

Inspections of children's centres

A leaflet for children's centres

Introduction

Ofsted inspects Sure Start children's centres in England under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 (as amended by the Apprenticeship, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009).

Inspectors check that centres:

- know their community and the types of services, activities and courses that families who live there need
- deliver the services most needed, to a high standard
- do all they can to help families use the services they need most, especially the families that find it hard to do so, making sure that no groups in the community are overlooked
- have good partnerships with health services, employment services, adult training, childcare providers and other relevant services and that they 'join up' the support that families need.

'[The framework for children's centre inspection](#)' came into effect in April 2013. Under the framework, inspectors make and report on the following judgements:

- overall effectiveness
- access to services by young children and families
- the quality and impact of practice and services
- the effectiveness of leadership, governance and management.

For detailed information please see the framework and the '[Children's centre inspection handbook](#)'.

What information must children's centres prepare for the inspection?

Children's centres are not expected to prepare anything extra for inspectors. Inspectors will spend time on site the day before the inspection to plan the inspection.

You might like to plan the best place for the team of inspectors to meet with you and arrange a 'base' room for the duration of the inspection.

For information on the people the inspectors will want to meet and the information they will need, please refer to paragraphs 48 to 60 of the 'Children's centre inspection handbook'.

As part of the on-site planning day, the lead inspector will require copies of:

- the centre's self-evaluation (sent electronically beforehand if possible)
- action/development plans (sent electronically beforehand if possible)
- the activity programme (sent electronically beforehand if possible)
- the safeguarding policy
- the centre's staff list and record of recruitment and checks with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)
- any evaluations carried out of services or activities, or other evidence of impact of the work of the centre
- performance-tracking data and other management information.

You should submit the information that is required electronically before the inspection through the provider portal. Instructions on how to use the portal are included in the letter we will send you to notify you of your inspection.

Please **do not** send staff records electronically as they will include personal data. The lead inspector will look at this on site.

You must tell centre staff, families and partner agencies that inspectors will be in the centre and may observe activities. You must tell families how they can meet inspectors. You must also tell the local authority and partner agencies.

Gaining the views of parents, carers, children and others

Inspectors will spend most of their time talking to people connected with the centre, including:

- parents, carers and children
- managers/leaders of the centre's different services
- health visitors, family support workers, employment or training advisers members of the centre's advisory board.

They will look at services and/or activities on offer.

The inspectors will not make judgements about every service or activity. Instead, they will consider:

- whether the overall services and activities are right for the community
- how the centre finds out if they are right for the community
- whether they are making a positive difference to the young children and families using them.

Online survey

Following your inspection, we will invite you to complete an online inspection survey. The survey asks for your views on the inspection process, including the impact that the inspection is likely to have in bringing about improvement.

Ofsted values all survey responses; we use the responses to help keep us informed about the quality and impact of our inspections, and help guide us in reviewing and improving the inspection process.

No. 150114

Published September 2015

© Crown copyright 2015

Website: www.gov.uk/ofsted

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/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk

Contact Ofsted

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

Helpline: 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted