

Deferral of children's centre inspections

Information for local authorities and children's centres

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This document sets out Ofsted's approach to the deferral, cancellation and re-scheduling of inspections.

Reference to ISPs in this document refers to Ofsted's inspection service provider partners, who administer and conduct children's centre inspections on behalf of Ofsted.

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Deferral of children's centre inspections

There are a limited number of circumstances in which a decision can be taken that an inspection should not go ahead on the planned dates. The purpose of this policy is to set out Ofsted's approach to the deferral, cancellation and re-scheduling of inspections. The policy does not apply to decisions to re-schedule the start date of an inspection within five working days.

Ofsted's policy is that deferral or cancellation should only be granted if:

- the centre manager or the appropriate authority or a member of the centre's senior management team is subject to a current police investigation that would be compromised by an inspection of the centre
- the centre has experienced a recent major incident, such as a fatal accident to a centre user or member of staff
- the centre is due to close and Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) has decided that no useful purpose will be served in inspecting it. This should normally only apply when:
 - having followed the required statutory process, the proposed closure has been formally approved by a decision of the local authority (LA) or the Schools Adjudicator, as appropriate
 - the date of closure is within six months of the inspection
- the centre is closed to all users – for example, owing to a staff training day or adverse weather conditions – for at least half of the period for which the inspection has been scheduled
- the centre has very recently merged or become part of a children's centre group – in such circumstances HMCI reserves the right to schedule the reorganised centre's first inspection at a later date
- other exceptional circumstances that, in the judgement of Ofsted's Regional Director, justify deferral or cancellation of the inspection.

The nature of such circumstances should be recorded fully.

Applications to defer a planned inspection on the grounds that the centre manager is out of the centre will not be accepted, as users of the centre are still receiving services.

In the case of illness or death of the centre manager, the Regional Director will determine whether the inspection will take place.

Building work will not be a reason for deferral if the centre is still operating.

Subject to the discretion of the Regional Director, the criteria for deferral and cancellation will also be applied to decisions to re-schedule or to accept scheduling requests.

Deferral process

The chart below is the process followed by Children's Centres lead inspectors

