










هيئة جودة التعليم والتدريب  
Education & Training Quality Authority

# Kindergartens Reviews Handbook

## February 2025



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## Introduction

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The Education & Training Quality Authority (BQA) is committed to raising the quality of education across the Kingdom of Bahrain. As part of this role, we review the quality of educational provision for all ages. This framework has been developed by (BQA) to support the review of kindergartens. It defines the evaluation requirements that are used to review the performance of kindergartens in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

### Pillars of early childhood education; A basis for the review framework

Kindergarten is a crucial stage in a child's development. It shapes their personality alongside their home environment. This stage supports children with their development, fostering their talents and abilities, and cultivating their independence and understanding of the world. It fosters a love of learning, boosting curiosity and creativity. Kindergarten encourages children to express themselves through a variety of educational experiences, including both individual and group activities and to explore the world around them.

Activities should be designed to harness children's energy to build their skills, gain experience, and discover new interests. This approach allows them to learn, explore, experiment, and problem-solve, through playing and interacting with their peers and surroundings, preparing them to engage with the wider environment and community.

The educational goals of kindergarten are guided by a focus on developing key pillars of early childhood education practices, which is the starting point for the review framework aspects and criteria. These include the following:



**01**

### Centrality of Play

Play is fundamental in early childhood education. It supports cognitive, physical, social, and emotional development. Through play, children explore their world, learn to solve problems, and develop critical thinking skills. Play-based learning encourages creativity, imagination, and resilience, making it the central keystone of effective early childhood education and the method of delivery.

**02**

### Holistic Development

Early childhood education aims to nurture the overall development of children. Recognizing that each child is unique, emphasising on personalised learning experiences, tailoring activities to meet individual needs, interests and developmental levels, and fostering a supportive environment where every child can thrive and reach their full potential based on their own pace, ability and interests.

**03**

### Nurturing and Inclusive Environment

Creating a safe, inclusive and nurturing environment in early childhood education is fundamental for children's holistic development. A supportive atmosphere where children feel valued and secure enhances their ability to play, explore, learn and grow, which are crucial for their cognitive, emotional and social growth.

This learning environment is further enriched by the active involvement of families and the broader community in kindergartens' activities and children's learning experiences.

For example, parents may participate in class activities and field trips, while community members such as local artists and health professionals may provide interactive learning sessions, offering children new perspectives and learning opportunities. This inclusion enhances children's sense of belonging within their community and the world.

Family engagement in kindergarten activities fosters a consistent learning experience, reinforces educational goals and helps children feel supported in both settings. According to a study by Bovaird et al. (2019), family and community involvement significantly boosts children's academic and social outcomes by providing diverse perspectives and additional learning resources. Casanova et al. (2022) emphasise that learning environments with strong family and community ties create a collaborative network that nurtures children's development, helping them build social skills and a sense of community belonging. Together, these elements create a comprehensive support system that encourages children to thrive in their early years. These pillars foster children's development of different skills and knowledge, which are essential for personal growth and well-being, as well as later academic success.

## Kindergartens Reviews Framework

The Kindergartens Reviews Framework defines the evaluation requirements based on the criteria that are used in reviewing the quality of kindergartens performance in the Kingdom of Bahrain, where the most prominent strengths will be identified, as well as developmental areas to formulate recommendations in order to improve the overall quality for experiences for children in kindergartens.

The Kindergartens Reviews Framework is organised into:

Aspects	Criteria	Indicators
Representing the core areas of Kindergartens' practices.	Representing the focus areas in each aspect and upon which the aspect is evaluated.	Explaining the key elements that the criteria focus on.

Table 1: Kindergartens Reviews Framework structure

The Kindergartens Reviews Framework consists of three main aspects: **Children's Growth and Development**, **Child Initiated Learning**, **Leadership and Management**, as indicated in figure (1).

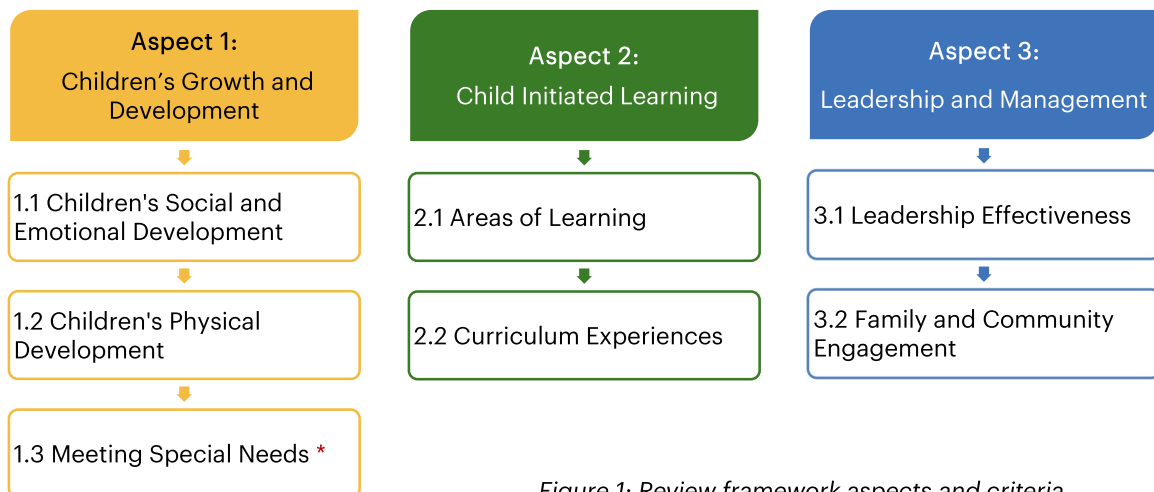


Figure 1: Review framework aspects and criteria.

\* This applies if any children with special conditions are enrolled



**Aspect 1:**

# **Children's Growth and Development**



## Aspect 1: Children's Growth and Development

The focus of this aspect is the experiences offered to children indoors and outdoors, that are built and designed based on accurate and in-depth knowledge of children's development during early years. It encompasses a comprehensive assessment of children's social, emotional and physical development, as well as responsiveness to diverse needs. While each indicator of children's development is clearly defined in the aspect, they are interconnected and are developed and evaluated holistically. Prioritising these criteria enables educators and stakeholders to create a nurturing and inclusive environment that promotes holistic growth and well-being for all children.

The aspect of 'Children's Growth and Development' is reviewed based on the quality of the following criteria:

Criteria	Indicator
1.1 Children's Social and Emotional Development	1.1.1 Social Skills 1.1.2 Behaviour and Wellbeing 1.1.3 Communication Skills
1.2 Children's Physical Development	1.2.1 Motor Skills 1.2.2 Health and Selfcare
1.3 Meeting Special Needs *	1.3.1 Special Personal Support

\* This applies if any children with special conditions are enrolled

### 1 1. Children's Social and Emotional Development

This criterion assesses how well the kindergarten supports children's interpersonal skills. It focuses on fostering positive relationships, social skills, and emotional resilience. Evaluation includes observing interactions and strategies for promoting positive behaviour and emotional expression. This criterion is reviewed based on the quality of the following indicators:

#### 1.1 1. Social Skills

This indicator focuses on assessing children's ability to interact positively and demonstrate confidence with peers and adults within the kindergarten environment. It includes observing how children engage in various activities, indoors and outdoors, such as group play and collaborative activities. It evaluates the development of social skills such as cooperation and building friendships in social interactions.

## **1.1 2. Behaviour and Wellbeing**

This indicator focuses on a nurturing and supportive environment where children feel emotionally secure and respected. It includes activities and experiences that instil positive behaviour and values, such as empathy and helping others, indoors and outdoors, by observing children's ability to regulate emotions, manage impulses and resolve minor conflicts peacefully. It evaluates the development of children's identity, recognising individuality and a growing sense of self. By fostering these values, kindergartens create a community where children learn to respect and care for one another, laying the foundation for their social and emotional development.

## **1.1 3. Communication Skills**

Effective communication is a key skill for both life and learning. This indicator assesses children's communication abilities by observing their proficiency to self-express through verbal and non-verbal means. It evaluates their capacity to listen actively and follow clear instructions. The assessment includes observing children's participation in play, their conversations, their ability to ask questions and their effectiveness in expressing thoughts, feelings and ideas, both inside and outside the setting.

## **1 2. Children's Physical Development**

This criterion looks into the diverse opportunities for children to develop physically, through active play and exploration, both indoors and outdoors. It assesses the range of activities that enhances children's gross and fine motor skills, as well as their healthy habits, which contribute to their overall physical vitality. This criterion is reviewed based on the quality of the following indicators:

### **1.2 1. Motor Skills**

This indicator focuses on evaluating the range of experiences and opportunities for children's fine and gross motor skills development, by evaluating the opportunities provided for engaging activities and experiences tailored to children's developmental needs. This includes indoors and outdoors activities, that also promote hand/feet - eye coordination, such as play opportunities, manipulative tasks, outdoor activities and physical exercise.



## **1.2 2. Health and Selfcare**

This indicator evaluates the kindergarten's efforts in promoting health and self-care among children. It includes observing and evaluating the integration of healthy habits into daily routines, such as proper hygiene practices, nutritious eating habits and regular exercise. It also examines the kindergarten's initiatives to develop and empower children to make healthy choices and essential self-care skills, fostering lifelong habits for well-being and vitality.

## **1 3. Meeting Special Needs \***

This criterion evaluates the kindergarten's efforts in meeting the diverse needs of all children, including those with special educational needs, if any are enrolled. It explores the provision of tailored support and accommodations, availability of resources and where required, specialised personnel, and collaboration with families and external specialised bodies. This criterion is reviewed based on the quality of the following indicator:

### **1.3 1. Special Personal Support**

This indicator evaluates the kindergarten's processes for identifying children with potential special needs and providing support for those with special needs, such as special educational needs, disabilities and health concerns. It assesses how the kindergarten ensures the necessary accommodations and support for those children, including access to facilities and specialised learning resources, and the availability of trained personnel when needed. It also covers the kindergarten's collaborative partnerships with families and external organisations, to support parents and provide guidance, as well as the engagement of those children in the kindergarten's activities and experiences, ensuring the unique needs of each child are met and their wellbeing is fostered.

Evidence for this aspect is derived from evaluating the effectiveness of processes and procedures taken, including - but not limited to - the following:

- **Analysing documents and procedures:** such as documents and records related to identifying and accommodating for different abilities and needs.
- **Observing and evaluating children's participation and interaction:** Covers their engagement in learning situations, various activities, indoors and outdoors, and direct interactions during play and conversations.
- **Analysing interviews and surveys:** Encompasses interviews and questionnaires with kindergarten staff and stakeholders.
- **Reviewing sample of children's outcomes:** individual and collective achievements, such as portfolios and artistic samples.

## Aspect 2:

# Child Initiated Learning



## Aspect 2: Child Initiated Learning

This aspect evaluates how well the kindergarten supports and promotes children's cognitive development through child-initiated learning, where children take the lead in their educational experiences. It emphasizes creating an environment that encourages exploration, creativity and independence, allowing children to learn and progress through enriching curriculum experiences, ensuring that they are actively engaged and well supported in their educational journey.

The aspect of 'Child Initiated Learning' is reviewed based on the quality of the following criteria:

Criteria	Indicator
2.1 Areas of Learning	2.1.1 Age-Appropriate Practices 2.1.2 Managing Learning Environment
2.2 Curriculum Experiences	2.2.1 Acquiring Skills 2.2.2 Progress Follow-up

### 2 1. Areas of Learning

This criterion evaluates the effectiveness and richness of the curriculum experiences encountered by children in the kindergarten. It focuses on ensuring that the curriculum is delivered through age-appropriate practices, such as play-based and sensory experiences, and that learning time is optimally utilised to engage, motivate and develop children. The goal is to foster a positive learning environment and cultivate a love for learning. This criterion is reviewed based on the quality of the following indicators:

#### 2.1 1. Age-Appropriate Experiences

This indicator evaluates how effectively the kindergarten provides an age-appropriate curriculum. It focuses on active child led learning experiences, through play-based learning, sensory exploration and use of concrete materials, to engage children and support their cognitive development individually and cooperatively. It also covers how well the kindergarten provides opportunities for open-ended activities that cater for children's individuality, and the provision of regular access to outdoor learning time, to encourage discovery, problem solving, creativity and free use of imagination, ensuring the provision of diverse and stimulating learning activities that supports children's overall development.

## **2.1 2. Managing Learning Environment**

This indicator evaluates the effectiveness of how the learning environment is managed, through proper utilisation of curriculum time, play spaces and resources in the kindergartens. It evaluates the methods used to maintain and ensure children's active participation and engagement in play-based learning and resources, the clarity of practitioners' instructions and their ability to build a positive rapport and create a safe learning environment where children feel loved, motivated, and excited to explore and learn.

## **2 2. Curriculum Experiences**

This criterion evaluates the kindergarten's effectiveness in fostering children's cognitive development through a holistic curriculum approach and continuous tracking of their progress. It focuses on children's acquisition of early essential skills based on curriculum experiences and their individual abilities, with the provision of focused intervention and feedback to ensure children are progressing continuously and at their own pace. This criterion is reviewed based on the quality of the following indicators:

### **2.2 1. Acquiring Skills**

This indicator assesses children's progress in acquiring essential early skills, focusing on language acquisition and development, basic numeracy skills and general knowledge, such as understanding the world, ICT skills and citizenship. It considers how well the curriculum supports these areas of learning holistically, and how effectively practitioners facilitate children's progress in these fundamental basic skills that are necessary for their future success.

### **2.2 2. Tracking Progress**

This indicator examines the kindergarten's approach to monitoring, documenting and supporting children's learning. It targets the use of continuous evaluation methods, such as observations of progress, photographs of play development and child development portfolios, to ensure their learning and developmental progress is on track, while receiving quality support and feedback to guide and enhance their development.

Evidence for this aspect is derived from evaluating the effectiveness of experiences and outcomes, including - but not limited to - the following:

- **Observation of Learning Experiences:** Evaluate the effectiveness of children's play, experiences, and activities, assessing how well they align with early childhood education principles and meet developmental needs.
- **Direct Observation and Interaction:** Observe children during play based learning activities and engage in conversations to assess their understanding and progress.
- **Interview and Survey Analysis:** Analyse interviews with kindergarten staff and stakeholders and gather insights from questionnaires.
- **Evaluation of Learning Plans:** Analyse the kindergarten's learning plans and methodologies, observing the effectiveness and flexibility of their implementation.
- **Assessing Children's Outcomes:** Review samples of children's outcomes and achievements, such as portfolios, artwork and other creative samples.

## Aspect 3:

# Leadership and Management





## Aspect 3: Leadership and Management

This aspect evaluates the overall effectiveness of the leadership and management within the kindergarten. It focuses on the leaderships' effectiveness in operating with a clear vision, planning based on identified priorities, managing resources and engaging with stakeholders and the community to create a supportive educational environment and enriching learning experiences for children.

The aspect of 'Leadership and Management' is reviewed based on the quality of the following criteria:

Criteria	Indicator
3.1 Leadership Effectiveness	3.1.1 Improvement Planning
	3.1.2 Managing Resources
3.2 Family and Community Engagement	3.2.1 Family Involvement
	3.2.2 Engagement with the Community

### 3 1. Leadership Effectiveness

This criterion evaluates the effectiveness of leadership in planning, implementing and sustaining high-quality educational practices. It looks at how leaders set a clear vision, conduct self-evaluation to identify priorities, plan for improvements, and ensure the curriculum is effectively delivered. It also examines the impact of governance – if applicable - on the overall quality and success of the kindergarten. This criterion is reviewed based on the quality of the following indicators:

#### 3.1 1. Improvement Planning

This indicator evaluates how the kindergarten is operating, with a clear vision that guides its overall direction and decision-making. The process of self-evaluation is assessed to ensure that the kindergarten accurately identifies its strengths and areas for improvement, and plans based on identified priorities, particularly in relation to the implementation of the curriculum's experiences. If applicable, the impact of the role of governance is assessed to ensure continuous support for the kindergartens' leadership and high-quality educational experiences for children.

### **3.1 2. Managing Resources**

This indicator evaluates the suitability of human and learning resources in the kindergarten, ensuring that staff members have the appropriate qualifications and skills to meet the needs of children, by providing practitioners with proper professional development opportunities and continuous feedback to support their ongoing learning and growth. It also assesses the availability and suitability of learning resources and facilities in the kindergarten, ensuring they are safe and appropriate, in order to create an optimal learning environment for children.

## **3 2. Family and Community Engagement**

This criterion evaluates the kindergarten's effectiveness in fostering strong relationships with families and the broader community. It focuses on how the kindergarten involves the family in their children's educational journey. It also assesses the kindergarten's efforts to engage children with the local community, enriching their experiences and preparing them for life. This criterion is reviewed based on the quality of the following indicators:

### **3.2 1. Family Involvement**

This indicator evaluates the kindergarten's effectiveness in engaging the family in their children's education. It looks at the quality and frequency of communication with parents, ensuring they are well-informed about their child's progress and development, their suggestions heard and concerns addressed. It also assesses how the kindergarten involves the family in various learning activities and events, as family inclusion is vital in bridging the gap between the kindergarten and home. This connection creates a consistent learning environment that extends beyond the kindergarten, reinforces positive attitudes towards learning and helps children feel more supported, motivated and loved, leading to better social and emotional outcomes, and overall development.

### **3.2 2. Engagement with the Community**

This indicator looks at how the kindergarten collaborates with community organisations and resources, particularly transitions from home into the Primary stage. It assesses efforts to enrich children's experiences through community involvement, providing diverse opportunities for learning and personal growth beyond the kindergarten's environment, such as visits to libraries, museums or nature reserves, and inviting professionals like artists, police officers or healthcare workers to provide children with diverse, real-world learning experiences. Such engagement is essential for broadening children's horizons, their sense of inclusion and supporting their holistic development.

Evidence for this aspect is derived from evaluating the effectiveness of processes and procedures taken, including - but not limited to - the following:

- **Assess Leadership Awareness:** Evaluate the leadership's understanding of self-evaluation mechanisms and effectiveness in identifying current situation and priorities. It also covers leadership's awareness of staff training needs and provision of effective training programmes, and the implementation of performance monitoring mechanisms, to ensure positive impact.
- **Analysis of Plans:** Analyse kindergartens' work plans to assess their comprehensiveness and rigor in reflecting improvement priorities and evaluate the effectiveness of performance follow-up mechanisms.
- **Evaluate Resources:** Ensure the availability, suitability and effectiveness of physical and human resources.
- **Interviews and Document Analysis:** Analyse interviews and questionnaires with kindergarten staff and stakeholders, and review performance related documents.

## Review Guidelines

The review process helps develop and improve kindergartens' performances, as it is evaluated through clear criteria. This is underpinned by a professional discussion with the kindergarten about its work and self-evaluation. The outcome of the review is a report that includes the kindergarten's strengths and recommendations to improve its overall performance. The task of improvement is the responsibility of the kindergarten and those who provide it with constant support.

### The approach to reviews

Regular and continuous self-evaluation is crucial for the development and improvement of a kindergarten's performance. This principle is central to the review process approach. Kindergartens are required to document the outcomes of their self-evaluation in the BQA Self-Evaluation Form (SEF), identifying strengths and areas for improvement based on the same criteria outlined in the Kindergartens Review Framework used by reviewers to assess quality across key aspects.

Reviewers evaluate the quality of provision through direct observation of children's interactions and participation in various activities and experiences, both inside and outside the setting. They also engage in direct conversations with children and observe practitioners' interactions in different scenarios.

Additionally, reviewers examine children's portfolios and other outcomes, analyse data from kindergarten documents, and conduct interviews and surveys with stakeholders, including staff and parents. This comprehensive approach ensures a thorough assessment of the kindergarten's overall performance.

Based on the evidence gathered during the review process, reviewers formulate overall recommendations regarding the quality of kindergarten's provision. Feedback to the kindergarten's leadership is an integral part of the review process, ensuring that staff are fully informed about how the report is derived.

### Review stages and procedures

The review process includes quality assurance procedures throughout its different stages. The review process has three key stages as follows:

#### Stage 1: Pre-review procedures

- The kindergarten uploads the completed SEF in the BQA (HUB) within the deadline assigned, along with the following documents:
  - the kindergarten's plans -if any- such as strategic or operational plans
  - the kindergarten's weekly timetable, highlighting the different activities children experience throughout the day
  - the kindergarten's staff deployment list.

- Two weeks prior the review, the BQA notifies the kindergarten of the dates of the review and the name of the Lead Reviewer.
- The kindergarten will be given the Parents' Questionnaire (PQ) link to send out to parents.
- The Lead Reviewer contacts the kindergarten's leadership, by telephone, to briefly discuss review related matters at the beginning of the week of the review.
- Reviewers analyse kindergarten's submitted SEF, Parents Questionnaire (PQ) and any other available kindergarten documents.

## Stage 2: During the review procedures

- The on-site review will normally last for around two days, in which reviewers will:
  - observe kindergarten activities
  - scrutinise children's portfolios and other type of outcomes to monitor their progress
  - review any additional documents that are related to the review aspects
  - hold discussions with the kindergarten's staff and parents
  - engage in conversations with children
  - ensure availability, suitability and effectiveness of resources
  - provide the kindergarten leadership with final feedback of the review findings.
- Reviewers are committed to the highest professional standards.

## Stage 3: Post review procedures

- The BQA sends a copy of the draft report to the kindergarten within a maximum period of 4 weeks from the review date.
- The kindergarten may comment on factual information in the draft report and share it back to the directorate within 5 working days.
- All kindergartens are required to submit an action plans - to implement the given recommendations - within 4 weeks from receiving the draft report.
- The BQA keeps a record of all evidence concerning each kindergarten review for one year.



## Reviewers Code of Conduct (ASPIRE)

To uphold the highest professional standards among reviewers and ensure they conduct reviews with integrity, impartiality and respect for all stakeholders. Key values are:

- **Accountability:** Take full responsibility for actions and decisions, ensuring transparency and adherence to ethical standards.
- **Sensitivity:** Demonstrate empathy, understanding, and cultural sensitivity in all interactions with kindergarten stakeholders.
- **Professionalism:** Conduct oneself with the utmost professionalism, maintaining a courteous and respectful demeanor.
- **Integrity:** Uphold the highest ethical standards, acting with honesty, transparency, and fairness in all aspects of review work.
- **Respect:** Treat all individuals with dignity and respect, valuing their perspectives and contributions to the kindergarten community.
- **Excellence:** Strive for excellence in all aspects of review conduct, providing comprehensive, insightful, and actionable feedback to kindergartens.

All reviewers must commit to upholding the highest standards of professional conduct and adhering to the principles outlined in this code. By consistently demonstrating ASPIRE key principles, reviewers can contribute to a fair and effective kindergarten review system that safeguards the interests of all stakeholders, especially the well-being of children. If the kindergarten wishes to file a complaint against the Code of Conduct, it must follow the instructions available on BQA official website.



## Disruption/incompletion of the review process

If the review process is disrupted for any exceptional circumstances such as natural disasters or epidemics, cases will be considered in accordance with the BQA policies and procedures.

