

Frequently asked questions and answers from the Early Years Curriculum Roadshows

1. What approach do Ofsted take when asking about our curriculum on inspection? Do I need to have a written curriculum and does my curriculum planning and observations need to be in writing?

During the inspection leaders will be able to explain how they organise the early years provision, including the aims and rationale for their EYFS curriculum. Inspectors will discuss with leaders and practitioners what they intend children to learn, know and do as a result of the curriculum they offer. Inspectors will follow this discussion through in their observations and discussions with children at play and staff interactions. Inspectors do not expect to see documentation other than that set out in the EYFS. They will use the evidence gathered from discussions and their own observations to help judge the overall quality of the curriculum provided for children.

2. Is there an expectation that early years providers deliver phonics sessions?

No. There is no requirement in the EYFS that children are taught phonics before they start the reception year.

3. What do you expect in terms of children being able to write their names or being taught letter formation before Reception?

Ofsted inspect in line with the requirements of the EYFS. Inspectors will want to find out how children are supported to make progress in all seven areas of learning, as set out in the educational programmes. The educational programmes do not require children to know letter formation or be able to write their names before Reception.

4. Can a bi-lingual setting focus their curriculum on other languages if they are confident that their children have a good use of the English language?

All registered nurseries, childminders, schools and pre-schools in England must follow the statutory EYFS framework. Inspectors inspect how well the provider does this. It is up to providers to determine their curriculum for their children to ensure that all children make progress in all seven areas of learning.

5. What documents are providers expected to use, i.e., Development Matters, EYFS, Birth to five when planning their curriculum and assessing children’s progress?

Development Matters is the DfE’s non-statutory curriculum guidance and there is other guidance that providers may choose to use alongside the EYFS. It is up to providers to decide on their curriculum for children. Inspectors will want to find out:

- how providers decide what it is that they want their children to learn and the sequence of their curriculum
- the effectiveness of a provider’s curriculum and the impact that it is having on children knowing more and remembering more, making progress.

6. For children who need extra support to develop their language, what would Ofsted expect to see? How best should we support children in developing their communication and language where we have concerns? What do we do to support children’s communication and language when there is a long delay on speech and language therapy?

Where there are gaps in children’s learning, providers should focus the curriculum particularly on those areas and put strategies in place to support their development, working with children’s parent/s and/or carers.

7. We know that the use of dummies can hinder children’s speech, if we are addressing this in the setting but parents aren’t doing the same how would Ofsted judge this?

Inspectors will look at how well practitioners share information with parents about their child’s progress in relation to the EYFS and how they help parents to support and extend their child’s learning at home.

8. How best should we support children with English as an additional language in developing their communication and language?

It is up to providers to decide how best to support children with English as an additional language in developing their communication and language. Inspectors will look at how well providers give children opportunities to develop and use their home language in play and learning, support their language development at home and promote their development of English language during the EYFS. Providers may use whatever curriculum guidance they choose to support them in doing this.

9. Will inspectors visit phonics lessons in nursery?

Some phonics programmes include the teaching of phonics in Nursery. However, there is no requirement for children to be taught phonics before the start of Reception. Therefore, inspectors will focus on communication and language, rather than phonics, in nursery provision.

10. What books should beginner readers take home in Reception?

Children's language comprehension should be well ahead of their word reading when they are in the early stages of learning phonics. Therefore, the books they take home are likely to serve different purposes and will need to be used in different ways. Books will be selected to either provide decoding practice or to develop children's language comprehension.

For decoding practice, children should take home books which are matched to their phonic knowledge so they are able to read every word. These books should be read by the child.

Books to develop children's language comprehension should be read to the child by an adult as they will contain words which the child is not able to read. If the books have been enjoyed many times in class, the child may be able to join in as they know the story so well, even though they can't yet read the words for themselves.

Links to useful resources:

- [Early years inspection handbook - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)
- [Ofsted EIF inspections and the EYFS - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)
- [Vodcast on Ofsted inspections and the new EYFS | From pregnancy to children aged 5 \(foundationyears.org.uk\)](https://foundationyears.org.uk)
- [Education recovery in early years providers: summer 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)
- [Hungry Little Minds – Simple fun, activities for kids aged 0 – 5](https://www.hungrylittleminds.com)
- [Every Child a Talker: Guidance for Early Language Lead Practitioners \(foundationyears.org.uk\)](https://foundationyears.org.uk)