

# Are you ready for your inspection?

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

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## Early years inspections explained

Ofsted inspects and reports 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 three and four years** provided by those of you who are included on your local authority's directory of providers entitled to receive nursery education funding.<sup>1</sup>

If you provide both care and nursery education, we will carry out an 'integrated inspection' with one single inspection report.

To help reach judgements about the overall quality of your care and, where applicable, nursery education, our inspectors will ask, **what is it like for a child here?** To answer this important question they 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.

In **childcare inspections**, inspectors consider these outcomes **by taking account of how well your provision meets the 14 National Standards for under-eights day care and childminding**.<sup>3</sup> These standards are a baseline of quality below which no provider may fall. They are the same for all types of provision, but are supported by criteria which differ between each of the five categories of childcare.<sup>4</sup> Inspectors will take account of the supporting criteria relevant to the particular type of childcare you provide.

Inspectors also:

- judge the quality of teaching
- judge the quality of teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage (where you provide nursery education for children aged three and four)

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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.

<sup>3</sup> The *National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding* is published by the DfES (ISBN 1 84478 061 9), revised edition, 2003.

<sup>4</sup> The five categories are: full day care, sessional day care, crèches, out of school care and childminding.

- take account of 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 three).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> This document is available on the Sure Start website:  
[www.surestart.gov.uk/resources/childcareworkers/birthtothreematters](http://www.surestart.gov.uk/resources/childcareworkers/birthtothreematters).

The table shows how this all fits together.

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Inspection of care</b>	<b>Inspection of nursery education</b>
	<i>Inspectors will check:</i>	<i>Inspectors will check:</i>
<b>Helping children to be healthy</b>	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.
<b>Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe</b>	Standard 4: Physical environment Standard 5: Equipment Standard 6: Safety Standard 13: Child protection Birth to three matters: a healthy child	
<b>Helping children enjoy and achieve</b>	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.
<b>Helping children make a positive contribution to the provision and the wider community</b>	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 cultural development is fostered.
<b>Organisation</b>	Standard 1: Suitable person Standard 2: Organisation Standard 14: Documentation	How well the setting is led and managed.

## How often do inspections take place?

We 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.

## Do inspectors have to follow a code of conduct?

Yes. All inspectors adhere to a code of conduct to ensure that inspections are of the highest professional standard. You can see the code in the long version of this guidance which appears on our website.

## 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 normally receive no notice of the inspection<sup>6</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.

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<sup>6</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 it when it is notified of the school inspection.

Inspectors will ask to see the completed self-evaluation form *What is it like for a child here?*, which can be found at the end 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 to assess 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 main findings of the inspection. The meeting usually lasts no longer than one hour. The inspector will tell you the overall judgement of the quality of care and of nursery education (where this is provided) and will explain the main strengths of the provision and where improvement is needed. He or she will normally show you a display of the judgements on a laptop computer. These are the judgements that we will include in the report. During the meeting, you may correct factual details, for example about the description of the setting. However, this is not a time to present fresh evidence about the provision because the inspector will have already made his or her judgements, so make sure you have shown or told the inspector all he or she needs to know **before the meeting**.

If the quality and standards of care or education are judged to be inadequate, the inspector will explain to you what happens next.

## **What will happen after the inspection?**

After the inspection, we will send you the inspection report and publish it on our website. 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: *Complaints procedure - Raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted* (HMI 2473).

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

## What grades does Ofsted use?

We use a straightforward four-point grading scale to make a judgement on how well your provision meets each of the outcomes. We 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 which 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 six 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 three to six 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 your 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.

## 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: crèche; childminding; full day care; sessional day care; out of school care
- Ofsted's *Day care and childminding: guidance to the National Standards. Revisions to certain criteria: September 2003; February 2004; October 2005*.
- *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 have 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.

### ✓ **Make sure you understand the revisions to the National Standards**

New laws for childminding and day care came into effect on 3 October 2005, so check that you meet the new requirements of National Standards 1, 7 and 12. These include the responsibility for registered providers of **day care** to ensure

that the staff they employ are suitable to care for children. The new requirements are explained in Ofsted's *Day care and childminding: guidance to the National Standards. Revisions to certain criteria October 2005* (Ofsted reference number 070116).

- ✓ **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 the 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 without involving Ofsted. However, since 3 October 2005 you must show the inspector a record of any written complaints parents have made that relates to one or more of the National Standards as well as any 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. Further information about the investigation of complaints and the complaints record is set out in the Annex to Ofsted's *Day care and childminding: guidance to the National Standards. Revisions to certain criteria October 2005* (Ofsted reference number 070116).
  
- ✓ **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>7</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 (childminding only)
  - 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. 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.

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<sup>7</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 the fuller version of this guidance for more information about how inspectors make judgements; this is available on the Ofsted website.

- **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								
<b>1. How effective are you in helping children to be healthy?</b>								
<b>Grade:</b>	<b>1</b>		<b>2</b>		<b>3</b>		<b>4</b>	
<b>2. How effective are you in protecting children from harm and neglect and keeping them safe?</b>								
<b>Grade:</b>	<b>1</b>		<b>2</b>		<b>3</b>		<b>4</b>	
<b>3. How effective are you in helping children to enjoy what they do and to achieve as well as they can?</b>								
<b>Grade:</b>	<b>1</b>		<b>2</b>		<b>3</b>		<b>4</b>	
<b>4. How effective are you in helping children make a positive contribution to your provision and to the wider community?</b>								
<b>Grade:</b>	<b>1</b>		<b>2</b>		<b>3</b>		<b>4</b>	
<b>5. How effective is your organisation of childcare?</b>								
<b>Grade:</b>	<b>1</b>		<b>2</b>		<b>3</b>		<b>4</b>	

## Have you got the following documents ready to show the inspector?<sup>8</sup>

### For all childminders and day-care providers

- 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 (childminding only)
- 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
- a record of complaints that includes brief details of the complaint, the National Standard(s) it relates to, how it was dealt with, the outcome of any investigation including any action(s) taken, and whether and when the parent was notified of the outcome.

### Additional documents for day-care providers only

- the name, address and telephone number of the registered person
- 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)
- a written procedure to be followed where a parent has a complaint about the service provided by the registered person

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<sup>8</sup> These are required by the Day Care and Childminding (National Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 and 2005.

- 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.