

New style Ofsted reports: Frequently asked questions

Why has Ofsted introduced these changes?

The changes to the way that Ofsted inspects schools is set out in the [Education Inspection Framework 2025](#). This is a renewed approach to education inspection that Ofsted says will give parents better and more detailed information about the education setting their child attends, will be fairer on professionals, and will help raise standards for all children.

What are the main changes to the Ofsted reports?

There are two main changes to the way Ofsted reports on school/education provider performance:

1. New language to describe the gradings - and Ofsted will no longer provide a single, overall judgement on a school or education provider's performance
2. A new report card format with colour-coding to help you understand performance quickly and easily

There is no direct read-across from the old grades to the new grades, but Ofsted have emphasised that 'Expected standard' is a high standard, and education providers achieving this grade are providing your child with the education, care and support they deserve.

What else has changed?

The way in which Ofsted's inspectors reach a conclusion about which grade to award has also changed. Before, Ofsted applied a 'best fit' approach - meaning that if overall, a school was achieving a 'Good' standard, it would be awarded 'Good' even if there was evidence of performance that was considered to be 'Outstanding' or 'Requiring improvement'. Now, grades are awarded using an 'Exact fit' model. This means that even if the school or education provider is performing at a 'Strong standard' across all but one criteria, it will still receive an overall grading of 'Expected standard'.

What are the new gradings?

Instead of the old language of Outstanding, Good, Requires Improvement, education providers will now be assessed using the following grades:

- Exceptional
- Strong standard
- Expected standard
- Needs attention
- Urgent improvement

The school my child attends used to be ‘Good’ but is now ‘Expected standard’. Is this better or worse than ‘Good’?

There’s no direct read across from any of the old grades to the new grades, so we can’t make a direct comparison. However, Ofsted has made it clear that schools that receive a rating of ‘Expected standard’ are performing to a high standard and children attending that school are receiving everything they need and deserve.

We expect that most schools will be awarded ‘Expected standard’, ‘Strong standard’ or ‘Needs attention’ grades - with ‘Urgent improvement’ and ‘Exceptional’ being used only in extreme cases.

Should I be worried if the school my child attends receives a ‘Needs attention’ rating on any of the evaluation areas? Is it the same as the old rating of ‘Requires improvement’?

‘Needs attention’ is not the same as ‘Requires improvement’. The easiest way to think of it is as an *early warning system* for areas where some work might need to be done to prevent issues in the future. It means that the ‘Expected standard’ hasn’t been met in all elements of the evaluation area, and that there are elements that could be demonstrated more consistently and with more impact. Ofsted is clear that this grading isn’t failure, but a signal that there is work the school or education provider can be doing to meet the ‘Expected standard’.

Do the new grades have an explanation or definition that I can see?

Yes - here’s a list of the new grades and their definitions:

- **Exceptional (highest quality provision):** an evaluation area can be graded ‘exceptional’ when all the strong standards have been met and if it meets all the additional standards in the ‘exceptional’ section of the toolkit.
- **Strong standard:** an evaluation area can be graded ‘strong standard’ when all the expected standards and all the strong standards have been met.
- **Expected standard:** an evaluation area can be graded ‘expected standard’ when all the standards are met – this includes meeting the legal requirements and the expectations set out in statutory guidance, as well as the professional standards required of the particular type of provision, where these apply.
- **Needs attention:** an evaluation area can be graded ‘needs attention’ when the ‘expected standard’ has not been met because some aspects of provision are inconsistent, limited in scope or impact and/or not fully meeting the legal requirements.
- **Urgent improvement (lowest quality provision):** an evaluation area can be graded ‘urgent improvement’ when it needs urgent action to provide a suitable standard of education and/or care for children and learners.



I don't have time to read the whole report. Is there a summary section that gives me all the information I need?

We think the most useful summary is the 'What it's like to be a pupil at this school' section. This is a reflective summary of a child's experience of life and learning at school, and offers the most nuanced view of the school's performance.

Where can I find out more about the new approach to Ofsted inspections?

Ofsted has created a video about the changes which we think is a helpful summary and explanation of the changes. You can access it on YouTube by following [this link](#).