



# How to Get your Nursery to an Ofsted Outstanding

A guide from the Nursery Owners  
who actually did it



# Contents

1	Introduction	4
2	What value does an Ofsted Outstanding give your nursery?	5
3	Let's talk about the Ofsted handbook	6
4	Getting that 24 hours notice	12
5	Documents to have ready	13
6	How to prepare for inspection day (long before the 24-hour notice call)	14
7	Think about your nursery's ethos	15
8	What to expect on inspection day	15
9	What if I have no children at my setting on inspection day?	16
10	How long will the inspection take?	16
11	Inside the inspector's mind	17
12	How are the parents involved in the inspection?	18
13	Tips for safe recruitment	19
14	Safeguarding	21
15	Master learning walks	22

# Contents

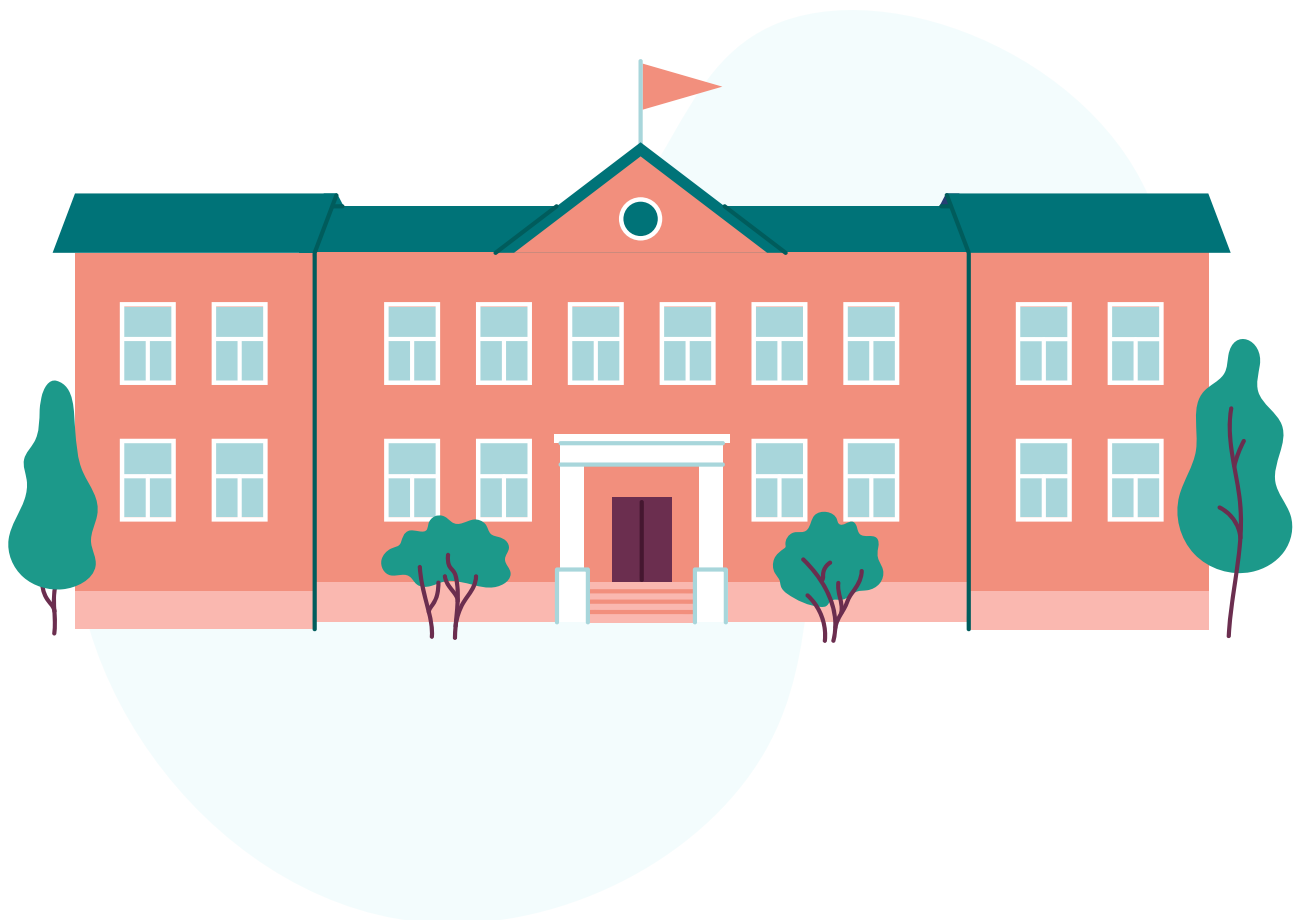
<b>16</b>	What is reflective practice?	23
<b>17</b>	Joint observations	24
<b>19</b>	The 3 I's	25
<b>20</b>	How to prepare staff	26
<b>21</b>	What type of evidence will the inspector gather in terms of my staff?	27
<b>22</b>	Questions you will be asked	29
<b>23</b>	How to answer their questions	32
<b>24</b>	Make all events past and present shine	34
<b>25</b>	List of things not to do	35
<b>26</b>	What happens after the inspection finishes?	36
<b>27</b>	Summary of how to get Ofsted Outstanding	37

*This guide is intended as general information only. Always check with a professional for advice.*

# Introduction

The mere whisper of the words “Ofsted inspection” can get some managers rattling in their boots. Don’t panic! We have been in those shaky boots and come out the other side with an Outstanding rating ourselves for our Blossom Tree nursery!

So we thought we would put together a comprehensive guide covering all things you need to know about your Ofsted inspection. And most importantly: advice and methods on how to get that Outstanding. This is what we did to get our Outstanding. Read on to get your nursery there too.



# What value does an Outstanding give your nursery?

## Firstly, what is Ofsted?

Ofsted stands for the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills. And to answer your question, what do Ofsted do? their role is to make sure that organisations providing education, training and care services in England carry their services out at a high standard for children and students.

Everyone is chasing this Outstanding rating and what for? Does it actually do your nursery any good? Yes! It is used as a huge decision-maker. Prospective parents take it into account when deciding where to send their children. Similarly, potential employees look at your nursery's Ofsted rating when considering whether or not to join your staff. To fully understand an Outstanding, we need to examine the Early Years Inspection handbook.



## Let's talk about the OFSTED handbook

This is the guide that your inspector will follow to a tee. Therefore, you should too. Everything you need to get you to an Outstanding is there - it just needs to be executed well (no biggie). A good idea is to audit your setting against these criteria. This will help you understand what - if anything - you have to do to maintain your current inspection grade.

Pay extra attention to [part 2 of the handbook](#). This details the evaluation schedule which specifically sets out clear criteria for each inspection judgement. Your inspector will be trained to use these grade descriptions when confirming grades. Therefore, it's important for you and your staff to have a good read of this handbook.

**We've made this easy for you. Read below for the 'tick boxes' inspectors will use (according to the Early Years Inspection handbook) to grade:**

1 **✦ Outstanding** Grade descriptors for the provision's overall effectiveness

2 **✦ Outstanding** EYFS Curriculum

3 **✦ Outstanding** Cultural Capital

4 **✦ Outstanding** Personal Development

5 **✦ Outstanding** Leadership and Management

## An Ofsted Outstanding is...

What exactly does an Outstanding mean? Put simply, your nursery needs to be exceeding expectations on every level and 'stand out' from the average. From practitioners to administrators to children. Everything needs to be of a certain standard. At an Outstanding setting, your staff are brilliant role models who put caring for the children first. And the children are well-behaved and happy.

Here are some of the 'tick boxes' for an Outstanding - according to [part 2 of the Early Years Inspection handbook](#):

- ✔ Children show respect for others.
- ✔ Children are excited to join in during activities, showing good levels of sharing and co-operation.

- ✔ Children demonstrate perseverance even when faced with a challenge.
- ✔ Practitioners expect good behaviour from the children.
- ✔ Practitioners provide experiences that promote an understanding of people, families, and communities beyond their own personal ones.
- ✔ Children are taught the language to communicate and understand feelings to help develop their individual emotional intelligence.
- ✔ Practitioners value and teach principles of equality and diversity.



# Grade descriptors for the provision's overall effectiveness

## ★ Outstanding

- ✔ The quality of education is outstanding.
- ✔ All other judgements are likely to be outstanding. In exceptional circumstances, one of the judgements may be good, as long as there is convincing evidence that it is improving this area rapidly and securely towards outstanding.
- ✔ Safeguarding is effective.
- ✔ There are no breaches of EYFS requirements.





# What is the Early Years curriculum?

## ★ Outstanding

We know that the EYFS sets out learning areas and details what children should be able to do at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. And how settings do that is up to them. This is where you can get creative.



**You can expect your inspector to discuss with leaders and practitioners what they intend children to learn and do as a result of the EYFS framework you offer.**

## What makes an Outstanding quality of education?

- ✔ The provider meets all the criteria for a good quality of education securely and consistently. The quality of education at this setting is exceptional. In addition, the following apply:
- ✔ The provider's curriculum intent and implementation are embedded securely and consistently across the provision. It is evident from what practitioners do that they have a firm and common understanding of the provider's curriculum intent and what it means for their practice. Across all parts of the provision, practitioners' interactions with children are of high quality and contribute well to delivering the curriculum intent.
- ✔ Children's experiences over time are consistently and coherently arranged to build cumulatively sufficient knowledge and skills for their future learning.
- ✔ The impact of the curriculum on what children know, can remember, and do is highly effective. Children demonstrate this through being deeply engaged in their work and play and sustaining high levels of concentration. Children, including those children from disadvantaged backgrounds, do well. Children with SEND achieve the best possible outcomes.
- ✔ Children consistently use new vocabulary that enables them to communicate effectively. They speak with increasing confidence and fluency, which means that they secure strong foundations for future learning, especially in preparation for them to become fluent readers.

# Cultural capital

★ Outstanding

## What is cultural capital?

It's about how children are made ready for their next stage of learning through adding opportunities they may not usually have access to at home. For example, if they don't have access to a garden, we would perhaps add a planting activity for them to experience. It's also about equipping children with necessary skills such as social skills.

Inspectors will consider the ways in which children demonstrate their attitudes and behaviour through the characteristics of effective learning:

- ✓ playing and exploring
- ✓ active learning
- ✓ creating and thinking critically.

Inspectors will consider the extent to which leaders and practitioners support children's behaviour and attitudes, including how the provision helps children to manage their own feelings and behaviour, and how to relate to others.



# Personal development

## ★ Outstanding

The provider meets all the criteria for good personal development securely and consistently. Personal development in this provision is exceptional. In addition, the following apply:

- ✔ The provider is highly successful at

giving children a rich set of experiences that promote an understanding of people, families, and communities beyond their own.

- ✔ Practitioners teach children the language of feelings, helping them to appropriately develop their emotional literacy.

# What constitutes Outstanding leadership and management?

## ★ Outstanding

To get your nursery to an Outstanding rating, you need to have outstanding leaders in your team. Inspectors will consider how well leaders and managers evaluate their provision and know how they can improve it or maintain its high standards. That should come as no surprise. Here are some characteristics inspectors will be looking for in your leaders:

- ✔ Leaders show a clear goal of providing high-quality, inclusive care and education to all.
- ✔ Leaders focus on the development of their practitioners' knowledge and skill concerning the teaching and care of children.
- ✔ Leaders communicate effectively with the children, their parents, and in the community overall.

### Covid-19 Handbook Update

Certain [updates have been made to the Early Years Inspection Handbook](#) which take into account the Covid-19 pandemic. From interacting with parents virtually to inspectors seeking out how the pandemic affected your setting overall. Check to see the full impact the changes may have on your inspection.

## Getting that 24 hours notice

The anticipated phone call finally comes. You can expect to receive a telephone call at around midday on a working day before the start of the inspection. And you can bet that the inspection starts here. How to begin? Sell yourself and your nursery right from "hello."

**You will always get 24 hours notice unless Ofsted has received a concern about your nursery. In that case, this will trigger a surprise inspection.**

After the call, you will be surprised how quickly the word spreads of the anticipated inspection in your setting. You want to have control over it as you do not want panic to ensue. After you hang up, try to resist the urge to frantically make a 'to-do' list. We've saved you the trouble. Here's our one:

- ✔ Let everyone at your setting know
- ✔ Neaten and tidy anything that needs it
- ✔ Make staff feel confident and calm (see what we did below!)
- ✔ Encourage staff to share previous inspection experiences

Doing all this makes the inspection less daunting for your staff and you.

### **Blossom Tree Montessori's Own Inspection Experience**

You may be interested to know that the night before our own inspection, we threw a pizza party! It was more of a celebration of what we had accomplished together as a nursery. This excited and relaxed energy carried into the inspection the next day - which the inspector immediately picked up on.

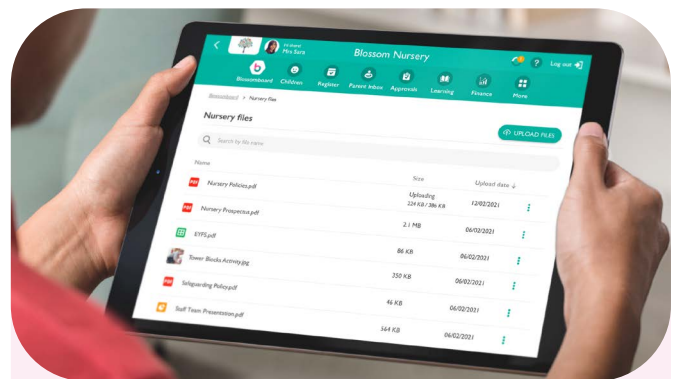


## Documents to have ready

It is no secret that your Ofsted inspector will need to review certain important documentation during their visit. And you need to be ready. Fiddling around at the eleventh hour to find papers is the last thing you want on the day and it is avoidable stress.

Here are the [documents that need to be readied](#) according to the Early Years Inspection handbook:

- ✔ List of current staff and their qualifications, including in paediatric first aid.
- ✔ Register/list showing the date of birth of all children on roll and routine staffing arrangements.
- ✔ List of children present at the setting during the inspection (if not shown on the register).
- ✔ Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) records and any other documents summarising the checks on, and the vetting and employment arrangements of, all staff working at the setting.
- ✔ All logs that record accidents, exclusions, children taken off roll, and incidents of poor behaviour.
- ✔ All logs of incidents of discrimination, including racist incidents.
- ✔ Complaints log and/or evidence of any complaints and their resolutions.
- ✔ Safeguarding and child protection policies.
- ✔ Fire-safety arrangements and other statutory policies relating to health and safety.
- ✔ List of any referrals made to the local authority designated person for safeguarding, with brief details of the resolutions.
- ✔ Details of all children who are open cases to social care/children's services and for whom there is a multi-agency plan.



Blossom customers are able to [find nursery, staff, and child files instantly](#).

Documents can be uploaded to the system for cloud-based storage and quick access.

## How to prepare for inspection day (long before the 24-hour notice call)

In an ideal world, everything would be sorted and ready for your inspection. But in reality, there are often a few loose ends that need to be tied up. Why not give yourself the upper hand and prepare for this in advance? Certain elements can be taken care of long before to help get you that Outstanding:

- ✔ Make sure your website is up to date. Remember, inspectors must prepare for the inspection by gaining a broad overview of the setting, its context, and history. A great

first impression starts here.

- ✔ Host visitors regularly as this helps staff become more comfortable with being watched. And it will be less intimidating on inspection day.
- ✔ Ofsted picks up on the wellbeing of staff. As a general practice, check-in with your staff regularly.



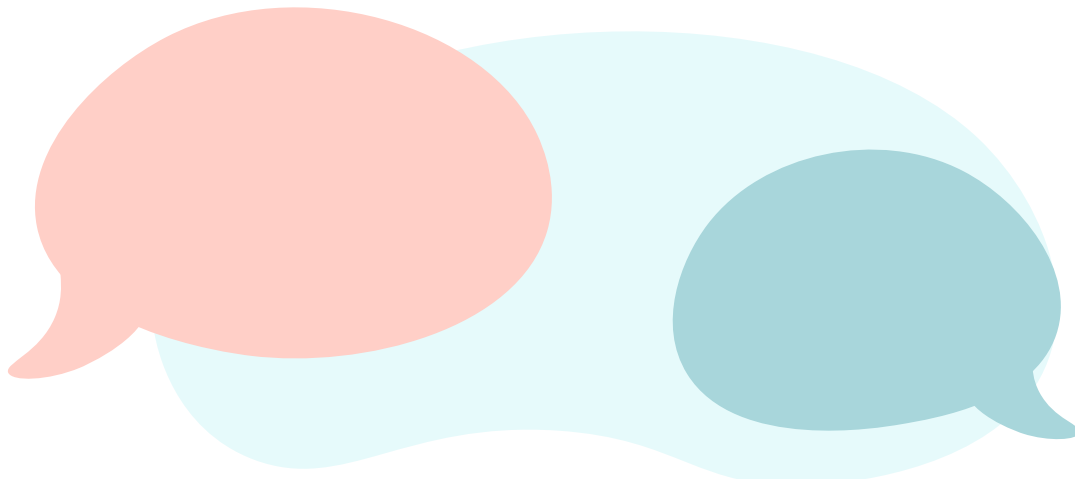
## Think about your nursery's ethos

Your inspector will most likely enquire into your nursery's ethos. So have a good think about it (if you haven't already). It's a good idea to have staff be able to explain it should the question arise.

## What to expect on inspection day

Establish an honest conversation with your inspector. As previously mentioned, Ofsted inspectors are highly intelligent and they've been Outstanding teachers and leaders themselves. Simply put, you won't be able to fake an Outstanding setting.

**Things go wrong!** During Blossom Tree's inspection, the pressure was too much for one junior practitioner and they burst into tears. We sent them on a break (with some tea and bickies to recover!).



## What if I have no children at my setting on inspection day?

Whether you have no children on roll or just no children present, the inspection must be deferred. However, if it becomes clear to the inspector during the notice call that the childminder/nursery only cares for children on certain days of the week, the inspection should be rescheduled to suit this (if practical).

However, should it continue without any children present, the inspector will make it clear that the inspection will not be a full inspection but will be a check that the provider continues to be suitable to remain registered. No grades will be given against

the four key judgements. The inspector will make a judgement only on the 'overall quality and standards of the early years provision.'

There are only 3 possible outcomes for this evaluation:

- 1 Met
- 2 Not met with actions
- 3 Not met with enforcement

## How long will the inspection take?

That depends on the size and operating hours of your setting.

### 3 Hours

Childminders

### 4 Hours

Group provision that operates only for restricted daily hours

### 6 Hours

Group provision open for a full day



# Inside the inspector's mind

Let's get inside the mind of the inspector for a second. If you know what the inspector is looking for, you can ensure that your setting meets those requirements.

## How an inspector prepares for the inspection

They will conduct sufficient research on you and your setting. They will pick up information from a variety of sources such as word of mouth, and of course your website.

## What types of evidence do they gather?

Inspectors must spend as much time as possible gathering evidence about the quality of care, teaching, and learning. According to the Early Years Inspection handbook, they will:

- ✓ Observe the children at play.
- ✓ Talk to the children and practitioners about the activities provided.
- ✓ Talk to parents to gain their views on the quality of care and education provided.
- ✓ Observe the interactions between practitioners and children.
- ✓ Gauge children's levels of understanding and their engagement in learning.
- ✓ Talk to practitioners about their

assessment of what children know and can do and how they are building on it.

- ✓ Observe care routines and how they are used to support children's personal development, including the setting's approach to toilet training.
- ✓ Evaluate the practitioners' knowledge of the EYFS curriculum.

## How will an inspector decide their judgements?

Based on evidence gathered (and the criteria set out in part 2 of the handbook as set out above) your inspector will put forward a grade for your setting.

Blossom customers are able to provide this evidence easily with features such as:

- ✓ EYFS tracking and learning
- ✓ Cohort tracking
- ✓ Observations and Reports

## How are the parents involved in the inspection?

After you receive the 24 hours notice call, it is important to notify the parents that an inspection will be happening. In terms of the inspector, they will make a point to talk to some parents and find out their views during the inspection. This is part of their evidence gathering.

Things the inspector is looking to find out are:

- ✔ Parents' overall satisfaction with the service and care provided to their child / children.
- ✔ How involved are the parents at the setting?
- ✔ Any concerns they may have/ areas for improvement.

### How to get Ofsted to like your books:

- ✔ Make sure they are consistent in quality
- ✔ Sensible marking must be practised
- ✔ There is visible progression

We've made this simple for Blossom customers with our [easy-to-use and modern Parent App](#). It enables parents to:

- ✔ Receive diary updates, highlighting special moments
- ✔ Be involved in their child's learning and development with Learning Journeys
- ✔ Communicate with their nursery instantly with 2 - way messaging
- ✔ Continue their child's education at home with Home Observations
- ✔ Enjoy paperless billing (with automatic reminders)

**Note:** Your inspector will take into consideration the arrival times of children and parents at your setting to arrange a convenient time to speak. Your parents won't have to fit into the inspector's schedule.

## Tips for safe recruitment in EYFS

It is vital to have and practice strict recruitment policies at your setting. These should prioritise children's safety and wellbeing. You need to ensure that you monitor and improve your recruitment processes. They need to be continuously improving as children's safety is of paramount importance. Here are some policies that you should implement:

**Appropriate policies:** Write out the approach that you take to recruiting staff or volunteers to work with your children. Cover your policies and procedures in detail. This makes sure that you carry out thorough and legal policies and procedures.

**Barring and disclosure checks:** Early years services must have clear and current policies which set out proper disclosure and barring checks for potential recruits. By doing this, you prevent employing someone who has been barred from working with children.

**Right to work checks:** With this check, you make sure that prospective employees are legally able to work within the UK. The law

states that under the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006, as amended by the 2016 Immigration Act, employers need to check this. Failure to comply with this may not only result in heavy legal penalties for you, but makes children vulnerable to potential risk.

**Check qualifications:** This one should be obvious, but you always need to check that any prospective early years employee is actually qualified to work with children. If you decide to go forward with an interview, ask them to bring along their certificates and other evidence of qualifications. Having them in your hands allows you to examine the original documents for authenticity and make copies for your records. In England, you can go a step further and check qualifications with the Department for Education on the website.

**Don't forget about checking references!  
Contact previous employers directly to ensure their credibility.**

**Don't discriminate:** At all stages in the recruitment process (and in life generally), it is imperative that you do not adopt any attitude of discrimination. Not only is it illegal, but you want to create a recruitment process that focuses on respect, equality, inclusivity, and diversity. This sets the tone for your setting overall. Do not discriminate against a candidate based on their:

- × Age
- × Gender
- × Marital status
- × Sexual orientation
- × Race or ethnicity
- × Religion
- × Part-time status
- × Disability

**Insider tip:** Make job offers conditional. Offers only become binding once it satisfies any stipulated conditions you may set out. This adds an extra layer of protection to your nursery. Without these, the offer is not legally binding and no employment contract would be formed. Some stipulated conditions may be:

- ✓ Obtaining satisfactory references
- ✓ Satisfactory health check
- ✓ Relevant pre-employment checks



# Safeguarding

Early years settings should be safe environments where children can learn and develop without the threat of abuse or harm. Although inspectors will not provide a separate grade for this crucial aspect of a provider's work, they will always make a written judgement in the report about whether the arrangements for safeguarding children are effective.

It is clear that the Covid-19 pandemic has increased safeguarding risks in EY settings. Make a point to inform your inspector on how you have adopted your approach and policies to ensure that:

- ✔ Vulnerable children, including those with SEND, are encouraged to attend the provision.
- ✔ Your procedures remain effective for supporting those at home and those attending your setting.
- ✔ Parents and carers are informed of any developments/ changes.
- ✔ Staff are looked after properly.



## Master learning walks

The learning walk on your inspection day encompasses a 15-20 min walk with the manager and inspector. And this is the time to let the nursery shine! If your nursery follows a specific pedagogy (e.g. you like learning outside) inform the inspector. If you have certain activities planned, again inform your inspector so that they can make time to observe this. You've worked hard, it would be a shame for the inspector to miss out simply because they didn't know.

It's good to focus on things you are doing well rather than what needs some work. Help your inspector to better understand your nursery. If you wish, you can delegate some duties of the walk to other managers/ leaders in your setting. However, ensure that they are well prepared with specific points to highlight. Overall, make it a celebration of your nursery's achievements and what impact it has made.

Stuck on ideas for activities to do on the day? Why not try:

- ✔ Potato planting (Preschool)
- ✔ What's in the box? Dear Zoo story sack (Babies)
- ✔ Baby clinic role play (Toddlers)

**Insider tip:** Conducting a mock learning walk is excellent preparation. And it can get those nerves down and your confidence up. Practise your learning walk every couple of months so that when the time comes you're an expert at it.



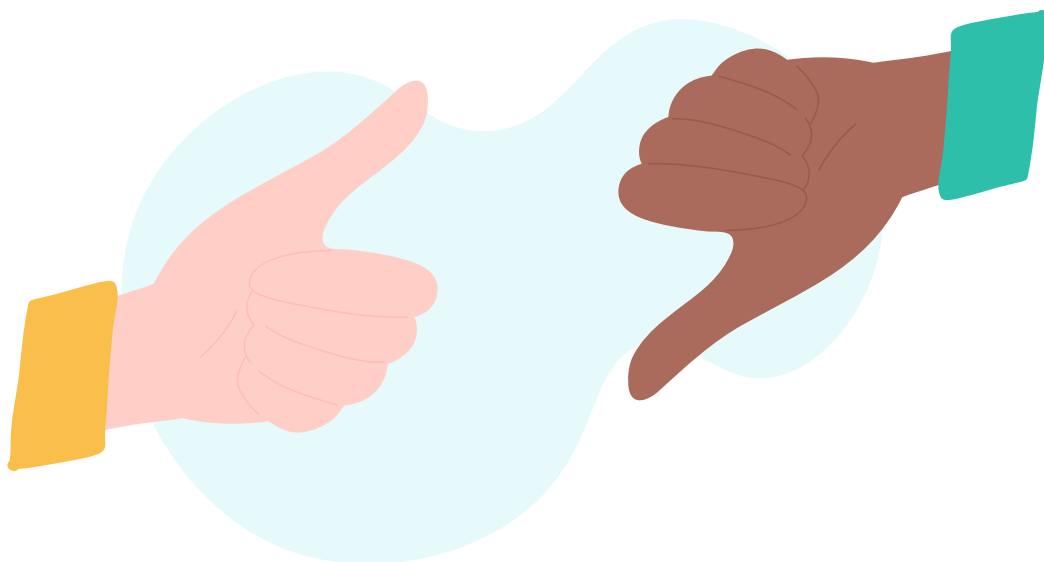
## What is reflective practice?

“Reflective practice is a critical tool to improve. It helps us to think honestly and raises our self awareness. This self analysis is uncomfortable for many people until they realise the impact it has on developing and extending their knowledge and practice. It is a continuous process that guides our decision making and drives our individual and collective practice forward. It is important to consider the positives as well as considering things that don’t always go well. We incorporate the 3 i’s into everything we do from planning, to behaviour management, to any change we wish to implement. These are all analysed and evaluated. The impact of this self reflective practice takes us [children, staff and parents] from strength to strength.”

Razia Nurmohamed, Quality Director at the Ofsted Outstanding nursery Blossom Tree.

Some suggestions to encourage reflective practice at your setting:

- ✓ Staff, management, and Room leader meetings
- ✓ Parent forums
- ✓ Parent and staff questionnaires
- ✓ Suggestion boxes
- ✓ Parent comment books
- ✓ Peer observations
- ✓ Manager spot checks
- ✓ Discussions with children about their likes and dislikes



## Joint Observations

At some point during your inspection, there will come a time for joint observations. This is when the inspector and manager (or assigned leader) will take part in observing activities together.

According to the Early Years Inspection handbook, joint observations should enable the inspector to:

- ✔ Gain an insight into the effectiveness of the provision's professional development programme for practitioners.
- ✔ Learn about the provider's view of staff's interactions with children.
- ✔ See the quality of the implementation of the curriculum/educational programmes.
- ✔ Consider how effectively the manager supports staff to promote the learning and development of all children.

**Insider tip:** What they are mainly looking for is the manager's ability to recognise anything done well and more importantly anything that needs improving. How well you observe will relate to solutions you put forward to better the nursery and methods you put in place to continue operating at a high standard. This is what your inspector is evaluating.

What about policies? Inspectors are unlikely to check all policies held by the provider. However, they most likely will consider your setting's:

- ✔ Recruitment records
- ✔ Staff qualifications and deployment
- ✔ Staff training for safeguarding practice and procedures
- ✔ Records of complaints





## What are the 3 I's?

Separately the 3 I's are intent, implementation, and impact. However, it should be noted that your inspector will not judge them separately. Rather, they will reach a single graded judgement for the quality of education (backed by the evidence they've gathered during their inspection).

But what does each 'I' really mean?

**Intent:** When Ofsted using the word 'intent' they are referring to your setting's overall way of working. Mainly, the aims you have to help your children develop and learn. So whatever particular educational approach you take, whether it be Montessori like ours or others, show how it centres around the children's growth. Your inspector will be looking how your 'intent' helps children make progress across the seven areas of learning and is play-based.

**Implementation:** This is about how you exercise your stated 'intent.' What do you do every day at your setting that ensures your children are making progress? This is what your inspector will be looking for. Specifically,

your inspector will examine:

- ✔ What resources you make available
- ✔ How practitioners interact with children
- ✔ What opportunities for progress and growth you provide

**Impact:** How do you know that what you're doing at your setting is making a difference? This is what the final 'i' refers to. Show your inspector the impact your setting has with your observations and assessments for each child. On top of this, describe to your inspector how well you do in fact know your children. Talk about their likes and dislikes (as well as any milestones hit since joining your nursery).

**Insider tip:** The Covid-19 pandemic has a very real and serious impact on children and their development. Be prepared to show how your children's needs and wants are being met in the context of the virus.

## How to prepare staff

Our main point is to make the Early Years Inspection handbook familiar. Have it readily available, visible around your nursery, or in the common room ready for discussion. The more your staff understand what constitutes an Outstanding setting, the more confident they will be on inspection day.

Tips to help staff prepare. Staff can ask themselves:

- ✓ What impact have I made as an individual to this setting and its children?
- ✓ How do I keep the children safe?
- ✓ What do I do well?
- ✓ What are some positive changes that I

have made?

- ✓ Think of examples where my influence saw the development of a child/children
- ✓ Consider the general rationale behind my teachings and actions

Understandably, some of your staff may experience anxiety around the inspection. Do not ignore this. Remind them that it's alright to be honest and say that some things did not work or go according to plan. In fact, this will show your inspector how you reflect and resolve at your setting. Refocus the inspection on the idea that it is a celebration of accomplishments that your staff should be proud of.



## What type of evidence will the inspector gather in terms of my staff?

All evidence relating to:

- ✓ Staff supervision
- ✓ Performance management
- ✓ Training and continuing professional development
- ✓ Impact of these on children's well-being, learning, and development
- ✓ How well leaders engage with staff
- ✓ Pressure management

At Blossom Tree the Quality Director, Razia Nurmohamed, often (and unpredictably) tests practitioners' knowledge. Whether it be the EYFS framework, relating to the children, or policies, and so on. The staff actually requested that Razia conduct her usual testing to get them in the zone on inspection day! Why not try this with your staff?



During the observations of children at play and interacting between them and adults, your inspector will discuss children's learning and development with staff. According to the Early Years Inspection handbook, these are the factors which your inspector will be looking for in your staff:

- ✔ Engage in dialogue with children
- ✔ Watch, listen, and respond to children
- ✔ Model language well
- ✔ Read aloud and tell stories to children
- ✔ Encourage children to sing songs, nursery rhymes, and musical games
- ✔ Encourage children to express their thoughts and use new words
- ✔ Support independence and confidence
- ✔ Encourage children to speculate and test ideas through trial and error
- ✔ Enable children to explore and solve problems
- ✔ Behave as an excellent role model for children
- ✔ Support children to recognise and respond to their own physical needs
- ✔ Attend to children's personal needs
- ✔ Deal with children's care arrangements: intimate care, the levels of privacy afforded to children, and the supervision arrangements when undertaking personal hygiene tasks



This was our first Ofsted inspection for Blossom Tree. Getting an Outstanding on the first try happens roughly 1% of the time. **We're so proud of our Blossom team**



## Questions you will be asked

As you know, your inspector will be armed with a list of questions. Some directed at the manager, others Room Leaders, and so on. It's imperative that you answer all questions with 100% honesty because sooner or later the inspector will find out. (And you can bet that won't work in your favour).

**Insider tip:** If you get stuck, just be honest and say something like, "Goodness, my mind's gone blank. Can I get back to you on that one?" and move on. But do get back to them. We're all human here (including the inspector!).

### Safeguarding:

- 1 If you had any safeguarding concerns about a child, what action would you take?
- 2 Who would you approach or contact if you had any safeguarding concerns regarding a child or adult?
- 3 What are the types of abuse?
- 4 What is radicalisation? For example, what would you do if a child came in and said 'I don't like Americans'?
- 5 What sort of things could children say or do if they were being radicalised?
- 6 What is FGM?

### Key children & their development/Observations:

The inspector asked several staff members about one of their key children and their development:

- 1 What was your child's starting point and what stage of development are they in now?
- 2 Is your child in the right development stage, are they behind or exceeding age bands?
- 3 What are your child's next steps?
- 4 What is their DOB?
- 5 What is their age in months?
- 6 Do you have any concerns about a child?
- 7 How do you use the settling in procedure as a starting point for children's interests?
- 8 How do you use your relationship with parents when settling a child?

### Questions to Room Leader:

- 1 How do you have an overview of the room?
- 2 How do you monitor/check children's observations?
- 3 If a teacher is reading a story very badly, what would you do?
- 4 How do you plan for the children?

5 What is the role of a Room Leader?

6 What's your daily routine?

### Questions to Room Leader:

1 What is your background experience?

2 What qualifications do you hold?

3 Have you had supervision? How do you get your point across?

4 Do you like it here?

5 How do you keep within ratios?

6 What is your relationship like with other staff members?

7 How do you get your point across at supervisions?

# How to answer Ofsted's questions (for managers)

Here are extracts of the questions our Quality Director, Razia Nurmohamed, was asked (and what Outstanding answers she gave). Note: these answers are pre-Covid-19.

## How do you plan for the children?

"I referred to our current weekly lesson plan. Planning at the moment was our aim, but staff are not ready for this yet. My constant questioning around the 3 I's was preparing staff for planning in the moment."

### Inside our experience:

We engaged in a joint observation and discussed this. Our inspector tracked two children from each room and questioned staff on children's starting points. She spoke to parents. The inspector also requested to look at parents' comments.

## How do you involve parents?

"I explained about our recent events and upcoming events, and particularly mentioned the parent forum which had stemmed from a parent suggestion. I highlighted the importance of gaining parent suggestions

and forming that partnership with them to drive the setting forward. It also gives parents a chance to socialise with each other and speak to staff. Our suggestion box was also mentioned."

## How have you trained staff about the new framework?

"Through staff meetings and by regularly questioning them, staff skills and knowledge are kept at the highest standard. I talked about empowering staff through regular in-house training and 1:1 training despite staff already knowing PPs. I told her about our weekly room leader meetings, team meetings, and staff meetings how all information is shared."

## Do you check staff observations?

"Room Leaders do as they are best placed to do this by being in the classroom all the time. They are best suited to reflect accurately on information relating to children such as the age and stage of each child. We discuss this every week - particularly any facing concerns. I gave a specific example of a situation where we had established contacts with the Early Years team in Hillingdon and drew into their support when necessary."



### Inside our experience: What our inspector did:

- ✔ Tested staff on children's starting points and how they use these and interests to develop children
- ✔ Asked about what we do with children's photos once we've used them
- ✔ Asked about our mobile phone policy
- ✔ Was very thorough in her inspection and kept checking what our Quality Director was saying against what staff were saying

### Do you go on trips and what do you need to prepare before the trip?

"We are planning a school trip in summer, but do local trips currently. We are gaining consent from parents to take children out spontaneously. She asked about what we need for trips: I spoke about risk assessment, ratios, parent contact details, and so on."

### How do you manage children with dietary requirements?

"We have colour-coded mats, allergy/intolerance/preference sheets which are all up on the wall and given to the chef each day. We highlight children present that day noting vegetarians and non-vegetarians. Separate meals are cooked where necessary and ingredients are noted on the form. The chef, a member of manager, and Room Leaders

check the ingredients and the temperature to ensure all provided meals comply with all dietary requirements."

With Blossom's **Child Profile** feature, Blossom customers are able to add allergy, dietary, as well as likes and dislikes, notes for each child. These are also downloadable to stick up in the kitchen for the chef, for example.

### What is your recruitment process?

"Firstly we take our CVs from Indeed and do telephone interviews with those we feel would be suitable for the role. After a successful telephone interview, we would invite them in for a face-to-face interview where two people would conduct the interview. We check qualification certificates against the Government website to ensure they are recognised and valid. We also check the DBS certificate and take any forms of ID and proof of address dated within the last 3 months. If the interview went well, we ask them to stay for a trial. If successful, we obtain two references and ensure the DBS is on the update service before they can commence work."

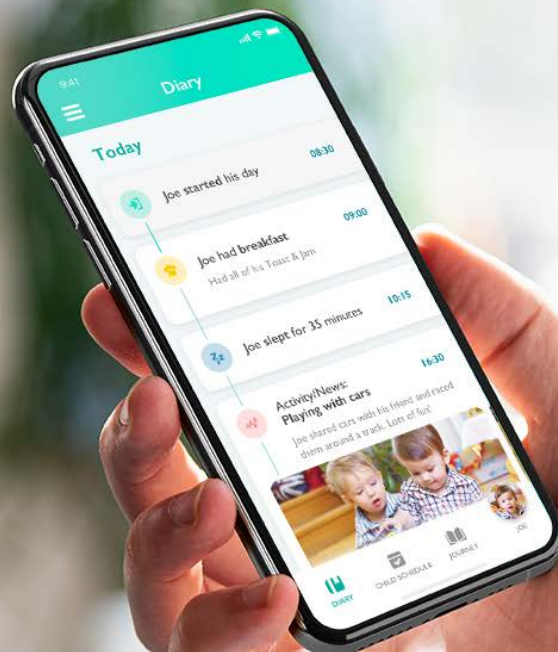
### Inside our experience:

Our inspector viewed two staff files samples. We spoke about practitioners having qualifications not recognised by Ofsted - but how we supported those to gain desired qualifications as well.

## Make all events past and present shine

Remember the inspector only sees what they see of your nursery on the day. They don't know you hosted a successful parent picnic 2 months ago. You need to inform them. Therefore, you need to show them golden moments that have already occurred. Photos are valuable as they provide the inspector with tangible evidence of why your nursery is Outstanding. This is where a scrapbook comes in handy. Print a page or two from the book for the inspector to take back and put on record. Every little bit helps your case!

Blossom's [diary feature sends parents daily updates](#) of their child's activities, as well as highlights 'golden moments,' making it much faster and easier to show off.



## List of things not to do

We've spoken about what you should do on inspection day, but what should you stay away from? This may seem obvious, however, the excitement of the news may cause things to become briefly blurry.

The two most important things not to on the day are:

1. Panic, and make others panicked
2. Do activities you have never done before

Keep calm and stick to what you know and do well. Today is not the today to try anything new.

### Inside our experience:

We have heard horror stories of nurseries attempting new activities on inspection day and children piping up saying, "Why are we doing this? We've never done this before." They did not get an Outstanding to say the very least.



## What happens after the inspection finishes?

Your inspector will provide you with feedback. We suggest that the entire management team hears this as it will be valuable to all. You will be told informally or unofficially the grade that the inspector is going to put forward for your setting. However, this needs to be quality assured by the internal Ofsted team. So even though you may be bursting to tell your parents, we strongly advise against this. You will only get confirmation of your grade 10 days after your inspection. And 9 out of 10 times your grade will remain unchanged.

Towards the end of the inspection, the inspector should talk to the provider to:

- ✔ Discuss any inadequate or outstanding practice they have seen
- ✔ Ensure that the provider understands

how the evidence supports the judgements

- ✔ Allow the provider to raise any concerns, including those related to the conduct of the inspection or the inspector
- ✔ Alert the provider to any serious concerns that may lead to the provision being judged inadequate.

The inspector will write a report immediately after their inspection. It will detail what it is like to attend your Early Years setting. Expect what you do well (and what can be improved) to be highlighted by your inspector in this report. This is all valuable information that will help you improve or maintain your grade going forward.



# Summary of how to get an Ofsted Outstanding

Ofsted nursery ratings are stressful for any setting. Boosting your rating from an Ofsted Good nursery, to an Ofsted Outstanding nursery will not happen overnight – but it's clear that it's not impossible either.

Here are the main pointers to take away:

- ✔ Ensure that all staff have a clear understanding of the Early Years inspection handbook
- ✔ Audit your setting against the grade descriptors in the Early Years inspection handbook as preparation
- ✔ Ready all documents and tidy anything necessary during the 24 hours notice period
- ✔ Notify parents immediately and encourage them to be a part of the inspection process
- ✔ Establish an open and honest dialogue with the inspector from the outset
- ✔ Be able to provide evidence of the high quality care being provided at your setting
- ✔ Be ready to demonstrate that all children's needs have been assessed in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic
- ✔ Be prepared to discuss policies and procedures at your setting - and how they place paramount importance on children's well being
- ✔ Ensure that your learning walk is well-prepared and highlights the positives at your nursery
- ✔ Also provide evidence of reflective practice - with relevant examples
- ✔ Encourage staff to focus on their valuable contributions and achievements during the inspection
- ✔ Help prepare staff by familiarising them with expected questions and encouraging calmness with open discussions on previous inspection experiences
- ✔ Try not to panic and remember not to attempt anything new or untested on the day
- ✔ Above all encourage positivity and remember to celebrate your staff and setting!

Good  
Luck!