



Olivia Bailey MP

Minister for Early Education and Minister for Equalities

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Martyn Oliver
His Majesty's Chief Inspector
Ofsted
10 South Colonnade
Canary Wharf
London
E14 4PU

Wednesday 18th March 2026

Dear Martyn,

REQUIREMENTS FOR EARLY EDUCATION AND CHILDCARE INSPECTIONS

I am writing on behalf of the Secretary of State to set out the necessary inspection requirements for early education and childcare inspections.

These requirements are issued under the Childcare Act 2006 and apply to all providers registered on Ofsted's Early Years Register.

This letter replaces the remit letter issued on 3rd November 2020. It reflects our commitment, as set out in the [Best Start of Life strategy](#) (published July 2025) for Ofsted to move to a more frequent inspection window so that standards, including safeguarding and quality, are reviewed more regularly, giving parents more up-to-date information to help them choose the right setting for their child.

In 2020, the then Minister for Children and Families wrote to Ofsted to outline changing inspection requirements so that each individual provider was inspected within a maximum of six years from the date of their previous inspection. The following changes set out below update those requirements:

From April 2026, Ofsted will further prioritise the first inspection of all newly registered providers on the Early Years Register, usually or where possible, within 18 months of registering. This reduces the current timescale of the first inspection within 30 months. This enables earlier oversight of new providers, and the impact of their actions on children in their settings.

In addition, by March 2030 Ofsted must inspect all providers registered on the Early Years Register at least once within every four years, replacing the current six-year window. Ofsted can also inspect more frequently if they have any concerns about the provision.

Introduction of the new inspection frequency timescales will be phased, with full implementation expected by March 2030. Providers that have already been inspected under the six-year window will transition to the new four-year window at their next routine inspection as part of the phased rollout.

The Secretary of State expects Ofsted to implement these requirements in line with agreed timelines and to provide an update on the progress towards full delivery of the revised inspection timescales through the existing accountability and reporting arrangements.

Ofsted is continuing to work on changing the inspection arrangements for providers registered on the early years register that have no children on roll at the time an inspection is due. When these arrangements are introduced, the Secretary of State will not require the Chief inspector to carry out an inspection. Ofsted may undertake proportionate checks to confirm compliance with registration requirements, until such time when an early years provider has children on roll and Ofsted will carry out a full inspection as soon as reasonably practicable. Until these arrangements are formally in place, we expect Ofsted to continue inspecting providers with no children on roll.

Our officials have worked together closely on these changes, and I look forward to continued close co-operation on this important work.

All other inspection and reporting arrangements set out in the 2020 remit letter, including those relating to independent schools and the sharing of inspection reports with local authorities, remain unchanged and are reproduced in the annex for reference.

Please confirm your acceptance of the arrangements set out in this letter by Tuesday 31st March 2026.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Olivia Bailey". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal stroke.

Olivia Bailey MP
Minister for Early Education and Minister for Equalities

Annex: Requirements for Early Education and Childcare Inspections

Inspection Timeline

Under section 49(2)(b) of the Childcare Act 2006, the Secretary of State requires you to:

- Inspect all providers registered on the Early Years Register – whether they registered before or after 1 April 2026 – within four years from the date of their last inspection. The four-year inspection window will be introduced from April 2026 and phased in over four years, with full implementation expected by March 2030.
- Prioritise the first inspection of all newly registered providers on the Early Years Register, usually or where possible, within 18 months of registering. This requirement will apply to providers registering on or after 1 April 2026.
- Continue with existing arrangements to inspect all providers who were registered before 1 April 2026, usually within 30 months of the date of registration.

Childcare providers with no children on roll

When arrangements are in place, if a registered early years provider has no children on roll at the time an inspection is due, then the Secretary of State will not require you to carry out an inspection. In such cases, you may undertake proportionate checks to confirm compliance with registration requirements, until such time when an early years provider has children on roll and Ofsted will carry out a full inspection as soon as reasonably practicable. Once a provider receives an inspection, the four-year inspection window will resume from the date the inspection is carried out. You have powers outlined in the Childcare Act 2006 to cancel the registration of childminders with domestic premises and childminders without domestic premises who have not cared for children for more than three years.

Independent Schools

You are not required to inspect early years provision at an independent school if:

- By two months before the date by which you would have been required to inspect the early years provision, that early years provision has been inspected by a body approved by the Secretary of State under section 106 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 or section 49(4) of the Childcare Act 2006, and
- That approved body has prepared a report of the inspection which reports on the matters set out in section 50(1)(a) to (d) of the Childcare Act 2006, and has sent a copy of that report to you.

Copies of early years reports to local authorities

The Secretary of State requests that a copy of an inspection report (or such parts of the report as you consider appropriate) made under section 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 be sent to the local authority in whose area the provider is situated.

Copies of later years reports to local authorities

The Secretary of State requests that a copy of an inspection report (or such parts of the report as you consider appropriate) made under section 61 of the Childcare Act 2006 be sent to the local authority in whose area the provider is situated.