

Every child deserves the best start in life

The strategy sets out how Ofsted will continue its work to improve the lives of children and young people, which is more important than ever following the disruption and distress of the past 2 years.

The strategy centres on the fundamental principle that Ofsted will be a force for improvement through the intelligent, responsible and focused use of inspection, regulation and insights. It sets out the strategic priorities for Ofsted over the next 5 years, which include a stronger focus on the inspectorate's work in the early years and ensuring children get the best start in life.

Ofsted's recent reports on education recovery highlighted the serious impact the pandemic has had on some of the youngest children. Many have gaps in their communication and language skills and are behind where they should be in their personal, social, emotional, and physical development.

The early years workforce has also been hit hard. Thousands have left the sector since the first lockdown in 2020, while those who have stayed are often struggling to get by on low wages.

There has also been a drop in the number of childcare providers. At the start of the pandemic there were just over 75,000 registered providers, but that has since dipped below 70,000, with childminders accounting for the bulk of the reduction.

To play its part in the recovery, the new strategy commits Ofsted to helping make sure every child's earliest experience of education is as good as it can be. It states that Ofsted will use research and insight to support young children's physical, social and wider development, increase training for the inspection workforce and promote a better understanding of early education and care in support of positive change.

Ofsted will also share data and insights about group-owned early years providers, to improve regulatory oversight at the group level, and work with government to simplify the regulatory regime for childminders.

Amanda Spielman, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, said:

Our strategy for the next 5 years takes account of the impact of the pandemic and raises still further our ambitions for children and learners. Ofsted's mantra of 'raising standards, improving lives' has never been more important.

If the past 2 years have taught us anything then perhaps it is how resilient people can be, not least the youngest in our society whose start in life has been challenged in a way we've never seen

before.

We recognise the outstanding work early years providers have done to help children recover what they missed, and this strategy aims to increase our support for a workforce that is so deeply devoted to what it does.

Whether it is through developing specialist training for our inspection workforce or through sharing our own insights, we will do everything in our power to help every child gain the best start in life.

The 2022–2027 strategy also includes commitments to:

- accelerate the inspection cycle so that all schools are inspected by July 2025
- allow more time for professional dialogue and evidence-gathering by increasing the proportion of longer inspections in education
- assess all further education colleges on how well they are meeting the skills needs of the economy within the next 4 years
- enhance inspections of independent schools, so swift intervention can happen where standards are poor
- review social care inspections following the recommendations of the independent care review
- develop and implement a new area SEND inspection framework that holds the right agencies to account for their role in the system
- work with the Department for Education (DfE) to increase powers to act when children are educated or cared for in unregistered settings
- improve the diversity of our staff, across grades and roles