

T R I B A L

Quality Mark - International Early Childhood Education and Care

Recognising high quality early childhood provision



An introduction

Welcome to the International Early Childhood Education and Care Quality Mark (IQM-ECEC). This award builds on the Tribal Quality Mark for Early Years, taking account of recent studies that reflect the increasing attention being given to early childhood educational issues and quality standards at an international level.

This handbook provides an overview of the context and principles of the award which lead to external validation of high quality education and care for young children. The IQM-ECEC is supported by an accompanying audit tool designed to enable participating settings to progress towards accreditation. The audit tool sets out the early education standards that settings must meet in addition to remaining compliant with all local/national regulations for children's learning and welfare.

The Quality Mark framework supports effective self-evaluation and continuous improvement within the context of internationally shared views that high quality ECEC programmes have a positive and lasting impact on children's well-being, learning and development.

Benefits of the International Quality Mark

- External validation and acknowledgement of provision that has moved beyond meeting basic requirements in ECEC practice, progress and performance.
- Valuable public recognition of the impact of the work of leaders, managers and practitioners in improving the quality of provision for the young children in their care and the standards they achieve.
- Helps every provider of early childhood education and care continue to think about how to improve further the quality of service they offer to young children and their families.
- Provides a holistic evidence base for continuous improvement through the multi-dimensional aspect of Quality Mark. QM includes structural characteristics, such as adult-child ratios and practitioner qualifications that are often regulated according to the local/national context. These are interwoven with process quality factors, such as the pedagogical approach and types of interactions that influence the quality of children's experiences in ECEC settings.
- Leaders/managers and practitioners are taken through a process of rigorous self-evaluation to identify strengths, prioritise key areas for development and

undertake regular reviews to identify the impact of their practice.

- The process of audit and self-review will add value to current provision and support improved outcomes for children.

The IQM takes account of indicators widely acknowledged to contribute to the quality of early education and care while recognising that the approach to supporting children's welfare, learning and development varies according to the cultural and social context of each country and each setting.

It was a really helpful tool for reflection on our setting in Budapest. I appreciated the emphasis on practitioners' understanding of child development. The self-assessment tool is really useful and it made me think about what is in place currently in our setting and also where we need to make improvements. It is certainly a useful tool for schools to use.

EARLY YEARS LEADER AND NORD ANGLIA TEACHING FELLOW, BRITISH INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL, BUDAPEST



Background of the award

An internationally shared view of effective teaching and early learning

The Quality Mark for schools was developed in 1996 to provide a framework to promote, support and celebrate the improvement of literacy, language and mathematics. The framework was extended to include Early Years in 2008 in recognition of a growing understanding that high quality early childhood experiences have lasting benefits for young children (Sammons, P. et al 2008). Implementation of the Tribal Early Years framework followed a national pilot funded by the Quality Improvement Agency (QIA). Participants included local authority advisers and early years practitioners representing the maintained, private, voluntary and independent sectors.

The IQM builds on the Quality Mark Early Years to support those who lead and work in ECEC, within and outside the UK, to undertake effective self-evaluation and continuous improvement which drives better outcomes for children, their families and society. The updated guidance and audit tools reflect findings of international studies which identify shared views of high quality ECEC provision and its short and long-term, positive impact on children's learning (e.g. Sammons et al., 2008, Melhuish 2004; 2011).

Empirical research into how children's competencies develop and are interconnected continues to evolve, however, there is a consensus that early learning is a

holistic concept that involves developing children's interrelated and mutually reinforcing, physical, social-emotional and cognitive skills (Tinajero, Loizillon, 2012).

The IQM is based on this consensus. The required elements of the award reflect the themes and key domains of the OECD's ongoing survey, 'Starting Strong' (OECD 2012, 2017a) and those that are being included in the International Study of Early Learning and Child Well-Being (OECD 2017 b). These studies reflect a growing body of research, from neuroscience, that the quality of ECEC provision is the most significant factor underlying the long-term impact on children's outcomes, fostering cognitive and non-cognitive skills which are important for success in later life.

'Starting Strong 5' highlights that, "the brain sensitivity of highly important developmental areas, such as emotional control, social skills, language and numeracy, peaks in the first three years of a child's life." (OECD 2017). As these domains are integral to the IQM, ECEC settings who meet the requirements of the 10 elements can be assured that they are evaluating their provision against internationally shared views of effective early learning.

"Quality Mark has the benefit of ensuring children are being taught basic skills well and that any gaps in attainment and progress are identified early; it also ensures that we are forever striving for improvement."

**LISA HUMPHRYES, DEPUTY HEADTEACHER,
RUSH GREEN PRIMARY SCHOOL**



A National and International Agenda

The IQM, and associated audit tool, complement and support national and international visions of a dynamic sector that delivers high quality early education and care. The process of reflection and self-evaluation is integral to the IQM and is key to the accreditation process.

As leaders and practitioners gather evidence of their provision and practice, they engage in robust self-evaluation, identify strengths and areas for improvement and set and implement targeted actions to support further improvement.

The initial phase of evaluation and evidence gathering often takes between 12-18 months to complete. This process will give proprietors, leaders and practitioners confidence to explain their cycle of review and continuous improvement. Those involved will find that the information collected is a valuable source of evidence for any system of regulation and/or inspection that has high expectations of quality in early childhood settings.

Completing the International Quality Mark

IQM activity can stand alone or complement and integrate with other local and/or national initiatives to improve young children’s achievements. Those with responsibility for leading the process in your setting control the timescale for submitting the IQM portfolio. The length of time taken to achieve accreditation will vary according to your setting’s starting point and its ability to demonstrate progress and sustained good practice. All practitioners, and others involved with the setting, whether paid or voluntary, should be involved in helping to achieve the IQM award. Involvement in the process will contribute to the development of leadership and management skills such as auditing, action planning, monitoring and evaluating, in a practical context and with a tangible outcome.

Proprietors, management committees and governing bodies, or their equivalent, will find that work undertaken to achieve and sustain the IQM award offers a meaningful context in which to monitor and evaluate the quality of provision, practice and outcomes and to demonstrate how they are actively carrying out their role to drive continuous improvement.



Impact of the International Quality Mark

As parents/carers become ever more demanding consumers of early childhood services, they seek assurance that those who educate and care for their young children meet their individual needs and prepare them well for school and later life.

Proprietors and leaders who have a strong commitment to continuous quality improvement are most likely to succeed in reassuring parents/carers that they will promote the best outcomes for their children.

Achievement of the IQM-ECEC Quality Mark will contribute positively to parents'/carers' confidence and consequently to the sustainability of the setting, school and business.

The International Quality Mark Approach

The IQM uses studies of international best practice to provide benchmarks against which leaders, practitioners and other stakeholders can evaluate their provision, whatever teaching method/approach they choose to use. The criteria required to meet the elements are not prescriptive. However, those who embark on the process will be expected to show that they recognise that the early years of a child's life are a period of intense learning and development. It is expected that practitioners will use developmentally appropriate practices, an informed knowledge of the needs of each child and an

understanding of the social and cultural contexts in which children live, to support children's physical well-being and motor development, social-emotional development, language and cognitive abilities during this crucial phase of life.

The criteria of the IQM are based on a general understanding that young children learn best when they are well-cared for in a nurturing and supportive environment. A significant focus is given to how well practitioners support children to learn through different types of play, which is recognised as being so important to children's well-being and development that it is set down in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989).

Participants undertaking the award will show that they understand that self-evaluation and quality assurance processes are not one-off, short-term activities. The process, and the actions which follow, must enhance the provision for children's care and learning. Settings achieving the award will show that they give children a strong start to help them to become well-rounded, confident individuals who are prepared for their next stage of learning and for their place as global citizens.



The International Quality Mark framework

A comparative model

Your Early Childhood Education and Care setting will achieve the IQM when you demonstrate that the criteria for all 10 elements are met and provide evidence that participation in the award has had a positive impact on provision and practice.

You can be confident to share with parents, and other interested parties, that the IQM elements are reflected in international studies of ECEC quality monitoring and relevant to the expectations of inspection, accreditation and regulatory frameworks.

The table on the next page illustrates how the IQM elements align with a range of key levers, processes and systems used to measure the quality of early childhood education and care in different contexts.

“We will be improving our hearing journals, including more photographic evidence. Doing the QM helps to focus on the above areas and to reflect on them. A very useful tool which we use to help improve our nursery and what we offer.”

QUALITY ASSURANCE MANAGER, GLAISDALE DAY NURSERY



QUALITY MARK ELEMENT		OFSTED COMMON INSPECTION FRAMEWORK	NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE EDUCATION OF YOUNG CHILDREN ACCREDITATION STANDARD	STANDARDS FOR BRITISH SCHOOLS OVERSEAS	OECD STARTING STRONG III AND IV
1	A whole setting strategy to improve children’s abilities and achievements	Leadership and management (integral to all key judgements)	Leadership and management (10) Curriculum (2) Assessment (4) Health (5)	Quality of education provided (Part 1) Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils (Part 2) Welfare, health and safety of pupils (Part 3) Suitability of practitioners, supply practitioners and proprietors (Part 4) Premises and accommodation (Part 5) Leadership and Management (part 8)	Quality Goals Curriculum and learning standards Data, research and monitoring
2	An analysis of the assessment of young children’s abilities and achievements	Leadership and management Teaching, Learning and Assessment Personal Development, Behaviour and Welfare	Assessment (4) Leadership and management (10)	Quality of education provided (Part 1) Leadership and Management (part 8)	Data, research and monitoring Monitoring child development and outcomes
3	Setting appropriately high expectations for young children’s development	Leadership and management Teaching, Learning and Assessment Personal Development, Behaviour and Welfare	Teaching (3) Curriculum (2) Relationships (1) Leadership and management (10)	Quality of education provided (Part 1) Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils (Part 2) Leadership and Management (part 8)	Curriculum and learning standards Monitoring child development and outcomes
4	Planning ‘next steps’ in learning for young children’s development	Teaching, Learning and Assessment	Curriculum (2) Teaching (3)	Quality of education provided (Part 1) Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils (Part 2)	Curriculum and learning standards Monitoring child development and outcomes
5	Regular review of progress made by all children	Leadership and management Teaching, Learning and Assessment	Assessment (4) Leadership and management (10)	Quality of education provided (Part 1) Leadership and Management (part 8)	Monitoring child development and outcomes

6	A commitment to improving the skills of all practitioners	Leadership and management	Teachers (6) Leadership and management (10)	Quality of education provided (Part 1) Leadership and Management (part 8)	Workforce Quality Monitoring of practitioners’ quality linked to professional development
7	A balanced use of child-initiated and adult-guided play-based activities	Leadership and Management Teaching, Learning and Assessment Personal Development, Behaviour and Welfare	Teaching (3) Curriculum (2) Relationships (1)	Quality of education provided (Part 1) Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils (Part 2) Leadership and Management (part 8)	Curriculum and learning standards Workforce Quality
8	The use of appropriate environments and resources	Leadership and Management Teaching, Learning and Assessment Personal Development, Behaviour and Welfare	Physical environment (9)	Quality of education provided (Part 1) Welfare, health and safety of pupils (Part 3) Premises and accommodation (Part 5)	Quality Goals Curriculum and learning standards
9	Partnership working between families, carers, practitioners and professionals in supporting young children’s learning and development	Leadership and Management Teaching, Learning and Assessment Personal Development, Behaviour and Welfare (N.B the domain of physical development is expected to include health, growth and fitness and sensory/ motor development)	Families (7) Community relations (8) Health (5)	Quality of education provided (Part 1) Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils (Part 2) Welfare, health and safety of pupils (Part 3) Provision of information (Part 6)	Family and community engagement collaboration between practitioners and parents. Quality Goals Curriculum and learning standards Monitoring child development and outcomes.
10	An effective procedure for monitoring planning and assessing improvement in practice and provision	Leadership and Management (& integral to all judgements)	Leadership and management (10)	Leadership and Management (part 8)	Monitoring the quality of curriculum implementation, practitioners- child interaction, teaching and care, collaboration between practitioners, responsiveness to child’s needs, collaboration between practitioners and parents.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who can apply?

The IQM (ECEC) is available to all registered/licensed providers of early childhood education and care for children from birth to statutory school age. This includes for example, nurseries, early childhood centres, playgroups, pre-schools, Reception classes and ECEC provision in independent, private, voluntary and maintained/ government schools.

ECEC providers and schools interested in accreditation should contact : enquiries.qualitymark@tribalgroup.com to receive details of the award, the support available and associated costs.

How long is the IQM award valid?

The IQM is awarded for two years. At the end of that period the award can be renewed for a further two years (and in subsequent cycles) providing the setting continues to meet the criteria for all 10 elements and can demonstrate that holding the IQM has had a positive impact on its provision and practice. This includes an ongoing emphasis to the areas of communication, language and literacy as well as mathematics within with the relevant ECEC framework/curriculum.

How is the provision assessed?

An early childhood specialist, accredited by Tribal, will review and evaluate the electronic portfolio of evidence submitted and carry out an assessment visit to your setting. The recommendation for the International Quality Mark award can only be made by an accredited assessor. There is no prescribed start or end date for the award. Applications can be made throughout the year.

What does the evidence about the practice and provision need to show?

An ECEC provider in a setting or school provision will be required to show that at the time of the assessment:

- it meets the appropriate criteria for its context in all 10 IQM elements
- the whole setting/school is committed to improving communication, language, literacy and mathematics taking account of the age and stage of development of each child and within the relevant learning and development framework
- the abilities and achievements of young children in communication, language, literacy and mathematics are improving.

ECEC settings spend varying amounts of time working towards accreditation depending on their starting points. They must show that all elements of the IQM elements are met before the award can be granted. It is not possible to gain accreditation by making a commitment to meet all elements in the future. Evidence to show that the quality of provision and practice meets the criteria for each element should come from a wide range of sources. Possible sources are included, but not limited to, the examples included with each element in the handbook.

There is no prescribed amount of evidence required to substantiate each element. Participants may find that they have much of the evidence readily available, as it will have been gathered for other purposes. Each setting should make a professional judgement in selecting the most appropriate evidence to illustrate how they meet criteria in the context of their setting. As highlighted in the audit tool guidance the same piece of core evidence may be used for more than one element, provided the analysis relates to the relevant criteria. Evidence should be presented electronically. The choice of format is a decision for the setting, but should enable the assessor to easily identify planning, provision and impact. The self-audit tool maybe a useful working document to support the collation of relevant evidence.

Assessment is not based solely on an evaluation of the evidence submitted or a review of documents. The assessor will gather additional evidence during focused observations of practice during the evaluation visit and/or a ‘learning walk’ around the setting or school. An assessor will also seek evidence through discussion with key stakeholders, such as practitioners, parents/carers, representatives of any management committee, advisory group or governing body. Where appropriate, assessors will talk to and take account of the views of young children.

It is expected that any improvements that take place add value to the provision and in most instances, relate to a period lasting longer than one academic year.

How is achievement of a Quality Mark recognised?

The International Early Childhood Education and Care Quality Mark is awarded by Tribal and is only available to settings that have been assessed as meeting the accreditation standard. Schools and ECEC settings holding the award are entitled to display the logo, which is supplied electronically, on information and publicity materials, such as a letterhead, prospectus or advertisement. Those who achieve the award also receive an award certificate.

For further information on the Quality Mark please contact: enquiries.qualitymark@tribalgroup.com

