




# Early years: firm foundations

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Better  
education  
and care

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# Contents

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<b>Preface</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Introduction. The national picture</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Chapter 1. Being healthy</b>	<b>14</b>
Children learn about healthy eating	16
Children have a balanced diet	17
Children are protected from becoming ill	18
Children take part in regular physical play	19
<b>Chapter 2. Staying safe</b>	<b>21</b>
Children are protected from abuse	23
Children are secure and well supervised	24
Children use safe resources	26
<b>Chapter 3. Enjoying and achieving</b>	<b>28</b>
Children are happy and settled	30
Children are involved	31
Children explore confidently	35
Children respond to adults' interest	37
<b>Chapter 4. Making a positive contribution</b>	<b>40</b>
Children are considerate	42
Children value diversity	43
All children are included	45
Children's needs are met through partnership with parents	48
<b>Chapter 5. Organisation to promote good outcomes for children</b>	<b>52</b>
Adults have a clear sense of purpose	54
Adults are well qualified	55
Adults use their time well	56
Adults use resources well	57
Adults use records effectively	58
<b>Conclusion: raising quality</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>Annex 1. Quality of childcare on each national standard, by type of setting</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>Annex 2. Quality of key aspects of nursery education</b>	<b>70</b>



## Preface

This report covers the two-year period between April 2003 and March 2005 when Ofsted carried out the second programme of inspections against national standards.<sup>1</sup> During that programme, for the first time, Ofsted has awarded each childminder or day-care provider registered by Ofsted a judgement on the quality of childcare. We have also inspected and awarded a quality judgement to every setting outside maintained education settings that was funded by government to offer nursery education places for 3 and 4-year-olds.<sup>2</sup> From this work I have obtained a clear and comprehensive overview of the quality of childcare and nursery education and am pleased to be able to share a positive picture overall.

Last year my report *Protection through regulation* focused on our work to improve or cancel the registration of unsatisfactory providers. This year I want to concentrate on the qualities that make for good provision, using some of the many examples of good or outstanding practice taken from inspection reports. My staff carried out over 94,000 childcare inspections and over 16,000 nursery education inspections during the last programme. Almost half the childcare provision is good; the overwhelming majority of the remainder is at least satisfactory; and a third of nursery education provision is of high quality with children making very good progress towards the early learning goals.<sup>3</sup> We found only a very small minority of childcare or nursery education provision to be unsatisfactory.

As well as improving in quality, the size of the sector continues to increase. There are now around 105,000 settings offering almost 1.5 million registered childcare places, a growth of 15% during the period covered by this report. Funded nursery education is available in almost 19,000 non-maintained education settings. This picture reflects the success of central government strategies to expand the availability of childcare, and the contribution of local authorities in implementing them.

During the period covered by this report, inspectors made individual judgements against each of the 14 national standards. Since then, we have developed a new framework for the current programme. This links the standards of care and the quality of nursery education to the outcomes for children that local authority children's services must work to deliver under the requirements of the Children Act 2004. Service providers must consider how

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<sup>1</sup> *National standards for under eights day care and childminding*, Department for Education and Skills, 2003.

<sup>2</sup> In this report, nursery education inspections relate to private and voluntary nurseries and pre-schools, and independent schools, offering government-funded nursery education: we used a different framework to inspect nursery education in maintained schools.

<sup>3</sup> The early learning goals indicate what most children should achieve by the end of the Foundation Stage (the end of the primary school reception year), as identified in the *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage* (QCA/00587), Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2000.

they help children to be healthy; stay safe; enjoy and achieve; make a positive contribution; and achieve economic well being.

The findings in this report are set out under four of these outcomes to help to demonstrate how providers, by meeting the relevant standards, are also able to deliver good outcomes for children. Accordingly, each of the first four chapters of this report looks at one of the key outcomes for children. Each chapter starts with a summary of the features that *Every child matters* identifies as important to the outcome for children, and lists the standards associated with that outcome.<sup>4</sup>

We do not judge how individual early years settings promote children's economic well-being. We recognise that good quality childcare and nursery education contributes to this as it helps parents return to work and sets firm foundations for children's future education. The final chapter examines how the organisation of the settings enables them to promote good outcomes for children.

There are far too many examples of good practice for this report to cover fully. Instead, the report identifies common themes from practice that stand out. The themes are illustrated with examples from all types of setting and in all areas of the country.

Good practice is inspiring. I hope that, whether you are a parent, a provider of childcare or nursery education, or involved in a local community or other organisation promoting better provision for children, this report will encourage and challenge you to spread good practice further and so ensure that we build on this firm foundation for our children in the coming years.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Bell". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line.

David Bell  
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools

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<sup>4</sup> *Every child matters* (CM 5860), Department for Education and Skills, 2003.

## Introduction. The national picture

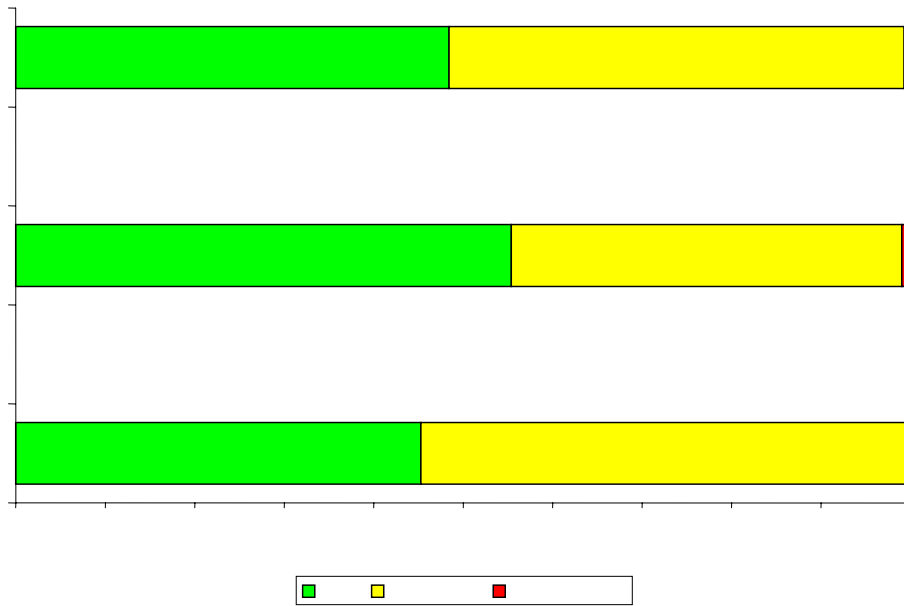
- Almost half the 94,000 registered settings inspected provide good quality childcare: they meet the national standards well overall, often exceeding them.<sup>5, 6</sup>
- Aspects of childcare practice are outstanding in 4% of settings.
- Good provision for children is found across all types of setting; it is evident more often in full and sessional day care than elsewhere.
- Around two thirds of settings are judged to be good in meeting the standards relating to caring for children's individual needs, offering play that promotes children's development, managing children's behaviour, ensuring a safe and stimulating environment for the children, and working in partnership with parents and carers.
- All inspections have identified aspects for improvement, either as actions required to meet one of the national standards or as recommendations to develop further the quality of care. Around a third of settings were issued with actions because they did not meet one or more of the standards.
- Of the 16,500 non-maintained education settings where government-funded nursery education was inspected, a third of those inspected provide high quality education, where children make very good progress towards the early learning goals.

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<sup>5</sup> Ofsted has inspected the childcare in all settings registered for at least two years, the nursery education in all non-maintained education settings that have received funding for at least four years, and many, though not all, new settings registered during the last two years.

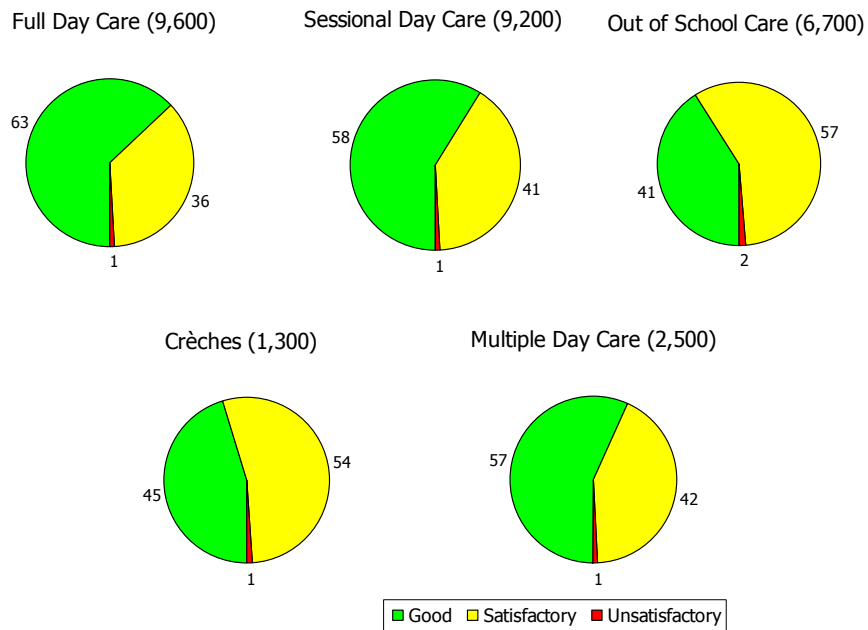
<sup>6</sup> All data in this report is as at March 2005.

**Early years: firm foundations**



(1) Good = meets the national standards well, satisfactory = meets the standards adequately overall, unsatisfactory = failed to meet the standards. For further details and a description of each type of care, please see Annex 1.

**Figure 2: Quality of group day care, by type of care (percentages)**

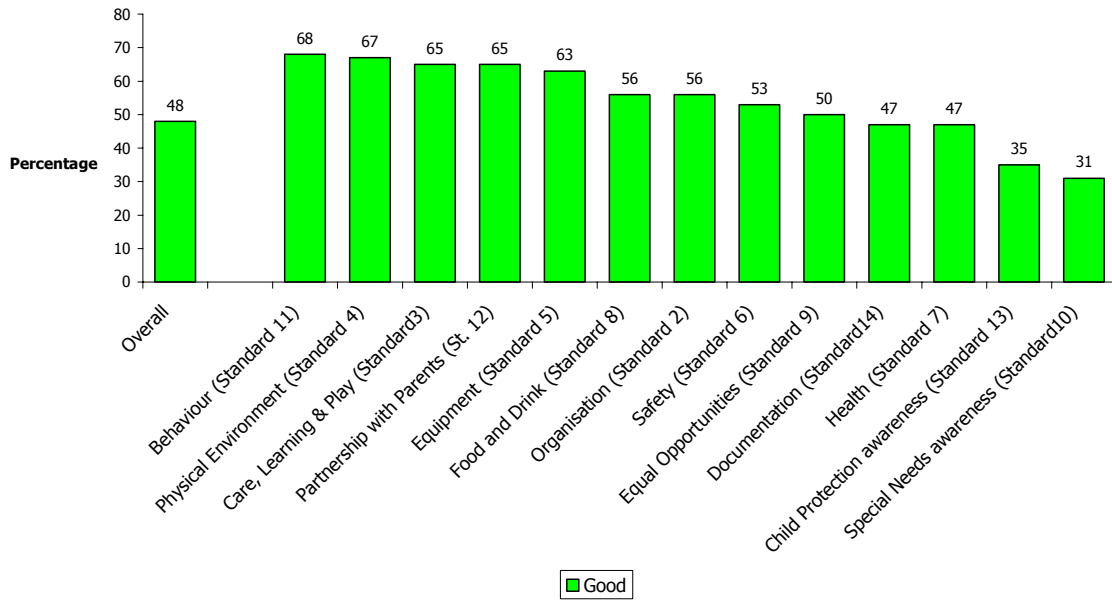


For further details, please see Annex 1



**Early years: firm foundations**

**Figure 3. Quality of childcare - percentage judged good on each standard**



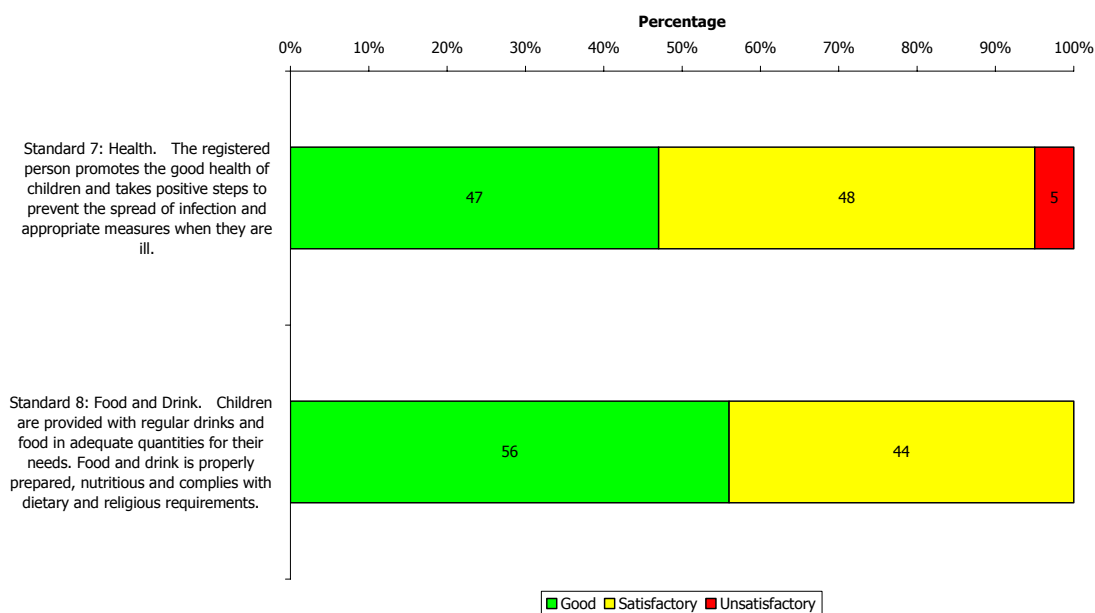
(1) Standard 1, Suitable Person: sets out that adults providing care, looking after children or having unsupervised access to them are suitable to do so. Ofsted judged settings against this standard on only two grades, satisfactory and unsatisfactory.

## Chapter 1. Being healthy

The outcome for children 'being healthy' involves children being physically, mentally and emotionally healthy, having healthy choices, and leading healthy lifestyles.

- The most relevant national standards and area of learning relate to:<sup>7</sup>
  - health (Standard 7)
  - food and drink (Standard 8)
  - physical development.
  
- In settings where outcomes are good, children:
  - learn about the importance of healthy eating
  - are provided with nutritious, balanced meals and snacks appropriate to their individual dietary needs
  - are protected from infection and are taken well care of if they have an accident or become ill
  - take part in regular physical play, both indoors and outside.

Figure 4: Quality of childcare - Being Healthy



**Key:**

Standard 7, Health: the registered person promotes the good health of children and takes positive steps to prevent the spread of infection and appropriate measures when they are ill.

Standard 8, Food and Drink: children are provided with regular drinks and food in adequate quantities for their needs. Food and drink is properly prepared, nutritious and complies with dietary and religious requirements.

<sup>7</sup> There are six areas of learning identified in the *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage*, Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2001: personal, social and emotional development; communication, language and literacy; mathematical development; knowledge and understanding of the world; physical development; and creative development. For more details, please see Annex 2.

## Children learn about healthy eating

1. Good providers promote children's health by taking a range of positive actions to encourage healthy eating and prevent obesity. Children are helped to enjoy food and understand why some foods are healthy and others are not. Children help with the preparation of meals and snacks. Mealtimes are relaxed, social occasions when children and adults sit together around the table to enjoy their food and each other's company. Staff are aware of the many learning opportunities to promote an understanding of healthy eating.

*Children enjoy food from many different countries. They are actively involved in some aspects of the preparation as they cut up vegetables which are made into a stir-fry for their tea. The cook sits with them at meal times, and explains to them what the unfamiliar ingredients are. The children enjoy a wide range of unusual dishes, and they are encouraged to learn about a healthy diet.*

## Children have a balanced diet

2. In good settings children's health is promoted by a wholesome, nutritious and balanced diet. Meals are freshly prepared using fresh fruit and vegetables, some using organic and even home-grown produce. Processed food is not served and children are not given food and drinks with high levels of artificial additives and sugar. Menus are produced to give parents information about meal choices. They include dishes from different cultures. Drinking water is always available. The provider is aware of each child's individual dietary needs and ensures these are met.

*The childminder has an excellent understanding of food nutrition. The children are able to grow their own vegetables in the garden and all meals are prepared with either food from the garden or organic food. Cooked meals are provided according to the dietary requirements of the children and they are often involved in helping to prepare their own meals by picking vegetables from the garden and preparing them and other ingredients.*

## Children are protected from becoming ill

3. Good providers promote children's health by recognising and reducing possible risks. They take steps to prevent the spread of infection by keeping the premises clean, wearing gloves when changing nappies, regular sterilisation of feeding equipment, safe handling of food and providing separate flannels for children. Children are helped to understand that washing their hands before handling food and brushing their teeth after meals helps keep them healthy.

*The childminder gives high priority to ensuring that children's individual needs are provided for, particularly in relation to hygiene. Children are provided with their own beaker, flannel and toothbrush to use at the setting. She encourages children to brush their teeth after eating, is aware of the need to provide shade for children in the sun, and recognises the importance of hand washing. The*

*childminder also provides individual creams and talc for nappy changing according to parents' wishes for each child.*

4. There are good arrangements in place to care for children who are ill. If children become ill in the setting, the provider ensures they are comfortable and cared for sensitively while waiting to be collected by parents. Providers are trained in administering first aid and have appropriate permissions and records in place regarding the administration of medication to children. They keep records of all accidents in the setting and inform parents. Settings have clear policies about children who are sick or who have infectious diseases and these policies are shared with parents.

5. In some good settings adults are trained in procedures to support children with specific health needs, for example to support a child with a catheter, or to use epipens in case of anaphylactic shock. This gives opportunities for a wider range of children to experience day care.

### **Children take part in regular physical play**

6. Settings that ensure children make good progress in their physical development provide plenty of opportunities for physical play through well-planned indoor and outdoor activities. This helps children develop the confidence to enjoy moving with control, using their bodies in various ways, for example dancing to music or meeting the challenge of an obstacle course. Children are helped to understand how exercise helps them to stay healthy.

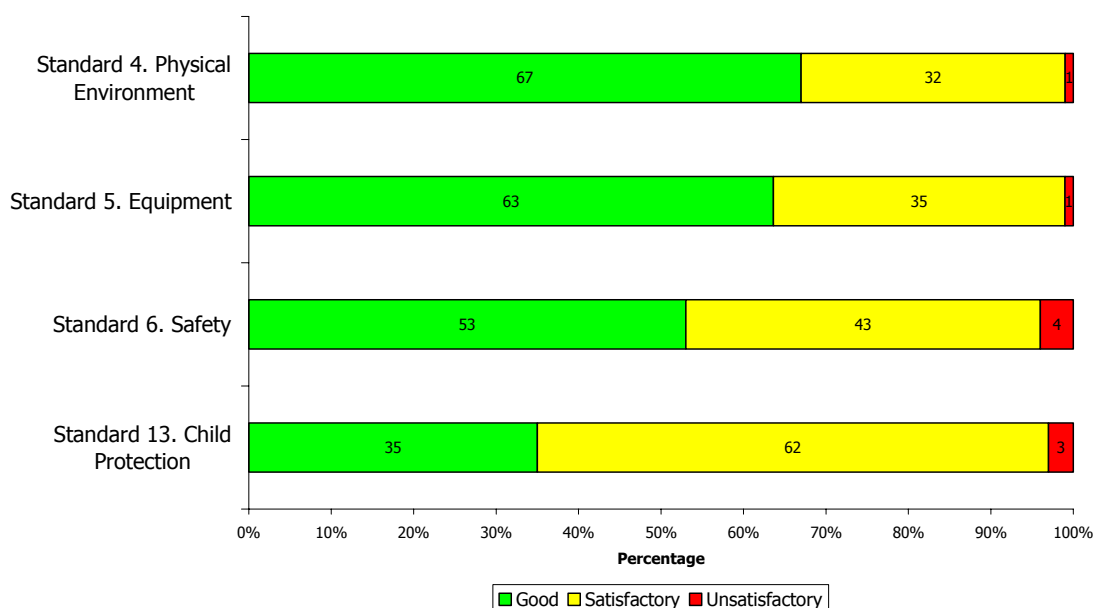
*Children get plenty of robust physical exercise. They use the outdoor facilities, including a climbing frame and slide, with gusto and have good control over their bodies. Children confidently use a wide variety of large and small equipment. Some ride scooters. Children manipulate different consistencies of clay and other soft materials. They use small and large paint brushes and rollers and in imaginative play they 'paint the fence'.*

## Chapter 2. Staying safe

The outcome for children 'staying safe' is about children having security, stability and care that protects them from mistreatment and neglect, accidental injury, bullying, discrimination and anti-social behaviour.

- The most relevant national standards relate to:
  - physical environment (Standard 4)
  - equipment (Standard 5)
  - safety (Standard 6)
  - child protection (Standard 13).
  
- In settings where outcomes are good, children:
  - are protected by adults who are suitable and vigilant
  - are secure and well supervised in a clean and well-maintained environment
  - use safe and suitable toys and equipment that stimulate and challenge them.

**Figure 5. Quality of child care - staying safe**



**Key:**

Standard 4, Physical Environment: the premises are safe, secure and suitable for their purpose. They provide adequate space in an appropriate location, are welcoming and offer access to necessary facilities for a range of activities which promote children's development.

Standard 5, Equipment: furniture, equipment and toys are appropriate for their purpose and help to create an accessible and stimulating environment. They are of suitable design and condition, well maintained and conform to safety standards.

Standard 6, Safety: the registered person takes positive steps to promote safety within the setting and on outings and ensures proper precautions are taken to prevent accidents.

Standard 13, Child Protection: the registered person complies with local child protection procedures approved by the Area Child Protection Committee and ensures that all adults are able to put the procedures into practice.

## Children are protected from abuse

7. In good settings, adults have a good understanding of how to protect children, and recognise that this is their first priority. They are vigilant, aware of the signs and symptoms of possible abuse and know the appropriate procedures to follow should they have concerns about a child. Adults working with children are aware of the content of the government booklet *What to do if you're worried a child is being abused*.<sup>8</sup> There is a clear child protection statement based on this booklet and the local area child protection committee procedures are followed. In group day care there is a named person responsible for ensuring that child protection concerns are dealt with promptly, appropriately and sensitively. Adults update their knowledge and skills through regular training.

*The childminder has attended a number of training courses related to child protection. In this way she has ensured that her practice is underpinned by a good and up-to-date knowledge of the possible signs and symptoms of abuse and neglect and also the correct procedure to follow should she have any concerns. Her willingness to make notes on existing injuries and to discuss these with parents ensures that the safety of children in her care is always a priority. She has an excellent written statement about child protection and she makes sure that this is discussed with all parents before their children attend.*

## Children are secure and well supervised

8. In good settings, children are secure and parents are welcome. Indoor and outdoor space is organised effectively, creating a child-friendly environment which enables children to explore and take risks while being appropriately supervised. Children can move freely and are protected from harm. There is a high ratio of adults to children present, and adults are appropriately deployed, ensuring children are always well supervised.

9. Adults are aware of their responsibilities to keep children safe. Clear and comprehensive policies and practices are in place to ensure children's safety; the policies are shared with parents.

10. Adults assess potential risks to children and put procedures and practices in place to minimise these at all times. Appropriate safety equipment is used according to the age and needs of the children attending including socket covers, safety gates, fire guards and safety flooring.

11. Providers have a good awareness of security. They ensure children cannot leave the premises unsupervised and there can be no unauthorised access to children. There are clear procedures to ensure children are collected only by authorised people. For example, passwords are used when necessary for extra protection.

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<sup>8</sup> *What to do if you're worried a child is being abused* (ref 31553), Department of Health, 2003.

## Early years: firm foundations

12. Thorough procedures are in place to ensure children are safe when on outings. Staff take appropriate information with them on outings including parents' contact numbers in the case of an accident or emergency. The provider ensures parents give written permission for their children to be transported in a vehicle.

13. Babies and young children sleep safely and comfortably, and are frequently monitored.

14. Children learn about what is dangerous and how to keep themselves safe. They learn about fire safety; they know the procedure for evacuation in an emergency and the provider regularly practises this with them. Appropriate fire equipment such as fire blankets, alarms, smoke detectors and extinguishers are provided and are regularly checked to ensure they are in good working order.

*The pre-school has excellent systems for ensuring the safety of children and the premises at all times. There is a designated health and safety officer who is responsible for checking the premises daily. Clear risk assessment documentation is maintained and the health and safety officer is knowledgeable about relevant legislation. Very good safety practices are in place, for example during a walk to the local school, high ratios are maintained, children are escorted safely, staff at the front and back of the line wear fluorescent jackets and regularly count the children. Staff talk with children about being safe and are proactive in working with the health and safety officer to ensure the on-going safety of children at all times.*

## Children use safe resources

15. Children use an extensive range of toys and equipment, including everyday household items, that are of good quality and safe. These support enjoyable activities that stimulate and challenge in ways appropriate to the needs of the range of children attending. Children access resources independently. Equipment is kept clean and in a good state of repair and is regularly checked for safety.

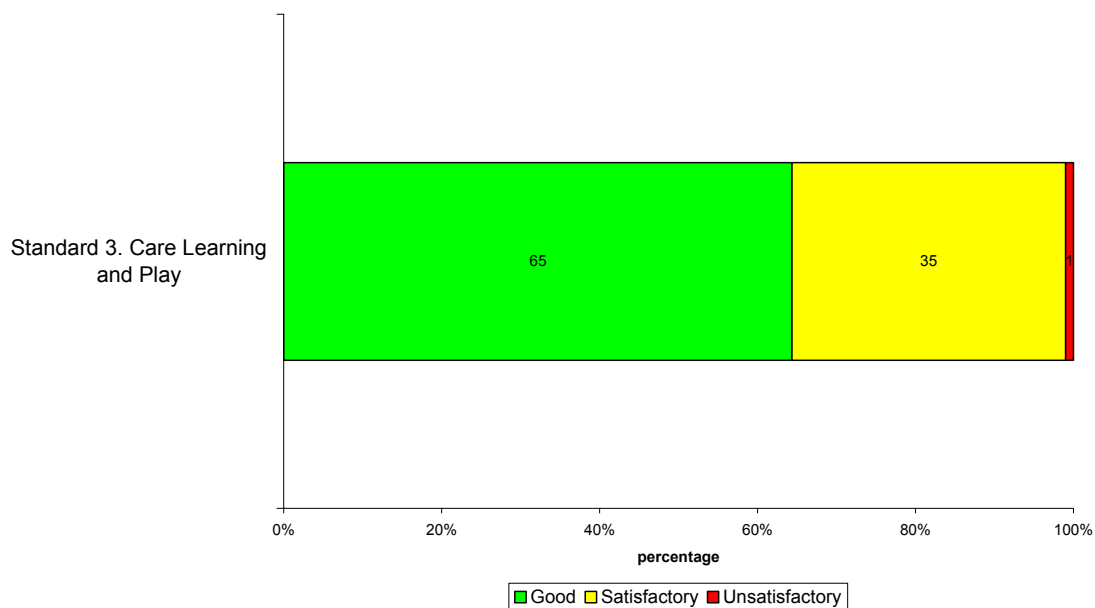
*The opportunities for children to take part in outdoor activities and use equipment to develop their motor skills and physical abilities are excellent. A fully enclosed safety-surfaced outdoor play area has been equipped with sturdy outdoor apparatus suitable for children to use all year round. Further equipment to develop children's skills in balance, climbing and pedalling are available in a well-supervised indoor room.*

## Chapter 3. Enjoying and achieving

The outcome for children 'enjoying and achieving' involves children enjoying play experiences that stretch and develop them and help them achieve. The relevant national standard relates to care learning and play (Standard 3); all areas of learning are relevant.

- In settings where outcomes are good, children:
  - are happy and settled
  - are involved in a broad range of planned activities and spontaneous events, which support their development and overall learning
  - are confident to make decisions, explore and investigate, and relate well to others
  - respond well to adults who are interested in what they do and say.

Figure 6. Quality of childcare - enjoying and achieving



**Key:**

Standard 3, Care Learning and Play: the registered person meets children's individual needs and promotes their welfare. They plan and provide activities and play opportunities to develop children's emotional, physical, social and intellectual capabilities.



## Children are happy and settled

16. In good settings, adults provide a calm environment where children are happy and confident. Children enjoy themselves and are helped to achieve. Good, warm and caring relationships between adults and children are evident. They communicate easily with each other and this helps children to enjoy and achieve.

17. Children are valued and adults help children feel good about themselves by frequently providing positive support, praise and encouragement, while managing behaviour very well: this helps build children's self-esteem.

*Children are very secure with the staff in the pre-school and have good self-esteem. They all enjoy being a 'special helper'. They are confident in initiating their own learning and are excited by the interesting activities. They are polite and considerate to each other and are learning to share favourite toys. Their behaviour is very good. Children enjoy being independent as they help themselves to drink and bread sticks.*

18. Children are relaxed and settled. This enables them to make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development. They are keen to learn and encouraged to try out new skills. This supports their developing independence and self-motivation.

*Children enter nursery enthusiastically, behave very well and are confident and happy during the time they spend there. They take turns and cooperate with each other to achieve a common goal. They are keen to participate in all activities and select tasks independently. They talk freely about their home and community and are developing a sense of humour.*

## Children are involved

19. In good settings, children enjoy stimulating practical activities. They learn new skills, make connections with other experiences, and talk and listen while involved in the activity.

*During a baking activity the childminder discussed numbers and texture and the child responded with confidence, asking many questions, and clearly learnt from the experience.*

20. Children also benefit from a range of activities outside settings. They go for walks to the shops or to the local park to feed the ducks, or they go out for a picnic. They may visit a soft-play centre, the local library, zoo or cinema. Older children sometimes take part in active sports. Adults plan these activities well, and use them effectively as opportunities to help children's learning. For example, an outing or game is combined with learning about mathematical concepts or discovering about the world around us. This helps children make good progress in their learning.

*Children can count confidently and show increasing skill in recognising and using numbers to support their play: for example, they recognise numbers in throwing games. They are regularly offered mathematical problems to solve. Children are surrounded by rich use of mathematical language. Staff regularly question children using words such as 'full' and 'empty'. Children enjoy activities that introduce them to shape: for example, looking at shapes in our everyday environment and recognising and naming them.*

21. In group day care, resources and space are used well to support play and provide a stable environment for all children including the very young. Children access a wide variety of activities, which staff thoughtfully plan and prepare to encourage them to develop skills and have fun. Children enjoy using their imaginations in role play and sometimes take on family roles or those of familiar people in the community, like hairdressers and doctors. Children are engaged and motivated to learn.

*Children respond excitedly to a wide range of creative activities. They sing and dance with gusto, love role play and exploring paint and other materials. They take their imaginations outside to the play area where they use the apparatus as pirate ships or moon rockets. They also like to discuss their own or others' creative ideas, and are guided well by staff who encourage the children to observe, express their thoughts and develop their language.*

22. Increasingly, when working with under-threes, good settings are using the framework *Birth to three matters* effectively to involve children and further their development.<sup>9</sup>

*Extensive planning is in place following the Birth to three matters framework. Each planned activity is colour coded to link it with the skills and competencies in the framework. For example, in the baby room all the babies were playing with the water tray containing bubbles and green glitter. All the babies were taking part with their 'special carer' and encouraged to feel, splash, experiment and investigate the water. Colour coded files contain more examples of activities such as this, identifying links with the relevant aspects of the framework and accompanied by photographs. The staff complete observations again following the framework.*

23. Settings providing good nursery education develop activities and themes from children's interests. Children enthusiastically take part in creative, physical and imaginative play. They talk happily about their play, make decisions about what they want to do, and are confident to ask for what they need. Learning is exciting and enjoyable.

*Children confidently talk about their needs and interests, likes and dislikes, who they are, and to whom they are related. They select, look at, and 'read' books*

<sup>9</sup> *Birth to three matters: a framework to support children in their earliest years*, Sure Start, 2004.

*of their choice, and most of them correctly identify their names. Three and four-year-olds enjoy listening to, and joining in with, familiar stories. Some use writing or drawing to record and communicate ideas, for example writing and posting letters to each other.*

## **Children explore confidently**

24. Children learn through hands-on experience. Good settings provide a broad range of rich and stimulating opportunities for children to investigate and explore their environment and a range of equipment and materials. Children are given the time to develop their ideas and interests, enabling them to expand their knowledge and understanding of the world in which they live. In settings where children make good progress in nursery education they are provided with opportunities to use their senses, ask questions and build on what they already know.

*Children explore a wealth of living things from plants and trees in the wood to snails, worms and frogs in the pond. They notice differences and changes with wonder. They are developing skills in the use of the computer, and wind up toys cause great fun and laughter as children watch them move and tumble. They enjoy celebrating a range of festivals and value differing lifestyles.*

*The after school club has a Kids' Club Council. Four children, two boys and two girls, are nominated by their peers to speak on their behalf to the manager. Every few weeks these four note any suggestions or concerns the children have. They then meet with the manager to discuss them. The children and manager negotiate and if at all possible the children's requests and ideas are taken up. If it is not possible then the reasons are explained to them.*

*The encouragement that children are given to appreciate music is exceptional. The younger children enjoy participating in the music and movement sessions and enjoy making their own tunes up on the piano; a child aged 18 months insisted on having a music book to look at while she played. Three older school children have developed a very keen interest, resulting in the childminder, at the parents' request, taking them to piano lessons after school and then supporting them in their practice in her home.*

## **Children respond to adults' interest**

25. In good settings, adults are particularly skilled in talking to children, responding well to them and listening to their ideas. They ensure that children are engaged in their activities and ask them questions that extend their experiences and learning.

*The staff member provided various textured ingredients for children to spread and sprinkle. The children crushed, fingered, smelt and described a selection of herbs before adding them to the glue artworks. The member of staff asked for, and listened to, the children's descriptions of the smells, feels, likes and dislikes as the activity progressed. Descriptions included those connected with*

*mealtime, for example associating the smell of rosemary with roast dinner. Another child associated chives with plants grown in gardens. Children listened to each other's responses and waited their turn at the activity, which continued until the last child had chosen to work there.*

26. In good childcare settings adults spend time playing and talking with children, helping them to learn. They provide a range of structured activities like baking, art and crafts, music and singing, and they maximise the opportunities for informal learning.

*Staff make very good use of questioning as they challenge children to recognise and compare colour, number, shape and size to support learning. Staff are particularly receptive to the quieter children and encourage them to become involved in play.*

27. When appropriate, the adults allow the children to plan and initiate their own play, stepping back to observe how the play develops, interacting occasionally to encourage or extend the children's learning.

*Staff achieve a balance between supervised activities and allowing children freedom to create from their imaginations, for example in painting and role play. Children are encouraged and supported well to select a variety of creative materials and tools. They enjoy acting using the puppet theatre and small world play with the dolls' house.*

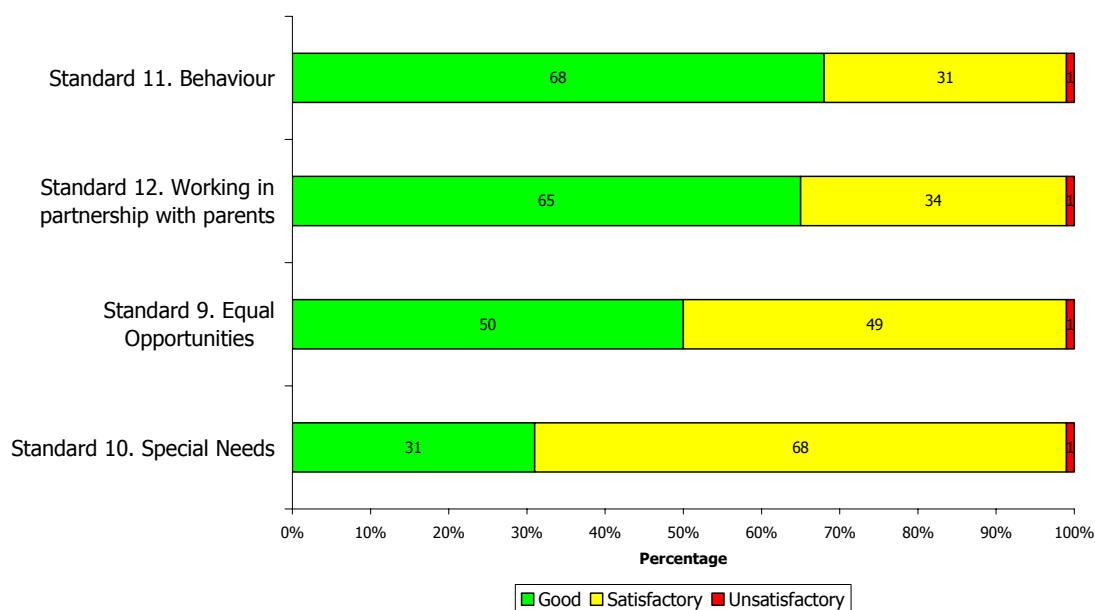
28. In good settings, including those providing government-funded nursery education, adults take positive steps to find out what interests each child and how much they know or can do. Adults observe children as they play and record what children can do. Adults use these achievement records to monitor children's progress and to help plan the next steps in children's learning. They plan and provide a very wide variety of interesting and challenging activities supported by quality resources.

## Chapter 4. Making a positive contribution

The outcome for children 'making a positive contribution' involves children making positive relationships, engaging in positive behaviour, being involved in what goes on around them, and gaining in self-confidence.

- The relevant national standards and areas of learning relate to:
  - equal opportunities (Standard 9)
  - special needs (Standard 10)
  - behaviour (Standard 11)
  - partnership with parents (Standard 12)
  - personal social and emotional development
  - knowledge and understanding of the world.
  
- In settings where outcomes are good, children:
  - behave well as they learn to consider others and what is expected of them
  - benefit from activities and resources which help them to value diversity
  - are valued and included
  - have their individual needs met by adults who work in close partnership with parents and carers.

**Figure 7. Quality of childcare - making a positive contribution**



**Key:**

Standard 9, Equal Opportunities: the registered person and staff actively promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice for all children.

Standard 10, Special Needs (including special educational needs and disabilities): the registered person is aware some children have special needs and is proactive in ensuring appropriate action can be taken when such a child is identified or admitted to the provision. Steps are taken to promote the child's welfare and development of the child within the setting in partnership with the parents and other relevant parties.

Standard 11, Behaviour: adults caring for children are able to manage a wide range of children's behaviour in a way which promotes their welfare and development.

Standard 12, Working in partnership with parents: the registered person and staff work in partnership with parents to meet the needs of the children, both individually and as a group. Information is shared.

## Children are considerate

29. In good settings, children are kind, considerate and thoughtful to each other. They are well-mannered, share, and take turns. Children and adults respect each other. Adults praise and encourage children frequently. They are calm, consistent, polite and respectful, and children follow their example.

30. Adults have high expectations of children's behaviour, and they manage behaviour in a way that is appropriate to each child's age and stage of development. They make sure that children are not bored or frustrated, but are busy and contented.

31. Children have clear boundaries that they understand. Often children are involved in negotiating the 'house rules', for example to ensure all the children had fair access to a play station.

*The childminder ensures that children understand the need to share and how being kind to each other prevents children from being hurt. She is firm with the children, while retaining an element of fun. When teaching the children right from wrong, she is sensitive to children's feelings and consistently turns negative situations into positive experiences with kindness and laughter. The children respond well to the childminder and are secure and happy in her care. Children are kind and caring to each other spontaneously.*

*Staff provide good role models for children by being calm and polite. Praise is given freely to children, ensuring that they develop confidence and self esteem and understand when they have done well. Music is used effectively to promote good behaviour, for example by highlighting tidy-up time, and songs teach children when to use please and thank you. Children respond with enthusiasm to requests for help from staff at tidy up time. They enjoy the opportunities given for taking responsibility at snack time.*

## Children value diversity

32. In good settings children are helped to consider and value diversity, for example in religious and cultural backgrounds or in gender, disability and ethnicity. Staff understand policies on equal opportunities and work within them. Where relevant, staff foster positive links with children's own culture and language, involving parents. Children have access to a broad range of resources, play opportunities and activities, which reflect diversity and acknowledge cultural differences.

*The childminder goes to a great deal of effort to ensure that the individual needs of all the children in her care are met. This sometimes involves her conducting research on alternative cultures and belief systems; learning familiar words in other languages (including sign language); providing suitable food and drinks; visiting families at home or borrowing books from the library in other languages to share with the children.*

*Staff provide children with first-hand experience of equal opportunities. Several members of the staff team are in wheelchairs: children see these adults as effective members of the staff team and learn how specialist vehicles, equipment and adapted facilities on the school campus are used to support and enable them to play a full role. Children become aware that, on occasion, extra time is needed for these staff to move around. Staff answer children's questions honestly and teach children to respect that their wheelchairs are essential and not toys. Children learn consideration for others and confidence around disability. Children also learn that they are not alone in having specific needs and that they can talk to someone who really understands.*

## **All children are included**

33. In good settings, children are able to participate fully because activities are thoughtfully adapted to meet their needs. Adults are strongly committed to inclusion and enthusiastic about undertaking relevant training, sometimes of a very specific nature, to support a particular child.

*The childminder is able to communicate in sign language and all the children have learnt some basic signing. The environment is designed to make resources easily accessible to all. The childminder has adapted a table and paint easel simply and effectively, to prevent tipping over or paper and materials slipping off when coordination and balance is difficult. This enables children with special needs to be independent and take a full and active part in the setting.*

*The childminder cares for a disabled child who needs tube feeding. The childminding network coordinator, linking with health professionals, arranged training and provides financial subsidy so that the childminder is able to give additional care without financial loss. The childminder uses the same procedures and words as the parents use when tube feeding so the child's needs are met consistently and sensitively. Records are kept as part of the individual health care plan.*

*The childminder explains clearly and simply to other children why the child needs special feeding arrangements and the children accept this easily. As a result the child feels understood, reassured, and cared for and is treated with dignity and respect. She is included and given the same opportunities as the other children. Her parents are given respite from the high demands of caring for her and they feel they have more energy for their parental care as a result.*

34. Good providers promote inclusion for all children through keeping thorough records of each child's individual needs and all aspects of their progress. In group day-care settings the presence of a trained and effective Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) helps ensure that each child's needs are met fully. The provider works closely with parents and liaises with other relevant professionals.

*The out-of-school club was asked to accept a child with profound and multiple learning difficulties who attended a special school and who had no speech, double incontinence and was prone to falling. After assessing the risks the club*

*refused to admit the child.*

*The parent approached the local authority and all parties met to consider what was needed to include him. As a result, the local authority funded a one-to-one worker, arranged training in intimate care and suitable play activities, provided appropriate equipment, and organised the disposal of clinical waste. The staff were able to overcome their fears and to see the child as an individual. They found ways to include the child and offer him play experiences within the setting, and other children in the club responded positively to him.*

*Staff responded to concerns from other parents by confidently explaining their policy around inclusion and how they assess the needs of all children and aim to meet them whenever possible.*

## **Children's needs are met through partnership with parents**

35. Good providers work in close partnership with parents and carers. Relationships between providers and parents are honest, open, trusting, friendly and professional. This helps ensure children are settled and secure.

36. Parents have clear information about the setting and their children's progress through, for example, a prospectus, regular newsletters, daily diaries, and displays. Policies and procedures are clear and available. Providers regularly ask parents for feedback and suggestions, often using questionnaires. Good settings provide flexible support to parents who have varying work patterns, ensuring that children are safe and secure.

*The childminder gives children's learning very high priority every day and they benefit from her commitment to planning a suitable curriculum. She uses the Foundation Stage curriculum guidance and the Birth to three matters framework to plan interesting activities, using many appropriate resources and creating relevant displays. Equal opportunities are considered well throughout all that she provides. Activities such as outings, craft, books, discussions and games, link imaginatively to a planned theme. Parents comment positively about their active involvement in their children's learning and a strong link between home and the childminder is maintained.*

37. Good day-care groups actively encourage parents and carers to come into the setting at any time. Often they promote parental participation on a rota system and give parents clear and meaningful tasks to undertake. Good providers arrange meetings and parents' evenings for fuller discussion about their child's progress. Some providers offer information meetings, for example, to provide detail about the Foundation Stage curriculum.

*Parents complete a 'Get to Know Me' document, which is used during an induction for the children. The nursery keeps parents informed daily and encourages parents to spend time in the nursery, to observe their children or to offer their talents and skills. Parents are invited in regularly to look at assessment documents and to talk about their children's progress. Parents influence the individual play plans for their child by sharing interests and achievements at home. They can take children's files home to share with other interested adults. The nursery encourages children to take items home,*



*including library books.*

38. Parents and practitioners share what they know about the child's interests, achievements and learning. Parents have opportunities to contribute to their child's learning, for example by sharing the assessment and recording of their child's progress.

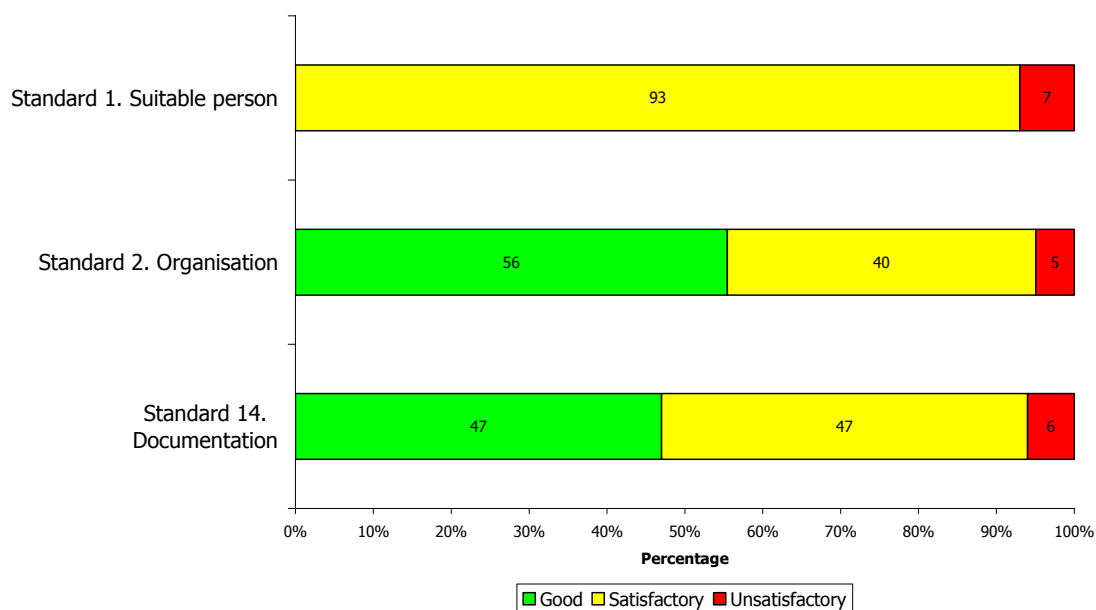
*Staff have introduced 'The Learning Story', a narrative depicting what a child was doing at a certain time in nursery. Staff record what children are doing, who they are interacting with, what they did and what they said. At the base of the page they record what children are learning in the example given and what skills children are developing through their play. Parents all report that this is very useful to them as it helps them to understand how children learn from activities and develop their skills.*

## Chapter 5. Organisation to promote good outcomes for children

This chapter looks at the measures providers put into place and how they organise themselves to promote positive outcomes for children.

- The relevant national standards relate to:
  - suitable person (Standard 1)
  - organisation (Standard 2)
  - documentation (Standard 14).
  
- Good settings for children are well organised because adults:
  - have a clear sense of purpose, and a commitment to continual improvement
  - are well qualified and experienced
  - make the best use of their time to support the children
  - use space and resources well for children
  - keep good records and use them well.

**Figure 8. Quality of childcare - organisation**



**Key:**

Standard 1, Suitable person: adults providing day care, looking after children or having unsupervised access to them are suitable to do so. For this standard, Ofsted judged on only two grades, satisfactory and unsatisfactory.

Standard 2, Organisation: the registered person meets the required adult:child ratios, ensures that training and qualifications requirements are met and organises space and resources to meet the children's needs effectively.

Standard 14, Documentation: records, policies and procedures which are required for the efficient and safe management of the provision, and to promote the welfare, care and learning of children are maintained. Records about individual children are shared with the child's parent.

## Adults have a clear sense of purpose

39. In good settings there is a clear sense of purpose and direction. Providers of group day care value their staff. They have robust arrangements to monitor and evaluate children's progress, and they act on the findings. They have a full range of policies and procedures, including one for complaints. These are regularly reviewed, updated, and shared with parents, and all staff understand them.

*The pre-school team have developed a wide range of effective procedures, which enable staff, volunteers and parents to know how the setting operates on a day-to-day basis. This includes how they offer appropriate support and help the children to bridge the gap between home and pre-school. A comprehensive operational plan covers all areas of practice and includes suitable policies and procedures. The 'welcome pack' for new parents and guidance for new committee members includes additional relevant information. The manager provides induction training for new members of staff and rotas are clearly displayed in the office area to make sure everyone is aware of their roles and responsibilities.*

## Adults are well qualified

40. In good day-care settings the person in charge holds a relevant qualification to at least level 3.<sup>10</sup> Staffing levels are good and the large majority of staff hold early years qualifications, and have relevant experience. Most of those not yet relevantly qualified are training to become so. Staff enhance their skills by attending short courses on specific subjects, for example on outdoor play, developing curious minds and using circle time. Staff use their training well to plan and provide exciting opportunities for children.

*The priority given to staff development and training is excellent. The nursery has a clear management structure and all senior members of staff have defined roles and responsibilities. New staff, including those working towards a childcare qualification, receive support meetings to discuss strengths and areas in which to improve. Induction procedures are well established and daily discussions ensure these staff are fully informed, included and valued. Systems are well developed to evaluate and monitor staff performance and development and the effect the nursery programme has on children's progress. This ensures the nursery fulfils its vision to provide a high quality standard of care for children and provides maximum learning opportunities.*

41. Good childminders show commitment towards their own personal development and improve their knowledge by attending relevant courses and workshops. Childminders use this knowledge effectively to provide children with a wide range of learning experiences.

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<sup>10</sup> This refers to levels of qualification identified on the National Qualifications Framework developed by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, or on the list of acceptable qualifications maintained by the Department for Education and Skills.

## Adults use their time well

42. Good providers deploy staff well, so children receive appropriate adult attention. Adults provide good levels of support enabling all children to participate in the activities. They group the children effectively, often with key workers in small groups. This promotes consistency and allows lots of discussion between staff and children. The small groups enable staff to build effective relationships and to get to know individual children well and help ensure children feel secure and confident with their carers.

*There are extremely effective staffing levels resulting in an outstanding standard of care. The staff ratio is maintained according to the needs of the children, and members of staff work individually with some children with special needs. The key worker system is effective and the staff get to know the children extremely well. The staff are particularly skilled at interacting with the children, responding well to them and listening to their ideas. Staff use very carefully framed questions that extend children's thinking, vocabulary and learning. As a result, children are confident and have a positive approach to the learning experiences provided.*

## Adults use resources well

43. Good providers organise resources and activities imaginatively. The environment, both indoors and out, is organised flexibly and creatively so children can choose to access areas and resources offering different activities to extend their play and develop their independence. Good group day-care settings often use movable room dividers to create smaller areas for story telling or other group activities, or for sleep times to provide a cosy feel for children. Childminders often make effective use of local facilities and regularly arrange outings to parks and the library and adventurous journeys on buses and trains.

*The childminder has developed an extremely well organised playroom which appeals to children. It provides a wealth of exciting learning opportunities which are easily accessible. Excellent home made resources include games, treasure baskets, and story and singing sacks with props which inspire children's imagination and encourage them to learn in a fun way.*

## Adults use records effectively

44. Good providers use documents well to support the care of the children and to comply with regulations. Records are clear, up-to-date, easily accessible and stored securely. Adults observe children's development and keep records that help them meet children's individual needs. Parents share and contribute to records about their children. This helps ensure children are cared for safely and progress well.

*The crèche has an excellent range of required record keeping, policies and procedures. These are available for parents to see. Written notices are displayed to remind parents of the need to share important information that could affect their children's care. There is a process to inform parents of their*

**Early years: firm foundations**

*children's achievements, even though the children only attend the crèche for a short time. Staff use a daily log to inform parents of any incidents or events involving their child. Parents complete a detailed information form about their child and any particular needs are noted and shared with staff.*

*The childminder keeps an excellent standard of records on the children in her care. This includes detailed information on the children's needs, their development and significant milestones. Parents are kept informed, verbally and in writing, on a daily basis. All significant information is recorded, demonstrating to parents that the children are being provided with a stimulating routine offering sufficient challenge to their development. A photographic record is kept on their progress in individual scrap books.*

## Conclusion: raising quality

45. I hope that all who look after children will aspire to good quality provision. This report has exemplified what can be done, by sharing aspects of practice that Ofsted inspectors have observed and judged to be good. Guidance documents are also available to help promote good practice.<sup>11</sup>

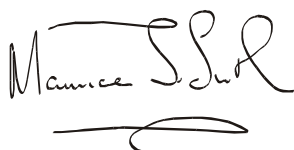
46. Improving quality is at the core of Ofsted's role as regulator and inspector of early years care and education, captured in our aim of ensuring 'better education and care'. We shall fulfil this role by continuing to offer a secure registration, inspection, complaint investigation and, where necessary, enforcement service to the public. We shall continue to report and grade quality publicly, publish guidance and reliable national data, and offer recommendations and actions to providers to secure further improvement.

47. But everybody has a responsibility for raising quality. Central government provides the statutory, strategic, policy and curriculum frameworks and sets the national standards. Local government provides support, advice and training to providers and information to parents. Providers themselves have a key role in maintaining and further improving the quality of the care and education they offer. And parents have a responsibility to continuously demand high quality from providers, and monitor the daily care of their children.

48. There are always opportunities for further improvement, even in the best settings. In every inspection we have identified ways in which experiences and outcomes for children could be better: these are illustrated in Annex 3.

49. Good quality is not the whole story about provision for children. In 2004 the Ofsted report *Early years: protection through regulation* focused on the sharp end of regulation: enforcing the law in the very small minority of cases where providers did not deliver the standards children deserve. Our work at this sharp end continues.

50. We want good practice to be common practice. This report has shown that substantial numbers of children receive good quality care and education: but there is further to go. I hope the report will be used widely to build on the firm foundations illustrated here and to raise further the quality of care and education for our children in the months and years to come.



**Maurice Smith, Director, Early Years**

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<sup>11</sup> For example, *Guidance to the National Standards*, Ofsted, 2001, plus supplement, 2004; *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage*, Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2001; *Birth to three matters: a framework to support children in their earliest years*, Sure Start, 2004.

## Annex 1. Quality of childcare on each national standard, by type of setting

Outcome	Standard  <i>Types of setting are defined in note (2)</i>	All settings			Percentages graded good against each setting type						
		Good <sup>(1)</sup>	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	All group day care	Child-minding	Full day care	Sessional day care	Out-of-school care	Crèche	Multiple day care
<b>Being healthy</b>	<b>Health:</b> The registered person promotes the good health of children and takes positive steps to prevent the spread of infection and appropriate measures when they are ill. (Standard 7)	47	48	5	54	44	60	54	42	51	57
	<b>Food and drink:</b> Children are provided with regular drinks and food in adequate quantities for their needs. Food and drink is properly prepared, nutritious and complies with dietary and religious requirements. (Standard 8)	56	44	0	61	54	70	60	51	41	64
<b>Staying safe</b>	<b>Physical environment:</b> The premises are safe, secure and suitable. They provide adequate space in an appropriate location, are welcoming and offer access to necessary facilities for a range of activities which promote children's development. (Standard 4)	67	32	1	66	67	70	68	57	65	68
	<b>Equipment:</b> Furniture, equipment and toys are appropriate for their purpose and help to create an accessible and stimulating environment. They are of suitable design and condition, well maintained and conform to safety standards. (Standard 5)	63	35	1	70	61	73	74	57	69	72
	<b>Safety:</b> The registered person takes positive steps to promote safety within the setting and on outings and ensures proper precautions are taken to prevent accidents. (Standard 6)	53	43	4	58	51	64	59	47	54	61
	<b>Child protection:</b> The registered person complies with local child protection procedures approved by the Area Child Protection Committee and ensures that all adults are able to put the procedures into practice. (Standard 13)	35	62	3	38	34	43	36	32	34	44
<b>Enjoying and achieving</b>	<b>Care learning and play:</b> The registered person meets children's individual needs and promotes their welfare. They plan and provide activities and play opportunities to develop children's emotional, physical, social and intellectual capabilities. (Standard 3)	65	35	1	73	61	74	75	69	66	74

**Early years: firm foundations**

		All settings			Percentages Graded Good(1) against each setting type						
		Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	All group day care	Child-minding	Full day care	Sessional day care	Out-of-school care	Crèche	Multiple day care
Types of setting are defined in note (2)											
<b>Making a positive contribution</b>	<b>Behaviour:</b> Adults caring for children are able to manage a wide range of children's behaviour in a way which promotes their welfare and development. (Standard 11)	68	31	1	76	64	78	77	71	66	78
	<b>Working in partnership with parents:</b> The registered person and staff work in partnership with parents to meet the needs of the children, both individually and as a group. Information is shared. (Standard 12)	65	34	1	72	61	80	74	60	65	74
	<b>Equal opportunities:</b> The registered person and staff actively promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice for all children. (Standard 9)	50	49	1	61	45	66	64	50	56	66
	<b>Special needs:</b> The registered person is aware some children have special needs and is proactive in ensuring appropriate action... Steps are taken to promote child's welfare and development in partnership with the parents and others. (Standard 10)	31	68	1	49	23	54	53	39	27	55
<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Suitable person:</b> Adults providing day care, looking after children or having unsupervised access to them are suitable to do so. (Standard 1)(3)		93	7	93	94	95	94	87	91	93
	<b>Organisation:</b> The registered person meets the required adult to child ratios, ensures that training and qualifications requirements are met and organises space and resources to meet the children's needs effectively. (Standard 2)	56	40	5	54	56	62	55	42	50	57
	<b>Documentation:</b> Records, policies and procedures are kept as required for the management of the provision and to promote the welfare, care and learning of children. Records about individual children are shared with the child's parent. (Standard 14)	47	47	6	51	45	61	49	39	43	54
<b>Overall Percentage</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>57</b>	
<i>Total number of inspections (4)</i>	45,600	47,900	700	29,300	64,800	9,600	9,200	6,700	1,300	2,500	

(1) Judgements on the national standards were made on a three-point scale. Good = the standard was met well, or exceeded; Satisfactory = the standard was met; Unsatisfactory = the standard was not met.

(2) Childminding is care on domestic premises for a period or periods of more than two hours a day and for reward; full day care offers continuous care for four hours or more; sessional care is care for more than two hours and less than four hours in any one day where no child attends more than five sessions a week; out-of-school care is for children aged three upwards; crèches provide occasional care for children; multiple care offers more than one type of care.

(3) Judgements of suitability against Standard 1, were either satisfactory or unsatisfactory; (4) Numbers of inspections have been rounded to the nearest 100



## Annex 2. Quality of key aspects of nursery education

	All nursery education inspections judgements <sup>(1), (2)</sup>				Percentage judged high quality for each provision type <sup>(3)</sup>			
	High quality	Good overall	Significant weaknesses	Unacceptable	Full day care	Sessional day care	Independent schools	Multiple day care types
<i>Areas of learning:</i>								
Personal, social and emotional development	64	33	3	0	64	62	90	61
Physical development	56	40	4	0	56	53	89	55
Creative development	53	40	6	1	53	51	83	53
Knowledge and understanding of the world	52	42	6	1	52	47	85	51
Mathematical development	49	42	8	1	49	44	90	46
Communication, language and literacy	48	45	6	1	49	42	89	45
<i>Aspects of management:</i>								
Partnerships with parents	58	39	3	0	59	53	88	58
Improvements since last inspection	46	44	8	1	45	42	81	46
Leadership and management	42	51	6	1	43	37	79	42
Quality of teaching	35	57	7	1	35	30	77	34
<b>Quality of nursery education overall</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>32</b>
<i>Total number of inspections<sup>(4)</sup></i>	<i>5,600</i>	<i>9,600</i>	<i>1,100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>7,100</i>	<i>7,300</i>	<i>900</i>	<i>1,300</i>

(1) All nursery education inspections completed between 01/04/03 and 31/03/05. (2) Four-point judgement scale: 1 = high quality nursery education where children are making very good progress towards the early learning goals; 2 = good quality education overall where children are making generally good progress; 3 = acceptable provision but some significant areas for improvement, where children's progress is limited; 4 = unacceptable provision, children are making poor progress towards the early learning goals.

(3) Percentages may not add to 100 because of rounding. (4) Number of inspections has been rounded to the nearest 100.

## Annex 3. Actions and recommendations for improvement

<i>Outcome</i>	<i>Standard</i>	<i>Typical actions and recommendations following inspection</i>
Being healthy	7: Health  8: Food and drink	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve documentation on administration of medication</li> <li>• Improve documentation following accidents</li> <li>• Attend a paediatric first aid training course</li> <li>• Seek permission from parents for emergency medical treatment, or to administer medication</li> <li>• Ensure children have access to drinking water at all times</li> <li>• Ensure snacks and meals are healthy and nutritious</li> <li>• Ensure a record is kept of babies' food intake</li> </ul>
Staying safe	4: Premises  5: Equipment  6: Safety  13: Child protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure sufficient provision for children to move freely and for quieter activities</li> <li>• Ensure toys and materials promote equality of opportunity</li> <li>• Make areas safe or inaccessible for children</li> <li>• Ensure emergency evacuation procedures and all required fire safety precautions are in place including fire blanket and smoke detectors</li> <li>• Ensure a clear procedure if a parent fails to collect a child or a child becomes lost</li> <li>• Ensure risks and hazards are identified and reduced effectively both inside and outside, and on outings</li> <li>• Ensure clear procedures for action if you suspect abuse, or if an allegation is made against you</li> </ul>
Enjoying and achieving	3: Care, learning and play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extend the range of planned activities and experiences for children, appropriate for their stages of development and based on their individual needs</li> <li>• Improve opportunities for children to make independent choices by using a range of resources and responding to their spontaneous interests</li> <li>• Consider ways of recording children's progress to plan the next steps for their development through play</li> </ul>
Making a contribution	9: Equal opportunities  10: Special needs  11: Behaviour  12: Working with parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure children have access to a broad range of resources and activities which reflect diversity</li> <li>• Ensure that staffing arrangements meet the needs of children with special needs</li> <li>• Ensure behaviour management methods promote children's welfare, and develop the behaviour policy to include bullying</li> <li>• Ensure aspects of record keeping are in place, such as the complaints procedure, and that parental permissions are obtained as appropriate</li> <li>• Improve information to parents about their child's experiences and achievements</li> </ul>

<i>Outcome</i>	<i>Standard</i>	<i>Typical actions and recommendations following inspection</i>
Organisation	<p>1: Suitable person</p> <p>2: Organisation</p> <p>14: Records</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure checks are completed for all household members over the age of 16 years (childminders)</li> <li>• Complete an appropriate first aid course that includes training in first aid for infants and young children (childminders).</li> <li>• Ensure there are suitable arrangements in place to protect children from persons who are not vetted</li> <li>• Ensure that there are effective procedures in place for informing Ofsted of relevant changes</li> <li>• Develop and implement an action plan, with timescales, to ensure the person in charge will meet the minimum qualifications requirement and at least half of all childcare staff will hold an appropriate level 2 qualification</li> <li>• Ensure that the record of attendance includes the names of the children looked after on the premises and the names of the persons who look after them and visitors, including arrival and departure times</li> <li>• Demonstrate the arrangements for supervisory cover in the manager's absence by identifying a named deputy</li> <li>• Confirm the named deputy has appropriate qualifications to take charge in the absence of the manager</li> <li>• Ensure that the continuing training needs of staff are met</li> <li>• Ensure required records are in place, most often: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A daily record of attendance</li> <li>• A record of accidents occurring on the premises</li> <li>• A record of any medicine administered and parents' consent</li> <li>• Notification of significant changes or events</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Update policies in line with the national standards for child protection and for complaints.</li> </ul>