

GUIDANCE FOR PREPARING FOR YOUR OFSTED VISIT

OFSTED – THE OFFICE FOR STANDARDS IN EDUCATION

This document is intended for private and voluntary children’s nurseries in the UK, but can also be applied to pre-school groups, out of school clubs and holiday play schemes.

Why does an Ofsted inspection take place?

All private or voluntary nurseries in the UK must be registered on the Early Years Register if they are providing care for children aged between birth and five years old. Ofsted requires nurseries to provide Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) care, preparing children for school and their future.

In order to regulate the provision of Early Years Care Ofsted regularly inspects nurseries to ensure the set standards are being achieved. The inspections exist to support and guide nurseries with their overall objectives as child care providers. The inspections should be viewed as a positive and encouraging aspect of promoting good practice for Early Years education.

Most nursery inspections are carried out on a regular basis and can take place on average between every one to three years. However, if a previous inspection has shown there are some areas to be improved upon quite urgently there could be a follow-up inspection within months.

Some inspections take place due to complaints about the nursery. If this is the case the inspector is obliged to inform the nursery of the complaint and what they are specifically inspecting.

Where does an Ofsted inspection take place?

The inspection takes place on the premises of the nursery. The inspector will view:

- classrooms
- baby rooms
- food preparation areas
- toilets and bathrooms
- rest areas for children
- staff areas
- outside play areas and gardens

The nursery has a responsibility to keep these areas clean, safe and functional at all times.

How to prepare –physical areas of the nursery

Design and maintain a rota system to ensure all physical areas are checked regularly for cleanliness and safety. Clearly post a copy of the rota in each area and ensure staff initial, date and time the rota every time a check is carried out.

Before an Ofsted inspection

There is no obligation by Ofsted to give any notice of an inspection to nurseries. The inspector will just arrive and the nursery is expected to accommodate them and any needs they have.

The inspector will want to speak to the nursery manager, staff, children and parents. They want to see the nursery running naturally, with nothing hidden. Giving notice may make staff feel stressed and they may not work to their best capacity, which is one reason why there is no notice.

If staff are aware they are being observed, of course, they may feel a little nervous. To overcome this it is important they know that the inspector has a valuable job to do for the benefit of the children, and is not there to 'catch anyone out'.

How to prepare – the inspector's arrival

The best way to prepare for an Ofsted inspector's unexpected arrival is to always be prepared. The duty of the nursery manager is to ensure all staff are aware that an inspector can arrive at any time and when this happens they must be prepared. This means doing their job as if the inspector wasn't there, but also being ready to talk to the inspector and answer any questions they may have openly and honestly.

As soon as a nursery is aware of an inspection they must inform parents by posting a clearly positioned notice of the date (usually on the entrance door).

Nursery staff must also be prepared to answer any questions have about the inspection, which why one reason why all staff should be aware of the objectives of an Ofsted inspection.

TOP TIPS

- ⇒ When you know the inspector is coming don't panic. This will cause you stress and also filter through to the nursery staff. Be confident and knowledgeable and set an example to your staff by treating the inspection as positive.
- ⇒ When the inspector arrives make them feel welcome, get them to sign the visitor's book, show them where to leave their bag and coat, give them a quiet area to work from and show them where the toilets are. Also, don't forget to offer them refreshments. First impressions count.

- ⇒ Continue with your daily routine and don't make this the day to try anything new.
- ⇒ As soon as you know there is to be an inspection take out any paperwork you feel the inspector may want to view and lay it out neatly on a desk or table. This will show your organisation skills and prevent you from panicking because you can't find a particular document.

How does an Ofsted inspection take place?

The inspector's job is to observe the nursery functioning as a normal environment and monitor how well it is achieving the Early Years Foundation Stage standards. The inspector will:

- ask to meet with the nursery manager
- spend time chatting to staff
- talk to the children
- talk to parents if possible
- observe the nursery at work from a background position (quality of play, care standards, interaction, implementation of learning objectives)
- check documentation and paperwork is up to date
- review hygiene standards
- monitor health and safety standards and procedures

How to prepare – ongoing action

Running a nursery is more than just child care. It's about enthusiasm and passion for the development of young children. This passion needs to show in every aspect of the nursery's work.

TOP TIPS

- ⇒ Ensure all children are treated as individuals and have their individual needs and interests catered for.
- ⇒ Keep all records on individual children up to date.
- ⇒ Liaise with parents regularly to ensure they are aware of their child's development.
- ⇒ Encourage staff to study for additional Early Years qualifications that will benefit their childcare skills and promote their professional development.
- ⇒ Ensure policies and procedures are in place to assist the smooth running of the nursery, for example: greeting parents and visitors, having a visitor's book, getting children ready in time for parents' arrival, allowing for parents' late arrival.
- ⇒ Prepare a simple fact sheet (one sheet of A4) for staff that lists the key questions Ofsted may ask and what they will be looking for. DO NOT give staff

standard answers they must use. They must answer inspectors' questions in their own words.

- ⇒ Keep all rooms clean, tidy, organised and interesting (displays of children's work, projects and posters). Staff should be aware of who is responsible for maintaining each area.
- ⇒ Equipment and toys must be regularly inspected for damage and either repaired or disposed of.
- ⇒ Happy and motivated staff will influence children to feel the same way.

Self assessment

One of the best ways to ensure a nursery is being run to the highest possible required standards is to **self-assess** regularly.

How to prepare – self assessment

To help nurseries with their self-assessment procedure Ofsted provides a **self-assessment document** on its website, known as the Early Years Self-Evaluation Form. This form can be completed on-line or by hard copy on a regular basis (it's up to the nursery how often they wish to do this, although Ofsted recommend once a year). The form is then submitted to Ofsted for review. The inspector will use the form in conjunction with their inspection to consider how well a nursery is self-assessing itself.

The form is split into two parts:

Part A. Setting details and views of those who use the setting

- Section 1: Your setting
- Section 2: Views of those who use your setting and who work with you

Part B: The quality and standards of the Early Years provision

- Section 3: How well the Early Years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend
- Section 4: The contribution of the Early Years provision to children's well-being
- Section 5: The leadership and management of the Early Years provision
- Section 6: The overall quality and standards of the Early Years provision

It is not compulsory to complete this form or send it to Ofsted, but it is highly recommended as a method of self-assessment of nursery provision.

TOP TIPS

- ⇒ When completing your self-assessment form be truthful and honest. The form is for the benefit of the nursery, not to impress the inspectors.
- ⇒ The form should not just list what you do, but how you do it.
- ⇒ Spend time at the end of each day and each week reflecting on how things were done, whether they were successful or whether they could be improved. Regularly analysing how things are done will make completing the self-assessment form much easier.
- ⇒ Keep your self-assessment form up-to-date. This will make the inspector's job much easier and show you are in control of administrative tasks.

Nurseries can also design their own form/documents and keep them on file on their premises if they don't wish to use the Ofsted form.

Guidance of how to use the form, and the actual form, can be found in both Word and PDF versions here:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/early-years-online-self-evaluation-form-sef-and-guidance-for-providers-delivering-early-years-founda>

All staff should be aware of the self-evaluation form and where a filed copy is kept in case they wish to refer to it.

Regular staff meetings should be held to ensure everyone is clear about the strengths and weaknesses of the nursery and how all staff can work together to achieve the Early Years Foundation Stage objectives.

After an Ofsted inspection

Once the inspection is completed the inspector produces a report that includes:

- a description of the nursery
- the overall quality and standards of the provision, including the quality of teaching and learning
- how well the nursery meets the needs of the children to ensure they make the best possible progress
- the contribution of the provision to the children's well-being
- how the leadership and management helps with understanding and implementing the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Source: www.ofsted.gov.uk

Inspectors give providers one of four grades:

- grade 1 – outstanding
- grade 2 – good

- grade 3 – requires improvement
- grade 4 – inadequate

Outstanding

If a nursery receives an outstanding grade they can use the outstanding provider logo (which will be supplied by Ofsted) on all publicity material. This logo is a valuable marketing tool that can be used on:

- the website
- stationery
- posters
- leaflets
- newsletters
- advertisements

Inadequate

If a nursery receives an 'inadequate' grade they must take immediate steps to address this. A visit to monitor the situation will take place within three months and a follow-up inspection be held within six months.

The Local Education Authority (LEA) will be informed of the result, which could affect any funding provision.

If there are welfare and safeguarding issues the grade 'inadequate with enforcement' can be issued. This means there will be a list of welfare requirements issued which must be addressed by the nursery immediately. Each requirement will be given a date for completion and a monitoring visit usually takes place within 24 hours of the earliest date given.

It is important to remember that every grade is given for the purposes of meeting the required standards of the Early Years Foundation Stage and in turn the needs of the children. Identification of areas for improvement should be seen in a positive light as a way of making things better.

A copy of the report is sent to the nursery and posted on Ofsted's website.

Action by the nursery after the inspection

It is important to check the report to ensure all facts are correct (number of staff, children, location of equipment, facilities).

A copy of the report should be given to all staff and parents.

The report should be discussed with staff to review the final grade and identify how any necessary improvements can be made.

If an inadequate with enforcement grade is received the necessary action must be taken immediately in preparation for the monitoring visit (within three months).

Final reminder

Ofsted inspectors are human and are just doing their job. They want to work with you to ensure the well-being of the children at all times. Relax, be yourself and stay calm.

<https://www.stonebridge.uk.com/category/early-years>

