

Early childhood education and care quality ratings

Quality matters

Choosing a quality early childhood education and care (ECEC) service for your child is one of the most important decisions you will make.

ECEC services are assessed and rated against the National Quality Standard (NQS) that sets a benchmark for the quality of all education and care services across Australia.

Services are assessed against 7 quality areas, which contribute to an overall rating. It is not a pass or fail system, but is designed to promote continuous improvement in quality for each service.

In NSW, ECEC service quality ratings are displayed in an easy-to-follow star graphic, designed to give families important information about the overall rating of a service, as well as rating against each of the quality areas.



All services are on a continuous journey of quality improvement. The quality ratings reflect where a service is up to on their journey at a point in time.



Significant Improvement Required

Service does not meet one of the 7 quality areas or a section of the legislation and there is a significant risk to the safety, health and wellbeing of children.



Working Towards National Quality Standard

Service provides a safe education and care program, but there are one or more areas identified for improvement.



Meeting National Quality Standard

Service meets the NQS. Service provides quality education and care in all 7 quality areas.



Exceeding National Quality Standard

Service goes beyond the requirements of the NQS in at least 4 of the 7 quality areas.



Excellent

Service promotes exceptional education and care, demonstrates sector leadership, and is committed to continually improving.

This rating can only be awarded by the Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority (ACECQA).

Services rated Exceeding NQS in all 7 quality areas may choose to apply for this rating.

How is the overall rating for a service determined?

If a service is rated below the NQS in any quality area, the overall rating will reflect the lowest quality area rating.

To achieve an overall rating of Exceeding, a service needs to achieve Exceeding NQS in 4 or more quality areas of which 2 must be from Quality Areas 1, 5, 6 or 7.

How can I find out what a service is rated?

All services are required by law to display their quality ratings on the premises.

You can also find out a service's quality rating at startingblocks.gov.au.

Remember to ask a service

- What is their quality rating against the NQS?
- How are they meeting the requirements of the NQS?
- How will they include your child's interests in the broader educational program?
- What is their plan for quality improvement?

The quality ratings reflect a service's performance against 7 quality areas.

These areas are:

Quality Area 1: Educational program and practice

Educational program and practice of educators are child-centred, stimulating and maximise opportunities for enhancing and extending each child's learning and development.

Quality Area 2: Children's health and safety

Children have the right to experience quality education and care in an environment that safeguards and promotes their health, safety and wellbeing.

Quality Area 3: Physical environment

Physical environment is safe, suitable and provides a rich and diverse range of experiences that promote children's learning and development.

Quality Area 4: Staffing arrangements

Qualified and experienced educators who develop warm, respectful relationships with children, create predictable environments and encourage children's active engagement in the learning program.

Quality Area 5: Relationships with children

Relationships with children are responsive, respectful and promote children's sense of security and belonging.

Quality Area 6: Collaborative partnerships with families and communities

Collaborative relationships with families are fundamental to achieving quality outcomes for children, and community partnerships based on active communication, consultation and collaboration are essential.

Quality Area 7: Governance and leadership

Effective leadership and governance of the service contributes to quality environments for children's learning and development. Effective leaders establish shared values for the service and set clear direction for the service's continuous improvement.