

School inspection handbook

Handbook for inspecting schools in England under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 (as amended by the Education Act 2011)

This handbook provides instructions and guidance for inspectors conducting inspections under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 (as amended). It sets out what inspectors must do and what schools can expect, and provides guidance for inspectors on making their judgements.

WITH LINKS TO THE ITERS and ECERS SUGGESTED BY A+ EDUCATION LTD in green
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The effectiveness of the early years provision: the quality and standards

1. Inspectors are required to report a numerical grade for the quality of education provided in the early years and write a section in the inspection report that summarises its effectiveness. Inspectors will judge the overall quality and standards of the early years provision, taking into account:
 - how well children, including those disabled children, those with special educational needs and the more able, achieve so that they are ready for the next stage of their education
 - how well the provision, including the quality of teaching, meets the needs of the range of children in the early years

- ECERS-E (13) Planning for individual learning needs
- ITERS-R (34) and ECERS-R (37) Provision for children with disabilities
- ITERS-R (24) and ECERS-R (28) Promoting acceptance of diversity

Statements which consider the needs of individual children are also threaded through the whole of the ITERS and ECERS scales

For example:

Routines e.g. ITERS-R 8 (3.1) – nap is personalised; ECERS-R 11 (7.1) – nap/rest schedule is flexible to meet individual needs

Language e.g. ITERS-R 12 (5.3) verbal communication is personalised; ECERS-R 15 (5.4) books, language materials and activities are appropriate for children in the group

Resources e.g. ITERS-R 16 (5.4) some [active physical play] equipment that can be used by each child in the group, incl. children with disabilities if enrolled; ECERS-R 26 (5.1) many developmentally appropriate [maths] materials of various types accessible; ECERS-R 19 Fine motor (5.1) Many developmentally appropriate fine motor materials of each type accessible for a substantial portion of the day (5.3) Materials on different levels of difficulty accessible ECERS-R 25 Nature/science (5.1) Many developmentally appropriate games, materials and activities from three categories accessible

Interactions and supervision e.g. ITERS-R 27 (7.1) interaction is responsive to each child's mood and needs; ITERS-R 28 (3.3) expectations are generally realistic and based on age and ability of children; ECERS-R 30 (5.1) careful supervision of all children adjusted appropriately for different ages and abilities (7.1) staff talk to children about ideas related to their play, asking questions and adding information to extend children's thinking ECERS-E 6 (7.1) adults provide scaffolding for children's conversations with them (7.3) adults regularly use open-ended questions to extend the children's language through talk

Schedule and group times ITERS-R 29 (5.1) schedule for basic routines is flexible and individualised to meet each child's needs; ITERS-R 29 (7.1) staff adjust schedule of play activities throughout the day to meet varying needs of children; ECERS-R 36 (5.1) whole group gatherings limited to short periods, suited to age and individual needs of children

- how well the provision contributes to children's physical and emotional health, safety and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

- ITERS-R (16) Active Physical Play
- ECERS-R (7+8) Space for gross motor play and gross motor equipment
- ITERS-R and ECERS-R Personal Care Routine subscale
- ITERS-R (24) and ECERS-R (28) Promoting acceptance of diversity
- ECERS-E (15) Race equality and awareness
- ITERS-R and ECERS-R Interaction subscale
- ITERS-R (37) Staff continuity

Statements which consider provision and practice in these areas are also threaded through the whole of the ITERS and ECERS scales

For example:

Space and furnishings: e.g. ITERS-R and ECERS-R 2 (7.1) routine care furniture convenient to use
 ITERS-R and ECERS-R 3 (7.1) Cozy area plus softness accessible in several areas
 ECERS-R 5 (5.1) space set aside for 1 or 2 children to play protected from intrusion by others
 ITERS-R 5 (7.1) Photographs of children in the group, their families, pets or other familiar faces displayed on child's eye level and ECERS-R 6 (5.1) much of the display relates closely to current activities and children in the group (5.2) most of the display is work done by children (7.1) Individualised work predominates
Routines: e.g. ITERS-R 6 and ECERS-R 9 (5.1) Staff greet each child and parent/each child greeted individually

- how well the provision is led and managed.

- You can use your work with the ECERS/ITERS to provide evidence that you are using rigorous and systematic tools to help you evaluate your provision, using this information to identify priorities for development and setting challenging targets for improvement.
- You can use ECERS/ITERS to help you improve areas identified as needing improvement (whether these areas have been identified by Ofsted, through your use of ECERS/ITERS, or through using other self-evaluation tools)

2. Inspectors must consider:

- the proportions of children who have made at least typical or better progress from their starting points, including disabled children, those with special educational needs and the more able
- the attainment of children at the end of Reception compared with Early Years Foundation Stage Profile national figures, including the proportion that achieve a good level of development¹
- whether achievement is consistent across areas of learning, particularly in the prime areas and the specific areas of literacy and mathematics, and if any groups are underachieving
- the quality of the approach to teaching phonics in Reception

- ECERS-E 1 Print in the environment
- ECERS-E 3 Adult reading with children
- ECERS-E 4 Sounds in word
- ECERS-E 5 Emergent writing/mark making
- ITERS-R 14 Using books and ECERS-R Item 15 Books and pictures
- ECERS-R 26 Maths/number
- ECERS-E 7, 8, 9a, 9b Mathematics items

- ECERS-E 13 Planning for individual needs

- how well teaching nurtures, engages and motivates children, includes a broad range of educational programmes and is based on accurate assessment of children's learning and development, so that activities and experiences meet their needs

- ITERS-R and ECERS-R 4 Room arrangement
- ITERS-R and ECERS-R Activity subscale items and theme of accessible resources
- ITERS-R and ECERS-R Talking and Listening and Language-Reasoning subscale items
- ITERS-R (16) Active Physical Play
- ECERS-R (7+8) Space for gross motor play and Gross motor equipment
- ITERS-R and ECERS-R Programme Structure subscale items
- ECERS-E (13) Planning for individual learning needs

Resources e.g ECERS-R 26 (5.1) many developmentally appropriate [maths] materials of various types accessible; ITERS-R 15 and ECERS-R 19 Fine motor (5.1) Many developmentally appropriate fine motor materials of each type accessible for a substantial portion of the day (5.3) Materials on different levels of difficulty accessible ECERS-R 25 Nature/science (5.1) Many developmentally appropriate games, materials and activities from three categories accessible

¹ A child achieves a good level of development, as defined by the government, if s/he meets the expected level in the early learning goals in the prime areas of learning (personal, social and emotional development; physical development; and communication and language), and in the specific areas of mathematics and literacy. This is not the same as making good progress.

Interactions and supervision e.g. ITERS-R 27 (7.1) interaction is responsive to each child's mood and needs; ITERS-R 28 (3.3) expectations are generally realistic and based on age and ability of children; ECERS-R 30 (5.1) careful supervision of all children adjusted appropriately for different ages and abilities (7.1) staff talk to children about ideas related to their play, asking questions and adding information to extend children's thinking ECERS-E 6 (7.1) adults provide scaffolding for children's conversations with them (7.3) adults regularly use open-ended questions to extend the children's language through talk

Schedule and group times ITERS-R 29 (5.1) schedule for basic routines is flexible and individualised to meet each child's needs; ITERS-R 29 (7.1) staff adjust schedule of play activities throughout the day to meet varying needs of children; ECERS-R 36 (5.1) whole group gatherings limited to short periods, suited to age and individual needs of children

- how well all staff work with parents, engage them in their children's learning and keep parents informed about their children's achievements and progress

- ITERS-R 33 and ECERS-R 38 Provisions for parents
- ITERS-R 6 Greeting and departing (3.4) (5.1) (7.1) (7.2)
- ECERS-R 9 Greeting and departing (3.3) (5.3) (7.3)

These indicators reflect importance of building relationships with parents and sharing information about children's learning and development

- children's attitudes to learning, including their participation and willingness to make choices and decisions, and the extent to which children are active and inquisitive learners who are creative and think critically

- ITERS-R and ECERS-R 4 Room arrangement
- ITERS-R and ECERS-R Activity subscale items and theme of accessible resources
- ITERS-R and ECERS-R Language subscale items
- ECERS-E Item 6 Talking and listening
- ECERS-E Item 12a Science activities: non-living
- ECERS-E Item 12b Science activities: Living processes and the world around us
- ECERS-E Item 12c Science activities: Food preparation
- Plus a variety of other indicators throughout the ECERS-E which focus on extending children's thinking for example Maths Item 9b 7.1 children are encouraged to identify characteristics of sets of objects which form the basis for sorting, matching or comparing
- ITERS-R 29 and ECERS-R 34 Schedule

- how well children behave, cooperate and share with each other, make friends, respect each other's differences and build their understanding and respect for different families, people and communities beyond their immediate experience

- **ITERS-R 28 and ECERS-R 31 Discipline**
- **ITERS-R 26 and ECERS-R 33 Peer interactions/interaction among children**
- **ITERS-R 27 and ECERS-R 32 Staff-child interactions**
- **ITERS-R 24 and ECERS-R 28 Promoting acceptance of diversity**
- **ECERS-E Item 14 Gender equality and awareness**
- **ECERS-E Item 15 Race equality and awareness**

Linked item: Display

- the extent to which children behave in ways that are safe, understand how to stay safe and show that they feel safe

- **ITERS-R 11 and ECERS-R 14 Safety practices**
- **ITERS-R 26 and ECERS-R 33 Peer interactions/interactions among children**
- **ITERS-R 25 and ECERS-R 29 and 30 Supervision of play and learning**
- **ITERS-R 27 and ECERS-R 32 Staff-child interaction**
- **ITERS-R 28 and ECERS-R 31 Discipline**

- the rigour and effectiveness of systems to drive improvement, including: monitoring the quality of provision and children's outcomes; the professional development of staff; evaluation of the impact of actions taken; and setting challenging targets

- You can use your work with the ECERS/ITERS to provide evidence that you are using rigorous and systematic tools to help you evaluate your provision, using this information to identify priorities for development and setting challenging targets for improvement.
- You can use ECERS/ITERS to help you improve areas identified as needing improvement (whether these areas have been identified by Ofsted, through your use of ECERS/ITERS, or through using other self-evaluation tools)
- **ECERS-E 13 Planning for individual learning needs**
- **ITERS-R 34 and ECERS-R 39 Provision for the personal needs of staff**
- **ITERS-R 35 and ECERS-R 40 Provision for the professional needs of staff**
- **ITERS-R 36 and ECERS-R 41 Staff interaction and cooperation**
- **ITERS-R 38 and ECERS-R 42 Supervision and evaluation of staff**
- **ITERS-R 39 and ECERS-R 43 Opportunities for professional growth**

- the effectiveness of safeguarding procedures.

- See staff development items above

Grade descriptors – effectiveness of the early years provision: the quality and standards

Note: These descriptors should not be used as a checklist. They must be applied adopting a 'best fit' approach that relies on the professional judgement of the inspection team. The exception is that teaching must be outstanding for effectiveness of the early years provision to be outstanding.

Outstanding (1)

- Children make consistently high rates of progress in relation to their starting points and are extremely well prepared academically, socially and emotionally for the next stage of their education. As a result, almost all pupils in the early years provision, including disabled children, those who have special educational needs, those for whom the school receives additional funding and the most able, are making sustained progress that leads to outstanding achievement.
- Gaps between the attainment of groups of children and all children nationally, including those for whom the school receives additional funding, have closed or are closing rapidly. Any gaps between areas of learning are closing.
- A highly stimulating environment and exceptional organisation of the educational programmes reflects rich, varied and imaginative experiences that meet the needs of all children exceedingly well.
- The quality of teaching over time is outstanding and never less than consistently good; it is highly responsive to children's needs.
- Accurate assessment, including through high quality observations is rigorous, sharply focused and includes all those involved in the child's learning and development. Provision across all areas of learning is well planned and based on regular and precise assessments of children's achievement so that every child undertakes highly challenging activities.
- Children are highly motivated, very eager to join in and consistently demonstrate the characteristics of effective learning with high levels of curiosity, imagination and concentration. They listen intently and are highly responsive to adults and each other. They do not distract others or become distracted themselves.
- All children are developing a very good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and manage risks and challenges. They demonstrate exceptionally positive behaviour and high levels of self-control, cooperation and respect for others.
- Children's health, safety and well-being are significantly enhanced by the vigilant and highly consistent implementation of robust policies, procedures and practice.
- Highly successful strategies engage parents and carers, including those from different groups, in their children's learning in school and at home.
- The pursuit of excellence by leaders and managers is demonstrated by an uncompromising, highly successful and well-documented drive to improve achievement, or maintain the highest levels of achievement, for all children over a sustained period of time. The training and development of staff is highly focused and has a significant impact on improving outcomes for children.

Good (2)

- Children make at least typical progress and most children make good progress from their starting points. This includes disabled children, those who have special educational needs, those for whom the school receives additional funding and the most able, who make good progress relative to their starting points. They develop the key skills needed to make a good start in the next stage of their education.
- Children who join the school at a level below what is typical for their age, but not significantly so, catch up quickly. Any gaps between the attainment of groups, including those for whom the school receives additional funding, and all children nationally are closing.
- The educational programmes have depth and breadth across the seven areas of learning. They provide interesting and demanding experiences that meet the needs of all children.
- The quality of teaching is consistently good.

- All teachers and other adults have high expectations of children based on accurate assessment of children's skills, knowledge and understanding when they join the school. Learning opportunities are well planned and based on regular and accurate assessments of children's achievement so that every child is suitably challenged.
- Children are motivated and interested in a broad range of activities and are keen learners who regularly display the characteristics of effective learning. They listen carefully to adults and each other.
- Children's good behaviour shows that they feel safe. They gain an understanding of risk through activities that encourage them to explore their environment. Children are learning to respect and celebrate each other's differences and to build their understanding of diversity beyond their immediate experience.
- Parents and carers contribute to initial assessments of children's starting points when they join the school and they are kept well informed about their children's progress. Parents are encouraged to support and share information about their children's learning and development at home.
- Safeguarding and child protection policies and procedures are implemented consistently; practice is reviewed regularly and clearly evaluated.
- Leaders and managers have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision through effective self-evaluation. They take concerted action to improve provision and can demonstrate the impact of such action, including the training and development of staff, on children's achievement over time.
- Monitoring ensures that individual children or groups of children with identified needs are targeted, and appropriate interventions are secured so that children receive the support they need, including through effective partnerships with external agencies and other providers.

Requires improvement (3)

- The early years requires improvement because provision and outcomes are not good.

Inadequate (4)

The early years is likely to be inadequate if **any** of the following apply:

- Children, or specific groups of children such as disabled children, those with special educational needs, those for whom the school receives additional funding, or the most able, do not achieve as well as they can so that many start Year 1 without the skills and knowledge they need. Low attainment of any group shows little sign of rising.
- Educational programmes do not adequately cover the seven areas of learning and/or do not provide interesting activities in enough depth or breadth to provide adequate challenge for children.
- Leaders and/or staff have a poor understanding of how to promote children's learning and development, resulting in weak teaching that is not matched to children's needs.
- Information from assessment is not accurate and not used well enough to enable children to make the progress they should.
- Children, or particular groups of children, are not enthusiastic about learning, spend much of their time with little purpose and fail to thrive.
- Children's behaviour is not consistently well managed. As a result, more than occasionally, lack of engagement in activities leads to a disorderly environment that hinders their learning and/or puts them and others at risk.
- Strategies for engaging parents about their child's learning and development are weak. As a result, parents do not know what their child is learning or how to help them.
- Teachers and other adults are not knowledgeable enough and/or they are not vigilant enough to ensure that children are kept safe and safeguarded and that their health and welfare are promoted.
- Self-evaluation is weak, with too little focus on raising achievement and improving the quality of provision. Any actions taken to tackle areas of identified weakness have been insufficient or ineffective.