

Ofsted to inspect early years providers more frequently

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Ofsted will begin inspecting early education and childcare providers more frequently from April 2026, in line with the DfE's Best Start in Life strategy.

The change to a 4-year inspection window is part of the Department for Education's (DfE) and Ofsted's shared commitment to provide parents with more up-to-date information and reassurance about the quality and safety of their child's early education and care.

Each provider on the Early Years Register will be inspected at least once by March 2030 and then again within a 4-year period, replacing the current 6-year window. If Ofsted has concerns about a provider, inspectors will, of course, visit more frequently.

The change will also see the first inspection of newly registered providers happen more quickly. From next month, Ofsted will usually inspect a new provider within 18 months of registration, rather than the current 30 months.

The new inspection windows will be phased in gradually. Providers who have already been inspected under the previous arrangements will gradually transition to the new 4-year window before 2030.

The relevant guidance for early education and childcare providers will be updated shortly.

Yvette Stanley, Ofsted's National Director for Regulation and Social Care said:

The overwhelming majority of early years providers do a really good job at giving our youngest children the best possible start in life. But it is essential that parents and carers have up-to-date information about the quality of early years providers so they can make informed decisions about their child's education and care.

That's why we're pleased that the government has funded us to move to more frequent inspections, so that we can give parents greater assurance that their child is safe and being well-cared for.

Related links

Department for Education's requirements from April 2026.

Department for Education's Best Start in Life strategy.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ofsted-to-inspect-early-years-providers-more-frequently>