Ofsted Inspection of Children’s Homes: Framework for Inspection from April 2012

**Practice areas affected:**
Children’s Homes

**Status:**
Ofsted report: ‘Inspection of children’s homes for inspections from 1 April 2012’ (published March 2012)

**Useful Links:**

**Timescales:**
The Ofsted framework for inspection set out in the report will have effect from 1 April 2012.

**Introduction**
This briefing outlines the Ofsted Framework for inspections of Children’s Homes, in place from 1 April 2012. This is a summary of the Ofsted document *Inspection of children’s homes for inspections from 1 April 2012*, which is available on the Ofsted website at: [http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/inspection-of-childrens-homes-for-inspections-1-april-2012](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/inspection-of-childrens-homes-for-inspections-1-april-2012) with the accompanying *Evaluation Schedule for the Inspection of Children’s Homes*.

Ofsted intends that inspections not only test compliance, but also raise standards and focus improvement in the sector. There is a particular emphasis on improving outcomes for children and young people; services will be required to show how they are contributing to delivering such outcomes.

**Frequency of Inspections**
The inspection period is between 1 April and 31 March; all registered children’s homes will have two inspections in this timeframe (see the full Ofsted document for the inspection schedule for newly registered children’s homes). At least one of these will be a full inspection. The timing of an inspection is influenced by:
• outcomes of previous inspections;
• current complaints or any enforcement action;
• notifications received from a children’s home;
• other relevant information Ofsted receives.

If a children’s home has been evaluated as inadequate, it will receive an interim inspection to monitor progress within three to six months.

**Types of Inspections**

There are two main types of inspection which Ofsted undertakes in children’s homes:

- **Full inspection** is carried out at least once in a year, normally over a 2 day period. It is conducted against the evaluation schedule and will result in a set of graded judgements. The inspector is normally on site for two days.
- **Interim inspection** focuses on progress in improving quality of care and outcomes for children and young people since the most recent full inspection. The judgement will be made on a three point scale: good progress; satisfactory progress; or inadequate progress. The inspector will normally be on site for one day.

Other types of inspections include: If a children’s home also provides education, Ofsted will also conduct a **single-event full inspection** (of both the social care and education provision; carried out at least once every three years). Ofsted will conduct a **monitoring inspection**, which will take place at the same time as a statutory inspection, if there has been an incident or complaint that becomes a compliance investigation enquiry case. They also undertake a **survey inspection**; to gather evidence on a particular issue or area of practice.

Apart from survey inspections, all other inspections will be unannounced.

**Evaluation schedule for full inspections**

The evaluation schedule outlines the judgements that inspectors make on a full and an interim inspection, and the grade descriptors that they use to arrive at their judgements. Judgements will be made on: overall effectiveness (including areas for development); outcomes for children and young people; quality of care; safeguarding children and young people; leadership and management.

Equality and diversity is a critical aspect across the evaluation schedule, which inspectors will take into account across all judgement areas and report on throughout the inspection.
Making judgements at full inspections

Children’s homes must meet statutory requirements as set out in the regulations, and must take account of the national minimum standards and statutory guidance. Inspectors must evaluate all the evidence in a particular area and consider it against the descriptors for outstanding, good, adequate or inadequate before making a judgement. Examples of practice may be used to support more than one judgement. Judgements are made on carefully balanced consideration of the impact on children and young people, and not on a formulaic approach.

However, failure to meet all the statutory requirements in full does not necessarily result in a judgement of inadequate. The seriousness of the failure and its potential impact on outcomes for children and young people is considered carefully to determine how it should impact on the overall judgement. Inspectors use their professional judgement to assess the impact of any breach against other aspects of the service provided.

For information about the approach taken by Ofsted following an overall judgement of inadequate, including interim inspections, please see the full Ofsted document.

Inspection activity at full and interim inspections

Inspectors focus their inspection activities on evaluating the outcomes for children and young people, and the quality and impact of services in helping to improve outcomes.

In preparation for inspection, inspectors consider the information that Ofsted has about the service. This includes:

- previous inspection reports;
- the home’s statement of purpose;
- concerns and complaints received;
- notifications of significant events received;
- Regulation 33 reports received;
- quality assurance reports received under Regulation 34 (including monitoring by the registered person of any incident where a child accommodated in the home goes missing);
- any changes to registration, including change of manager;
- any current or recent enforcement activity.

At the start of a full inspection, an inspector will also request specific information from the registered manager or person in charge. Inspection activities include:

- listening and talking to children and young people
- observing staff interactions with children and young people
- observing key activities, such as handovers of information between staff
- gathering views from partners and stakeholders, such as parents, social workers and teachers
- case file reading
- examining records
- inspecting premises, facilities, and health and safety arrangements
- discussions with managers and staff.
Inspectors will take account of the extent to which service providers have asked for and acted on the views of children and young people and their parents or carers, in reviewing and improving services and outcomes.

Ofsted will use online questionnaires to gather the views of children and young people, parents and families, staff and other interested parties, such as placing social workers, Independent Reviewing Officers, and health, police and education colleagues. These questionnaires will be used at points in time across the inspection year.

**Reporting findings at inspections**

Each inspection is followed by a report that sets out the inspection findings using text and grades. The draft report is sent to the provider for a factual accuracy check within 10 working days of the end of the inspection; they should reply to related comments within five working days. The final report will be published on the Ofsted website within 20 working days of the end of the inspection.

**Further Information**


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**Tri-X-Childcare March 2012**

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