report extracts

The **very good** partnership with parents and carers helps children to learn. Parents receive clear and detailed information about the educational provision through a parents' brochure, newsletters and notice boards. This enables them to contribute ideas and objects and to talk with their children at home. Parents have good opportunities to share what they know about their child through, for example, a daily 'contact' book and written reports. They are well informed about their child's achievements and progress. Staff clearly value parents' suggestions and respect their views.

Contributes to a judgement that the partnership with parents is very good.

The pre-school has a **generally good** partnership with parents and carers. A booklet describes the six areas of learning and early learning goals, and how parents can support learning at home. However, parents are given little information about the kinds of activities which the pre-school provides to promote the goals. This limits opportunities for parents, other than those who are able to help during the sessions, to talk to their child about their experiences in the pre-school. An effective combination of informal and formal methods enables parents and staff to share information about children's achievements and progress.

Contributes to a judgement that the partnership with parents is generally good.

The partnership with parents has **significant weaknesses** and makes only a limited contribution to children's learning. Parents receive essential information about the nursery's provision when their child enrolls in the setting. Relationships between parents and staff are friendly, but further communication about children's activities and experiences in the nursery is infrequent and limits the opportunities for parents to share in their child's learning at home. Parents and staff occasionally discuss what children have done in the session, but the nursery lacks a systematic procedure to enable all parents to share their observations of their children's needs, interests or learning or to be informed of their progress.

Contributes to a judgement that the partnership with parents has significant weaknesses.

The **poor** partnership with parents and carers does not contribute to children's progress toward the early learning goals. A timetable of daily routines is displayed on the notice board, but there is no information for parents about the educational provision. The staff have not developed useful ways to encourage parents to be involved in their child's learning. They do not, for instance, exploit the parents' various ethnic backgrounds to increase children's awareness of different customs and practices. There are no planned opportunities for parents to share concerns or what they know about their child, or to gain clear information about their child's progress and achievements in the six areas of learning.

Contributes to a judgement that partnership with parents is poor.

General guidance on making summary judgements

You must make a summary judgement for each of the areas of learning, teaching, leadership and management, and partnership with parents and carers. These will be one of the following:

Very good

- **When should you make a summary judgement that an area is very good?**
 - Where you identify no weaknesses in children's learning although you may identify a **very minor** aspect that could be improved further.
 - Where you may identify an aspect(s) of excellent or outstanding practice.
- **Should you identify aspects for improvement in areas that are very good?**
 - You may or may not identify a very minor aspect for improvement. Where you do these will only lead to a point for consideration in 'What needs to be done next?'
 - Any areas you identify for improvement will enhance the already very good practice.

Generally good

- **When should you make a summary judgement that an area is generally good?**
 - Where the evidence shows children make good or steady progress towards the early learning goals.
 - Where you identify a weakness in children's learning.
 - Where there are several strengths but improvement is needed.
- **Can you identify key issues from an area that is generally good?**

Yes. It is likely that a key issue will arise from an area judged as generally good.

You may:

- identify a key issue that is specific to the weakness in the area
- pull together weaknesses in other areas of learning that lead to one key issue about teaching.

Significant weakness

- **When should you make a summary judgement that an area has significant weaknesses?**
 - Where evidence reveals significant gaps in the educational programme.
 - Where there are weaknesses that limit children's learning. For example, teaching methods which hinder children's progress.
 - Where you have serious concerns about some aspects of the provision.
- **What sort of key issues will evolve from an area with significant weaknesses?**

Key issues which address weighty teaching issues, for example:

- improving staff understanding of the stepping stones and early learning goals
- planning activities at the right level
- interacting with children to help them learn
- addressing significant gaps in the educational programme.

Poor

- **When should you make a summary judgement that an area is poor?**
 - Where evidence raises grave concerns about children's learning. Children may be developing negative attitudes towards learning and the provision may be detrimental to their overall development.
 - Where fundamental weaknesses mean that children's progress is poor because of weak teaching, insufficient challenge and a lack of understanding about how children learn.

What has improved since the last inspection?

If we have inspected the nursery education before, you must analyse any changes in the setting's performance since the last inspection and report on these. This will involve an evaluation of how well the setting has addressed the key issues and a consideration of any other changes the setting has made with regard to the nursery education. **The key task is to evaluate the effect any changes have had on the provision.**

Action plans

You should ask the provider for a copy of the action plan produced following the previous inspection of funded nursery education. This will help you to see what actions the provider intended to take and to evaluate improvements made. It may also give you evidence of how well the setting is led and managed, for example, by assessing:

- whether all key personnel were involved in the development of the plan
- whether the implementation of the plan was monitored and evaluated to ensure the improvement was made.

You may find that a provider has not taken account of some key issues in their plan; or that the action plan is unavailable, for example it is lost or a new owner is unaware of it. You can still evaluate improvement by:

- considering evidence that relates to key issues from the last inspection
- asking questions about changes or improvements made, and testing responses against the current quality of provision.

Remember to ask yourself the question 'How has the quality of the educational provision improved' and not just 'Have the actions been carried out?'

Making your summary judgement

Your summary judgement for improvement since the last inspection will be either:

Very good	Generally good	Limited	Poor	Not applicable (first inspections of nursery education)

In making judgements about improvement, you need to evaluate:

- the setting's current performance
- how the setting has changed since its last inspection in relation to previous key issues which applied to three and/or four year olds
- what impact the changes have had on the provision.

If there is no evidence of improvement then you should judge that progress is poor. If, however, a key issue appears unrealistic or inappropriate, you should record the reasons for this in your notebook and base your judgement on the overall improvement made by the setting since the last inspection.

Example of a report extract

Poor progress has been made in tackling the key issues identified in the previous inspection report. These required the nursery to improve teaching and the management of children's behaviour. Although staff attended training on the Foundation Stage, they lack understanding of how to plan and teach a suitable programme to support children's learning. A behaviour policy was drawn up but is not consistently applied. This means that children do not develop a sufficient understanding of acceptable behaviour; disruption by some children during whole group activities affects the ability of others to concentrate and learn effectively

What is being done well?

Once you have gathered your evidence and made your judgements, you should stand back and ask yourself what are the best aspects of the provision for funded nursery education in this setting.

These aspects:

- are drawn from the key strengths in your notebook
- are relatively few; the number will depend on how good the setting is.

What needs to be improved?

You must also judge which aspects of the educational provision do not work well.

These aspects:

- must be clearly supported by your evidence
- arise from the key weaknesses identified in your notebook

-
- accurately pinpoint the root cause of a weakness, so that it is clear what needs attention. Sometimes weaknesses in several areas of learning can be pinpointed to failures in staff's planning and their understanding of the stepping stones and early learning goals
 - are relatively few in number, depending on how good the setting is
 - form the basis for 'What needs to be done next'.

Even in very good settings there are minor aspects which would benefit from improvement. These are identified in this section and lead to points for consideration in 'What the setting needs to do next'.

The balance between 'What needs to be improved' and 'What is being done well' should reflect your overall judgement about the quality of the provision and children's progress towards the early learning goals.

What needs to be done next?

You need to use your judgements of 'What needs to be improved?' to identify what the setting needs to take action on. You must decide which weaknesses require the most urgent attention and will have the greatest influence on improvement. These will be the 'points for consideration' or the 'key issues' which help the setting improve its provision.

The points in this section:

- arise from the section 'What needs to be improved?'
- do not necessarily address **all** the issues in 'What needs to be improved?', only those aspects requiring the most urgent improvement
- are clear and precise about what needs to be done
- reflect the outcome-based approach to inspection and are non-prescriptive
- provide practical ways to improve the quality of the nursery education and are helpful to the setting in developing their action plan
- indicate clearly where an issue applies to a specific age group (if applicable)
- must not over-emphasise minor weaknesses.

Points for consideration

In a setting where provision is of **high quality**, there will be many strengths and no important weaknesses. However, all settings have some aspects that can be

improved further. So you should include 'points for consideration' in the 'What the setting needs to do next' section of the reports of these very good settings. No more than two points should be raised

Remember: 'points for consideration' can only be raised if you judge the provision to be of **high quality**. In all other cases, you must raise 'key issues'. You **cannot** raise 'points for consideration' **and** 'key issues' in the same report.

Making overall judgements for the outcome of the inspection

The overall judgements for the outcome of the inspection are:

Provision is acceptable and is of high quality. Children are making very good progress towards the early learning goals.	Provision is acceptable and is of good quality overall. Children are making generally good progress towards the early learning goals	Provision is acceptable but has some significant areas for improvement. Children's progress towards the early learning goals is limited by some significant weaknesses	Provision is unacceptable. Children are making poor progress towards the early learning goals.
<i>The next inspection will take place in 3- 4 years' time.</i>	<i>The next inspection will take place in 3-4 years' time.</i>	<i>The next inspection will take place in 1-2 years' time.</i>	

By the end of the inspection you will have reached a view of how good the nursery education is for funded three and four year olds. Your overall judgement is based on all your summary judgements on each of the following aspects:

- how well children make progress towards the early learning goals (the six areas of learning)
- how well the children are taught
- how effectively the setting is led and managed
- the effectiveness of the partnership with parents and carers.

If there are important weaknesses in one or more of these aspects then you must consider whether the children are making limited or poor progress towards the early learning goals and whether the weaknesses are great enough to make the provision unacceptable.

Remember: all these aspects are inter-related. If the quality of teaching has major weaknesses, it is highly likely that the children's learning will have significant weaknesses or be poor. Similarly if the children are making limited or poor progress towards the early learning goals, then there will be major weaknesses in the teaching and probably in the way the setting is led and managed.

- You make an overall judgement that **provision is of high quality** where:
 - children are making very good progress towards the early learning goals in **all** areas of learning

-
- teaching is very good. Adults know children well and have a secure understanding of the stepping stones and the early learning goals. Their teaching challenges children and enables them to learn effectively
 - the setting is very well led and managed
 - very little, if any, improvement is needed to enhance the already very good provision
 - you can usually identify features that make aspects of the provision outstanding.

All aspects of the provision have to be judged as very good to make an overall judgement that provision is of high quality.

- You are likely to make an overall judgement that **provision is of good quality overall** where:
 - children are making generally good or better progress towards the early learning goals in most areas of learning
 - teaching is generally good and helps children make appropriate progress
 - leadership and management are generally good, with clear aims for children's education
 - there are areas for improvement that result in key issues for action.
- You are likely to make an overall judgement that **provision has significant areas for improvement** where:
 - children's progress towards the early learning goals is hindered by a number of significant weaknesses in teaching, for example, children are not sufficiently challenged because staff lack a secure understanding of the early learning goals and how to implement them
 - provision in some areas of learning is generally good, but there are significant areas for improvement in others that substantially hinder children's progress
 - leadership and management are weak and insufficiently focused on ensuring that children make progress
 - the weaknesses identified result in weighty key issues that need speedy action.

-
- You are likely to make an overall judgement that **provision is unacceptable** where:
 - children's progress in the majority of areas of learning is poor
 - the quality of teaching and its effect on children's learning is poor
 - leadership and management are ineffective, and fail to recognise and act on fundamental weaknesses in the provision for nursery education
 - key issues relate to fundamental weaknesses in staff's knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage and require urgent attention.

Judging unacceptable provision

The following indicators are a guide to reaching the judgement that the children are making poor progress towards the early learning goals and that the provision is unacceptable. Not all have to be present.

Teaching

Judgement: Staff do not have a good working knowledge of the early learning goals and have a limited understanding of the stepping stones.

Evidence:

- adults are unable to talk to you about how they develop each area of learning
- adults are not sure how different activities contribute to an area of learning, and fit in with the stepping stones
- adults are uncertain about what children are to learn from an activity.

Judgement: The range of activities is too narrow and/or lacks challenge.

Evidence:

- a scrutiny of plans over time reveal some areas of learning are rarely considered
- the same activities appear frequently but without any variation in their intended outcomes, or in the resourcing e.g. sand, water, home corner, climbing frame, painting area
- no start up questions are given to suggest a learning outcome.

Judgement: Staff use a limited range of teaching techniques, and have low expectations of the children.

Evidence:

- too much direction by adults in order to achieve the end result, for example in producing a collage; baking activities; counting and writing tasks
- insufficient questioning of children
- failure to observe the children in order to move the learning on, for example role play, construction activities
- vague understanding of the differences between adult- and child-initiated activity

-
- expectations are low either because adults do not know children's learning needs and/or are unsure of the activities' learning potential.

Judgement: Staff are deployed inefficiently.

Evidence:

- adults are preoccupied with teaching/supervising one activity to the exclusion of others
- adults fail to respond to unforeseen events either behavioural, or developing a learning situation
- adults fail to observe what children do and how they learn
- there is an over-emphasis on supervising and servicing activities rather than teaching.

Leadership and management

Judgement: There is insufficient leadership given to the staff.

Evidence:

- there is no commitment to professional development for staff
- the leader/supervisor has a limited understanding of the early learning goals
- the leader/supervisor is not a good role model for others; teaching style is weak; delegates planning and its contents to others; prefers to administrate and service activities rather than teach
- parents and carers are not fully involved or informed about the setting and its aims.

Judgement: The setting is inefficiently managed.

Evidence:

- planning and/or assessment procedures are not in place, or lack detail and precision
- staff are unclear about their roles and responsibilities
- the deployment of staff is inefficient.

Learning

Judgement: There are major weaknesses in the areas of learning.

Evidence:

- Personal, social and emotional development
 - unacceptable behaviour which hinders learning
 - children display poor relationships with others
 - children lack confidence, independence and self-esteem.
- Communication, language and literacy
 - insufficient attention to developing listening and speaking skills
 - limited use of books
 - no planned or consistent approach to developing writing, reading and the linking of sounds and letters.
- Mathematical development
 - insufficient attention to numbers and counting and to shape, space and measures
 - failure to extend children's understanding of numbers through practical activities.
- Knowledge and understanding of the world
 - insufficient attention, over time, to the different strands of learning – scientific, technological, geographical and historical
 - limited use of the local environment as a learning resource
 - few opportunities to investigate or explore.
- Physical development
 - insufficient and inappropriate use of indoor and outdoor space to increase children's physical skills
 - equipment is inappropriate for the age or stage of children's development.

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- Creative development
 - over-prescriptive and repetitious tasks
 - emphasising singing at the expense of exploring sound and instruments
 - restricted range of media and materials
 - poor use of role-play to develop imagination.

There are some general indicators about the quality of children's learning. Having identified weaknesses in the individual area of learning, you need to respond to the following questions:

- Are children often merely occupied rather than being questioned and challenged?
- Do activities fail to build on children's current knowledge and skills?
- How well do adults check on children's progress?
- Are activities too easy or too difficult?
- Is insufficient attention paid to the social and learning needs of children of different ages?
- Are there limited opportunities for children to ask questions, talk about their work, or use their initiative and independence to develop ideas?

Example of report extract

Children's progress towards the early learning goals in mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world and creative development is poor. Staff are uncertain about what children are to learn from the activities they provide in these areas. This results in children being occupied rather than actively engaged in learning. Children complete number worksheets with little purpose or understanding. Adults do not provide children with sufficient practical experience to develop their idea of shape and measure or to use numbers in a meaningful way. Over-directed teaching means that children rarely explore and investigate natural and made things or express their own ideas in creative activities.

Contributes to an overall judgement that provision is unacceptable and that children are making poor progress towards the early learning goals.

SECTION 4: COMMUNICATING JUDGEMENTS

Communicating judgements

Oral feedback

Oral feedback is a crucial part of the inspection process. It provides the opportunity to tell those in charge of the setting how good it is and what needs to be done to improve further. It requires careful thought and preparation.

The date, time and persons attending feedback should be agreed with the provider at the start of the inspection. The feedback should be given immediately following the inspection so that the provider is not left wondering about inspection judgements. It should not be delayed more than one or two days at the most, and then only if there are **exceptional** circumstances. These circumstances would normally be at the provider's request.

You should try, wherever possible, to accommodate a setting's request for a development worker or an advisory teacher to attend the feedback. In these instances, make sure the provider understands that development workers or advisors are there as observers, not to challenge your judgements or findings. If you wish to refuse a request, then you should give a reason why they may not attend. This may be because the number of persons attending is excessive, or that the date and time the worker or advisor can attend is inconvenient.

Set the groundwork for the oral feedback during the inspection. Much of the success of the feedback hinges on the quality of the relationships you establish with the provider and staff during the course of the inspection. Avoid major surprises by acknowledging strengths and raising emerging issues throughout the inspection. This will help to ensure that the provider is aware of the most significant strengths and is aware of areas that require improvement. The checklist on page 90 will help you to include all required elements of the oral feedback.

The requirement for inspectors to communicate clearly and frankly is a key principle of the Code of Conduct. This is particularly important when giving oral feedback which should be presented in an open, frank and constructive way, using straightforward language. Complex information and possibly unwelcome judgements must be conveyed as simply as possible. Judgements should be stated unequivocally. For example, providers should not be led to believe that the provision overall is 'excellent' or 'very good' when you have identified weaknesses which give rise to key issues.

Make sure you give the points for consideration or key issues to the person in charge at the oral feedback. You should **discuss and agree an order of priority for action**. These are the order in which the points or key issues should appear in the report.

If you have judged the provision for funded nursery education to be unacceptable, you should give the provider a copy of the *Next Steps* leaflet (see Annex A).

Before the feedback

- agree the arrangements for the oral feedback with the provider
- ensure you have a full grasp of the inspection evidence, findings and issues
- take time to reflect on your evidence and prepare for the feedback
- complete all parts of the oral feedback section in your notebook
- where there are two inspectors, decide where reporting on the standards/nursery education overlap. Avoid repetition. Plan who will explain similar sections in more detail.

During the feedback

Set the scene

- check that the seating arrangement is welcoming
- be relaxed, friendly, make eye contact and thank the provider for their help during the inspection
- explain the purpose and structure of the feedback clearly. Where there are two inspectors explain who will be reporting the findings for the different sections of the inspection
- explain that the feedback is confidential
- invite questions/comments to help staff clarify points raised
- agree the detail of the paragraph on 'Information about the setting' (wherever possible this may be agreed earlier during the inspection)
- suggest that someone take notes.

Communicate well

- speak slowly, clearly and with conviction
- use straightforward language, without being condescending
- be aware of sensitivities but unambiguously state your judgements
- paraphrase rather than read your notes
- maintain a good pace and do not spend too long on one area

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- use telling examples to illustrate and explain key strengths and weaknesses
 - give a balanced picture of the setting – try to include positive points at each stage
 - explain the links between teaching, learning and leadership and management
 - respond calmly to any challenges; refer to your evidence to justify your judgements
 - manage discussions skilfully by keeping to the point
 - give useful practical advice, without being prescriptive or too lengthy
 - explain what the setting needs to do next (key issues, points for consideration) and agree the order of importance with the provider
 - present actions/conditions/what needs to be done next clearly
 - agree the timing of actions/conditions and the order of importance of key issues.

At the end of the feedback

- make sure the provider or their representative is clear about what happens next including the process for receiving the report (see process flowchart)
- remind the provider about the need to draw up an action plan, to keep a copy and, if required, to send a copy to their local education authority (LEA)
- give the provider a copy of the 'Next Steps' leaflet if you have judged the provision to be unacceptable
- thank those present for their attention and contribution to the meeting.

Always ensure that your messages have been understood and finish on a positive note.

Checklist for oral feedback (combined inspections)

The order is flexible

During the feedback inspectors should:

- give thanks
- invite note taking
- explain that the feedback is confidential
- explain the structure of the feedback (explain there are two parts, but will make it clear where findings overlap, for example partnership with parents and carers. If there are two inspectors, explain who will report on what)
- invite questions and comments
- agree the detail of the paragraph on 'Information about the setting' (wherever possible you may agree this earlier in the inspection)

Quality of care

- summarise the 14 Standards briefly
- report on:
 - the effectiveness of the day care or childminding; including whether children are safe, well cared for and take part in activities that contribute to their development, as well as the effectiveness of the organisation of the setting and the quality of the partnership with parents and carers
 - what is being done well
 - what needs to be improved
 - improvement since the last inspection
 - what needs to be done next, including any recommendation, actions or conditions to be imposed
- give an overall judgement about the registration
- explain the conditions on their certificate of registration – numbers and ages of children.

The quality of funded nursery education

- give your summary judgements, the inspection outcome and the timing of the next inspection
- report on:
 - how effective the nursery education is (make clear links between children's progress, teaching, leadership and management, partnership with parents and carers)
 - what is being done well
 - what needs to be improved
 - the key strengths and weaknesses in each area of learning
 - improvement since the last inspection
- explain what the setting needs to do next (points for consideration or key issues) and agree priority
- explain the action plan process
- explain what happens next, including:
 - the opportunity for the provider to comment on the factual accuracy of the report
 - the letter from the Regional Centre that explains the non-statutory actions
 - the process providers should follow when they inform the Regional Centre of actions taken
 - the notice of intention for the conditions on their certificate
 - if registration is to be cancelled, the reasons why and the steps to be taken to corroborate this decision.
- outline the process for receipt of the report and any follow up action required
- give the provider a copy of the Next Steps leaflet (if appropriate).

Writing the report

Your report should be:

- clear
- consistent
- concise and evaluative
- compliant with requirements
- correct
- convincing.

Effective report writing requires more than a set of technical skills. Clear writing comes from clear thinking. This means that you should know your judgements before you begin to write, so that you can state them clearly and unambiguously in your report. Let the reader know how teaching, leadership and management impacts on children's progress towards the early learning goals in the six areas of learning. However, it is not necessary to refer to every aspect of the goals.

Use straightforward language, while making sure the tone of your writing is professional and courteous. In this way readers will be more amenable to your message. Your report should reflect the individuality of the setting and provide a good basis for its action plan. **It must be consistent with your oral feedback.**

If you are reporting on the provision for both three and four year olds, particular strengths and weaknesses for either age group should be made explicit.

Some general rules:

Do

- write in the active voice
- make sure that your writing can be understood by a variety of audiences
- keep sentences short
- aim for simplicity
- make your judgements clear.

Don't

- use jargon
- use long words where a short one will do
- join together several points in one sentence
- hide judgements in descriptive phrases
- avoid giving unwelcome messages.

Report sections

Information about the setting

Write this section in full sentences in one or more paragraphs.

This is a factual section agreed with the provider. It gives basic information for parents and others to set the inspection in context. It should include:

- the type of setting
- how it is organised
- the community it serves
- the days and times of opening
- the number and ages of the children attending
- the number of funded three and four year olds, including those with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language
- the number of staff and their qualifications
- the involvement of teacher support from the Early Years Development and Care Partnership (EYDCP)
- any special features, such as particular teaching methods.

If there are no funded children present at the time of the inspection, this should be stated in this section.

Remember:

- to use upper case letters for the setting name, for example: The Crescent Playgroup
- to use the 24-hour clock when writing opening times
- to avoid giving information available elsewhere in the report
- not give evaluative judgements, for example 'a bright and cheerful environment'.

Example from a combined inspection report

Happy Valley Early Years Centre was registered to provide day care in September 2001. It is situated on the outskirts of Happytown, near to a large industrial estate. The centre is open each weekday from 08.00 until 18.00 for 50 weeks of the year.

The centre comprises a nursery which offers full day care for children aged two to five years, and an out-of-school club for children aged five to eight years. Currently 43 children attend the nursery throughout the week, and 12 children attend the out-of-school club. They are drawn from a wide catchment area as most of their parents travel to work in and around the industrial estate. The children's hours of attendance vary to suit the working hours of their parents. None of the children speak English as an additional language, but six have special educational needs. Four children receive funding for nursery education; one is aged three, and the others are aged four.

The centre is based in large Victorian terraced house. There is a large pre-school room on the first floor for children aged three and over. The Sunshine room for the two year olds is on the ground floor and is much smaller. The out-of-school club is based in a large hut to the rear of the house. All the children share access to large, secure outdoor play area, part of which is for the exclusive use of the two year olds.

Twelve staff work in the centre. All staff hold, or are working towards, either the Diploma in Nursery Nursing (NNEB); the Diploma in Playgroup Practice (DPP); or the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ): Early Years Care and Education level 2 or 3. Staff receive support from an advisory teacher from the Happytown Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP).

How effective is the nursery education?

Write this section in full sentences. You will need to write more than one paragraph.

In this section you should summarise the key strengths and weaknesses of children's learning, teaching, leadership and management and partnership with parents and carers. You should explain how these areas impact on each other to contribute to the overall effectiveness of the provision. The paragraph is made up of four brief sub-paragraphs.

You should:

- begin with a judgement on how good the nursery education is and the progress children are making towards the early learning goals
- give your summary judgement for how well the children are taught and support this with the key strengths and weaknesses

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- give your judgement for leadership and management and support this with the key strengths and weaknesses for both aspects. You may wish to distinguish between the qualities of leadership and management
 - give your summary judgement for the partnership with parents and carers and support this with the key strengths and weaknesses. Link your judgements to their effect on children's learning.

Make sure this section presents the right balance of strengths and weaknesses to reflect your overall judgement. It should be consistent with what comes elsewhere in the report without being repetitive.

How effective is the nursery education?

Happy Valley Early Years Centre provides good-quality nursery education overall which enables children to make generally good progress towards the early learning goals. Provision for their personal, social and emotional development, as well as their physical development, is particularly well-planned and they make very good progress in these areas.

The quality of teaching is generally good. Staff manage the children very well and have good relationships with them. They plan a variety of practical activities and understand what children learn from them. They organise the indoor space and resources imaginatively to create an interesting learning environment in which children increase their independence. The outdoor area is used very well to promote children's physical skills, but less effectively to develop their imaginative play or understanding of the natural world.

Staff give individual children a good level of support and those with special educational needs are encouraged to participate in the full range of nursery activities. They skilfully develop children's language, by maintaining a dialogue with them and asking questions which encourage them to think and talk about what they are doing. Group activities for the funded children are presented in an enthusiastic and lively manner, but are not always extended to provide sufficient challenge, particularly in aspects of literacy and mathematics.

Staff assess children's learning against the stepping stones and early learning goals and use this information to plan what children should do next. They keep careful records which provide a clear picture of children's progress to share with parents.

The leadership and management of the day nursery are generally good. The supervisor has been particularly effective in developing a committed staff team who have a collaborative approach to all aspects of their work. She acts on advice and has implemented a programme of staff development aimed at improving teaching. There is not yet a rigorous system to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching.

The partnership with parents and carers is very good. Parents spend time talking informally to staff about their children and are well informed about forthcoming events in the centre. A well attended series of evening and weekend sessions, organised by the supervisor, helps parents to understand how they can support their children's learning at home. This has led to children showing a greater interest in books and stories.

What has improved since the last nursery education inspection?

Write this section in full sentences in one or more paragraphs.

This section evaluates progress with the points for consideration or key issues raised at the last inspection. You should avoid simply describing what has been done. Instead you should evaluate the impact on improving the quality of care or nursery education.

You should:

- summarise the key issues
- report on what the setting has done
- evaluate the impact of the action on the nursery education
- insert 'not applicable' if this is a provider's first inspection.

Very good progress has been made since the last inspection. The staff have introduced a number of effective measures to improve planning and teaching which were raised as key issues in the previous inspection report.

A major factor in the improvement to teaching has been the reorganisation of the children into more appropriate groups. Three and four year olds are no longer taught alongside the youngest children. Instead, they have moved to their own bright and well-ordered room, with new furnishings and equipment. The impact on their learning has been considerable. The children have greater choice and independence, and their behaviour and concentration skills have improved. Timetables have been adjusted to provide a day that is well-structured with a good mix of activities.

Under the leadership of the supervisor, the staff have improved their knowledge of the Foundation Stage and the Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs. Plans have been revised to give a much clearer direction to teaching. They are soundly based on the 'stepping stones' and there are logical links between long, medium and short-term plans. As a result, staff have a much clearer understanding of what children are intended to learn from activities. They offer effective support through well-judged interventions and questions which extend children's knowledge and understanding.

What is being done well?

Write this section as bullet points and in full sentences. Begin with a capital letter and end with a full stop.

This section tells the reader what is good about the setting. It should link to the main points in 'How good is the nursery education' by unpicking the main positive points raised. You may give examples of practice to support your point if you feel you need to give more detail.

You should:

- tell the reader about the best features of the nursery education in the setting
- make sure the number of strengths is consistent with your overall judgement
- keep the number of points relatively few by pulling out those strengths that have the most positive impact on children's learning
- make sure the section is consistent with your evidence and the section on 'How effective is the nursery education'
- press the return key to start each new bullet point when entering electronically. Do not enter any other punctuation to identify the bullet point. The bullet points do not show on your version but will appear on the published report.

- Staff use excellent strategies to promote good behaviour and consideration for others. They give children clear and consistent boundaries and help them understand the impact of unacceptable behaviour on others. Their calm and polite manner sets a very good example for children.
- Children with special educational needs are included in all activities. Staff find out all they can about children's specific needs. They work in partnership with parents, carers and outside agencies to ensure children gain as much as possible from activities.
- Many children arrive at the centre with limited communication skills. Staff are good at developing their language. They value what children say, introduce them to new vocabulary, and encourage them to listen to others.
- Children's physical skills are promoted very effectively through a stimulating range of indoor and outdoor activities.

-
- Children benefit from effective teaching to help them design and make things. They become adept at using construction sets, recycled materials, scissors, glue and tape. They are encouraged to be systematic, and to review and improve their work.
 - Parents are kept very well informed of their child's progress. There is an extensive range of books and language games which they can borrow to help their child learn at home.

What needs to be improved?

Write this section as bullet points, answering the question 'What needs to be improved?' Start with the thing that needs improving. Begin each new point with a lower case letter. You do not need a semi-colon at the end of each point. End the final point with a full stop.

This section tells the reader about the key weaknesses of the quality of nursery education. It should link to the main points in 'How good is the nursery education?' by unpicking the broader points. This section should not be left blank; even the best settings are capable of improvement.

You should:

- report on the most significant weaknesses based on an evaluation of your evidence
- make sure the number of weaknesses is consistent with your overall judgement and your number of strengths. For example, good provision will have more strengths than weaknesses
- make sure the weaknesses are few in number, even for the poorest provision
- focus on those that have the most impact on children's care or learning
- press the return key to start each new bullet point when entering electronically. Do not enter any other punctuation to identify the bullet point. Bullet points do not show on your version but will appear on the published report.

What needs to be improved?

- the attention given to increasing children's awareness of the different purposes of writing
- the use of resources to increase children's understanding of weight and capacity
- the use of the outdoor area to promote understanding of imaginative play and the natural world
- the monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching.

The six areas of learning

Write one short paragraph in full sentences.

These six sections summarise your main judgements about children's progress through the stepping stones toward the early learning goals in each area. You should give a balanced picture in each paragraph which supports your individual judgement for that area, and other judgements in the report, particularly those for teaching.

You should:

- **NOT** state the summary judgement as this is automatically populated
- avoid over-emphasising minor weaknesses
- make clear shortcomings in children's learning other than when progress is judged to be very good
- link children's learning with elements of teaching
- give illustrative examples to support your judgements, where appropriate.

Personal, social and emotional development: very good progress

Children's confidence and self-esteem are built up by staff who are sensitive to their needs and know them well. They are encouraged to be independent and to persist with difficult tasks. They choose between activities, select resources for themselves, and take care of their personal needs, such as dressing themselves, washing their hands and brushing their teeth. Children behave well. They are taught to share and take turns, and to be polite and considerate to others.

Communication, language and literacy: generally good progress

Children are keen to communicate with staff either through signs, gesture or talk. They listen to stories, enjoy sharing books with staff and enthusiastically enact familiar fairy tales. They are encouraged to notice the wealth of print displayed around the nursery on signs, captions and posters. Children recognise their first names and are beginning to write these correctly with well-formed letters, but activities such as role play are not extended to include opportunities to write for different purposes.

Mathematical development: generally good progress

Children benefit from good individual support to help them count to 10 and to recognise shapes, colours and sizes. Their understanding of numbers is reinforced as they take part in routine tasks such as working out the date, or laying the table for lunch or snack-time. They learn that coins have different values as they buy items in the pretend shop. Children solve problems of shape and size as they dress dolls and construct with large blocks. The potential to develop their awareness of weight and capacity is not sufficiently exploited through the use of resources such as sand and water.

Knowledge and understanding of the world: generally good progress

Planned activities help children notice changes that occur, for example when crayons and ice are exposed to heat, or when water is mixed with oil, washing-up liquid or glitter. Children carefully make models from construction sets and recycled tubes and boxes, joined with different types of glue and tape. They are occasionally taken to the nearby park to collect leaves and feed the ducks, but opportunities to encourage children to find out more about the natural world are not fully exploited in the centre's outdoor area.

Physical development: very good

Outdoors, children are set challenges to develop their physical skills. They balance along planks; swing from tyres and ropes attached to trees; manoeuvre tricycles around obstacles; and roll and push large plastic barrels. Staff are on hand to give support and encourage new skills such as helping children to jump and land safely. Children are taught to handle and control small objects. For example, they squeeze pegs onto washing lines, pick up lentils with tiny scoops, and handle scissors, pencils, paintbrushes and cutlery with increasing control.

Creative development: generally good

Children participate enthusiastically in music sessions, using their imagination as they pretend to climb beanstalks or walk like bears through forests. They tap simple rhymes, and use their voices and percussion instruments to distinguish between loud and soft sounds. Children draw freely and apply paint in different ways. Indoor role play activities are varied and interesting. Children draw on their experiences and imagination as they play in 'the hairdressers'. Their imaginative play outdoors is short-lived because they are given too little support to develop their ideas.

What needs to be done next?

Write as bullet points. Begin each point with a verb and a lower case letter. End the final point with a full stop.

This section tells the reader about the most important things that must be done.

You should:

- keep them few in number so that the setting can realistically achieve them
- make sure they arise from 'What the setting needs to improve' (though not all points from that section need to come forward)
- focus on those most likely to bring about improvement in the nursery education
- make sure every setting, no matter how good, has at least one point for consideration. Every setting has some aspect that they can improve
- record them in the order of priority for action which you agreed during your oral feedback.

The setting has to write an action plan identifying how it will address these points for consideration or key issues. Therefore, it is crucial that you write them clearly so that they are easily understood and can be acted upon.

What the setting needs to do next: the key issues

- increase children's awareness of the different purposes of writing
- improve the use of resources to promote children's understanding of weight and capacity
- make greater use of the outdoor area to promote children's imaginative play and their understanding of the natural world
- introduce a rigorous system to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching.

The provider must draw up an action plan within 40 working days of receipt of this report showing how the key issues detailed above will be addressed. The action plan must be made available to all parents, and to the local authority if required. An evaluation of the action taken will form part of the next inspection of funded nursery education.

When raising points for consideration in **high quality** provision, you should use the following wording in your report:

'There are no significant weaknesses to report, but consideration should be given to improving the following:'

There are no significant weaknesses to report, but consideration should be given to improving the following:

- the presentation of information about the areas of learning displayed for parents in the entrance.

Checking your nursery education report

All notebooks and reports should meet HMCI's **Standards**.

This means your report should:

- **arise from the evidence in the notebook.** Evidence is sufficient in quantity, and is evaluative. Anyone reading the notebook can see clearly how you arrived at the judgements made. The most important strengths and weaknesses stand out, and are brought forward into the report
- **be consistent.** Judgements given within the report are balanced and are not contradictory. They support the outcome of the inspection
- **be well written.** It is free from jargon, grammatical errors and spelling mistakes. Interested people can read the report and understand what it is saying
- **include all the required elements,** particularly the paragraph on 'How effective is the nursery education?' You understand the requirements of the inspection in that judgements relate to the progress children are making in their learning along the stepping stones towards the early learning goals as set out in the *Curriculum guidance to the foundation stage* and the difference the setting makes to that progress. Key issues or points for consideration are made in relation to the provision of nursery education.

Once you have finished writing your report, read it through to check that it:

- is free from spelling, grammar and typing errors
- gives the main messages from the inspection
- is a fair balance of strengths and weaknesses
- complies with the writing guidance in the *Ofsted Style Guide*
- is consistent with the feedback you gave at the end of the inspection, including factual accuracy, points for consideration or key issues
- does not contradict anything that is said about the quality of care sections of the reports (combined inspections).

1. Information about the setting

- Does this contain only factual information agreed with the provider (i.e. no judgements or future intentions)?

2. How effective is the nursery education?

- Does this section give your overall judgement?
- Does it summarise the main strengths and weaknesses given elsewhere in the report?
- Does the balance of strengths and weaknesses reflect your overall judgement?
- Does it include the required four aspects?

3. Improvement since the last inspection

- Does this section evaluate the impact on children's learning of actions taken since the last inspection?
- Does it spell out the impact where action has been insufficient or had little effect?

4. What is being done well?

- Does this section contain the **main** strengths from your notebook?
- Are these few in number (no more than 4–6 for the best settings)?
- Does the balance with the next section fairly reflect your overall judgement?

5. What needs to be improved?

- Does this section contain the **main** weaknesses from your notebook evidence?
- Are these few in number (no more than 4–6 for poor settings)?
- Does the balance with the preceding section reflect your overall judgement?

6. What needs to be done next?

- Do you have at least one point for consideration or key issue for action?
- Do the points for consideration or key issues arise from the section on 'What needs to be improved?'

Annex A: The process of a combined inspection

The process of a combined inspection

Step 1: Team manager (TM) allocates work to inspector(s). Where more than one inspector is involved, one inspector will be nominated to co-ordinate the inspection.

Step 2: Inspector(s) receive electronically (from the database) the completed sections 1 of the day care and nursery education notebooks.

Step 3: Where more than one inspector is involved, they contact each other and agree responsibilities.

Step 4: The co-ordinating inspector contacts the setting to arrange the inspection.

Step 5: Inspector(s) carry out the combined inspection. Where the nursery education is judged to be unacceptable, the inspector gives the person-in-charge a copy of the 'Next Steps' leaflet (Annex B).

Step 6: The inspector(s) complete the day care and nursery education inspector electronic notebooks. Where more than one inspector is involved, the notebooks may be completed and submitted separately by the relevant inspector. These will generate the appropriate part of the report.

Step 7: The inspector(s) submit work to TM.

Step 8: TM **either** signs off notebook **or** enters into dialogue with inspector(s) using TM comment box. TM signs off notebook(s) once all issues have been resolved.

Step 9: TM creates the Notice of Intention if necessary and sends notebook through the electronic system to Regional Centre for processing.

Step 10: The Regional Centre sends the provider a copy of the report to comment on factual accuracy. Where the nursery education provision is **unacceptable**, the Regional Centre contacts the School Improvement Division in Ofsted.

Step 11: The provider notifies the Regional Centre of any factual changes within 5 working days.

Step 12: The Regional Centre sends the provider the report any notice of intention to impose/vary/remove conditions and a covering letter outlining the appeals process and any actions the provider needs to take arising from the inspection. Where the nursery education is **unacceptable**, the setting is also sent another copy of the 'Next Steps' leaflet.

Step 13: The report is published on the Ofsted website following the end of any appeal period (normally 28 days).

Annex B

Next steps after educational provision is judged to be unacceptable

At the end of your oral feedback, you should give the following leaflet to providers where you have judged the quality of nursery education to be unacceptable.

Information for providers

Next steps after educational provision is judged to be unacceptable

At the end of your inspection, the Childcare Inspector has judged that your educational provision is unacceptable in promoting the early learning goals for children's learning.

This does *not* mean that you will automatically stop receiving funding for the three and/or four year old children in your nursery setting.

The purpose of this information sheet is to answer questions you may think of after the Childcare Inspector has left.

What happens next?

If your educational provision is found to be unacceptable, the report will say so. The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) will then write to you to ask for an action plan to be prepared within 20 working days. The action plan should set out how the key issues in the inspection report will be addressed. This plan should be sent to the DfES.

The Secretary of State for Education and Skills will then consider the action plan and other factors, and take one of two steps:

- direct your Local Education Authority (LEA) to remove you from their list of providers entitled to receive nursery education funding;
- allow you six months to improve your educational provision, at the end of which a further inspection (a 're-inspection') by Ofsted will be arranged to check that the necessary improvements have been made. If your provision remains unacceptable, the Secretary of State will direct your LEA to remove you from their list of providers entitled to receive nursery education funding.

How long will it be before I know which course of action will be followed?

The process will take approximately 12 weeks from the inspection carried out by the Childcare Inspector.

Can I carry on receiving funding in the meantime?

Yes. You remain eligible to claim funding until your LEA is directed to remove you from their list of providers entitled to receive nursery education funding.

You can continue to receive funding until Ofsted re-inspects your setting. The re-inspection will take place approximately six months after your action plan has been

approved. At this time, if your provision is acceptable, you can continue to receive funding. However, if your provision is unacceptable, the Secretary of State will direct the LEA to take action to stop the funding.

I have just received a cheque from my local authority – can I pay it in?

Yes.

Will I have to pay back any money?

Only if you have been paid for any period after the LEA has been directed to take action to stop the funding by removing you from their list of eligible providers. It is a condition of receiving nursery education funding that the provider agrees to such recovery taking place.

Is there anything I can do whilst waiting to hear from the DfES?

You should start drawing up your action plan. The reason for starting now is that you will be asked by DfES to draw up an action plan within 20 working days, instead of the normal 40 days. By starting immediately after the inspection, you will gain a head start on this work. The quality of the proposals outlined in the plan will be a key factor in helping the Secretary of State decide whether your funding can continue. You may wish to contact your local Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership for advice on producing an appropriate action plan.

What should I tell parents?

You should keep parents fully informed at all stages. Once you receive the inspection report, you are required to make it available to parents. You can reassure them that their child's place will continue to be funded until further notice.

If nursery education funding is withdrawn, will I have to close?

No. If you are also registered with Ofsted as a provider of childcare, and Ofsted is satisfied with the standard of care you provide, your childcare registration will remain unaffected. You will continue to be inspected at regular intervals under Part XA of the Children Act 1989.

If my nursery education funding is withdrawn, can I re-apply?

You can apply to your LEA to be put back on the list of providers entitled to receive nursery education funding no sooner than 12 months from the date of your removal from the list. Before the LEA can decide on your application, however, Ofsted will visit your setting to judge if the educational provision is acceptable. If it is, then the LEA may proceed to put you back on the list. If the provision remains unacceptable, the LEA cannot consider an application to put you back on the list for a further twelve months.

What if I need more information?

You can contact the School Improvement Division at Ofsted by telephoning
020 7421 6672.

May 2003

