Your Nursery Checklist

This comprehensive checklist will help when selecting a Nursery which is right for you.

Nursery

1. Does the Nursery feel happy, warm and welcoming?
Do the children seem happy and are staff interacting with them?
Are you introduced to members of the team when you visit?

2. Does the Nursery follow any voluntary Quality Assurance scheme?

3. Is the building safe, comfortable and homely so children feel secure?
Is it geared to child care?

4. Is the Nursery properly equipped to care for each age group?
Is it bright, clean and well-maintained?
Does it look like equipment is in good condition and is there a good variety to support all areas of development e.g... physical, social or creative development?

5. Is there an emphasis on emotional and physical wellbeing?
Are there cosy spaces for children?

6. Do the playrooms reflect the children: their physical needs and their activities?

7. Are bathrooms hygienic with areas for children to wash their hands?
Is the children's personal privacy considered?
Do they have suitable nappy changing and toilet facilities?

8. Is a child able to rest or sleep in a quiet area?
How flexible are sleeping arrangements?

9. Children of a similar age should be grouped together, but check if they also have an opportunity to mix.

10. How does the Nursery encourage healthy eating?
Check that fresh food is cooked daily, that menus are nutritionally balanced, that reputable produce suppliers are used and ask how the new allergy legislation is being met—do all staff know how to provide information on allergens?

11. Is there a large, secure, outdoor area where children can mix, play freely and develop physical skills in fresh air?

12. Are your specific dietary needs catered for?

Costs

1. Don't let cost be a primary factor. Good child care is invaluable and cannot be provided cheaply. If it is less expensive, where are the savings being made?

2. Are the daily opening hours suitable?
Is the Nursery or Nursery School open all year (not just term times)?

3. Is it registered as a Nursery School so you can benefit from the Nursery Education Grant and benefit from free early education for two, three and four-year-olds?

4. Do they accept Childcare Vouchers?

5. Is your deposit returnable?

6. Are there hefty registration fees?

7. Are there vacancies or is there a waiting list?

8. Ask other parents and carers how they view the Nursery. Is there a Parent and Carer Feedback area on their website or Facebook page? Check with your Local Council, midwife or health visitor to see what they think. Ask other parents or carers—they have extended experience.

9. Do your research: check the setting's Ofsted reports on the Ofsted website, check the setting's own website and Facebook page to help get a sense of the ethos there. Are Ofsted certificates displayed?

10. How well would the Nursery communicate with you and support your family? Are there opportunities for you to be involved?

Policies

1. Are parents and carers welcome to visit at any time and are they willing to show you around?
Does the Nursery have a realistic attitude towards the needs of working parents and carers?

2. Does the Nursery have a secure procedure controlling who can collect children?

3. Check entry/exit security.

4. Is there a formal list of exclusion criteria for communicable illnesses?

5. What is their policy on behaviour management and safeguarding children?

6. Does the Nursery have a strong ethos towards equality and inclusion for all? Is your cultural background respected?

7. Is the Nursery flexible and does it take parental and carer requests into account?
How is your opinion sought and taken into account?

8. Check emergency evacuation procedures.

9. How would medical conditions/emergencies be managed?

10. What is their settling–in policy for new children?

11. Can you see the Nursery policies?

Staff

1. Does the Nursery meet minimum staffing ratios?
What supernumerary staff are onsite?

2. Are the Manager and Deputy suitably qualified (at least to Level 4) and experienced?
Ask how they supervise and manage their team's performance.
Do staff like working there?

3. Is there a qualified Early Years Teacher and how many qualified Early Years Professionals/Teachers are on the team?

4. Does the Nursery operate a Key Person system?

5. Are the staff well qualified? Ofsted dictates a minimum of 50% qualified staff onsite.
Are there any graduates on the team?

6. Are all staff trained in First Aid (not just one or two)?
Does the Nursery have a trained Special Educational Needs & Disability Co-ordinator (SENDCO)?

7. What job-related training is staff expected to attend?
How do they ensure they keep up-to-date and offer best practice?

8. What is the staff turnover like and what are the reasons for staff leaving? Do they use safe recruitment practice and are DBS (used to be known as CRB) checks up to date?

9. Do the staff members smile and take time to welcome you and your child? Are they friendly, interested and sincere?
Do they interact with the children?
How do they get on with each other?

Learning

1. What will be your child's care routine and is it shaped by the four principles of the EYFS from babyhood to pre-school? To find out more about the EYFS visit www.foundationyears.org.uk.
Will your child's routine and special needs be considered?

2. Are planned and resourced activities on offer which follow the EYFS framework, allowing the children to achieve within all seven areas of learning, focusing on the three prime areas?

3. Does the Nursery enhance its daily routine with interesting activities or outings for all ages, including babies?

4. How is information about your child's day communicated to you?
Are activity plans on display and is there evidence of well-rounded activities and topics?

5. Is there any ICT equipment available e.g.. Early Years programmable robots, laptops, iPads?

6. Can children freely access areas of continuous activity provision, so they can explore, play and reinforce their learning at their own pace?
Are they busy, happy, engaged?

7. Does the Nursery work with outside specialists e.g. Forest School, Drama4Tots, Stretch 'n' Grow to enhance provision?