

# Evaluation schedule for inspections of registered early years provision

Guidance and grade descriptors for inspecting registered early years provision from 1 September 2014

---

The evaluation schedule provides outline guidance and grade descriptors for the judgements that inspectors will report on when inspecting registered early years providers who deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage.

**Age group:** Birth–5

---

**Published:** August 2014

---

**Reference no:** 120086



Corporate member of  
Plain English Campaign  
Committed to clearer communication

**361**

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 assesses 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 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/120086](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/120086).

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our website for news, information and updates at [www.ofsted.gov.uk/user](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/user).

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

No. 120086

© Crown copyright 2014



# Contents

---

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Inspection judgements</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Meeting individual children's needs</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Descriptors and guidance</b>	<b>6</b>
How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend	6
The contribution of the early years provision to children's well-being	11
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision	14
The overall quality and standards of the early years provision	18

## Introduction

1. We inspect early years providers in order to judge the quality and standards of the care, learning and development of children – these standards are in the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage<sup>1</sup>. For ease, this evaluation schedule uses the terminology of the statutory framework.
2. This evaluation schedule is for use during inspections of registered early years provision carried out from 4 November 2013.

It sets out:

- the judgements that inspectors will make and report on
  - the aspects of the registered early years provision that inspectors will evaluate
  - outline guidance about the evidence that inspectors may gather (this is not exhaustive; it is intended to guide inspectors on the range and type of evidence they might collect)
  - grade descriptors to guide inspectors in making their judgements in the inspection of registered early years provision.
3. It should not be used to inspect early years provision in maintained and independent schools that is not registered, or provision registered on the Childcare Register.
  4. The evaluation schedule must be used for all inspections of early years provision registered under the *Childcare Act 2006* in conjunction with the guidance set out in *Conducting early years inspections*, and the *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage 2014* and, where appropriate, *Conducting priority and brought forward inspections following risk assessment*.  
<sup>2 3 4</sup>  
, , ,

## Inspection judgements

5. Inspectors will judge the overall quality and standards of the early years provision, taking into account three key judgements:
  - how well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend

---

<sup>1</sup> *Statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage 2014*, DfE, 2014;

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2>

<sup>2</sup> *Conducting early years inspections* (120087), Ofsted, 2014; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/120087](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/120087).

<sup>3</sup> *Childcare Act 2006*: [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/21/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/21/contents).

<sup>4</sup> *Conducting priority and brought forward inspections following risk assessment* (130179), Ofsted, 2013; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/130179](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/130179).

- the contribution of the early years provision to children's well-being
  - the leadership and management of the early years provision.<sup>5</sup>
6. Inspectors must apply professional knowledge and experience when using the criteria. They must take account of the context of the provision inspected, in particular children's ages, stages of development, the amount of time children spend at the setting each week, and the length of time they have been attending the setting.
  7. In all inspections, inspectors must keep the 'bigger picture' in mind as well as the evidence gathered during the inspection. They must consider the previous history, present state and future plans of a setting when coming to their overall judgement.
  8. A setting may be found to be providing a service that appears to be meeting the needs of the children and families well on the day of inspection. However, the history and information held on the setting must be considered as part of the inspection judgements. Inspectors must be rigorous and thorough in evaluating the impact of past events on how well the setting has, and continues to, meet the needs of all children.
  9. Inspectors are required to weigh up the evidence in a particular area and consider it against the descriptors for outstanding, good, requires improvement or inadequate before making a professional judgement as to which set of descriptors best fits the evidence available. They must be clear both why the evidence meets those descriptors and the reasons why it does not meet the sets above or below. When evidence indicates that **any** of the bullet points in the descriptors for inadequate apply, that aspect of the early years provision **must** be judged inadequate.
  10. Inspectors are required to consider the evidence from the whole evaluation schedule when making the overall judgement on the quality and standards of the early years provision.

## Meeting individual children's needs

11. Inspections focus on how well individual children benefit from their early years experience. It is important to test the provider's response to individual needs by observing how well they help **all** children to make effective progress, especially those whose needs or circumstances require particularly perceptive intervention and/or additional support. In any particular provision, this may include:
  - disabled children, as defined by the Equality Act 2010, and those who have special educational needs

---

<sup>5</sup> Throughout this document, 'leadership and management' includes childminders as leaders of their own provision. Where appropriate, any reference to staff also relates to childminding assistants.

- boys
- girls
- groups of children with starting points that are significantly below those expected for their age
- those who are easily able to exceed expectations for their age
- children from disadvantaged families and/or backgrounds, or vulnerable groups including:
  - funded two-year-olds
  - looked after children
  - children from minority ethnic groups
  - children for whom English is an additional language
  - children of service families.

## Descriptors and guidance

### How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend

12. Inspectors must evaluate and report on:
- the impact of what practitioners do on children’s learning and development; whether children make the best possible progress taking into account their starting points and capabilities, the length of time they have been at the setting, and how often they attend; and how well they are prepared for school or the next steps in their learning.

#### Criteria

13. When evaluating how well the provision meets the needs of the children who attend, inspectors must consider:
- the extent to which educational programmes for the prime and specific areas of learning<sup>6</sup> help all children to reach the level of development typical for their age<sup>7</sup> and, if not, the reasons why they do not

---

<sup>6</sup> The prime areas of learning are: personal, social and emotional development; communication and language; and physical development. The specific areas of learning are: literacy; mathematics; understanding the world; and expressive arts and design.

<sup>7</sup> Inspectors may find it helpful to refer to *Early years outcomes*, DfE, 2013: a non-statutory guide for practitioners and inspectors, to help inform understanding of child development through the early years <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-outcomes>.

- the extent to which all children are supported to acquire the skills and capacity to develop and learn effectively, and to be ready for the next stages in their learning, especially school (where applicable)
- how well practitioners demonstrate high expectations, enthuse, engage and motivate children
- how well teaching strategies, together with support and intervention, match individual children's needs and ensure that they make good progress<sup>8</sup>
- how well practitioners: work with parents to help children to settle; engage parents in their children's development and learning in the setting and at home; help parents share what they know about their children; and keep parents informed about their children's achievements and progress.<sup>9</sup>

## Evidence

14. The main evidence comes from inspectors' direct observations of the way in which children demonstrate the key characteristics of effective learning:<sup>10</sup>

- playing and exploring
- active learning
- creating and thinking critically

and their evaluation of how practitioners' teaching facilitates children's learning.

15. Direct observation should be supplemented by a range of other evidence to enable inspectors to evaluate the impact that practitioners have on the progress children make in their learning. Such additional evidence should include:

- evidence of assessment that includes the progress of different groups of children:
  - assessment on entry, including parental contributions
  - two-year-old progress checks (where applicable)
  - on-going (formative) assessments, including any parental contributions

---

<sup>8</sup> Teaching should not be taken to imply a 'top down' or formal way of working. It is a broad term which covers the many different ways in which adults help young children learn. It includes their interactions with children during planned and child-initiated play and activities: communicating and modelling language, showing, explaining, demonstrating, exploring ideas, encouraging, questioning, recalling, providing a narrative for what they are doing, facilitating and setting challenges. It takes account of the equipment they provide and the attention to the physical environment as well as the structure and routines of the day that establish expectations. Integral to teaching is how practitioners assess what children know, understand and can do as well as take account of their interests and dispositions to learning (characteristics of effective learning), and use this information to plan children's next steps in learning and monitor their progress.

<sup>9</sup> Throughout this document 'parents' should be taken to refer to parents and/or carers.

<sup>10</sup> *Statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage 2014*, DfE, 2014.

- the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (where applicable) or any other summative assessment when children leave
  - evidence of planning for children’s next stages of learning based on staff assessment and a secure knowledge of the key characteristics of learning and children’s development. Inspectors should consider how staff knowledge, qualifications, training and expertise impacts on their practice and children’s learning and development.
  - evidence from observations, including:
    - the inspector’s own observations of children’s responses to activities
    - joint observations with managers or early years professionals
    - any evidence of practitioners’ observations
  - the inspector’s tracking of selected children, including children of different ages, funded two-year-olds and other children whose circumstances may suggest they need particular intervention or support
  - discussions with practitioners, key persons, managers, parents and children.
16. Inspectors must use their professional judgement to interpret and apply the grade descriptors where: there is only a very small number of children with a childminder; only babies and very young children are present; there are funded two-year-olds or other groups who may be disadvantaged; or the children receive their main Early Years Foundation Stage experience elsewhere.
17. Where there is a mixed age range present, inspectors must note any differences in progress for children of different ages, and make a ‘best fit’ judgement.
18. Inspectors must consider which set of descriptors best fit all the evidence available and the reasons why. For provision to be outstanding it must meet all of the criteria in the grade descriptors for good, plus all or nearly all of the additional descriptors for outstanding.

<b>Outstanding (1)</b>	<p>The provision is better than good because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ It consistently achieves very high standards across all aspects of its work with exceptional educational programmes for children of all ages. The quality of teaching is consistently of a very high quality, inspirational and worthy of dissemination to other providers.</li> <li>■ Practitioners have very high expectations of themselves and the children. Using their expert knowledge of the areas of learning and a clear understanding of how children learn they provide rich, varied and imaginative experiences for the children.</li> <li>■ Assessment at all ages is precise, sharply focused and includes all those involved in the child’s learning. It is monitored and used to secure timely interventions and support, based on a comprehensive knowledge of the child and their family.</li> <li>■ Children are well motivated, very eager to join in and consistently</li> </ul>
----------------------------	---

	<p>demonstrate the characteristics of effective learning. The extremely sharp focus on helping them to acquire communication and language skills, and on supporting their physical, personal, social and emotional development helps all children make rapid improvement in their learning from their starting points with any gaps closing rapidly. They are exceptionally well prepared for school or the next steps in their learning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Highly successful strategies engage all parents in their children’s learning in the setting and at home.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Good (2)</b></p>	<p>The provision is good because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The educational programmes have depth and breadth across the seven areas of learning. They provide interesting and challenging experiences that meet the needs of all children.</li> <li>■ Practice is commonly based on a secure knowledge and understanding of how to promote the learning and development of young children and what they can achieve. The quality of teaching is consistently good and some may be outstanding.</li> <li>■ All practitioners have high expectations of all children based on accurate assessment of children’s prior skills, knowledge and understanding on entry to the setting. Practitioners complete regular and precise assessments of children and use these effectively to plan suitably challenging activities. They regularly listen perceptively to, carefully observe, and skilfully question children during activities in order to re-shape tasks and explanations to improve learning.</li> <li>■ Practitioners can demonstrate that all children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those learning English as an additional language, are progressing well towards the early learning goals over time, given their starting points. Children are interested and keen learners who display the characteristics of effective learning.</li> <li>■ Children are supported in the acquisition of communication and language skills and in their physical, personal, social and emotional development so that children of all ages and abilities make good progress in their learning.</li> <li>■ All children are generally working comfortably within the typical range of development expected for their age, taking account of any whose starting points are higher or any special educational needs and/or disabilities. Where children’s starting points are below those of other children of their age, assessment shows they are improving consistently over a sustained period and the gap is closing. Children’s progress in the prime areas of learning ensures that almost without exception they have the key skills needed for the next steps in their learning, including school where appropriate.</li> <li>■ The key person system supports engagement with all parents, including those who may be more reluctant to contribute. Parents contribute to initial assessments of children’s starting points on entry and they are kept well informed about their children’s progress. Parents are encouraged to support and share information about their children’s learning and development at home. The key person system</li> </ul>

	ensures all practitioners use effective, targeted strategies and interventions to support learning that match most children's individual needs.
<b>Requires improvement (3)</b>	<p>The provision is not yet demonstrating the characteristics of a good judgement. However, any breaches of the statutory requirements for learning and development do not have a significant impact on children's learning and development.<sup>11</sup></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Educational programmes cover the seven areas of learning and support children's development in the prime areas, but some aspects of learning are less well planned for. Children generally enjoy their time at the setting and are occupied, although on occasion activities are mundane and lack a good level of challenge.</li> <li>■ Practitioners understand how to promote the learning and development of young children, but the quality of teaching is variable which means that not all children make good progress.</li> <li>■ Practitioners routinely make assessments of children but do not consistently use the information to monitor children's learning and development and plan activities that challenge them.</li> <li>■ Nearly all children are working within the typical range of development expected for their age, taking account of any special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those learning English as an additional language. Where children's starting points are below those of others of similar age, the setting can demonstrate these children are starting to catch up and the gap is closing, albeit slowly. In the main, children have the basic skills they need for school or their next stage of learning.</li> <li>■ Parents are welcomed into the setting and encouraged to provide information about their children's starting points on entry. Practitioners share information about children's progress but strategies to engage parents to share information and promote learning at home are not always successful.</li> </ul>
<b>Inadequate (4)</b>	<p>Provision is inadequate if one or more of the following apply and there are breaches of the statutory requirements for learning and development which have a significant impact on children's learning and development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Educational programmes do not adequately cover the seven areas of learning and/or do not provide interesting activities in enough depth or breadth and/or do not provide adequate challenge for children resulting in some children lacking enthusiasm for learning.</li> <li>■ Some practitioners have a poor understanding of the prime and/or specific areas of learning and/or knowledge of how to promote children's learning and development. This results in weak teaching that is not matched to all children's needs.</li> <li>■ Planning is not effective in matching activities to children's needs. Observations and assessment are not consistent in quality and/or are</li> </ul>

<sup>11</sup> *Statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage 2014, DfE, 2014;*  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2>.

	<p>not frequent or accurate enough to build on children’s progress.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Not enough children are working within the typical range of development expected for their age, given their starting points and/or the learning and progress of individual or specific groups of children does not match levels of progress made by most children. These gaps show little sign of closing or may be widening.</li> <li>■ Children are not well prepared for school or their next stage of learning.</li> <li>■ Strategies for engaging with parents about their child’s learning and development are weak and focused too much on care practices. As a result, parents do not know what their child is learning.</li> </ul>
--	--

## The contribution of the early years provision to children’s well-being

19. Inspectors must evaluate and report on:

- the effectiveness of care practices in helping children feel emotionally secure and ensuring children are physically and emotionally healthy.

### Criteria

20. When evaluating children’s well-being, inspectors must consider the extent to which:

- practice ensures all children, especially very young children and those in need of additional support, are forming appropriate bonds and secure emotional attachments with carers
- care practices ensure children are happy and enjoy what they are doing, learn to behave well and play cooperatively, develop independence, explore their surroundings and use their imagination, and talk and play with adults and each other
- practitioners support children to develop an understanding of the importance of physical exercise and a healthy diet, and to manage their own hygiene and personal needs
- children are emotionally prepared for their transition within the setting, into other early years settings, and into maintained nursery provision and/or reception class.

### Evidence

21. The main evidence comes from inspectors’ direct observations of care practices, children’s behaviour and their interactions with practitioners and each other. Direct observation should be supplemented by a range of other evidence to enable inspectors to evaluate the impact that practitioners have on children’s well-being. Such additional evidence should include:

- evidence of planning for the prime areas of learning and especially for children’s personal, social and emotional development
  - evidence of assessment of children’s well-being
  - discussions with practitioners, children and parents and with managers about the key person system
  - inspectors’ tracking of children’s care arrangements.
22. To reach an overall judgement about the contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children, inspectors must use their professional judgement to consider the impact of the care experiences on children’s all-round development.
23. Inspectors must consider which set of descriptors best fits all the evidence available and the reasons why. For provision to be outstanding it must meet all of the criteria in the grade descriptors for good, plus all or nearly all of the additional descriptors for outstanding.

<b>Outstanding (1)</b>	<p>Care practices are better than good because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ All practitioners are highly skilled and sensitive in helping children of all ages form secure emotional attachments, and provide a strong base for helping them in developing their independence and ability to explore.</li> <li>■ Children increasingly show high levels of self-control during activities and confidence in social situations, and are developing an excellent understanding of how to manage risks and challenges relative to their age.</li> <li>■ Children’s safety and safeguarding is central to everything all practitioners do. They effectively support children’s growing understanding of how to keep themselves safe and healthy.</li> <li>■ There is a highly stimulating environment with child-accessible resources that promote learning and challenge children both in and outdoors.</li> <li>■ The strong skills of all key persons ensure all children are emotionally well prepared for the next stages in their learning. Practitioners skilfully support children’s transitions both within the setting and to other settings and school.</li> </ul>
<b>Good (2)</b>	<p>Care practices are good because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ A well-established key person system helps children form secure attachments and promotes their well-being and independence.</li> <li>■ Practitioners are good role models. They are deployed well, apply agreed strategies consistently and provide clear guidance for children about what is acceptable behaviour. Relationships are strong at all levels and children are learning to respect and tolerate each other’s differences. Children are gaining an understanding of risk through activities that encourage them to explore their environment.</li> <li>■ Practitioners are fully aware of, and sensitive to, potential and actual harm to children. They are able to demonstrate that they have</li> </ul>

	<p>thought through how they would deal with safeguarding issues and take appropriate action to protect and support the children in their care. Children’s behaviour shows that they feel safe in the setting. They are able to share concerns with their key person or other adults at the setting. Practitioners give clear messages to children to ensure they are developing a good understanding of why it is important to have a healthy diet and gain an understanding of the need for physical exercise. Practitioners help children to learn to be independent and encourage them to manage their own personal needs. Children are competent at managing their personal needs relative to their ages.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ There is a stimulating, well-resourced and welcoming environment, both in and outdoors, which supports children’s all-round development and emotional well-being, and provides a range of experiences that develop children’s independence and cooperation.</li> <li>■ Children are emotionally well prepared for the next stage in their learning because practitioners provide good support to prepare them for their transitions, both within the setting and to other settings and school.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Requires improvement (3)</b></p>	<p>Care practices are not yet demonstrating the characteristics of a good judgement. However, any breaches of the statutory requirements for safeguarding and welfare and/or learning and development do not have a significant impact on children’s safety and well-being.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Each child has a key person which helps most to form secure attachments with those working with them. However, on occasion, children’s care is not fully tailored to their needs.</li> <li>■ Practitioners generally support children to play and learn together and develop control over their actions. As a result, most children behave appropriately for their age. However, there are occasional lapses when some practitioners do not remind children of, or make their expectations of behaviour clear.</li> <li>■ Practitioners can demonstrate they understand how to safeguard children. Working practices and procedures help to protect and support children. Children are generally developing a sense of personal safety within the setting, although sometimes need a reminder. They are developing skills to manage their own personal needs relative to their ages and an understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles, but not as well as they might because the support is variable.</li> <li>■ The environment is safe, welcoming and adequately resourced. However, practitioners do not always make the best use of resources and space, both in and outdoors, to provide good quality learning experiences for all children and keep them motivated and engaged.</li> <li>■ Most children are emotionally prepared for the next stage in their learning because practitioners support their transition within the setting, to other settings or school.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Inadequate (4)</b></p>	<p>Care practices are inadequate if one or more of the following apply and there are breaches of the statutory requirements for safeguarding and welfare and/or learning and development which have a significant impact</p>

	<p>on children’s safety and well-being.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The key person system is not well embedded. Care practices do not support all children’s emotional well-being and welfare, with some children failing to form secure attachments with their carers.</li> <li>■ Children’s behaviour is not consistently managed well. As a result, more than occasionally some children are not engaged in activities which lead to a disorderly environment that hinders their learning and/or puts them and others at risk.</li> <li>■ Not all practitioners have sufficient knowledge and/or they are not vigilant enough to ensure that children are kept safe and safeguarded and that their health and welfare are promoted, and/or to help children develop enough understanding of how to keep themselves safe and healthy relative to their ages.</li> <li>■ The environment and/or resources are not welcoming and/or safe. They may be of poor quality and/or they are not used well enough to provide challenge for children or engage their interest.</li> <li>■ Children are poorly prepared for their transitions within the setting and/or to other settings and school because practitioners do not provide enough support for their emotional well-being.</li> </ul>
--	---

## The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

24. Inspectors must evaluate and report on:

- the effectiveness of the leadership and management in understanding and implementing the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

### Criteria

25. When evaluating the quality of leadership and management, inspectors must consider the extent to which providers:

- fulfil their responsibilities in meeting the learning and development requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage, including overseeing the educational programmes
- fulfil their responsibilities in meeting the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage at all times, implementing them consistently to ensure that all staff share a sense of responsibility to create an environment that is welcoming, safe and stimulating
- have rigorous and effective systems for self-evaluation that inform the setting’s priorities and are used to set challenging targets for improvement
- have effective systems for supervision, performance management and the continuous professional development of staff which have a positive impact on teaching and children’s learning and development

- have effective partnerships with parents and external agencies that help to secure appropriate interventions for children to receive the support they need.

## Evidence

26. The main evidence comes from interviews with the manager and/or registered provider or their nominee, supplemented by discussion with staff and parents and, if needed, sampling of policies and procedures.<sup>12</sup> Inspectors should obtain evidence of:

- how well practitioners and any trainees or students are monitored, coached, mentored and supported, and how under-performance is tackled
- qualification levels and the effectiveness of a programme of professional development arising from identified staff needs and improving relevant qualifications
- the deployment of staff taking account of qualifications, skills and experience
- the extent and range of completed training, including child protection and safeguarding training which fully meets statutory requirements, and the impact of that training in improving children's well-being
- the effectiveness of the staff's monitoring and revision of the educational programmes to ensure that they have sufficient depth, breadth and challenge, and reflect the needs, aptitudes and interests of children
- the effectiveness of the monitoring of children's progress and interventions where needed to ensure that gaps are narrowing for groups of children or individual children identified as being in need of support
- the effectiveness of arrangements for safeguarding, including recruitment practices and how well safe practices and a culture of safety are promoted and understood
- how well required policies and procedures are implemented
- the effectiveness of self-evaluation, including contributions from parents, carers and other stakeholders
- whether well-focused improvement plans have been implemented through engagement with staff, children, parents and carers
- the effectiveness of arrangements for sharing information and working in partnership with other providers, schools and professionals in order to identify all children's needs and help them to make good progress.

---

<sup>12</sup> Inspectors should refer to *Conducting early years inspections* to see which policies and procedures must be checked.

27. Inspectors must use their professional judgement to interpret and apply the grade descriptors for childminders.
28. Inspectors must consider which set of descriptors best fits all the evidence available and the reasons why. For provision to be outstanding it must meet all of the criteria in the grade descriptors for good, plus all or nearly all of the additional descriptors for outstanding.

<p><b>Outstanding (1)</b></p>	<p>Leadership and management are better than good because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Leadership is inspirational. The pursuit of excellence in all of the setting’s activities is demonstrated by an uncompromising, highly successful and well-documented drive to strongly improve achievement, or maintain the highest levels of achievement, for all children over a sustained period of time.</li> <li>■ The provider has an excellent understanding of their responsibility to ensure that the provision meets the safeguarding and welfare, and learning and development requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage, and has effective systems to monitor their implementation. The provider makes the most of learning relating to safeguarding and child protection to improve practice.</li> <li>■ An astute and targeted programme of professional development ensures practitioners are constantly improving their already first rate understanding and practice. High-quality professional supervision is provided, based on consistent and sharply focused evaluations of the impact of staff’s practice.</li> <li>■ Children’s needs are quickly identified and exceptionally well met through highly effective partnerships between the setting, parents, external agencies and other providers.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Good (2)</b></p>	<p>Leadership and management are good because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Educational programmes ensure a broad range of experiences help children make progress to the early learning goals. This is a result of a good, secure understanding of the areas of learning and how children learn, and accurate monitoring.</li> <li>■ Monitoring ensures that planning and assessment are consistent, precise, and display an accurate understanding of all children’s skills, abilities and progress. As a result, individual children or groups of children with identified needs are targeted, their progress rigorously monitored so that appropriate interventions are sought and gaps are closing.</li> <li>■ The safeguarding and welfare, and learning and development requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage are understood by leaders and managers and are fully met. Recruitment, supervision and training have a very strong focus on safeguarding and child protection, and policies and procedures are implemented consistently. Safeguarding and child protection practice are reviewed regularly, clearly evaluated and inform the provider’s plans for improvement. Planned actions to overcome weaknesses have been concerted and effective. The drive for improvement is demonstrated by a clear and successful improvement plan that supports children’s achievements</li> </ul>

	<p>over time. Strengths and weaknesses are effectively identified through thorough and accurate self-evaluation which takes into account the views of staff, children and their parents and careful monitoring, analysis and self-challenge.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ An effective and well-established programme of professional development is helping practitioners to improve their knowledge, understanding and practice. There are effective systems for performance management, practitioners are monitored and under-performance is tackled swiftly. Management and accountability arrangements are understood and consistently applied.</li> <li>■ Partnerships with parents, external agencies and other providers are well established and make a strong contribution to meeting children's needs. Appropriate interventions are secured so that children receive the support they need.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Requires improvement (3)</b></p>	<p>Leadership and management are not yet demonstrating the characteristics of a good judgement. However, any breaches of statutory requirements do not have a significant impact on children's safety and well-being and/or learning and development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Systems to monitor the delivery of the educational programmes for all children are not thorough enough to ensure all aspects of each area of learning are fully covered.</li> <li>■ Monitoring of assessments of children's learning and development provide a broad overview of each child's skills, abilities and progress. However, it is not consistently thorough enough to identify individuals or groups of children who need interventions, especially those who are underachieving, so any gaps are only closing slowly.</li> <li>■ Arrangements for performance management are in place and all staff have access to regular training. This helps to enhance practice, although it is not always sufficiently focused on improving the quality of teaching. Management and accountability arrangements are clear.</li> <li>■ The safeguarding and welfare, and learning and development requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage are understood by leaders and managers. Any breaches of these requirements do not have a significant impact on the safety and well-being of children or their learning and development, and leaders and managers know what they have to do to put them right. Recruitment and vetting are thorough and comply with statutory requirements. Training and supervision of staff have a clear focus on safeguarding and child protection, and policies and procedures are implemented by all those involved in the setting.</li> <li>■ Managers aspire to improve. Actions to overcome weaknesses and improve provision are generally successful but are not sufficiently focused on improving children's achievement. Self-evaluation provides an overview of the provision's strengths and weaknesses, although it may not take full account of the views of staff, children and their parents and/or focus sufficiently on teaching and learning. Partnerships with parents are encouraged by the setting and make a sound contribution to supporting children's well-being, although</li> </ul>

	<p>sharing of information about their learning may be variable. Partnerships with external agencies and other providers are in place to identify and meet children's needs so that most children who need it receive appropriate interventions and support.</p>
<p><b>Inadequate (4)</b></p>	<p>Leadership and managements are inadequate if one or more of the following apply and there are any breaches of statutory requirements which have a significant impact on children's safety and well-being and/or learning and development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ There is too little understanding of the learning and development requirements, resulting in breaches which have a significant impact on children's progress, particularly for individual or groups of children who are underachieving. Monitoring of educational programmes and children's progress is poor.</li> <li>■ There is ineffective monitoring of practitioners resulting in inconsistent practice and poor identification of training needs and/or practitioners do not have access to an adequate programme of professional development.</li> <li>■ There is too little understanding of the safeguarding and welfare requirements, resulting in one or more breaches that have a significant impact on the safety and well-being of children. Training and supervision are not sufficiently focused on safeguarding and child protection.</li> <li>■ Self-evaluation is weak and has too little impact. Any actions taken to tackle areas of identified weakness have been insufficient or ineffective. Providers are not sufficiently ambitious about improving provision and practice, including motivating staff.</li> <li>■ Management and accountability arrangements are not clear or are not understood by providers and/or their managers. Practitioners are not encouraged to improve their knowledge or practice.</li> <li>■ Links with parents, other settings or professionals involved in supporting children's care and education are not strong enough to ensure that individual needs are identified and met.</li> </ul>

## The overall quality and standards of the early years provision

29. Inspectors must evaluate and report on:

- how well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend
- the contribution of the early years provision to children's well-being
- the leadership and management of the early years provision.

### Criteria

30. Inspectors should take account of all the judgements made across the evaluation schedule. In particular, inspectors must consider:

- the progress all children make in their learning and development relative to their starting points and their readiness for the next stage of their education
- the extent to which the learning and care provided by the setting meets the needs of the range of children who attend, including the needs of any children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
- children’s personal and emotional development, including whether they feel safe and are secure and happy
- whether the requirements for children’s safeguarding and welfare have been fully met and there is a shared understanding and responsibility of how to protect children
- the effectiveness of leadership and management in evaluating practice and securing continuous improvement that improves children’s life chances.

<b>Outstanding (1)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The setting’s practice consistently reflects the highest aspirations for all children’s safety, well-being and learning. It enables them to make excellent progress in relation to their starting points and prepares them extremely well for school or the next stage in their learning.</li> <li>■ All major aspects of the provision are at least good, and outstanding in most respects, with all legal requirements met.</li> </ul>
<b>Good (2)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The setting’s practice keeps children safe and enables all children to do well, make good progress relative to their starting points and prepares them well for school or the next stage of their learning. Children benefit from practice that is at least good and sometimes outstanding.</li> <li>■ Most major aspects of the setting are at least good and all legal requirements are met. The judgement on ‘How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend’ is at least good.</li> </ul>
<b>Requires improvement (3)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The setting’s practice is not good enough because one or more key aspects of its work require improvement to be good. Children do not make good progress in their learning and development. Leadership and management demonstrate sufficient ability to identify and make required improvements.</li> <li>■ No major aspects of the setting are inadequate. There may be breach(es) of the safeguarding and welfare and/or the learning and development requirements, but this does not have a significant impact on the safety and well-being and/or the learning and development of children.</li> </ul>
<b>Inadequate (4)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Overall effectiveness is likely to be inadequate if any of the key judgements are inadequate; and/or</li> <li>■ There are breaches of statutory requirements which have a significant impact on the safety and well-being, and/or the learning and development of children; and/or</li> <li>■ It is a nursery or pre-school which has been judged as ‘requires improvement’ at two consecutive inspections and is still not ‘good’ at its third inspection.</li> </ul>