Ofsted strategy 2022-27 - all you need to know for your early years setting
In April 2022, Ofsted published its new five-year strategy for 2022 – 2027, setting out its aims, values and priorities for its work over the next few years. You can access the whole strategy document, as well as a one-page summary, here.

Since Ofsted is involved in inspecting all educational institutions including primary, middle and secondary schools, as well as colleges and higher educational establishments, not all of the strategy is directly related to early years. However, one of the main points in the new strategy document is to have a greater focus on the early years.

In this guide, we have set out some of the main things that the early years sector needs to be aware of regarding the new strategy going forward, together with some practical advice on how you can help the children in your care receive high-quality education and attention and that they are supported to achieve their full potential.

The purpose of the strategy

Times change, and Ofsted recognised that it needs to change its strategy periodically to address this. Its guiding principle is “to improve lives by raising standards in education and children’s social care.” Ofsted identifies itself as “a force for improvement through the intelligent, responsible and focused use of inspection, regulation and insights.” The 2022-27 strategy sets out how Ofsted will do this and recognises that improving children’s lives “is more important than ever following the disruption and distress of the past two years”.

Ofsted’s main values

Throughout the 2022-27 strategy, there are 4 recurring Ofsted values which can be seen as the guiding principles which underpin the wider strategy. These are:

- **Children and learners first**
- **Independence**
- **Accountability and transparency**
- **Evidence-led inspections and interventions**
Ofsted has identified 8 main priorities for the strategy period which are:

- **Inspections that raise standards** - inspections help education and social care recover and improve their work
- **Right-touch regulation** – this refers to Ofsted ensuring high-quality care, education and safeguarding for children
- **Making the most of insights and research** – Ofsted is keen to share insights gained through research and analysis. It wants this research to be used by practitioners, policymakers and decision-makers throughout the system to improve it
- **The best start in life** – this refers to a greater focus on the early years in this strategy. Ofsted wants to develop an evidence base about early years education, including curriculum and pedagogy, and encourage the sector to act on it
- **Keeping children safe** – safeguarding and welfare are still top priorities across the board
- **Keeping pace with sector changes** – this relates to ensuring that Ofsted is keeping up with changes and adapting accordingly, such as reviewing its approach to multi-academy trusts and unregulated schools
- **Accessible and engaged** – Ofsted wants to be open and accessible to its different audiences and wants to better understand their needs
- **A skilled workforce** – this relates to Ofsted’s workforce ensuring they have the tools, knowledge and expertise they need

**The tools that Ofsted uses**

Below are some of the tools that Ofsted has identified it can use to raise standards. They include:

- Frameworks and handbooks
- Risk assessments
- Inspections and visit processes
- Reports and summaries
- Insights from evidence and research
- Application and registration administration
- Judgements
There are several main areas that early years settings need to be aware of in the new strategy. These are:

1. There is to be a greater focus on early years through the “best start in life” priority and inspectors will receive training to enhance their understanding of effective and high-quality early education. In launching the strategy, the Chief Inspector, Amanda Spielman acknowledged the importance of early years, saying: “Each of us has only one childhood, and it shapes the rest of our lives. That’s why this strategy has a particular emphasis on giving all children the best possible start.” She also acknowledged that not all children get this.

2. Ofsted will also aim to assess the impact of the pandemic on children’s physical, social and wider development. Recent research about the ‘ghost’ children missing from education after the pandemic makes sobering reading with 22% of children missing more than 10% of their schooling last year. The new strategy will aim to assess this impact, especially in the early years since Ofsted is aware that the children coming into formal schooling in this period, may have been severely disadvantaged by lockdowns and other issues created by the pandemic which can affect their education.

3. The strategy includes plans to increase the sharing of data and insights especially in group-owned early years providers and to simplify regulations relating to childminders.

4. Frequency of inspections is likely to increase as Ofsted is aiming to inspect all schools in England by July 2025. It also plans to increase the amount of longer, Section 5 fully-graded inspections to allow more time for professional dialogues and evidence-gathering. If standards need to be improved, in most cases, this will need to be done within 9 – 12 months.

5. Ofsted is committed to publishing a series of evidence-led research reports, specially designed for early years. It will explore literature relating to early years education, drawing on a range of sources, including academic and policy literature, looking for evidence-based research which can improve early years education. The first report has been published and can be accessed here. Subsequent reviews, to be published at a later date, will explore the 3 prime, and 4 secondary early years foundation stage (EYFS), areas of learning.

6. Ofsted is developing a SEND inspection framework which is aimed at local authorities and agencies, focusing on the strategic oversight and commissioning of SEND and alternative provisions. Whilst not directly related to early years individually, settings may be involved in helping Ofsted assess how children with SEND are identified and assessed and the quality of provision offered by local authorities in this area. In these new inspections, individual children’s progress may be tracked to get an overview of what it is like for children in that area to have SEND.

7. There will still be an emphasis on safeguarding, ensuring that safeguarding practices are embedded throughout educational establishments.
We can be in no doubt that Ofsted wants to see that as early years educators, we are ensuring the children in our care receive high-quality education and attention and that they are supported to achieve their full potential.

To help succeed in this, there are several things you can do in your setting and when preparing for that all-important visit – some of which you will already have in place, some of which you may not have considered - but we go into more detail on these here:

- Ensure that your setting is safe, welcoming, and stimulating for children. This includes creating areas for exploration, play, and learning, and ensuring that equipment and resources are age-appropriate, well-maintained, and accessible to all children. Let’s not forget about the importance of risky play, though. Children need to learn open-mindedness and have the physical and mental freedom to explore, escape and have adventures. In this way, children learn vital things about their own capabilities and judgements - life skills that transform adulthood. You can read more about risky play [here](#).

- Encourage healthy eating habits, physical activity, and emotional well-being. This can include providing nutritious meals and snacks, promoting regular exercise, and teaching children about their emotions and how to manage them. You will find many articles on the Parenta blog which cover health and well-being [here](#).

- Foster communication and language development: Encourage children to communicate with each other and with adults. This can include promoting conversation, storytelling, and language-based activities like reading and singing.

- Provide opportunities for children to develop early literacy and numeracy skills through play-based activities. This can include storytelling, mark-making, counting, and problem-solving.

- Ensure that your setting is inclusive and celebrates diversity. This can include teaching children about different cultures and religions and promoting positive attitudes towards differences, understanding cultural differences and potential culture clashes.

- Foster positive relationships with parents and carers and involve them in their children’s learning and development. This can include regular communication, sharing information about what children are learning, and inviting parents and carers to participate in activities and events - more on this later.

- Regularly evaluate your provision to ensure that it meets the needs of all children and make improvements where necessary. This can include gathering feedback from children, parents, and staff, and using this to inform your practice.
Involving parents is an important step towards preparing for an Ofsted visit. Here are some strategies that you can use to engage parents and get them involved:

- Ask parents for their opinions about the setting and what they would like to see improved. You can do this through surveys, suggestion boxes, or in-person meetings. Make sure to listen to their feedback and take it into account when making changes.

- Hold parent workshops so that they can learn more about the early years curriculum and how they can support their child’s learning at home. This can help parents to feel more involved in their child’s education and build stronger relationships with staff.

- Set up a parents’ group that meets regularly to discuss issues and make suggestions for improving the setting. This can be a great way to get feedback from a range of parents and build a sense of community within the setting. This could be online or face-to-face – many settings have a private Facebook group but meeting in person brings parents together.

- Keep parents informed about the progress that is being made towards improving the setting. This can include sharing updates on new resources, changes in curriculum, or other improvements that have been made.

- Invite parents to come into the setting and see what their child is doing. This can be an opportunity for parents to see the setting in action, meet staff, and provide feedback on their experiences.

- Ask parents to volunteer their time to help with specific projects or tasks. This can include things like setting up displays, helping with fundraising events, or sharing their skills and expertise.

By involving parents in the improvement of your setting, you can build stronger relationships with families, create a more positive and supportive environment, and ultimately help to improve outcomes for children.
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- Showcase your setting with branded products. From newsletters to logos and prospectuses to business cards, we take care of all your branding needs

SOCIAL MEDIA
- We assist you with setting up and using your social media accounts in no time to help you increase your setting’s visibility

Working together for our children

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