

Education inspection framework
Our renewed approach

Registered early years settings such as a nursery or pre-school

Ofsted
raising standards
improving lives



Collectively, we want to achieve:

- high-quality, inclusive education for every child
- great outcomes for every child, including for those who are disadvantaged, those with SEND, those known, or previously known to children's social care and those who face other barriers to their learning and/or well-being
- better information for parents
- a collaborative and transparent approach to inspection
- high and rising standards of education and care.

Summary of changes

New report card

A five-point grading scale

A renewed focus on inclusion

New toolkits

New inspection methodology

Taking steps to reduce workload

More closely aligned to the EYFS

A sharper focus on regulation

New online insights platform





We will evaluate early years settings against the following:

- Inclusion
- Curriculum and teaching**
- Achievement**
- Behaviour, attitudes and establishing routines
- Children's welfare and well-being
- Leadership and governance*
- Safeguarding

* When there are no early years children present and/or on roll, we will only evaluate this evaluation area.

** These evaluation areas do not apply to out-of-school and holiday providers.

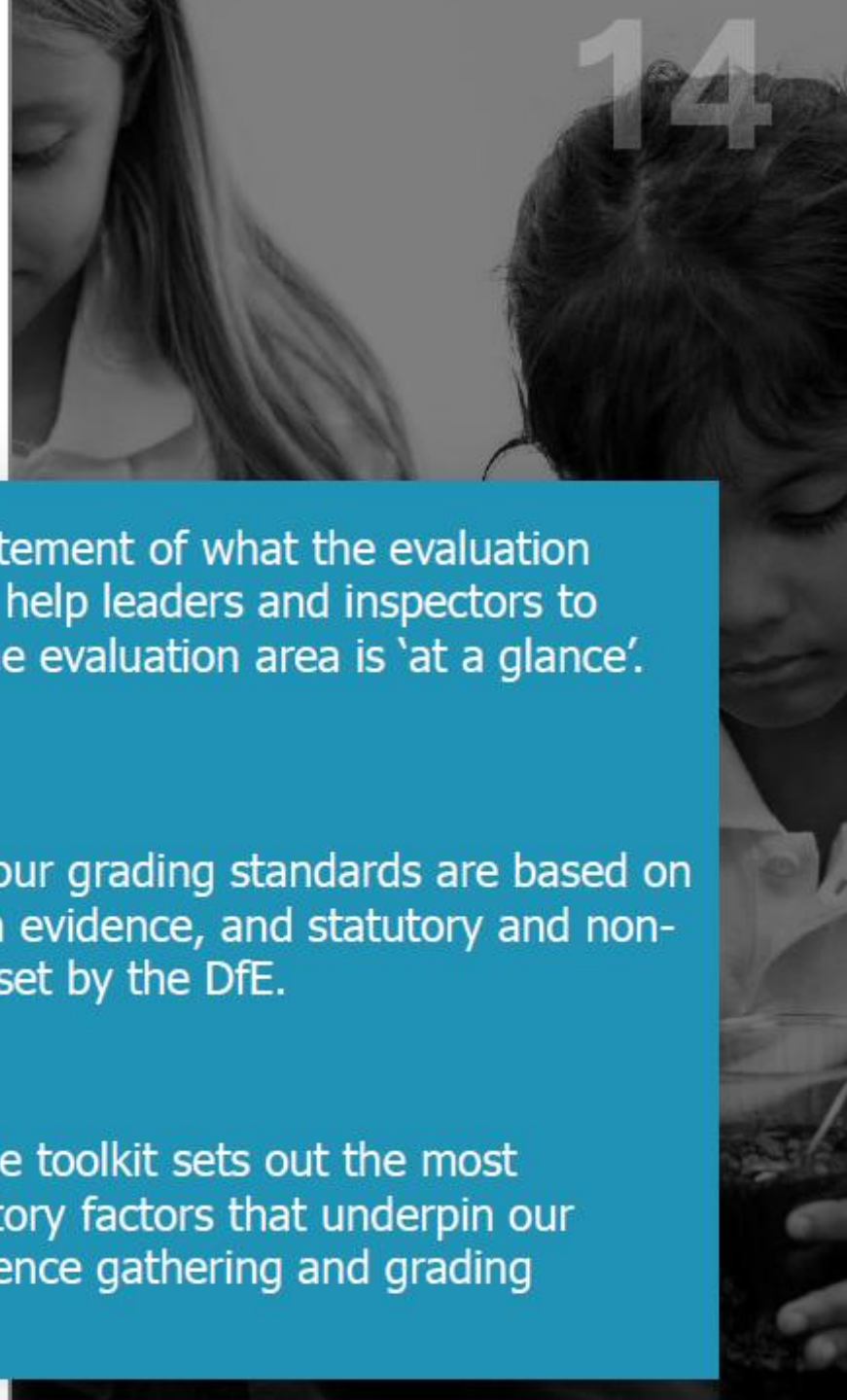


We will introduce toolkits

- Toolkits **replace the grade descriptors** that are currently in our inspection handbooks.
- Toolkits show providers and inspectors the **evaluation areas that we'll focus** on and how we'll evaluate and grade providers.
- The **general structure of the toolkit is the same** whatever sector you are working in, but we have **carefully reflected on** how our evaluation areas should apply for different sectors.

oolkit

toolkit is broken down into different evaluation areas. Each uation area starts with a covering page.



rriculum and teaching

aluation area considers:

- whether leaders ensure that they provide all children with a high-quality, ambitious curriculum
- whether leaders and practitioners plan, design and implement the educational programmes of the EYFS statutory framework to create a coherent and sequential curriculum that builds on what children know and can do
- the extent to which the setting's curriculum meets the needs of the range of ages and stages of children who attend, especially disadvantaged children, those with SEND, those who are known (or previously known) to children's social care, and those who may face barriers to their learning and/or well-being

tors focus on gathering evidence relating to the factors that statutory requirements and non-ry guidance, research and inspection evidence indicate contribute most strongly to high-curriculum and teaching.

factors are:

- constructing an ambitious curriculum that fully meets the intentions, breadth and ambition of the EYFS and is designed to give children the knowledge they need to be ready for their next stage in education, including school, where relevant
- planning and sequencing the curriculum carefully so that children gain knowledge and skills incrementally to reach its ambitious aims

1. A summative statement of what the evaluation area considers – to help leaders and inspectors to understand what the evaluation area is 'at a glance'.

2. A reminder that our grading standards are based on research, inspection evidence, and statutory and non-statutory guidance set by the DfE.

3. Following that the toolkit sets out the most significant contributory factors that underpin our approaches to evidence gathering and grading

Toolkits

Grades we expect to see **most frequently** on inspection

Grades across a 5-point scale

Needs attention	Expected standard	Strong standard
Curriculum and teaching are likely to be graded 'needs attention' when the 'expected standard' has not been met but breaches of the EYFS requirements do not have a significant impact on children's learning and development. **This may include when one or more of the following applies:** ■ Leaders' ambitions for the curriculum and teaching are appropriate, but weaknesses or inconsistencies in implementation have a negative impact on children's progress overall and/or that of particular groups of children. ■ Leaders have only recently started to take action to improve the curriculum and teaching. While their actions are appropriate, they are at an early stage. This means it is too soon to determine the impact of this work. ■ Leaders and practitioners have high ambitions for disadvantaged children, those with SEND, those who are known (or previously known) to children's social care, and those who may face other barriers to their learning and/or well-being. However, support does not	**Curriculum and teaching meet the 'expected standard' when all the following apply:** Leaders have an accurate understanding of the quality of the curriculum and teaching in their setting. They have a clear action plan to bring about improvement. The curriculum is designed so that, across all areas of learning and development, it is clear what leaders and practitioners want children to know and be able to do. The order in which to teach this, to give children the knowledge and skills they need for their future learning and development, including being ready for school, where appropriate, is also clear. The curriculum is an entitlement for every child. Leaders take effective action to make sure that children access an equally ambitious curriculum. This includes those attending part time or attending more than one setting, disadvantaged children, those with SEND, those who are known (or previously known) to children's social care, and those who may face other barriers to their learning and/or well-being.	**Curriculum and teaching meet the 'strong standard' when the 'expected standard' has been met and all the following apply:** Leaders ensure that the curriculum is inclusive and of consistently high quality. High expectations for what children can achieve are embedded across the provision. This includes during routines and at all times of the day, such as when children's care needs are being dealt with, at mealtimes and when tidying up. Leaders ensure that highly effective teaching and interactions with children are embedded. Practitioners understand that every interaction they have with a child is an opportunity for teaching and learning. They are skilled at teaching and adapting in the moment to respond to children's emerging thinking, their curiosity and any misunderstanding, providing opportunities for children to excel in their learning and development. Leaders' and practitioners' approach to the curriculum and teaching is focused accurately on children's age-appropriate learning and development needs and draws on expert guidance.

Indicators

Grading standards

Toolkits

Grades we expect to see **less frequently** on inspection

Urgent improvement

Curriculum and teaching are likely to be graded 'urgent improvement' when breaches of the EYFS requirements have a significant impact on children's learning and development and any of the following apply:

- Leaders' oversight of staff's implementation of the setting's systems and procedures, routines and interactions is ineffective.
- Practitioners do not teach the curriculum to an acceptable standard.
- The curriculum does not meet the full intention, ambition and breadth of the EYFS requirements.
- The design and sequencing of curriculum content and/or teaching are weak and lack ambition.
- The curriculum and/or teaching do not prepare children to build knowledge and skills for future learning, including for school, where relevant.
- Disadvantaged children, those with SEND, those who are known (or previously known) to children's social care, and those who face other barriers to their learning and/or well-being do not have access to the same ambitious adjustments or adaptations are not being made, or are not reducing or removing disadvantage who are not disabled.

Grades across a 5-point scale

Indicators

Standards

Exceptional

Inspectors may consider curriculum and teaching to be 'exceptional' when the 'strong standard' has been met and all the following apply:

- Exceptionally high standards in the curriculum and teaching have been sustained. Across all areas of learning, well-planned, effective and highly responsive teaching quickly and securely develops the knowledge and skills children need to be successful.
- Leaders' actions have a transformational impact on the learning of disadvantaged children, those with SEND, those who are known (or previously known) to children's social care, and those who may face other barriers to learning and/or well-being. These children are now exceptionally well prepared for current and later learning, and for future success.
- There are no significant areas for improvement that leaders have not already prioritised.

If this grade is awarded, leaders should use their exceptional success in this evaluation area to:

- support improvement across all aspects of their own setting and/or group
- share their learning and best practice externally to support system-wide improvement, for example with other settings, professionals, their community and stakeholders, including local and/or national networks

Remarkable, transformational over time,gold standard, out of the box approaches

Gradings:



Safeguarding

MET or NOT MET

If any area is graded Urgent Improvement or Safeguarding is NOT met, re-inspection will happen within 6 months.

If any area is graded Needs Attention re-inspection will probably happen within 1 year.

Expected Standard Grading

- Expected standard is a starting point for all inspections and all the EYFS requirements need to be met in order to meet this standard.
- The inspectors will be looking for 'secure' rather than 'best' fit.
- For Expected and Strong standard grade, all of the standards in that column need to be met.
- However, Ofsted use the words 'typically' and 'generally' to recognise that the Expected standard is not about perfection. For example, one area might be developed but doesn't meet the standard consistently as other areas.
- In this case the setting would still be graded as having a secure fit within the Expected standard.
- If not secure fit within the Expected standard, the grading will be 'Needs Attention'- this standard has indicators rather than standards.



SAFEGUARDING

- While safeguarding is a separate judgement, it still links through other evaluation areas (for example welfare, leadership, inclusion).
- The setting's safeguarding culture will influence how well children are protected, how staff behave, how transitions and partnerships work, etc.
- For example: the operating guide says inspectors will "connect evidence across a range of activities" and that they will review documents including safeguarding records.



Grading safeguarding

Not met	Met
The safeguarding standards have been developed from the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the 'EYFS statutory framework for group and school-based providers', 'EYFS statutory framework for childminders', 'Keeping children safe in education' and 'Working together to safeguard children'. Safeguarding standards are likely to be 'not met' if any of the following apply: Serious and/or widespread failures in safeguarding practice lead to children, or particular groups of children, being unsafe. Breaches of the statutory requirements for safeguarding have a significant impact on children's safety. Leaders have not taken sufficient action to resolve weaknesses following a failure of safeguarding arrangements that meant children may not have been kept safe. Leaders are not open to challenge and/or do not learn from issues or incidents. Leaders do not identify children who may need early help and who are at risk of harm or who have been harmed. This can include, but is not limited to, neglect, abuse, grooming, exploitation, sexual abuse and online harm. Leaders do not actively seek and listen to the views and experiences of children, practitioners and parents, and they do not deal with concerns promptly, when necessary. Leaders do not understand the impact of their policies, processes and systems. They are not receptive to challenge and/or do not reflect on	**The safeguarding standards have been developed from the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the 'EYFS statutory framework for group and school-based providers', 'EYFS statutory framework for childminders', 'Keeping children safe in education' and 'Working together to safeguard children'. Safeguarding standards are 'met' when all the following apply:** Leaders have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Leaders and practitioners meet their responsibilities to promote the safety of children, in relation to the statutory requirements for safeguarding. Multi-agency working is effective. Parents and children know who to go to for support. Leaders identify children who may need early help and who are at risk of harm or who have been harmed. Practitioners recognise that babies and young children, including those with SEND, may be more vulnerable to abuse and neglect and that they depend on adults to recognise and respond to concerns on their behalf. Leaders and practitioners identify children who are in need of early help or are at risk of harm. All practitioners are vigilant and carry out their responsibilities effectively to keep children safe. They follow the setting's systems confidently and consistently. Leaders and practitioners ensure that other professionals and parents adhere to policies to keep children safe.

Not met	Met
their own practice to ensure that safeguarding policies, systems and processes are kept under continual review. Leaders and practitioners do not follow the requirements for safer recruitment, reporting, referrals and the 'Prevent' duty. Poor record-keeping has a significant impact on children's safety. Leaders do not manage safeguarding concerns or allegations against adults appropriately. They do not fulfil their duty to refer allegations or concerns to relevant agencies, including the LADO and the DBS.	Leaders manage recruitment safely, ensuring that practitioners have the relevant qualifications and training and have passed any checks required for their roles. Leaders and practitioners understand and follow the requirements for reporting, referrals, record-keeping and the 'Prevent' duty. Policies and procedures for keeping children safe are clear and accessible. Leaders fulfil their duty to refer allegations or concerns to relevant agencies, including the LADO and the DBS. Leaders ensure that supervision, support and monitoring of adults are appropriate. The conduct and behaviour of staff are appropriate. Leaders and practitioners are receptive to challenge and reflect on their own practice so that the impact of safeguarding policies, systems and processes is kept under continual review.

Gathering evidence about safeguarding

- **Safeguarding culture**

establish a culture in which staff, children, parents and others feel comfortable raising and discussing any concerns that relate to safeguarding children and feel confident that appropriate action will be taken.

- **Safeguarding information for all staff to know and act on**

ensure that practitioners and other staff have received the training they need for them to know, understand and uphold their safeguarding responsibilities

- **Management of safeguarding**

appoint an appropriate senior member of staff to the role of designated safeguarding lead to carry out the setting's statutory duties to identify, help and protect children

ensure that the setting's information systems safeguard children effectively from online harm

- **Safer recruitment**

receive any required training in safer recruitment and understand and follow safer recruitment practices, complete the checks required for all staff and all other adults, including visitors, volunteers and contractor

- **Safeguarding concerns or allegations**

have clear procedures and the required record-keeping processes for responding to a safeguarding allegation against any members of staff, including leaders, and against visitors or volunteers; this includes when there are what appear to be low-level concerns

Under the new framework inspectors assess whether the setting has:

- A positive, transparent safeguarding culture across the setting: safeguarding is “part of everything” rather than a paper exercise.
- Robust policies and procedures in line with statutory guidance (for example under the Early Years Foundation Stage — EYFS) for safeguarding children.
- Safe and appropriate recruitment and vetting of staff (including checks and relevant safeguarding training where required).
- Effective procedures for reporting concerns or allegations, including clarity around who the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) is, how whistleblowing works, and how concerns are recorded and followed up.
- Evidence of safe day-to-day practice — how staff interact with children, manage risks, supervise appropriately, and respond (in real time) if a child expresses concern or discloses abuse.
- Records and documentation (where required) — e.g. records of referrals to social care / local safeguarding officer, any open cases, logs of incidents or complaints, accident/incident records, records of any refused placements.

Evidence gathering

- Professional discussion with leaders/staff about how safeguarding culture is embedded (not just compliance).
- Observations and evidence of day-to-day practice: how staff respond to children, how risk is managed, how transitions and communication with families work.
- How the setting works with external agencies, how well it identifies children at risk and acts on concerns.
- Training: ensuring all staff (including volunteers, temporary staff) understand their safeguarding responsibilities, know how to raise concerns, know how to escalate and follow the setting's policy.

Strong practice looks like:

- Safeguarding policies are up to date (including EYFS requirements), clearly accessible, and understood by all staff.
- Maintain and review safeguarding records: concerns, referrals, risk assessments, transitions, staff training logs.
- Regularly review and reflect on your safeguarding culture (not just the policy): how do staff feel? Are concerns raised promptly? Is there a pattern/trend? Are there ‘near misses’?
- Safe recruitment practices are robust, and staff/volunteers understand their role.
- Make sure partnerships with other agencies (children’s services, health, social care) are active and you have clear referral pathways.
- Children’s welfare, attendance, behaviour and transitions are considered through a safeguarding lens (especially for vulnerable groups, children with SEND, children known to social care).
- Risk assessments (indoors/outdoors/when off-site) are carried out, supervision and ratios meet requirements, and that staff understand their responsibilities.
- Leaders monitor safeguarding rigorously, and parents know who to speak to.

Safeguarding

- A strong safeguarding culture means creating an environment where children's safety, wellbeing, and rights are at the centre of everything adults do. It goes beyond having policies—it's about shared values, daily behaviours, and confident practice. Leaders meet their responsibilities to promote the welfare of children in relation to the statutory requirements for safeguarding and child protection

We have strengthened our approach to inclusion

Breaking down barriers to learning and/or well-being



Focusing on barriers

to learning and well-being especially for those who are disadvantaged, have SEND, or are known to children's social care.

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Understanding context

By using contextual information and discussions with leaders to understand their particular community and the opportunities and challenges this brings to their work.



Woven throughout the framework

Inclusion is woven through evaluation areas, as well as having a standalone inclusion area.

In early years we will look at inclusion by...

Observing

Observing children's routines and experiences.



Discussing

Speaking with leaders, staff and parents.

Considering

Considering the context of the setting.

Case sampling

Case sampling to evaluate how support works in practice.

The Use of Early Years Pupil Premium

There needs to be clear evidence of how the EYPP money spending is making a difference to this group of children.

Things to consider:

- How you identify and support children in receipt of Early Years Pupil Premium
- How you provide inclusive, broad and varied curriculum for all children, including recipients of EYPP
- How you are working with the families of this cohort of children, including signposting for additional support
- How you are working with external agencies to further support this cohort of children
- How you monitor and support the wellbeing of children eligible for EYPP
- The EEF has some great advice on their website on how best to spend the EYPP so it is having the most impact on children's progress. This can include using the money to train staff on aspects of practice that will benefit children from disadvantaged backgrounds such as ACI/high quality interactions.
- Early Years Pupil Premium | EEF

Expected standard

Inclusion meets the 'expected standard' when all the following apply:

Leaders identify children's needs quickly and accurately, including any emerging or changing needs. This includes the needs of disadvantaged children, those with SEND, those who are known (or previously known) to children's social care, and those who may face other barriers to their learning and/or well-being.

Leaders have high expectations for these children. Typically, the support they provide reduces barriers to the children's learning and/or well-being.

Leaders ask for and implement advice from specialists and external partners, when needed.

Leaders take a graduated approach (as explained earlier), which means that children's SEND needs are generally met well. Practitioners receive suitable training and support to implement this approach.

When required, the identified SENCo has the knowledge, understanding and skills to make a positive difference for children with SEND.

Grading Inclusion
What does this look like in practice?

- Ideally the initial assessments of children's needs are completed in the first 6-8 weeks.
- The Assess-Plan-Do-Review process is embedded.
- Leaders and every key person know their children well and can talk about their needs, as well as what they are doing to address these.
- The environment reflects and supports the needs of the children (OAP strategies- visuals, Now and Next etc).
- All practitioners can talk about how they adapt the learning and activities to meet children's needs, and this is shown consistently in their practice.

Example in Practice

Manjit is sharing the story 'Dear Zoo' with her key children which includes a new child to the setting who is at the beginning stages of learning English. She collects toy animals to represent the animals in the story and names them with the children. As she reads, she encourages the new child to find the toy to match the picture on each page and names the animal for him to repeat. She sometimes asks a simple question ie 'Is it elephant or dog?' so he can begin to respond orally.'

Expected standard

Curriculum and teaching meet the 'expected standard' when all the following apply:

Leaders have an accurate understanding of the quality of the curriculum and teaching in their setting. They have a clear action plan to bring about improvement.

The curriculum is designed so that, across all areas of learning and development, it is clear what leaders and practitioners want children to know and be able to do. The order in which to teach this, to give children the knowledge and skills they need for their future learning and development, including being ready for school, where appropriate, is also clear.

The curriculum is an entitlement for every child. Leaders take effective action to make sure that children access an equally ambitious curriculum. This includes those attending part time or attending more than one setting, disadvantaged children, those with SEND, those who are known (or previously known) to children's social care, and those who may face other barriers to their learning and/or well-being.

Grading Curriculum and Teaching
What does this look like in practice?

▪Everything you do in your early years setting is part of your 'curriculum' ie the routines, the environment, partnerships with parents as well as the skills and knowledge you want the children to learn.

▪Your curriculum should consider the prior knowledge and experience of your current children and should reflect their needs and interests.

•Effective teaching should involve giving children opportunities to learn through a variety of different approaches: adults modelling, adult guided and adult-led learning, through explicit teaching, through child-led independent and free play, by observing and interacting with their peers.

•Leaders and practitioners should ensure that they are guided by the 'Intent' ie **what you want the children to learn**, and this should be carefully considered before planning activities and experiences.

Example in Practice

If adults are aware of the overview of what knowledge and skills you want children to learn (e.g. introducing new vocabulary, developing fine motor skills, etc) they can seize the teachable moment.

For example, a child finds a snail in the garden; the adult might have to tell the child that it is a snail. If the child already knows this, the adult may decide to ask a question "I wonder why the snail has a shell" or comment "Wow, look at the spirals on the shell!" They might decide to look at it under a magnifying glass and later discuss where to put the snail so that it is safe.

Expected standard

Leaders ensure that the curriculum is typically taught well. They ensure that staff use assessment to check what children know and can do and to prevent children from falling behind. Teaching is tailored to children's different starting points, needs and stages of development.

Practitioners focus on babies' and children's personal, social and emotional development and make sure that they feel safe, secure, stimulated and happy.

There is a sharp focus on developing children's communication and language and their love of books.

Children's physical development from the earliest age is prioritised, to develop their strength, coordination and positive attitudes to physical activity.

Practitioners teach mathematics explicitly. They focus on the mathematical learning that promotes children's confidence in and enjoyment of mathematics.

The curriculum recognises and promotes equality and diversity. Practitioners support children to reflect on their similarities and to understand what makes them unique.

Grading Curriculum and Teaching
What does this look like in practice?

- Leaders and practitioners develop communication and language through **high quality back and forth interactions**. A range of strategies are used, ie teaching and modelling vocabulary, interactive reading and story time is part of the daily routine.
- Leaders and practitioners have a good understanding of progression and development in mathematics, ie in number- showing an awareness of different amounts of objects, being familiar with the language of number, understanding that numbers have names, knowing the sequence of numbers, counting small amounts of objects one at a time, understanding that the last number is the amount in total and so on.

Example in Practice

▪Rahina, the key person, is in the mud kitchen with a small group developing counting skills. Molly has a pan with 4 pinecones. Molly is counting the pinecones: 1,2,3,4 pointing at each one. Rahina asks Molly 'How many pinecones have you got?' Molly starts counting again from 1, Rahina observes that Molly doesn't understand the last number is the total amount and realises she needs to plan more opportunities to support Molly with saying the total.

Expected standard

Achievement meets the 'expected standard' when all the following apply:

Children develop age- and/or stage-appropriate knowledge and skills across the 7 EYFS areas of learning and development as they progress through the curriculum.

Children are suitably prepared for the next stage of their learning, including school, where relevant.

Children, including disadvantaged children, those with SEND, those who are known (or previously known) to children's social care, and those who may face other barriers to their learning and/or well-being generally achieve well from their starting points. They receive the necessary support to reach developmental goals and/or age- and stage-appropriate end points of the curriculum.

Grading Achievement
What does this look like in practice?

Leaders and practitioners can:

- Explain the knowledge and skills that children need before they transition to the next stage of learning and the sequence of steps towards these goals.
- Talk about the starting points of their children, the progress they have made, and their next steps.
- Use their day-to-day interactions with children to check what they know and can do.
- Recognise that some children may need more targeted time and attention than others to reach developmental goals.

Example in Practice

In the baby room, the key person Harry, notices that one of his babies is not meeting the milestone of rolling.
He plans to spend more time with the baby and use different strategies to support her, ie putting baby on her side to encourage rolling from side to back/tummy and holding a motivational toy to the side where she can see it and move the toy over her head to land on the other side so she will follow it with her eyes and may roll over.

Expected standard

Behaviour, attitudes and establishing routines meet the 'expected standard' when all the following apply:

Leaders and practitioners set high expectations for children's behaviour and attitudes to learning. These expectations are commonly understood by practitioners, parents and children. They are generally applied consistently and fairly. Incidents of poor behaviour, including unkind or discriminatory words and/or actions, when they occur, are quickly addressed.

Leaders promote to families the importance of attendance and punctuality.

Practitioners teach children the importance of treating others with kindness, care and respect and are positive role models.

Practitioners explicitly teach children the executive function skills they need to develop positive attitudes to learning. They help children to focus attention on what matters, screen out anything that is not relevant, hold information in mind to work on it, and focus on a goal and work out when it is necessary to change approaches to achieve that goal.

Practitioners understand and consider each child's individual needs and circumstances, including those of disadvantaged children, those with SEND, those who are known (or previously known) to children's social care, and those who may face barriers to their learning. Any adaptations and/or reasonable adjustments maintain the high expectations of behaviour that reflect the children's ages and stages of development. Practitioners proactively work with other agencies to serve children's best interests.

Children play games and activities collaboratively and get along well with others.

Practitioners give explicit praise to reinforce children's positive behaviour.

Children typically build warm, trusting and respectful relationships with their key persons. As a result, they are confident to share their concerns in age- and/or stage-appropriate ways.

Grading Behaviour, attitudes and establishing routines

What does this look like in practice?

- Setting has a clear set of rules that everyone is familiar with
- There is a consistent and uniform approach to dealing with unacceptable behaviour
- There is support/ adaptation/ interventions for children with barriers
- Warm, caring key person approach and set routines
- Positive, kind interactions culture between all, modelled by adults
- Positive behaviour strategies in place with lots of rewards!
- There are lots of books that teach children about right choices and how to treat others

Example in Practice

- 'Walk, thank you' (rather than 'Stop running')
- There is a visual timetable that reflects daily routines, each section is removed once completed
- Now and next board is used to support children with routines
- There is a cosy quiet area of the room that supports self- regulation
- The use of 3 R's- REGULATE, RELATE, REASON

Expected standard

Children's welfare and well-being meet the 'expected standard' when all the following apply:

Leaders establish policies and practices that support children's welfare, mental health and well-being. These are generally understood by staff and parents and implemented well across the setting.

Leaders create a safe, welcoming space where children typically enjoy play, learning and social activities and have daily access to outdoor learning.

Hygiene practices ensure that the personal needs of babies and children of all ages are met appropriately. Practitioners teach children to become increasingly independent in managing their personal needs.

Practitioners teach children about making healthy choices about food, rest, exercise and screen time.

Leaders and practitioners provide a healthy diet. Practitioners make sure that mealtimes are opportunities to promote children's good manners and social skills.

Practitioners support children to develop their physical and emotional health. They provide children with the age- and stage-appropriate knowledge that they need to stay safe and healthy.

Children, especially disadvantaged children, those with SEND, those who are known (or previously known) to children's social care, and those who may face other barriers to their learning and/or well-being, develop secure attachments and a sense of belonging through warm and positive relationships with key persons, which promote their well-being effectively.

Grading Children's welfare and well- being
What does this look like in practice?

- There are established routines for feeding, sleeping, weaning etc
- There are plenty of opportunities to be active during the day
- The environment is inclusive, and everyone is valued
- Children are provided with healthy snack choices and drinks
- Children are taught how to keep themselves safe
- Children are taught about feelings through books and visuals; they are supported to recognise how they feel
- Children are taught strategies that help them regulate

Example in Practice

- Zones of regulation/ Colour Monster strategies are embedded
- Adults sit with children at snack time and talk to them about healthy eating choices
- They teach them new vocabulary, ie when slicing an apple, they narrate what they are doing 'I am cutting my apple in two halves' or they model how to share pieces of fruit equally

Expected standard

Leadership and governance meet the 'expected standard' when all the following apply:

Leaders understand the setting's context, strengths and areas for development. They are ambitious for children, taking appropriate action to drive improvement and/or maintain high standards of education and care. When improvements are needed, leaders' actions are timely and effective.

The nominated individual ensures that leaders have a suitable vision and strategy for the quality of provision and that resources are managed well. They typically support and challenge leaders appropriately, giving due regard to leaders' well-being and workload.

Leaders provide regular, relevant and appropriate professional learning and expertise opportunities and constructive feedback for all practitioners, which equips them to carry out their roles successfully.

Leaders take action to ensure that staff feel valued and workload is manageable. They avoid creating unnecessary burdens.
Leaders engage with parents and professionals thoughtfully and positively in a way that supports children's education and care. This includes at times of transition, to enable children to settle quickly when they start at the setting and move on seamlessly to other settings or school, when appropriate.

Grading Leadership and Governance
What does this look like in practice?

- All staff demonstrate they have high expectations of all children
- Ethos and values of the setting are established and sustained
- Improvement plan identifies strengths and areas of development with clear targets and time-line for improvement
- Leaders do not expect staff to produce unnecessary paperwork
- Leaders always put children's interests first
- There is a culture of continuous growth amongst all
- Communication with parents is smooth and effective

Example in Practice

- CPD plan updated and it gives staff on all levels opportunities to develop
- All staff use the language of high expectations that develops children's independent skills where 'I can't' is not accepted
- Leaders monitor staff wellbeing and support accordingly
- 2 years progress check is shared with the parents, next steps and support clearly identified



Inspections will look and feel different

- **Context** taken into account.
- A more **collaborative** approach.
- A **consistent** approach to inspection.
- **Clear next steps** on what to improve.
- A continued **focus on well-being**.

Context



What does local context mean?

Your local context is the picture of the community where you work. It includes:

- things like the types of families living nearby
- how many young children there are
- where local schools are
- what other childcare options are available to families in the local area

Context



Finding out more about your area

Through the Ofsted: explore an area tool you can access key data about your local area that includes:

- levels of children from income-deprived families
- levels of childhood obesity and tooth decay
- number of children receiving EYPP
- numbers of children with English as an additional language
- the number of children with SEN and EHCPs

Context



Why does understanding your local context matter?

Ofsted inspectors look for evidence that you understand how your setting connects to the community. They may ask questions such as:

- What do you know about the families and community around you?
- How do you use that knowledge to plan your curriculum and activities?
- How does your setting meet the needs of local children, including those who may be disadvantaged or have special educational needs?
- How do you review and adapt your practice as the community changes?



Putting your local knowledge into practice

Being able to answer with real examples from your practice shows that you're thoughtful, reflective, and closely connected to your local area. Examples that you might give could include:

- If many families use public transport, you could set up role play about taking the bus, teaching children about road safety and community awareness.
- In an area with a strong cultural mix, you might celebrate local festivals and cook dishes from different backgrounds to reflect the diversity of your families.
- Where there's limited outdoor space, you might make use of local parks, libraries or nature reserves to broaden your provision.

These small but thoughtful adjustments show that your setting is rooted in its community. They also help children make meaningful connections between their home life, your setting, and the world around them—something Ofsted is keen to see.

What's changing for registered early years settings

Inspectors will:

- consider data in understanding the provider's context
- make the notification call before 10am
- use an email for sharing information before the inspection
- have a planning call with leaders ahead of the inspection
- no longer complete a learning walk with leaders
- make shared observations and have increased and ongoing professional dialogue with leaders throughout the inspection
- inform childminders of the day they will be inspected
- no longer grade out-of-school providers 'met' or 'not met'.



Before an inspector arrives

Notification call

To notify the setting of their inspection and arrange the planning call

Timetable for inspection

To enable the inspector to gather evidence relevant to the areas of inspection focus.









Notification email

To give leaders helpful information before the inspection

Planning call

The inspector will work collaboratively with leaders to identify any necessary reasonable adjustments and understand the context of the setting

The Notification Call

Before the Inspection:

Settings will be notified via a telephone call by 10am on the day before their inspection. They will then schedule a 30-minute video call for later on that day to gather some initial evidence and information.

The Planning Call Part1- Introduction and discussing practicalities

Leaders' well-being

- Check on the leader's and any other leaders' well-being.
- Check that any reasonable adjustments agreed during the notification call have been put in place.

Ensuring that leaders have what they need

This will include:

- Practical information, for example, the provider contact helpline number
- Encourage leaders to inform parents and carers of the inspection, including by displaying the notice of inspection poster.
- Any requests that are specific to the setting's context. For example, you may be asked to provide photographs of the inspector(s) to help prepare children for who they will see.

Part 2: Understanding the setting's context and leaders' priorities for improvement

The Inspector will discuss:

- the setting's context, including any changes since the previous inspection
- relevant safeguarding issues, as identified by leaders
- leaders' recent and ongoing priorities and challenges, the actions they have taken to maintain or improve standards and how they have assessed the impact of their actions
- the information asked for as part of the notification email about disadvantaged children, those with SEND, those who are known (or were previously known) to children's social care and those who face other barriers to their learning and/or well-being
- leaders' evaluation of the setting's strengths and successes, and their priorities for improvement, including where they believe they currently sit in terms of the 5-point grading scale for each evaluation area
- what leaders want all children to know and achieve as part of the setting's curriculum ambition



Part 2: Leaders' approach to inclusion

Inspectors will explore:

- leaders' approach to ensuring that staff are able to identify and support disadvantaged children, those with SEND, those known (or previously known) to children's social care, and those who face other barriers to their learning and/or well-being

- how the setting supports these children

- the impact of the support given to children and if and how that impact is monitored and reviewed

- the steps the setting has taken to meet their duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled children

- how the daily routines and curriculum are organised to meet the needs of all children, especially those listed above

- how the setting works with external professionals and agencies to support children effectively – this is particularly important in settings caring for children with more complex needs

- how the setting ensures continuity of care and information-sharing for any children who attend shared care or split placements.

- If leaders have not identified any children on roll who are disadvantaged, have SEND, or are known (or were previously known), to children's social care, reflect on why this may be the case. Take into account any contextual information about the setting.

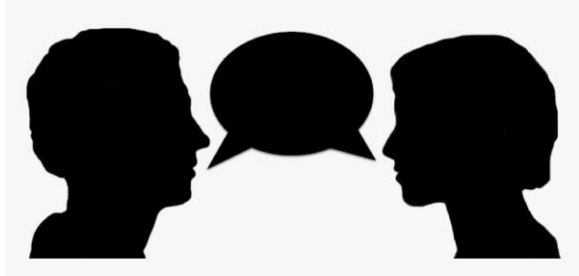
Part 3: Planning the timetable



Inspectors will plan to:

- check paediatric first-aid arrangements
- arrange to meet with the practitioner designated to take lead responsibility for safeguarding
- arrange to meet with the member of staff acting as special educational needs coordinator (SENCo)
- arrange to meet those responsible for leadership
- discuss the arrangements to speak with parents to gather their views
- gather evidence about what EYPP funding the setting has received and consider leaders' rationale for how it has been spent
- arrange to review the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) records and other documents on the setting's safer recruitment procedures
- explain case sampling to leaders

Part 3: Planning the timetable



The inspector will explain that:

- Leaders can accompany them on many of the inspection activities e.g. observations, talking with children.

- They will make adaptations for any leaders who are usually included in the ratio.

- They will meet with leaders halfway through the day to reflect on the evidence gathered so far.

- There will be additional inspection activities for example: focused leadership discussions, further shared observations, meetings with staff.

- Ongoing reflective discussions to discuss evidence already gathered.

- Towards the end of the inspection there will be a grading discussion against all evaluation toolkit areas and provisional final grades will be determined based on a 'secure fit'

- Final feedback

What we will do on inspection

- Begins with a brief introduction to leaders and staff.
- Hold discussions with the practitioner designated to take lead responsibility for safeguarding.
- Speak with practitioners and leaders.
- Gather first-hand evidence of children's experiences through:
  - shared observations with leaders
  - discussions with parents
  - case sampling of children.
- Evaluative reflective discussions with leaders.
- Concludes with a grading discussion followed by final feedback.



Focus for Leaders – Joint Observations



Observations are carried out with leaders where possible. This is an opportunity to gather a range of evidence across all toolkit evaluation areas. Each observation may focus on:

- A focus on inclusion helps to gather evidence about the outcomes and experiences of disadvantaged children, those with SEND, those known (or previously known) to children's social care etc. This focus typically includes a discussion with, or observations with the SENCo.
- A focus on children's welfare and well-being helps to gather evidence about the impact of children's care routines and contributes to the evaluation of the culture of safeguarding.
- A focus on curriculum, teaching and achievement gives the opportunity to evaluate how well children make progress from their starting points across the 7 areas of learning and development.
- A focus on behaviour and routines allows leaders to discuss how they implement and apply their approach consistently and the impact it has on children.
- A focus on leadership gives leaders the opportunity to demonstrate how their priorities and actions are being realised.

During shared observations inspectors will share a summary of their evaluations so that leaders have the opportunity to reflect on whether the emerging picture of the setting is typical and one that they recognise. Where leaders do not feel this is the case, inspectors will explore with them what other inspection activities may be useful and practicable.

Focus for Practitioners

Discussions with practitioners may include:

- what children are learning from their curriculum activities and experiences
- their assessment of what children know and can do and how they are building on it
- what they understand about the EYFS curriculum and how they ensure the best possible outcomes for children
- individual care routines for the youngest children
- how well leaders support their well-being and professional development
- their experience of working at the setting
- the impact of leaders' actions
- the culture of safeguarding



Case Sampling

Ofsted will choose 3 children who they want to use as 'Case Samples'. This will give them an idea of how effectively you are supporting children, and particularly children who may have difficulties accessing the learning.

The children they will likely choose include:

- One with an identified SEND or who you are concerns about
- One who is accessing the Early Years Pupil Premium and/or 2-year-old disadvantaged funding (now called FRAS Families Receiving Additional Support)
- One who is known (or previously known) to social services e.g. a LAC

- This will include a representative sample of children of **different ages** of children, including babies.

During the inspection, inspectors will carry out activities that help them to understand these children's experiences, the support they receive and the progress they are making from their starting points.

They will observe these children in the setting and discuss with leaders what they intend for these children to learn, based on what the children already know and can do. They will also talk to the parents of these children.

The type of information an inspector will want to know about these ‘case sample’ children will include:



- The key person’s knowledge of each baby/child, how they decide what they need to learn, and how they ensure their individual needs are met – this will include a focus on children’s care needs and their learning and development.
- The outcome of the child’s progress check at aged 2.
- The impact of any additional funding for eligible children on their development, including the EYPP.
- The support that has been given to a child with SEND, including how parents have been supported and how external agencies such as SaLT have been accessed.
- How well that child is learning and developing in readiness for their next stage of development and education, including school.
- The setting’s values and policies and whether the day-to-day experiences of those most in need of support reflect these in practice.

Throughout the Day



Reflective discussions

Inspectors will meet leaders to reflect on the emerging evidence.

They will:

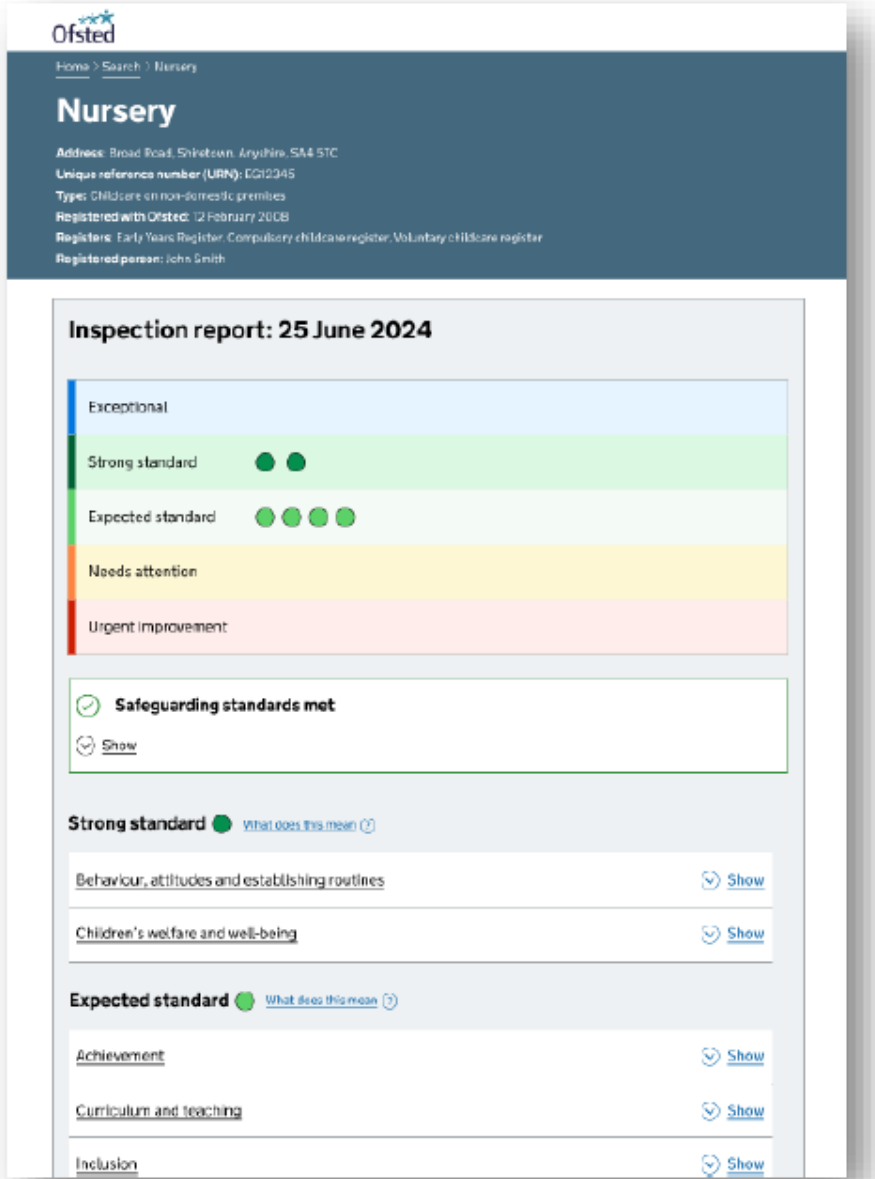
- evaluate to what extent the evidence supports a 'secure fit' in any of the evaluation areas, starting with the 'expected standard' for each evaluation area in the toolkit
- consider which areas are emerging as strengths in the setting's work, and areas where they may have more to do
- let leaders know if they have emerging evidence that any evaluation area is likely to be graded as 'needs attention' or 'urgent improvement', or if safeguarding is likely to be graded as 'not met'
- identify the most appropriate inspection activities to gather further evidence required

Final Gradings At the end of the inspection, the inspector will

Give a provisional grade for each evaluation area based on the evidence they have collated:

- Safeguarding - Inclusion - Curriculum and teaching
- Achievement - Behaviour, attitudes and establishing routines
- Children's welfare and well-being - Leadership and governance

If required, they will identify priorities for improvement



Report cards

- Our new report card will make findings clear and accessible.
- The report card will provide a summary overview as well as a detailed explanation for each of the evaluation areas the setting has been evaluated against.
- Colours ranging from red, for urgent improvement, to blue, for exceptional will provide a visual overview.
- The next steps for improvement, including actions, will be written in a constructive way to make clear what the improvement priorities are for the setting.

Ofsted: new early years report card



After the inspection

- Arrangements for publishing report cards will continue as before.
- Draft report cards are usually shared within 18 working days of the inspection.
- Providers have 5 working days to comment on the draft report card or submit a complaint.
- Final report cards are usually published within 30 working days of the inspection (but may be longer where there is a complaint).

Key message for nurseries:

Crucial to focus on prime areas- (approaches informed by research-backed evidence):

Communication and language is a priority- a setting cannot be at expected standard if this focus is not there. There is a particular focus on:

- High quality adult-child interactions to support language and vocabulary
- Development of fine motor skills to prepare children for writing (later on)
- PSED and self-regulation skills, so children are ready to learn

Ofsted want to see that children are given **strong foundations** in their learning and development and are prepared for the next stage of education. For pre-school children this may include phonological awareness and mark-making opportunities, **but only when the child is ready.**

Our First Inspection in Hillingdon!

We have had our first nursery inspection in Hillingdon and the feedback from their experience is:

- It was a positive experience, and the inspector really listened to what the nursery told them and showed them in terms of what they were doing to support children.
- The 3 children who were selected for case sampling included a child in receipt of EYPP, a LAC child and a child with an identified SEND. The key person for these children was expected to know about their needs and talk about their next steps, and how they were planning to support these.
- The manager was involved with most of the inspection and accompanied the inspector during the room observations, talking together about what elements of practice they were seeing and why that was happening e.g. how it supported individual and groups of children.
- The inspector asked practitioners who were leading an activity about what the children's next steps would be following the activity, and she expected the manager to also know this information. She said it was to ensure the manager has an accurate overview of what the children should be learning next.
- All practitioners were asked questions by the inspector, either about safeguarding, next steps in learning or about their key child/ren.


KEEP
CALM
& SHOW OFSTED
HOW FAB
YOU ARE!

ANY QUESTIONS



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New Ofsted Inspection Toolkit Training December 2025 Evaluation – Fill in form