



# Are you ready for your inspection?

A guide to inspections of childcare and nursery education conducted by Ofsted

Better  
education  
and care

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# Early Years inspections explained

From April 2005 Ofsted is changing the way it carries out inspections of childcare and nursery education. We will inspect and report on:

- **the quality and standards of childminding and day care** offered by registered childminders and day-care providers
- **the quality and standards of nursery education for children aged 3 and 4 years** provided by those of you who are included on your local education authority's (LEA) directory of providers entitled to receive nursery education funding.<sup>1</sup>

But from April 2005 if you provide both care and nursery education there will be an 'integrated inspection' that will have one single inspection report.

To help us come to our judgements about the overall quality of your care and, where applicable, nursery education our inspectors will ask the important question **what is it like for a child here?** To do this we will judge how well you meet a series of outcomes for children that are set out in law.<sup>2</sup> These are how you:

- help children to **be healthy**
- protect them from harm or neglect and help them **stay safe**
- help them **enjoy and achieve**
- help them make a **positive contribution** to your provision and the wider community.

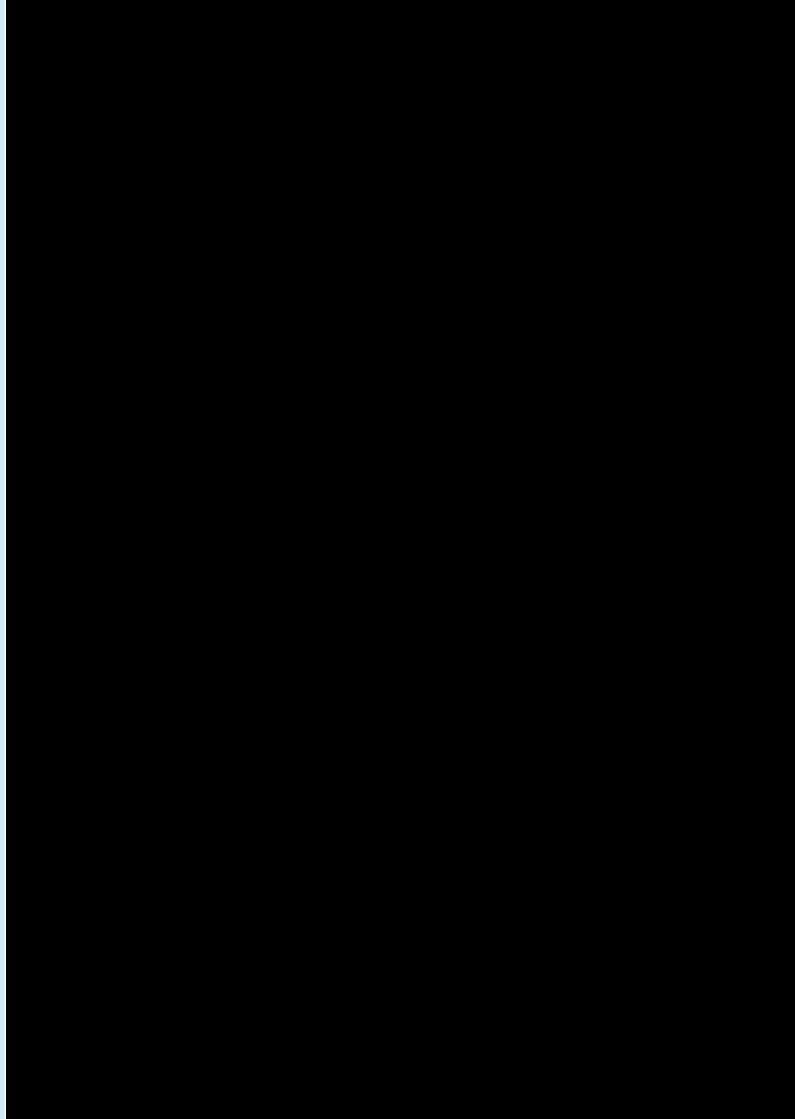
We will also judge how well you organise your childcare to help promote children's well-being. We will take account of:

- whether you meet the national standards for the type of care you provide

- the quality of teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage (where you provide nursery education for children aged 3 and 4)
- whether you use good practice as set out in *Birth to three matters: a framework to support children in their earliest years* (where you care for children under the age of 3).

The table overleaf shows how this all fits together.

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<sup>1</sup> This includes accredited childminders working in approved childminding networks.

<sup>2</sup> The outcomes were first set out in the green paper Every Child Matters and are now in the Children Act 2004.

# Inspecting against the outcomes

Outcome	Inspection of care <i>Inspectors will check:</i>	Inspection of nursery education <i>Inspectors will check:</i>
Helping children to be healthy	Standard 7: Health  Standard 8: Food and drink  Birth to three matters: a healthy child	The quality of the provision made for children's physical development
Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe	Standard 4: Physical environment  Standard 5: Equipment  Standard 6: Safety  Standard 13: Child protection  Birth to three matters: a healthy child	
Helping children enjoy and achieve	Standard 3: Care, learning and play  Birth to three matters: a skilful communicator; a competent learner	The quality of children's learning  The quality of teaching
Helping children make a positive contribution to the provision and the wider community	Standard 9: Equal opportunities  Standard 10: Special needs (including special educational needs and disabilities)  Standard 11: Behaviour  Standard 12: Working in partnership with parents and carers  Birth to three matters: a strong child	The effectiveness of the partnership with parents and carers in promoting children's learning  Whether the children's spiritual, moral, social and emotional development is fostered
Organisation	Standard 1: Suitable person  Standard 2: Organisation  Standard 14: Documentation	How well the setting is led and managed.

## What will happen after the inspection?

After the inspection, we will send you the inspection report. If you discover any factual inaccuracies you should reply promptly as we will soon publish your report on the internet. We will consider any points you raise and make necessary changes. If you have serious, unresolved concerns, there is more information on our website on how to make a complaint [www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications) (reference 822).

We will publish all early years inspection reports on our website from April 2005. If you are a childminder, the report will not include your name or your full address.

## What grades does Ofsted use?

From April 2005, we will use a straightforward four-point grading scale to make a judgement on how well your provision meets each of the outcomes. We will also use the scale to make an overall judgement on the quality of the childcare and, where applicable, on the quality of the nursery education. The grades are:

**Grade 1: Outstanding – given to exceptional settings that have excellent outcomes for children**

**Grade 2: Good – given to strong settings that are effective in promoting outcomes for children**

**Grade 3: Satisfactory – given to settings that have acceptable outcomes for children but who have scope for improvement**

**Grade 4: Inadequate – given to weak settings that have unacceptable outcomes for children**

If your childcare or nursery education is judged as **satisfactory** or **good**, the report will include recommendations to help you improve your provision further. We will check whether you have acted on these recommendations when you are next inspected.

## What happens if the quality of care is inadequate?

We will judge the quality of care as **inadequate** if you fail to meet one of the national standards for the type of childcare you provide. If we make this judgement we will:

*either*

- send you a letter to tell you what action you must take to improve the care you provide. This is called a **notice of action to improve**. You will need to let Ofsted know when you have taken the necessary action. We may carry out an announced or unannounced visit to check that you have done so. If you do not take the required action or what you do has little impact, we may take further enforcement measures. In any case you will receive another inspection within 6 to 12 months.

*or, where the childcare is poor and requires immediate improvement,*

- take enforcement action such as issuing a **compliance notice** and follow this up to make sure improvements have been made, or in rare cases, **suspending** or **cancelling** your registration. Where we take such serious action and your registration continues we will inspect you either at the date given on any enforcement action or within 3 – 6 months, whichever is the sooner.

## What happens if the quality of nursery education is inadequate?

We will judge the quality of nursery education as **inadequate** if there are significant weaknesses in the quality of teaching that prevent children making sufficient progress in their nursery education. We will then issue a **notice of action to improve** and inform the Department for Education and Skills and the local authority. This may affect your eligibility for funding. We will inspect your nursery education again within 12 months unless your local authority has stopped your funding.

## How often do inspections take place?

We will normally inspect newly-registered providers within a short period of their registration. After that, inspections are carried out at least once every three years. We will not wait for three years where:

- the last inspection concluded that the quality of your childcare or nursery education had significant weaknesses
- there have been significant changes since the last inspection, such as: the appointment of a new manager; a high turnover of staff; or, in the case of childminders, a change of premises
- we receive information, such as a complaint about your childcare, that suggests that the national standards are not being met.

## When will I know my inspection date?

Because we want to see your setting running as normally as possible on any given day without you making any special arrangements:

- day-care providers will normally receive no notice of the inspection<sup>3</sup>
- we will ring childminders a few days before the inspection to check whether there are any days in the coming week when it would not be suitable to visit.

## What will happen during the inspection?

Once the inspector arrives, please do not make changes to your normal routine. We want to keep disruption to a minimum, although the inspector will need to speak to you and any staff during the day to find out about the care and nursery education you provide.

At the beginning of the inspection, the inspector will discuss with you how he or she will carry out the inspection. This will include set times for discussions with you and any staff or assistants and the arrangements for a feedback meeting at the end of the inspection.

Inspectors will ask to see the completed self-evaluation form ***What is it like for a child here?*** that is at the back of this booklet, and will talk to you about the grades you have given yourself.

The inspector will then spend most of the time:

- observing what the children and adults are doing
- talking to children and, where possible, parents to find out their views
- checking premises and equipment to ensure they are safe and suitable (childcare inspections only) and how well they are used to promote the outcomes for children
- checking records, procedures and any other documents, if necessary.

Throughout the inspection, the inspector will make notes, sometimes on a laptop computer.

At the end of the inspection, the inspector will meet you and let you know the outcome of the inspection. You will normally see a display of their judgements on a laptop computer. These are the judgements that we will include in the report. You may correct factual detail or ask for further clarification of any points the inspector raises. However, this is not a time for you to present the inspector with fresh information about the provision, so make sure you have shown or told the inspector all that is needed before the meeting.

<sup>3</sup> We will ring providers of short-term crèches or holiday playschemes a few days in advance to check when they are operating. A maintained or independent school will receive notice of the inspection of any day care managed directly by them when it is notified of the school inspection.

# What can I do to be ready for my inspection?

## ✓ Check that you and your staff are familiar with the relevant documents

The most important documents are:

- the national standards for the type of childcare you provide
- Ofsted's *Guidance to the National Standards* appropriate to the type of care you provide
- *Birth to three matters: a framework to support children in their earliest years*
- *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage.*

## ✓ Make sure you have put right any weaknesses identified in your last inspection report

Check your last report and make sure you dealt with any weaknesses identified. If applicable, have a copy of your nursery education action plan ready to show the inspector.

## ✓ Complete the self-evaluation form

You should regularly look at and answer the questions on the form at the end of this booklet. Make sure that you have the latest version ready to share with your inspector. He or she will discuss it with you. If you have not completed the self-evaluation form, the inspector will ask you to do so at the beginning of the inspection.

## ✓ Check you have all the required records

There are certain records that Ofsted registered childcare providers must keep by law. These are set out on the self-evaluation form. Have all these ready to show the inspector if he or she asks to see them.

## ✓ Keep any information about how parents view your service and any improvements you have made as a result

This information will give a fuller picture of the care you provide and help the inspector to see how well you work with parents to ensure the best outcomes for their children.

## ✓ Make sure you have available any record you keep of complaints about the childcare that you provide

From time to time parents may complain to you about the childcare you provide. You are likely to resolve these complaints with parents without involving Ofsted but you should be able to demonstrate to the inspector that you have considered the issues parents have raised. You should also include information about complaints that have involved Ofsted. This will help the inspector check with you that the information on complaints that will go in the report is accurate.

## ✓ Make sure you have notified Ofsted of any significant changes to your provision

There are certain changes and events in relation to your childcare that you must tell Ofsted about.<sup>4</sup> For example, it is an offence not to let Ofsted know about changes to:

- the people looking after children or living on the premises where care is provided
- the registered person's details
- the premises where you provide care.

## What if I need more help?

If you need more help in getting ready for inspection, we have a fuller version of this guidance on our website [www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications) (reference 2447B). This gives more detail on how we award inspection judgements and points you to other sources of information and support. Your local authority is also able to provide you with this information if you do not have internet access.

<sup>4</sup> These are required by the Day Care and Childminding (National Standards) (England) Regulations 2003.

# Self-evaluation form

## What is it like for a child here?

Please review the following sections regularly and keep them up-to-date ready to discuss with the inspector during an inspection visit. We would like you to think about each of the questions listed and give yourself a grade based on the same scale as the inspector uses. You may wish to look at our website [www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications) (reference 2447B) for more information about how inspectors make judgements.

- **Grade 1: Outstanding – my practice is excellent**
- **Grade 2: Good – a strong area**
- **Grade 3: Satisfactory – OK but I could do better**
- **Grade 4: Inadequate – not good enough, I know I need to improve**

Please tick the appropriate box.

### 1. How effective are you in helping children to be healthy?

Grade: 1  2  3  4

### 2. How effective are you in protecting children from harm and neglect and keeping them safe?

Grade: 1  2  3  4

### 3. How effective are you in helping children to enjoy what they do and to achieve as well as they can?

Grade: 1  2  3  4

### 4. How effective are you in helping children make a positive contribution to your provision and to the wider community?

Grade: 1  2  3  4

### 5. How effective is your organisation of childcare?

Grade: 1  2  3  4



## Have you got the following documents ready to show the inspector?<sup>5</sup>

### For all childminders and day-care providers

*(except open access schemes as indicated)*

- the name, home address and date of birth of each child who is looked after on the premises (not open access schemes)
- the name, home address and telephone number of a parent of each child (not open access schemes)
- the name, home address and telephone number of any person who will be looking after children on the premises
- a daily record of the names of the children looked after on the premises, their hours of attendance and the names of the persons who look after them (not open access schemes)
- a record of accidents occurring on the premises
- a record of any medicinal product administered to any child on the premises, including the date and circumstances of its administration, by whom it was administered, including medicinal products which the child is permitted to administer to himself/herself, together with a record of a parent's consent.

### Additional documents for day-care providers only

*(except open access schemes as indicated)*

- the name, address and telephone number of the registered person and every other person living or employed on the premises
- a statement of the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire or accident
- a statement of the procedure to be followed in the event of a child being lost or not collected (not open access schemes)
- the procedure to be followed where a parent has a complaint about the service provided by the registered person
- a statement of the arrangements in place for the protection of children, including arrangements to safeguard the children from abuse or neglect and procedures to be followed in the event of abuse or neglect.

<sup>5</sup> These are required by the Day Care and Childminding (National Standards) (England) Regulations 2003.

