

Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework

# Effective Practice and Self-Evaluation Questions for Pre-School Management Groups

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ETI: Promoting Improvement in the Interest of all Learners

The Education and Training Inspectorate  
Promoting Improvement



Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education  
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# INSPECTION AND SELF-EVALUATION FRAMEWORK FOR MANAGEMENT GROUPS

## The Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework for Management Groups

Purpose and rationale of the Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework for Management Groups

The Inspection and Self-evaluation Framework (ISEF) is a resource to support management groups in their on-going process of self-evaluation and to provide transparency in the inspection process by the publication of key indicators of effective practice. It is designed to complement the phase specific ISEF intended for use by leaders, staff and management groups. The safety of all learners is paramount, therefore safeguarding/child protection is a core element of the framework as is the care and welfare of learners; these are intrinsic to the holistic view of learning and should be visible in every aspect of the work of an organization.

The pre-school education programme is funded by the **Department of Education**<sup>1</sup> and based on the requirements of the **Curricular Guidance for Pre-School**<sup>2</sup>. Statutory nursery schools, nursery units, reception classes and groups and in the funded voluntary and private pre-schools are inspected to a consistent framework. Early years education inspection by the ETI is a collaborative process involving the inspection team, the pre-school staff, leader/early year's specialist (if applicable) and the chair and management group<sup>3</sup>.

The ISEF complements the monitoring and regulatory processes of other agencies in respect of early childhood care and education. The voluntary and private pre-schools funded by the Department of Education are also registered and inspected by the Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts and comply with the Minimum Standards for early years. During all voluntary and private pre-school inspections the ETI evidence base takes account of the relevant evaluative information on education provision gathered through contemporary inspection findings and the extent of recommendations for improvement and actions taken to promote improvement.

The ISEF is designed to promote inspection and reflection about quality pre-school education. Among the principles underpinning the ISEF for pre-school education are the following:

- Play is central to the learning and development of young children.
- The pre-school year is a significant and distinct time which must be nurtured, respected, valued and supported in its own right.
- High quality educational early learning experiences and interventions are proven by research to lead to positive dispositions for life-long learning.
- The leadership role of the pre-school staff, including the early years specialist in the voluntary and private sector, is central.
- The children's holistic educational development and well-being has to be planned and resourced in accordance with their individual needs and stages of development.
- High quality staff interaction and their knowledge of how to effectively implement the requirements of the Curricular Guidance for Pre-School Education are essential to meet the needs of the children.
- The role of the parents as partners is recognised and supported.
- The links and partnerships with the community and support agencies must enable **all** children to become independent and confident to explore and

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk>

<sup>2</sup> [http://ccea.org.uk/sites/default/files/docs/curriculum/pre\\_school/preschool\\_guidance.pdf](http://ccea.org.uk/sites/default/files/docs/curriculum/pre_school/preschool_guidance.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Board of Directors, Management Group, Proprietor /manager and committee.

investigate with resilience to persevere as competent children.

### **What is self-evaluation?**

Self-evaluation is a process through which an individual teacher, groups of staff, the staff as a whole and senior management, including the management committee:

- ❖ reflect on their current practice;
- ❖ identify and celebrate the strengths of the pre-school;
- ❖ identify and address areas for improvement in their work;
- ❖ engage in personal and shared professional development; and
- ❖ focus on improving the quality of learning and teaching, and the standards of achievement in the pre-school.

Self-evaluation is a systematic process involving the staff and the management group and, where necessary other members of the pre-school community, such as, parents and children.

### **The process of self-evaluation:**

- ❖ is ongoing and not a one-off event in the life of the pre-school;
- ❖ requires an agreed approach to self-evaluation which is reflected consistently in the pre-school policy documents;
- ❖ requires a positive ethos where self-evaluation takes place in a culture of openness, transparency and reflection;
- ❖ is sharply-focused, and involves monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of existing provision and the children's outcomes;
- ❖ recognizes the need for the staff and the management group to have a clear and agreed view of the pre-school's current stage of development and, through the development planning process, to identify priorities which will have a positive effect on learning and teaching;
- ❖ informs and influences classroom practice and the quality of learning and teaching, and promotes development and improvement; and
- ❖ requires staff and the management group to evaluate their work critically, reflect on the extent to which expectations are being realized in the work of their pre-school, and establish a clear vision and future direction for the pre-school.

### **The purpose of self-evaluation is to:**

- ❖ promote effectiveness within the pre-school;
- ❖ improve the quality of learning and teaching;
- ❖ improve the experiences of the children; and
- ❖ raise the standards the children attain.

### **This framework may be useful to:**

- ❖ support the management group with the development of their self-evaluation process;
- ❖ help the management group to identify their strengths and areas for improvement;
- ❖ assist the leader and management group to incorporate action for improvement in the school development plan; and
- ❖ monitor and evaluate the impact of the actions for improvement on the outcomes for learners.

### **Underpinning principles of self-evaluation**

Whatever the context and circumstances of the pre-school:

- ❖ the procedures used in the process of self-evaluation should be rigorous, comprehensive and fit for purpose;
- ❖ all those involved should be aware of the methods to be adopted and of their part in, and contribution to, the process;
- ❖ the evidence obtained should be both qualitative and quantitative and be externally verifiable;
- ❖ the sources of the evidence should include those generated by the pre-school and other agencies and departments;
- ❖ the views of the children, staff, parents and the management group should be taken into consideration;
- ❖ first-hand evidence of the children's outcomes should be an integral part of the process; and
- ❖ the outcomes of the evaluation should lead to action to achieve the intended school improvements.

### **Application of the Framework**

During inspection, the ETI team will use this framework to evaluate the quality of the work of the pre-schools including the effectiveness of the management committee.

For the purposes of self-evaluation, the framework is designed to enable pre-schools, teams or individuals to initiate or continue the process of self-reflection leading to improvement; it should be used to provide a holistic approach to self-evaluation and not as an inflexible check-list. The underpinning phase specific characteristics of effective practice, and the self-evaluation questions, should enable the staff within pre-schools to have in-depth professional discussions about specific aspects within the framework and stimulate challenge and debate about: the outcomes for children; quality of provision; and leadership and management. These three key areas which are colour-coded form the basis of the framework. Care and welfare, safeguarding and governance (management group) influence all areas of the life and work of the pre-school organization. Within each key area are three sub-sections that contribute to the overall evaluation of that area and finally, taken holistically, an overall evaluation of the effectiveness of the pre-school setting. The framework may also be used to support teams or individuals to reflect on their skills, knowledge and expertise to identify areas for further career-long professional development in pursuit of high quality learning and teaching. Importantly the framework may be used to ensure consistent high quality provision within pre-schools at important key transition points.

As a result of the debate and challenge stimulated by the indicators and the questions, the pre-schools team or individuals should be able to provide a summary of the strengths of the particular aspect under focus, identify areas that require further development and consider the actions that are necessary to continue the improvement process. It is not enough to confirm that actions have taken place but rather to assess the impact of the actions on the outcomes for children. Therefore an important part of the evaluation process will be gathering of evidence of improvement that can be presented to the wider community and other stakeholders. This may include taking a wider, more inclusive and objective perspective to evaluation and necessitate consultation with children, staff, parents, management groups and other stakeholders.

Not all pre-schools are at the same stage of self-evaluation but the framework, characteristics of effective practice and self-evaluation questions will provide a generic model of reflection for those who are at the beginning of their evaluation journey as well as those pre-schools that are using well embedded procedures. The use of ISEF is not mandatory for management groups but may provide a framework for development and improvement at leadership and management level.

INSPECTION AND SELF- EVALUATION FRAMEWORK					
Overall effectiveness					
Outcomes for Learners	PL	Quality of Provision	PL	Leadership and Management	PL
Standards attained	S/AFI	Quality of curriculum including (breadth, balance and appropriateness)	S/AFI	Effectiveness and impact of the strategic leadership	S/AFI
Progression		Effectiveness of guidance and support in bringing about high quality individual learning experiences		Effectiveness and impact of the middle leadership	
Wider skills and dispositions/capabilities		Effectiveness and impact of planning, engagement/ teaching/training and assessment in promoting successful learning		Effectiveness of action to promote and sustain improvement, including self-evaluation and the development planning process	
Governance (for schools only)	High degree of confidence		Confidence		Limited confidence
Care and Welfare	Level 1. C&W impacts positively on learning, teaching and outcomes.			Level 2. C&W does not impact positively enough on learning, teaching and outcomes.	
Safeguarding	Level 1: Reflects the guidance		Level 2: Reflects broadly the guidance		Level 3: Unsatisfactory

**Overall Effectiveness:**

The pre-schools have a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners  
The pre-schools demonstrate the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners.  
The pre-schools need to address (an) important area (s) for improvement in the interest of all the learners  
The pre-schools need to address urgently the significant areas for improvement identified in the interest of all the learners.

**Performance Levels:**

Outstanding  
Very good  
Good  
Important areas for improvement  
Requires significant improvement  
Requires urgent improvement

**Additional Terms Used:**

S Strengths  
AFI Area for improvement

## OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN

### Standards attained, progression and the wider skills and dispositions

#### Effective practice

#### Effective practice is demonstrated when the management group:

- promote consistently high outcomes and behaviour, including social and emotional development, through being well informed by the leader and the staff about the outcomes for the children;
- ensures that the children make consistent progress in all areas of the pre-school curriculum;
- ensures there are well-developed approaches and strategies to support the children in progressing to their next stage of learning; and
- support opportunities for the children to develop wider skills and dispositions such as showing curiosity, respect, perseverance, confidence and resourcefulness.

#### Self-evaluation questions

- How do we know if the outcomes, progression, wider skills and dispositions, and behaviour including those with barriers to learning or additional learning needs are good enough and compare well with children in similar pre-schools?
- How do we know if all of the children achieve appropriate standards in line with their age and stage of development?
- How do we know that the children are learning across all six areas of the pre-school curriculum and that they are developing intellectually, socially, emotionally, physically and morally/spiritually?
- How do we support the staff in developing effective approaches and strategies to support the children as they transfer to the next stage of learning, for example by providing time for the staff to visit feeder primary schools?

## QUALITY OF PROVISION

### Quality of the curriculum, care, guidance and support and the impact of planning, teaching and assessment

#### Effective practice

##### Effective practice is demonstrated when the management group:

- ensure the staff are implementing a broad and balanced pre-school curriculum based on the requirements of the Curricular Guidance for Pre-school Education;
- ensure that there is appropriately resourced play provision for **all** children;
- is assured that the quality of adult interaction is of a high quality and promotes the children's language and thinking; and
- ensure that the agreed approach to planning, observation and assessment is effectively and consistently implemented and bring about improvement in the children's learning.

#### Self-evaluation questions

- What processes are in place to keep us informed about the quality of the provision across all areas of the pre-school curricular provision? Do we keep curricular policies under review? How do we monitor pastoral provision to ensure it meets well the needs of all the children?
- Do we adequately support the staff in providing high quality play resources and encourage parents to contribute resources when required?
- How are the needs of children who have additional learning needs or whose first language is not English being met?
- How do we know that the daily planned activities promote all aspects of learning using both indoors and outdoors resources to maximum potential to enhance learning?
- To what extent are the staff and children involved in planning the activities?
- Do we have evidence that the children have enough opportunities to develop their physical skills?
- How do we know that the approaches to planning, observation, and assessment are effectively and consistently implemented through high quality interactions to bring about improvement in the children's learning?



## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

### Effectiveness and impact of the strategic leadership of the management group

#### Effective practice

##### Effective practice is demonstrated when the management group:

- contribute to the vision, ethos and strategic direction of the pre-school centre and ensure strong links with the parents/carers and the local community;
- are well informed of and meet the requirements of the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) Minimum Standards for Child Minding and Day Care for children under age 12<sup>4</sup> (2012) and the Implementation Guidance<sup>5</sup> (\*)
- support and challenge appropriately the pre-school centre's development plan priorities for improvement of the pre-school programme;
- access and implement training to assist them in fulfilling their roles and statutory duties e.g. recruitment, risk assessment and child protection/safeguarding;
- access available external support for children and families with specific needs;
- be aware of and help facilitate staff participation in clustering arrangements with other pre-school centres and promote transition into and from the pre-school to support learning and development ; and
- ensure the centre's financial and human resources are deployed effectively and in the interest of all the children.

(\*) In 2012 the Department published the **Minimum Standards for Child-minding and Day Care for Children Under Age 12** under their powers from the Health and Personal Social Services (Quality Improvement and Regulation) (Northern Ireland) Order 2003. The publication of the Minimum Standards reflects the importance of having access to an up to date framework for the registration and inspection of child-minding and day care services.

**The Minimum Standards (as interpreted by the Implementation Guidance are compulsory.** The Standards and the Implementation Guidance issued by the Health Social Care Board, would be referred to by any Court considering, a challenge to a decision, in respect to registration, by a Trust. **The Implementation Guidance must always be read in conjunction with the Standards and is not designed as a standalone document.**

#### Self-evaluation questions

- How do we communicate a shared strategic vision and promote an ethos of professionalism, teamwork and partnership wherein the views of the children, parents and staff included in the review /planning processes?
- What robust systems, including a three year development plan with targeted action plans<sup>6</sup>, are in place for monitoring the leadership and management of the pre-school educational provision and outcomes for the children?
- What is the impact of the advice, guidance and support of the early years specialist (EYS) in the improvement process?
- How do we receive evidence from the /leader/EYS about the progress and development of a high quality pre-school programme and learning environment?
- How do we respond to the staff evaluation of the strengths and areas identified for improvement?
- How do monitor the work of the leader/ early years specialist to ensure that effective strategies are in place for professional reflection, training, mentoring, capacity building and development?
- How effectively do we challenge in a professional manner aspects of the pre-school provision which are less effective in leading to quality learning outcomes for the children?

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/dhssps/early-years-standards-full-version.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.early-years.org/policy/resources/v3-implementation-guide.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> SMART – Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound

## CARE AND WELFARE

### Care and welfare

#### Effective practice

##### Effective practice is demonstrated when the management group:

- ensure there is a safe, hygienic, secure and well-organised learning environment for all members of the pre- school community;
- promote a caring and inclusive ethos in which relationships are characterised by mutual respect, openness and trust;
- ensure that the Personal Social and Emotional area of the pre-school curriculum includes strategies and messages to promote for the children’s safety and well-being;
- ensure that any concerns raised about care and welfare are dealt with sensitively and efficiently in the line with the policies and procedures of the relevant Departments.
- ensure the children and their families/carers are active contributors to the life and work of the pre-school centre; and
- ensure the pre-school centre works effectively with appropriate outside agencies to support the care and welfare of the children.

#### Self-evaluation questions

- What evidence do we have that we provide a safe and secure environment for all members of the pre-school centre community?
- How do we ensure that relationships are mutually respectful, open and trusting?
- What strategies and messages are being conveyed to promote the children’s safety and well-being?
- How do we ensure that the children and their families/carers are active contributors to the life and work of the pre-school centre?
- How do we effectively address concerns raised by members of the pre-school centre and the wider community?
- Does our policy and procedures enable us to deal with concerns in a caring timely and efficient manner?
- How do we ensure that all the children are receiving the support they need to overcome potential barriers to learning both in school and through involvement of outside agencies?

## SAFEGUARDING

### Safeguarding

#### Effective practice

#### Effective practice is demonstrated when the management group:

- ensure the children's behaviour indicates that they feel free from harm or abuse in the four areas: neglect, sexual, physical and emotional;
- ensure the pre-school centre has and implements fully an appropriate safeguarding policy which is in line with the requirements of the relevant Department(s)<sup>78</sup>;
- ensure the children, parents/carers and all relevant parties are informed of policies and procedures relating to the protection of children;
- ensure the staff monitor and assess the extent to which children know how to keep themselves safe (including online) and how to seek help;
- ensure the pre-school centre regularly carries out self-evaluation of its own child protection/safeguarding policy and practice, at least annually, using the phase-appropriate ETI safeguarding proforma<sup>9</sup>;
- ensure the pre-school centre regularly reviews policies, procedures and reporting arrangements: child protection/safeguarding; anti-bullying; behaviour management;
- ensure the pre-school centre works with a range of external agencies to support safeguarding and child protection practices; and
- staff and /management group regularly receive training including safeguarding and child protection.

#### Self-evaluation questions

- How do we rigorously implement, on an annual basis, the requirements of the ETI safeguarding proforma?
- How do we ensure that all requirements regarding child protection and safeguarding are in place and are effectively communicated to the pre-school centre community?
- Do the staff know when and how to report concerns to Gateway, Health and Social Care (HSC), the regulatory body for safeguarding; for example, are the staff clear about the procedures for involvement of the parents and/or referral in the event of concerns?
- How do we know that the appropriate actions resulting from risk assessments are being implemented?
- Are appropriate records being kept, in line with guidance from the relevant departments, of the vetting and training of staff and volunteers?
- How is the leader or the person with overall responsibility for safeguarding accountable to the management group?
- How effectively do we engage with outside agencies?

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/circular-201704-safeguarding-and-child-protection-schools-guide-schools>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/co-operating-safeguard-children-and-young-people-northern-ireland>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.etini.gov.uk/publications/safeguarding-proforma-private-and-voluntary-pre-school-playgroups>

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