

Are you ready for your inspection?

A guide to inspections of provision on Ofsted's
Childcare and Early Years Registers



Contents

About this edition	2
Introduction	3
What do we mean by...?	4
Childcare Act 2006	4
Childcare providers	4
Childcare Register	4
Childminder	4
Department for Children, Schools and Families	5
Domestic premises	5
Early years and later years age groups	5
Early Years Foundation Stage	5
Early years providers	5
Early years provision	5
Early Years Register	5
Early years settings	6
Home childcarers	6
Ofsted	6
Open access scheme	6
Registered person	6
Self-evaluation form	6
About this guidance	7
About inspections	7
Section 1: Inspections of provision on the Childcare Register	8
What is the purpose of the inspection?	8
When will the provision be inspected?	8
How long do inspections take?	8
What happens during the inspection?	8
What happens after the inspection?	8
What happens if the provision does not meet requirements?	9
Will I have to pay an inspection fee?	9
What can I do to be ready for my inspection?	9
Section 2: Inspections of provision on the Early Years Register	11
What is the purpose of the inspection?	11
When will the inspection take place?	11
How long do inspections take?	11
Will I have to pay an inspection fee?	11
When will I know my inspection date?	11
What if I am a childminder and I am not caring for children when an inspection is due?	11
What if my provision is on a school site?	12
Will my provision be inspected against the Early Years Foundation Stage even if I only care for children before and after school or during school holidays?	12
What if I mainly educate children in their home language?	12
Will my inspection be different if I receive government funding for the early education of three- and four-year-olds?	12
Will I have two inspections if I am registered on the Childcare Register and the Early Years Register?	13
The self-evaluation form	13
The inspection	13
What do inspectors look for when judging provision?	14
How will my provision be graded?	18
Inadequate provision: informing the local authority and the Department for Children, Schools and Families	20
What happens after the inspection?	20
What can I do to be ready for my inspection?	21
How will Ofsted report on any complaints made about me or my service?	23
How does Ofsted celebrate outstanding provision?	23
Need more information and advice?	24

About this edition

We published a new edition of *Are you ready for your inspection?* in July 2008 (reference: 080023).

This July 2009 edition (reference: 090130) has revised text. It includes publication titles and links to our website where these were not available for the July 2008 edition.

Introduction

Are you ready for your inspection? is designed to help you to think about some of the implications for you as a provider when we inspect you from September 2008. In reality, you do not need to do anything to prepare for inspection. All you need to do is provide high quality care and early education for the children with whom you work.

We do not expect any provider to make special preparations for inspection, but we do expect every provider to be working towards making their provision outstanding. Those who do this will know that to continue to provide outstanding provision means continuing to reflect on what works well and what is not working as well as you would hope. The very best providers do this all of the time. They use their evaluations to strengthen and build on the most effective practice and to remedy any weaknesses they find in areas that are not as good. The very best providers also seek out good practice across the sector and beyond. They search for ways they may not have thought of to improve what they offer. If this is what you do, you are already very well prepared for inspection.

What do we mean by...?

Here is an explanation of some of the terms used in this booklet.

Childcare Act 2006

This is the law that sets out:

- duties on local authorities to improve outcomes for children and to ensure access to information about provision in their area
- legal frameworks for the regulation and inspection of provision for children from birth to age 17
- a framework for the delivery of quality integrated care and education for children from birth to the 31 August following their fifth birthday – the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Childcare providers

These include registered providers on:

- non-domestic premises (previously referred to as day-care providers)
- domestic premises who provide childcare with at least three other people. Providers who fall into this category are determined by the number of people either providing childcare or working with children or any combination of each. The law says that early years provision on domestic premises is not early years childminding if at any time the number of persons providing the early years provision on the premises or assisting with the provision exceeds three. There is more information about childcare on domestic premises in the *Guide to registration on the Early Years Register: childcare provider on domestic or non-domestic premises* (www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/080017).

Childcare Register

A register of providers who are registered by us to care for children from birth to 17 years. The register has two parts:

- the voluntary part which providers who are not eligible for compulsory registration may choose to join (mainly people looking after children aged eight and over, or providing care in the child's home)
- the compulsory part which providers must join if they care for one child or more from the 1 September following their fifth birthday until they reach their eighth birthday.

For more information about registration on the Childcare Register please see the *Guide to registration on the Childcare Register* (www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/080032), or contact your local family information service.

Childminder

A person who is registered to look after one child or more to whom they are not related on domestic premises for reward.

Childminders work with no more than two other childminders or assistants.

They:

- care for children on domestic premises that are not the home of one of the children, or
- care for children from more than two families wholly or mainly in the home of one of the children

and:

- must register to care for children under the age of eight
- can choose to register to care for older children.

Childminders care for at least one individual child for a total of more than two hours in any day. This is not necessarily a continuous period of time. For example, if you provide care for the same child aged under eight for an hour before and an hour and a half after school then registration is due; however, if you provide care for one child aged under eight for an hour before school and provide care for a different child aged under eight for an hour and a half after school then registration is not required.

Department for Children, Schools and Families

The government department responsible for the Childcare Act 2006 and the regulations that underpin it, including the law that sets out our responsibilities regarding childcare and early education. The department is also responsible for the *Statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage*, the document that underpins our inspections.

Domestic premises

Any premises which are wholly or mainly used as a private dwelling, that is, someone's home.

Early years and later years age groups

Early years age group

Children aged from birth until the 31 August following their fifth birthday who attend early years settings that deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Later years age group

Children from the 1 September following their fifth birthday to the day on which the child attains the age of 18 who attend settings registered on the compulsory and/or voluntary part/s of the Childcare Register:

■ the compulsory part

care for children from the 1 September following their fifth birthday until they reach their eighth birthday

■ the voluntary part

care for children aged eight and over, or for children of any age if cared for in their own home or attending a provision that is exempt from registration – see Registration not required (www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/080134).

Early Years Foundation Stage

The statutory framework for the early education and care of children from birth to the 31 August following their fifth birthday. The Early Years Foundation Stage includes requirements for the provision of young children's welfare, learning and development that all providers must meet, as well as good practice guidance. The Early Years Foundation Stage must be delivered by all schools and early years settings making provision for children from birth to the 31 August following their fifth birthday.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is not an Ofsted document. It is the responsibility of the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and is available from www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/eyfs.

Early years providers

Those who are registered on the Early Years Register to provide for children from birth to the 31 August following their fifth birthday, and maintained and independent schools providing for children of that age.¹

Early years provision

The provision of learning, development and care for children from birth to the 31 August following their fifth birthday.

Early Years Register

Unless exempt, the following must be registered by Ofsted on the Early Years Register:

- maintained and independent schools directly responsible for provision for children from birth to the age of three²
- childcarers, such as childminders, day nurseries, pre-schools and private nursery schools, providing for children from birth to the 31 August following their fifth birthday.

For more information about registration on the Early Years Register please contact your local family information service or see our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

¹ Schools are not covered by the guidance in this booklet.

² Schools that admit children who are three during the term in which they start school, known as 'rising threes', may treat those children as three-year-olds for the purposes of registration.

Early years settings

Childminding, day nurseries, playgroups, children's centres, maintained schools and those in the independent, private or voluntary sector who provide for children from birth to the 31 August following their fifth birthday.

Home childcarers

Those who care for the children (aged from birth to 17 years) of no more than two families, wholly or mainly at the home of one of the children. This includes nannies.

Ofsted

We are an independent, non-ministerial government department, responsible for the inspection of a range of education and children's services, and for the inspection and regulation of registered early years and childcare provision. From April 2007 the organisation's full title changed to the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills, but it continues to be known as Ofsted.

Open access scheme

An open access scheme offers play-based provision for children from the 1 September following their fifth birthday (known as later years). The play scheme allows children to leave the provision unaccompanied. It is exempt from registration, but can choose to register on the voluntary part of the Childcare Register. It cannot offer provision to children in the early years age group. Childminders who care for children in the later years age group are not allowed to offer open access provision.

Registered person

An individual or organisation registered to provide childcare and/or early years provision.

Self-evaluation form

A tool which supports early years providers to evaluate their provision and gives them a structure to record the outcomes. The completed form is discussed with an inspector, usually during the inspection.

About this guidance

The Childcare Act 2006 introduced two new registers for people caring for children – the Childcare Register and the Early Years Register. This guidance is for providers, including childminders, registered on either or both of those registers. It explains how the provision will be inspected from September 2008 and what you can do to be ready for your inspection. You may wish to read this guidance alongside that used by inspectors when they carry out inspections. Inspectors' guidance is available on our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

This guidance does not apply to governing bodies of maintained schools and proprietors of independent schools who are directly responsible for early years provision, or for childcare outside the school day for children aged 5 to 17 years.

About inspections

Inspection provides an impartial, external evaluation of the effectiveness of your provision, and is designed to help improve its quality.

Inspections are carried out by inspectors who work for us or on our behalf and who are trained to inspect childcare and early years provision. Inspectors carry identification that they must show you before entering your premises. The cards have photographs of the inspectors. You should always check cards before allowing inspectors access to your premises.

All inspectors must adhere to a code of conduct to ensure that inspections are of the highest professional standard. The code of conduct is in the document *Framework for the regulation of those on the Early Years and Childcare Registers* (www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/080024). We expect our inspectors to act courteously and professionally at all times and ask that you treat them with the same respect.

An inspector may contact you by phone prior to the inspection to ask about your availability and if you are caring for children. We do not do this in all cases. If you are worried about the identity of the inspector you can check by ringing our helpline on 08456 404040. Inspectors never ask for names or personal details about the children who attend your setting over the telephone.

We aim to make our inspections positive and helpful. In the vast majority of cases, providers tell us they are. However, there are occasions when, for whatever reason, inspections do not go as well as possible. If you are dissatisfied with any aspect of your inspection, you should speak to the inspector or their manager as soon as possible to try to resolve matters. You may also call our helpline staff on 08456 404040 and ask for advice on making a formal written complaint if you are unable to resolve matters with the inspector. Our helpline staff will provide you with a leaflet setting out the complaints procedure. This leaflet also gives the contact details of our complaints adjudicator, an independent organisation that considers your complaint if you remain dissatisfied with our final response. You can find more information about making complaints on our website.

Section 1: Inspections of provision on the Childcare Register

What is the purpose of the inspection?

The purpose of the inspection is to check that you are continuing to meet the requirements of your registration and any conditions we may have imposed on it.

When will the provision be inspected?

We will inspect a random selection of all those who are only on the Childcare Register, so we may inspect you at any time. We will always inspect if we receive a complaint about your childcare provision that relates to the requirements of registration or any conditions we have imposed. The random selection and complaints visits will be 10% of registered providers annually. If we decide to inspect your provision, you will receive little or no notice of the inspection. We will tell you whether your inspection has been triggered by a complaint or by random selection.

If you register on the Early Years Register as well as the Childcare Register, we will not carry out a separate inspection of the provision on the Childcare Register unless we receive a complaint relating to the requirements and/or conditions of your registration. Instead inspectors will usually check that you continue to meet the requirements and any conditions of your registration on the Childcare Register when they inspect your early years provision (see Section 2). These do not count as part of the random selection inspections.

If your Childcare Register provision is on a school site it is not likely to be inspected when the school inspection takes place, because Childcare Register inspections are random or are triggered by complaints.

If you are a home childcarer we will seek permission from the occupier of the premises where you work to enter the premises and inspect your provision.

How long do inspections take?

Inspections usually take up to two hours and are carried out by one inspector.

What happens during the inspection?

If we decide to inspect you, an inspector will visit your provision to check compliance against the requirements and any conditions of registration. At the end of the visit, he or she will give you feedback on the outcome of the inspection. If you have not met one or more of the requirements the inspector will tell you what needs to be put right and will explain what happens next.

During the inspection, the inspector will:

- talk to you, any parents, the children (if present) and any staff members and observe the provision to make sure policies are being put into practice
- check registration details and assess your compliance with, and understanding of, the requirements and any conditions of registration
- assess the safety of the premises and the risk assessment you carry out
- assess staff understanding of policies and procedures
- look at your recruitment policies, where applicable
- look at your arrangements for making sure unvetted people do not have unsupervised access to children.

What happens after the inspection?

Following the inspection you will receive either a letter confirming that you are meeting your requirements for registration or a letter detailing what must be done in order to remain registered. In line with other inspection reports, these letters are published on our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

What happens if the provision does not meet requirements?

If the inspector judges that you are not complying with the requirements or any conditions of registration, we will take steps to deal with this. This may mean that we send you a notice setting out what you need to do to comply.

If we have reason to believe that children in your care are, or may be, at risk of harm, we will suspend your registration to allow us time to investigate the circumstances. Ultimately we may decide to cancel your registration if we have reason to believe that you have:

- failed to comply with the requirements of registration, or
- failed to comply with a condition we have imposed on your registration, or
- failed to pay the annual fee.

We may, in rare cases, decide to caution or prosecute any registered person who commits an offence under the Childcare Act 2006. This includes failure to comply with a condition of registration.

We will inform other agencies, such as the police or local authority, if we receive information related to child protection.

Will I have to pay an inspection fee?

No, but as well as an application fee, you must pay an annual fee for your continued registration on the Childcare Register. The fee levels are set by the Government. For more information, please see *Paying fees* (www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/080019) or ring our helpline on 08456 404040.

What can I do to be ready for my inspection?

Make sure that you are ready for inspection by:

- meeting, at all times, the requirements for your continued registration and any conditions we may impose on your registration (available on our website and also attached to your certificate of registration)
- informing us of any change of address at which you provide childcare
- informing us of any significant event that is likely to affect the suitability of any person who has attained the age of 16 and lives or works on the premises to be in contact with children
- informing us of any significant event that is likely to affect your suitability to care for children
- ensuring you have prior written approval from us, if you are a later years childminder who wants to leave an assistant in sole charge of children
- notifying us of any significant events, listed in the application form and on the requirements sent with your registration certificate, which affect children in your care or adults on the premises. The significant events relate to:
 - the death of, or serious accident or serious injury to, a child while receiving registered childcare
 - the death of, or serious accident or injury to, any other person on the premises on which the registered childcare is provided
 - the sudden serious illness of any child receiving childcare
 - any allegation of serious harm to or abuse of a child committed:
 - by any person caring for children on the premises, whether the allegation relates to harm or abuse that occurred on those premises or elsewhere
 - by any person, where the allegation relates to harm or abuse that occurred on the premises
 - any incident of food poisoning affecting two or more children cared for on those premises.

Unless you are a home childcarer, **you are required to keep the following records in relation to each child who is cared for on the premises:**

- their name, home address and date of birth
- the name, home address and telephone number of their parent(s)
- the name, home address and telephone number of every person living or working on the premises on which childcare is provided (or the part of the premises where the childcare is held, in the case of premises such as community/leisure centres, where only parts of the premises are used for childcare)
- a daily record of the hours of attendance
- a record of accidents that occur on the premises
- a record of any medicinal product administered to any child who is cared for on the premises including:
 - the date and circumstances of its administration
 - who it was administered by
 - a record of a parent's consent.

Please be ready to show your records to the inspector if asked.

In the case of open access schemes, you must have a statement which makes it clear that the scheme is open access and later years children can leave unaccompanied. Childminders cannot provide open access provision. Open access schemes cannot accept children in the early years age group.

In addition, **if you are registered on the compulsory part of the Childcare Register**, you must ensure that you have the following written statements, make them available to parents and to the inspector, and put them into practice:

- a written statement of procedures to be followed to safeguard children being cared for from abuse or neglect
- a written statement of procedures to be followed in relation to complaints
- a written record of any complaint, the outcome of the investigation and any action taken.

'Complaint' means a written complaint by a parent in respect of a child who attends the provision and which relates to any of the requirements of the compulsory part of the Childcare Register.

You must retain all the above records for a period of three years from the date on which you recorded the information.

Section 2: Inspections of provision on the Early Years Register

What is the purpose of the inspection?

The purpose of the inspection is to evaluate the quality and standards of your early years provision, and outcomes for children attending, in line with the principles, and general and specific requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

When will the inspection take place?

We will inspect your provision at least once within the first three or four years of the implementation of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Newly registered early years providers are normally inspected within a short period of their registration, if they have children on roll.

We will always prioritise inspections of those settings where:

- the last inspection concluded that the quality of childcare and/or early education was inadequate
- 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 also investigate any information we receive, such as a complaint about the provision, which suggests that the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage are not being met.

How long do inspections take?

This varies depending on the size and features of your provision. As a rough guide, childminding inspections take about half a day and are usually carried out by one inspector. Inspections of other settings normally take the equivalent of one day and are carried out by one inspector.

Will I have to pay an inspection fee?

There is no fee for inspection, but you do have to pay a fee to continue to be registered as a childminder or childcare provider. The fee is payable annually and the amounts are set by the Government. For more information, please see *Paying fees* (www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/080019) or ring our helpline on 08456 404040.

When will I know my inspection date?

We give most providers no notice of inspection, so that inspectors can see settings running normally. However, inspectors may telephone a provider a few days before they intend to inspect, for example to check a childminder's availability and that children are attending, or that a holiday play scheme is operating that day. This is to avoid inspectors wasting time on unnecessary journeys. Inspectors do not give a provider the actual date of inspection.

If you do receive notice of your inspection, then you must notify parents that the inspection is due to take place.

What if I am a childminder and I am not caring for children when an inspection is due?

If you are a childminder, the law allows us to cancel your registration if you have not provided childminding for a period of more than three years.³ If, however, you dip in and out of childminding, for example to suit your domestic arrangements, we will inspect your provision even if there are no children on roll at the time when an inspection is due. In these circumstances, inspectors will not grade the quality of the provision. They will simply confirm and report on your continued suitability for registration, and on any improvements that need to be made.

Where there are children on roll, but they are not present on the day of inspection because, for example, they are ill or on holiday, inspectors will carry out a full inspection and will grade the quality of your provision.

³ Childcare Act 2006, section 68 (www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2006/ukpga_20060021_en_1).

What if my provision is on a school site?

If the provision forms part of a school's extended services and is managed by the school's governing body, it will be inspected at the same time as the school, and be reported on in the school inspection report.

If your provision operates entirely independently of the school and does not form part of its extended services, it will be inspected and reported on separately. This is normally but not always at the same time as the school. This might happen, for example, if you hire a room in a school to enable you to operate a pre-school or holiday play scheme for children in the local community. If this inspection is completed at the same time as the school inspection, it will always have its own separate report. There is further information on school-based provision in our *Registering school-based provision* factsheet (www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/080291).

Will my provision be inspected against the Early Years Foundation Stage even if I only care for children before and after school or during school holidays?

Yes. If your provision is registered on the Early Years Register you must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage, even if you only care for children at the beginning and/or end of the school day or in the school holidays. You are expected to work closely with other settings, including schools, which also provide the Early Years Foundation Stage for those children to ensure they receive the full offer.

Inspectors will grade the quality of your provision using a four-point scale (see pages 18–19), basing their judgements on the nature and extent of what you provide rather than the full Early Years Foundation Stage offer being received by each child. When reaching judgements inspectors will consider whether you work in partnership with other providers to ensure children receive the full Early Years Foundation Stage. They will also consider how well your activities complement other Early Years Foundation Stage provision to ensure continuity of children's care and learning.

In your inspection report, inspectors will make clear the extent of your provision and that children also attend other settings providing the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Please note that this applies if you only provide care for young children before and after school or during school holidays. It does not apply where some children attend for longer. For example, it does not apply if you care for a baby all day, and for a three-year-old between 12pm and 5pm who has attended a nursery school during the morning.

What if I mainly educate children in their home language?

If you primarily educate children in their home language you are expected to demonstrate to inspectors that you and any assistants or employees have a sufficient grasp of English to ensure the well-being of the children in your care. For example, it must be clear how you would be able to summon emergency help where necessary; that you keep certain records in English, as well as in your home language; and that you read and understand instructions in English, such as safety instructions and information on administering medication or on food allergies.

As part of the learning and development requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage you should be able to support children to develop their communication, language and literacy skills in English. Where this is not the case, inspectors will judge the provision to be inadequate.

Will my inspection be different if I receive government funding for the early education of three- and four-year-olds?

No. All providers who deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage will be inspected against its requirements, whether or not they receive funding. There is only one specific welfare requirement that applies exclusively to providers in receipt of funding – that is, they must have regard to the special educational needs code of practice (www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/sen/sencodeintro).

Will I have two inspections if I am registered on the Childcare Register and the Early Years Register?

Wherever possible, when inspectors carry out a full inspection of the early years provision, they will also ask the provider to confirm that they are meeting the Childcare Register requirements. The early years inspection report will include a statement as to whether or not the Childcare Register provision complies with requirements, and where it does not the action the provider must take to do so. The report will not grade the part of your provision registered on the Childcare Register but may comment on its impact on children in the Early Years Foundation Stage where this is evident.

We will usually carry out a separate inspection if we receive a complaint about the Childcare Register provision which relates to requirements or to the conditions of your registration.

The self-evaluation form

Do I have to complete the self-evaluation form?

We strongly recommend that you do, but it is not compulsory. If you choose not to complete our self-evaluation form inspectors will still check to see what self-evaluation you carry out and make a judgement about how effective this is.

The self-evaluation form is designed to help early years providers to review and improve their provision, so that it is of the highest standard and offers the best experience for young children. Importantly, it is a useful tool for you and any assistants or staff to evaluate the impact of what you do on children's welfare, learning and development.

The questions in the self-evaluation form are similar to those the inspectors ask when evaluating your provision. If your form is up to date and your self-evaluation has been thorough, the inspector gets an idea of which of those aspects you consider work well and which you are seeking to improve. This may mean that the inspector will not want to check everything you do.

There is no fixed time when you should complete your self-evaluation form. You can complete it as often as you wish and when it best suits you. You may choose to complete your self-evaluation form to fit in with your normal cycle of review and planning. However, we do recommend that you update it at least once a year.

How can I find out more about completing and submitting the self-evaluation form?

For more information on completing and submitting a self-evaluation form please ring our helpline on 08456 404040 or refer to the *Early years online self-evaluation form and guidance* (www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/080104).

The inspection

What happens during the inspection?

Once the inspector arrives, please carry on with your normal routine; we want to keep disruption to a minimum. At the beginning of the inspection, the inspector will discuss with you how he or she will carry out the inspection, agree convenient times to talk to you and any staff or assistants about your provision, and make arrangements for the feedback meeting at the end of the inspection.

The inspector will also discuss your completed self-evaluation form with you. This is an opportunity for you to explain your provision and the reasons for the grades you have included in the form. Ideally you should have completed and submitted the self-evaluation form beforehand. If you have not, the inspector will ask to see a completed form and any other documents you may use to evaluate your provision.

The inspector will then spend time:

- observing what the children and adults are doing
- talking with staff/assistants, children and, where possible, parents to find out their views
- checking premises and equipment to ensure they are safe and suitable and to assess how well they are used to promote outcomes for children
- checking records, procedures and any other documents, if necessary
- making notes, usually on a laptop computer.

At the end of the inspection, the inspector will meet you and let you know the judgements, the reasons for these and where improvements are needed. If overall we judge your provision as inadequate, the inspector will explain to you what happens next.

The feedback meeting usually lasts no longer than one hour. During the meeting, the inspector will tell you the main judgements and will normally show them to you on their laptop computer. These are the judgements that we will include in the report. You may correct factual details – for example about the description of your setting which will appear in the report – but this is not a time for you to present fresh evidence about the provision. 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 feedback meeting.

What do inspectors look for when judging provision?

The central question which inspectors seek to answer is: what is it like for a child here? In doing so, they consider how well you and/or any staff or assistants deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage; and how, as a result, children are helped to achieve the five Every Child Matters outcomes – a basic entitlement for all children.⁴

In order to decide this, inspectors make four main judgements:

- how well does the setting meet the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?
- the effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage
- the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The following table summarises what inspectors consider when making these judgements and shows how they link to the general requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. You can find more details about these and other judgements that inspectors make by referring to the inspection guidance *Using the early years evaluation schedule* (www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/080124) and *Conducting early years inspections* (www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/080164).

⁴ The five outcomes are: being healthy; staying safe; enjoying and achieving; making a positive contribution; and achieving economic well-being. They are at the bottom of each of the Early Years Foundation Stage principles into practice cards (www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/eyfs/site/resource/pdfs.htm).

Judgement	What inspectors consider	Links to the general requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage
<p>How well does the setting meet the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?</p>	<p>Overall how well the early years provision:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ meets the needs of all children who attend ■ supports every child so that no group or individual is disadvantaged ■ helps children make the best possible progress in their learning and development, and promotes their welfare ■ works in partnerships with others to ensure good quality early education and care ■ plans for improvement and has effective processes of self-evaluation. 	<p>ALL learning and development, and welfare requirements.</p>
<p>The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage</p>	<p>How well you (and/or the leaders and managers of the provision):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ strive for improvement to provide high quality care and early education ■ monitor provision, deployment of resources and outcomes for children, and identify and make the necessary improvement ■ safeguard all children, including making sure that adults looking after children or having unsupervised access to them are suitable to do so ■ promote inclusive practice so that the learning and development, and welfare needs of all children are met ■ engage and work with parents, carers, other providers, services and employers to promote children’s care and early education ■ maintain records, policies and procedures required by the Early Years Foundation Stage to ensure that the needs of all children are met. 	<p>ALL learning and development, and welfare requirements, specifically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ providers must take necessary steps to safeguard and promote the welfare of children ■ providers must ensure that adults looking after children, or having unsupervised access to them, must be suitable to do so ■ adults looking after children must have appropriate qualifications, training, skills and knowledge ■ staffing arrangements must be organised to ensure the safety and to meet the needs of the children ■ all providers must have and implement an effective policy about ensuring equality of opportunities and for supporting children with special educational needs and/or disabilities ■ providers must promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice and must ensure that every child is included and not disadvantaged because of their or their parents’ ethnicity, culture or religion, home language, family background, learning difficulties, sexuality, gender or ability ■ outdoor and indoor spaces, furniture, equipment and toys must be safe and suitable for their purpose ■ providers must maintain records, policies and procedures required for the safe and efficient management of the settings and to meet the needs of the children.

Judgement	What inspectors consider	Links to the general requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage
<p>The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage</p>	<p>How well you and any assistants or staff:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ use information from observation and assessment to ensure that all children achieve as much as they can ■ support children’s learning ■ plan the learning environment, and for children’s play and exploration ■ plan for individual children ■ identify and provide for additional learning and development needs ■ involve parents and carers as partners, and other agencies and providers in children’s learning and development ■ take steps to safeguard and promote the welfare of the children ■ promote children’s good health and well-being, take the necessary steps to prevent the spread of infection, and take appropriate action when children are ill ■ teach children about keeping safe ■ encourage children to develop the habits and behaviour appropriate to good learners, recognising their own needs and those of others ■ ensure that the outdoor and indoor spaces, furniture, equipment and toys are suitable and safe. 	<p>Learning and development requirements relating to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ the early learning goals – the knowledge, skills and understanding which young children should have acquired by the end of the academic year in which they reach age five ■ educational programmes – the matters, skills and processes which are required to be taught to young children ■ assessment arrangements – the arrangements for assessing young children to ascertain their achievements. <p>Welfare requirement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ providers must plan and organise their systems to ensure that every child receives an enjoyable and challenging learning and development experience that is tailored to meet their individual needs ■ the provider must take necessary steps to safeguard and promote the welfare of children ■ the provider must promote the good health of the children, take necessary steps to prevent the spread of infection, and take appropriate action when they are ill ■ children’s behaviour must be managed effectively and in a manner appropriate for their stage of development and particular individual needs ■ outdoor and indoor spaces, furniture, equipment and toys, must be safe and suitable for their purpose.

Judgement	What inspectors consider	Links to the general requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The quality of children’s learning and their progress towards the early learning goals in relation to their starting points. ■ How safe children feel in the setting and the extent to which they behave in ways that are safe for themselves and others. ■ The extent to which children know and understand how to lead a healthy lifestyle. ■ The extent to which children take on responsibilities and play a part in the setting and wider community. ■ How well children behave, make friends and respect each other. ■ The extent to which children develop their skills for the future in communicating, literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology. 	<p>All learning and development requirements.</p> <p>Welfare requirement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ providers must plan and organise their systems to ensure that every child receives an enjoyable and challenging learning and development experience that is tailored to meet their individual needs ■ the provider must promote the good health of the children, take necessary steps to prevent the spread of infection, and take appropriate action when they are ill ■ children’s behaviour must be managed effectively and in a manner appropriate for their stage of development and particular individual needs.

How will my provision be graded?

The table below shows the straightforward four-point grading scale inspectors use to make judgements. We use these grades against all the judgements we make at inspection. The inspector will share these with you at the end of the inspection. The table also includes some general indicators of the quality of early years provision for each grade, together with the implications for the next inspection.

Grade	Indicators of overall provision
1 Outstanding	<p>This applies to exceptional provision which is way above the norm. The standard of care is exemplary. It is highly effective at making sure that children make significant progress towards the early learning goals – given their starting points.</p> <p>Overall, the practice is worth disseminating beyond the setting.</p> <p>Inspectors make very few recommendations to bring about minor improvement.</p>
<p>What happens next?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The next inspection will not take place for at least three years, although we will investigate any complaint we receive which suggests the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage, or any conditions of registration, are not being met. 	

Grade	Indicators of overall provision
2 Good	<p>This applies to strong provision in which children are well cared for. It is successful at making sure that children make good progress towards the early learning goals – given their starting points.</p> <p>Overall, the practice is worth reinforcing and developing to become outstanding.</p> <p>Inspectors will make recommendations for further improvement.</p> <p>Inspectors may raise actions to ensure that specific welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage are met.</p>
<p>What happens next?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The next inspection will not take place for at least three years, although we will investigate any complaint we receive which suggests that the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage, or any conditions of registration, are not being met. 	

Grade	Indicators of overall provision
3 Satisfactory	<p>This applies to provision which is sound but could be better. The standard of care is acceptable. Children’s progress towards the early learning goals is steady, but slow given their starting points.</p> <p>Overall, the practice has scope for improvement.</p> <p>Inspectors will make recommendations for further improvement.</p> <p>Inspectors may raise actions to ensure that specific welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage are met.</p>
<p>What happens next?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The next inspection will not take place for at least three years unless we receive a complaint which suggests that the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage, or any conditions of registration, are not being met. 	

Grade	Indicators of overall provision
4 Inadequate Category 1	<p>This applies to provision which is weak. The standard of care is not good enough: one or more of the learning and development or general welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage are not being met. Children make too little progress towards the early learning goals – given their starting points. There has been too little improvement since our last inspection.</p> <p>Overall, the quality of the provision gives cause for concern but is likely to improve without external help and support.</p>
<p>What happens next?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ We will send a letter to the registered person, setting out the actions that must be taken, and by what date, to remedy significant weaknesses in the provision. This is called a ‘notice to improve’. The registered person should let us know when the necessary action has been taken. ■ We may carry out an announced or unannounced visit to check that the required actions have been taken. If we find that the required improvements have not been made, or what has been done has made little impact, we may take further enforcement measures, including suspending or cancelling registration. ■ The next full inspection will take place within six to 12 months. 	

Grade	Indicators of overall provision
4 Inadequate Category 2	<p>This applies to poor provision which needs urgent attention. The standard of care and/or early education is unacceptable. One or more of the learning and development or general welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage are not being met. Children are not safeguarded and/or make little or no progress towards the early learning goals. There has been too little improvement since our last inspection.</p> <p>Overall, the quality of the provision gives cause for concern and is unlikely to improve without enforcement action being taken by us, and help and support from external agencies.</p>
<p>What happens next?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ We take enforcement action where immediate improvement is needed to the provision for children’s welfare. We may issue a welfare requirements notice to the registered person which sets out which welfare requirements are not being met and what must be done to improve the provision, and by when. Failure to comply with a welfare requirements notice is an offence and may lead to prosecution. However, in rare cases where children are at risk of harm, we may suspend or cancel your registration. ■ Where provision is poor and learning and development requirements are not being met, we will consider whether it is necessary to suspend or cancel your registration. Otherwise we will issue a notice to improve and check that the necessary improvements have been made through regular monitoring visits. ■ In all cases we will visit the setting at least once in every three-month period, or on or about dates specified in the notification of any enforcement action we propose to take. The purpose of these visits is to check whether the required improvements have been made and to evaluate their impact on children. We will publish a letter explaining the outcome of each visit on our website. These visits will continue until the quality of early years provision has improved and is judged to be satisfactory or better: then we will carry out a full inspection and publish the inspection report on our website. If we find that the required improvements have not been made, or what has been done has made little impact, we may take further enforcement measures, including suspending or cancelling registration. 	

Inadequate provision: informing the local authority and the Department for Children, Schools and Families

We inform your local authority that we have judged your provision to be inadequate – either category 1 or 2. This may affect your eligibility for funding for three- and/or four-year-olds.

Changing conditions of registration

Following an inspection, either you or we may want to change your conditions of registration. For example, you may wish to increase the number of children you can look after or we may wish to prevent certain parts of your premises being used for childcare because they are unsuitable.

Where new conditions are imposed, or where existing ones are varied or have been removed, we will issue you with a notice of intention. This notice sets out the changes to your registration conditions.

However, if you do not want us to change your conditions you will have the opportunity to object to us, and a right to appeal to the Health, Education and Social Care Chamber if we dismiss your objections. Our leaflet *Building better children's services: objections and appeals by registered childminders and childcare providers*, which we send out with every notice of intention, sets out details of your rights (www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/080055).

What happens after the inspection?

After each inspection, inspectors write a short report which will include:

- the grades that the inspector gave you at the end of the inspection
- a brief summary of the effectiveness and quality of the early years provision and outcomes for children
- a brief summary of the effectiveness of leadership and management
- a brief summary of the effectiveness of improvements made since the last inspection
- what must be done to improve the quality of provision.

And, where applicable:

- whether or not the Childcare Register provision complies with requirements, and any action the provider must take to do so.

Shortly after the inspection we will send you your report, which you should check for factual accuracy. If you find any factual inaccuracies, for example in the names of places the children have been taken on visits, or in the number of children attending, then you should tell us immediately so that we can correct them before the inspection report is published on our website. Please note that it is not an opportunity to question the judgements in the report.

All inspection reports are published on our website within 20 days of the end of the inspection. The law requires you:

- to give each parent of children attending a copy of the report
- to provide any other person who asks you with a copy of the report.

What can I do to be ready for my inspection?

Make sure that you, together with any staff or assistants:

- **know, understand and implement the principles and statutory guidance of the Early Years Foundation Stage, including the learning and development and welfare requirements** so that children receive a high standard of care and early education.

Ask yourself – does my setting deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage as well as it possibly can at all times?

- **put right any weaknesses identified in your last Ofsted inspection report**

If your provision has been inspected before, check your last report and think carefully about the changes and improvements you have made since then. How have these had a positive effect on outcomes for children?

- **complete the Ofsted self-evaluation form**

Completing the self-evaluation form is an indication that you are continually seeking to improve your provision for children's learning, development and welfare.⁵ For example, if your premises have been inspected before, your self-evaluation form will show the improvements you have carried out and what difference the improvements have made to children. If you complete other self-evaluation documents and/or are part of a quality assurance scheme, please be ready to point this out when the inspector comes to visit. How can you demonstrate to the inspector that the process of self-evaluation has led to improvements in children's learning, development and welfare?

- **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 your provision and help the inspector to see how well you work with parents to ensure the best outcomes for their children. What can you show or tell the inspector to illustrate how you have acted on parents' views to improve outcomes for children?

- **demonstrate that you work with other providers who provide the Early Years Foundation Stage for the children in your care**

Close working between early years providers and professionals from other agencies, such as local and community health services, is vital for the identification of children's learning needs. Shared knowledge and advice will provide children with the best possible learning opportunities and environment. If the children who attend also receive the Early Years Foundation Stage in other settings you should be able to show how you work with them to complement activities they provide and provide a good programme overall for the children. What can you show or tell the inspector to demonstrate this?

⁵ For further guidance on quality improvement, please see *Practice guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage*, paragraphs 1.21 to 1.29 (www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/eyfs/site/resource/pdfs.htm).

You must be confident that your provision complies with the learning and development, and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

By law, from September 2008, all registered early years provision must comply with all these requirements. So please make sure that you know, understand and implement them. If your provision fails to comply with the requirements, it may be judged as inadequate.

Don't forget that the Early Years Foundation Stage requires you to:

■ **notify us of any significant changes to your provision**

There are certain changes and events in relation to your registered provision that you must tell us about. These are set out in the welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. It is an offence not to let us know about these changes and events, so make sure that you know what they are

■ **display your registration certificate and show it to parents on request**

■ **keep certain documents which you should be ready to show to the inspector if asked.**

All providers must keep the following written records. In situations where providers have permission to keep paperwork off the premises, it is expected that these records will still be available at inspection to ensure the smooth daily running of the provision:

- a record of complaints received from parents and their outcomes. From time to time parents may complain to you about your provision. You are likely to resolve these complaints without involving us. However, you must show the inspector a record of any written complaint parents have made that relates to one or more of the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (or previously the National standards for under 8s childminding and day care). This will help the inspector to check with you that the information on complaints that will go in the report is accurate

- a record of all medicines administered to children
- a record of accidents and first aid treatment
- a record to demonstrate that the required Criminal Records Bureau checks have been carried out, including the number and date of issue of the enhanced Criminal Records Bureau disclosure, in respect of all people who work directly with children or who are likely to have unsupervised access to them
- a record of the following information for each child in your care:
 - full name
 - date of birth
 - the name and address of every parent and carer who is known to the provider
 - which of these parents or carers the child normally lives with
 - emergency contact details of the parents and carers
- a record of the name, home address and telephone number of the provider and any other person living or employed on the premises
- a record of the name, home address and telephone number of anyone who will regularly be in unsupervised contact with the children attending the early years provision
- a daily record of the names of the children looked after on the premises, their hours of attendance and the names of the children's key workers
- a record of risk assessment, clearly stating when it was carried out, by whom, the date of review and any action taken following a review or incident. A risk assessment must be carried out for each specific outing with the children.

Providers must also record and submit certain information to their local authority about individual children receiving the free entitlement to early years provision.⁶

⁶ See the *Statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage* (www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/eyfs/site/resource/pdfs.htm).

All providers are expected to implement the following policies and procedures. All **except childminders** are expected to have written copies of these policies and procedures:

- a safeguarding children policy and procedure
- a policy for ensuring equality of opportunities and for supporting children with special educational needs and/or disabilities
- a policy for administering medicines, including effective management systems to support individual children with medical needs
- a behaviour management policy
- a procedure for dealing with concerns and complaints from parents
- a procedure to be followed in the event of a parent failing to collect a child at the appointed time
- a procedure to be followed in the event of a child going missing
- a procedure for the emergency evacuation of the premises.

Childminders registered on the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are required to keep some written statements – please refer to page 10 of this document.

How will Ofsted report on any complaints made about me or my service?

We give parents and carers information about any complaints we receive about you that may affect your suitability to care for children. These are complaints that required us or you to take action to make sure you continue to meet the legal requirements of registration. This is known as our complaints commitment and it helps to ensure that parents and carers are able to make informed choices about the care they choose for their child.

We publish this complaints information on our website and not in our inspection reports. This gives parents easy, quick and up-to-date access to complaints information, instead of waiting until an inspection takes place.

How does Ofsted celebrate outstanding provision?

We recognise the efforts made by settings who achieve an overall grade of outstanding in their inspection with the outstanding provider scheme. As part of this scheme, where settings are judged as outstanding overall they are entitled to use the Ofsted outstanding provider logo on a range of communications – from stationery to websites. We issue an outstanding provider pack to settings after the inspection report has been published on the Ofsted website.

The pack contains:

- a congratulatory letter personally signed by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector
- an outstanding provider certificate
- a CD with a copy of the Ofsted outstanding provider logo and guidance on how the logo may be used.

Need more information and advice?

You can obtain more information about our inspections from:

- our helpline – 08456 404040
- our website – www.ofsted.gov.uk

The following publications are on our website or you can obtain copies by calling 08456 404040:

- *Early years self-evaluation form and guidance*
(www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/080104)
- *Guide to registration on the Childcare Register*
(www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/080032)
- *Guide to registration on the Early Years Register: childcare provider on domestic or non-domestic premises*
(www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/080017)
- *Building better children's services: objections and appeals by registered childminders and childcare providers*
(www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/080055)
- *Conducting early years inspections: guidance for inspectors of registered early years settings*
(www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/080164)
- *Using the early years evaluation schedule: guidance for inspectors of registered early years settings*
(www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/080124)
- *Registration not required*
(www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/080134)
- *Framework for the regulation of those on the Early Years and Childcare Registers*
(www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/080024)
- *Guidance documents to support inspectors when inspecting provision registered on the Early Years and Childcare Registers*
(www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Forms-and-guidance/Browse-all-by/Care-and-local-services/Childcare/Inspection/Guidance-for-inspectors).

The Early Years Foundation Stage is available from:

- the DCSF website: www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/eyfs
- the DCSF publications department:
PO Box 5050
Sherwood Park
Annesley
Nottingham, NG15 0DJ
Tel: 0845 602 2260
Fax: 0845 603 3360
Email: dcsf@prolog.uk.com
- the teachernet website: www.teachernet.gov.uk/teachingandlearning/EYFS.

Your local family information service can give advice and support about the regulation of early years provision. For family information service contact details, please check your local telephone directory, your local authority's website or visit www.familyinformationservices.org.uk/contactcis/england/index.htm.

If you would like a version of *Are you ready for your inspection?* in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 08456 404040, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 08456 404040, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

T: 08456 404040
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

Reference no. 090130
© Crown copyright 2009

