

EDUCATION

ASK THE EXPERT



There are so many nurseries to choose from and they all seem to offer the same thing. How can I identify a quality nursery?

Who validates quality at the nursery? Accreditation bodies, such as the UK National Day Nurseries Association, evaluate nurseries using international standards in early childhood care and educational practice. Nurseries which seek relevant, independent evaluators show that they have nothing to hide and want to improve their practices.

What about child to staff ratios and groupings? Nurseries which follow low child-to-staff ratios and have small groupings tend to provide more supervision, encourage quality adult-child interactions and assist children in settling in more quickly, also promoting each child's individuality and self-confidence.

Do the curriculum and assessments matter? Absolutely! Nurseries which use current and research-based curriculums are better able to deliver quality early education. A good nursery will administer frequent developmental screenings and provide parents with progress reports.

What should I look for in educators? The key to any nursery is staff. Seek a nursery with qualified staff, specifically trained to work with young children. Staff should be observed and evaluated on a regular basis and given opportunities to develop their practice.

How does the nursery setting come into play? Children need

to move and learn in a supervised and safe environment. Does the nursery have a secure entry system, outdoor space and open areas for active play? What about age-appropriate toys and books?

Open and frequent communication: Communication between nursery managers, teachers and parents is crucial for your child's success. Does the nursery hold regular parent mornings and parent-teacher meetings? Are weekly newsletters and lesson plans sent out to keep you in the loop on class activities and learning objectives? Do you have the opportunity to give feedback?

Don't be afraid to ask lots of questions as you do a thorough walk-through of the nursery: Ask to check washrooms and clinics for cleanliness. Do you feel welcome and does your child seem eager to join in play?

Taking the time to research this important decision will ensure that your child has a high quality experience at this crucial time in their life.



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