

INSIGHT | PRACTICE

Active Supervision is a Verb

Assessors are observing supervision as a behaviour, not a roster line. Five movements that separate confident services from compliant ones.

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Most services can show a roster that meets ratios. Fewer can show supervision happening in the moment — adult eyes moving with children, anticipating before reacting, naming the blind spot before it becomes an incident. The 2026 NQS refinements have made this distinction sharper. Quality Area 2 now expects active supervision to be visible in practice, not declared in policy.

The five movements

- Scan — a continuous visual sweep, including peripheral zones and shared boundaries with other rooms.
- Count — deliberate head counts at every transition and at fixed intervals through the session.
- Listen — to changes in tone, volume, and silence. Silence in a four-year-old room is information.
- Anticipate — predict the next ten seconds from the cues already visible. Position before, not after.
- Move — supervision is dynamic. Educators travel with children rather than supervising from a fixed point.

High-risk moments to systematise

Moment	What to lock down
Arrivals	Sign-in accuracy, gate supervision, entry head count, parent–educator handover.
Toileting and nappy change	Line-of-sight protocols, two-educator presence where required, dignity considerations.
Outdoor play	Pre-play hazard sweep, sun safety, water and sandpit zoning, blind-spot coverage.
Excursions and transport	Risk assessment, ratio adjustment, head counts at every embark and disembark.
Rest periods	Safe sleep, visual checks at set intervals, documentation of checks.
Departures	Authorised collection only, visual confirmation, exit head count.

Moment	What to lock down
<p>COACHING PROMPT FOR EDUCATIONAL LEADERS</p> <p>Walk every room with a fresh pair of eyes. Where can a child be that no adult can see in three seconds? That is your blind spot. Cover it with a routine, not a hope.</p>	

The reframe

Active supervision is not vigilance. It is choreography — practised, distributed across the team, and visible to a stranger walking through the room. Services that train supervision as choreography out-perform services that train it as a checklist.

This article is part of The Practitioner's Guide to the NQF — McArthur's editorial series for the early childhood education sector. For the full whitepaper and webinar replay, visit www.mcarthur.com.au/insights.