

January 2021: registered early years providers

A short question and answer document to support registered early years providers following the Department for Education's announcement on Assurance inspections under the Education Inspection Framework (EIF) from January 2021.

Q: Will Ofsted resume full inspections in January 2021?

Routine, graded inspections will continue to remain on hold for the spring term. From January 2021, Ofsted will continue a phased return to routine inspections, across early years, schools and further education providers. In these remits, there will be no graded inspections until the summer term 2021.

Our vital regulatory and registration work in early years will continue.

What activity is Ofsted undertaking in January?

In Early Years, Ofsted will carry out assurance inspections under the EIF of early years providers from January 2021. These inspections will confirm whether or not a provider is meeting early years foundation stage (EYFS) requirements. We will also continue with regulatory and registration work.

When will routine inspections of early years settings be resumed?

Routine inspections under the EIF will resume in the summer term (April 2021).

Will Ofsted be conducting a new type of early years inspection in place of routine inspections?

From January 2021, we will carry out assurance inspections under the EIF, of early years providers. The purpose of these inspections is to find out what it is like for children in their early years setting and to seek assurance that providers continue to meet registration requirements and remain suitable for registration on the early years register and, if applicable, the childcare register. During these assurance inspections, Ofsted will consider the requirements of the EYFS, which sets the standards that all early years providers must meet to ensure that children learn and develop well and are kept healthy and safe.

These inspections will result in a 'met' or 'not met' outcome. Ofsted will publish a report for parents that will explain what the provider is doing to create a high-quality setting which is welcoming, safe and stimulating, and where children can grow in confidence.

Ofsted will also continue with its registration and regulatory work for early years and childcare providers.

What will inspectors be looking for on these assurance inspections?

During these assurance inspections, Ofsted will consider the requirements of the EYFS, which sets the standards that all early years providers must meet to ensure that children learn and develop well and are kept healthy and safe.

These inspections will result in a 'met' or 'not met' outcome. Ofsted will publish a report for parents that will explain what the provider is doing to create a high-quality setting which is welcoming, safe and stimulating, and where children can grow in confidence.

Will assurance inspections result in a published report with an inspection grade?

The assurance inspection will not result in a judgement of quality but will consider if the setting continues to meet EYFS requirements. The inspection will therefore result in one of three possible outcomes: met, not met with actions, not met with enforcement. Inspectors can use regulatory or enforcement actions if appropriate.

Ofsted will publish a report for parents that will explain what the provider is doing to create a high-quality setting which is welcoming, safe and stimulating, and where children can grow in confidence.

How will Ofsted select providers for an assurance inspection?

We will take a proportionate and risk-based approach to selection, taking into account what we know about a provider and time not inspected.

We have registered some providers and their first inspection is overdue. We do not know what quality is like in these settings and will prioritise these providers for an assurance inspection.

Will Ofsted be judging early years settings retrospectively for their response in lockdown to COVID-19?

We are not going to be going out looking to find fault about how people have handled their approach to the pandemic. We will continue to be sensitive to the challenges presented by the pandemic; we will always take that context into account.

The 'Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage' already includes the following:

- 3.44. The provider must promote the good health of children attending the setting. They must have a procedure, discussed with parents and/or carers, for responding to children who are ill or infectious, take necessary steps to prevent the spread of infection, and take appropriate action if children are ill.

Inspectors may ask providers about how they are meeting this requirement, where this is applicable.

Inspectors will consider the extent to which leaders and providers plan, design and implement the EYFS curriculum. They will have due regard to the limitations the pandemic may have caused and any disapplications of the EYFS which may currently be relied on or have been relied on previously by the provider. Inspectors will also consider how providers are supporting children's learning at home and how they are ensuring children return to their expected levels of development.

Will inspecting providers to conduct assurance inspections be safe?

Ofsted have sought advice from Public Health England on how we can conduct inspection activities safely in the current pandemic.

Inspectors will take all reasonable steps to work within the provider's COVID-19 systems and processes, commensurate with Government guidelines.

Will Ofsted carry out inspections in national Tier 3 areas?

Ofsted will undertake inspection activity in all Tier areas, including Tier 3, but we will be sensitive to any deferral requests.

[The deferral guidance can be found here:](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/deferring-ofsted-inspections)

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Inspectors will take all reasonable steps to work within the provider's COVID-19 systems and processes, commensurate with Government guidelines. Ofsted has carried out a COVID-19 general risk assessment for all inspection activities.

Will I be able to defer an Ofsted inspection to my setting?

It depends on the circumstances. Any requests will be considered in line with our published deferral policy, which is available on this link:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/deferring-ofsted-inspections.](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/deferring-ofsted-inspections)