



09 January 2026

Dear Parents and Carers,

We are writing to update you on the renewed Ofsted inspection framework, including a grading methodology and Ofsted Evaluation Toolkit. This was launched in November 2025.

The renewed framework represents a significant national shift in how schools are evaluated and we want to ensure all families across our schools have clear and consistent information. This letter has been co-produced by a number of colleagues in different local Trusts and Local Authority areas and is being sent out to other schools within and beyond Maiden Erlegh Trust.

The new inspection framework is substantially different from the previous approach from the way in which the inspection is conducted to the number of areas graded and how this information will be presented to parents, children and the wider community.

Grading across 7 core areas

Schools and providers will be graded across 7 core areas. These are:

- Safeguarding;
- Inclusion;
- Curriculum and Teaching;
- Achievement;
- Attendance and Behaviour;
- Personal Development and Well-being;
- Leadership and Governance.
- For schools with Early Years or Post-16 provision, these will also be graded.

New Grading Method

There is a move away from the old grading system with the areas above graded on a 5-point scale. These grades will be Exceptional, Strong Standard, Expected Standard, Needs Attention and Urgent Improvement. These grades will be given for all of the areas above with exception of Safeguarding which will simply be graded as Met or Not Met.

No comparison between old and new grades

The new grading structure is fundamentally different from the previous one, and the measures used are not directly comparable. It is therefore very important that no



comparisons are made between a school's previous grading and its new one. A change in grade under the new system does not reflect a decline or improvement in performance; it simply reflects a new assessment approach.

Variable profiles are normal

The new framework may show what are known as "variable profiles," where different aspects of a school's performance are rated at different grades. This is entirely expected and reflects the inspectorate's aim to give a more nuanced, detailed view of school performance rather than a single overall judgement.

"Needs Attention" explained

You may also see the term "Needs Attention", which can be thought of like an MOT advisory. It highlights an area that would benefit from further focus but does not indicate a serious concern. It is expected that most schools will have one or more areas labelled this way, to support schools in their normal cycle of continuous improvement.

Exceptional grades will be rare

Under the new system, the highest levels of recognition—referred to as exceptional grades—will be awarded only in genuinely innovative and uncommon circumstances. Most schools will not receive these grades, and their rarity should not be interpreted negatively; it simply reflects the framework's intention to reserve exceptional ratings for exceptional practice.

The report card

Ofsted reports will form part of an online report "card" given to schools. Alongside the gradings explained above, it will contain other useful information for parents and the wider community about each school. It's Ofsted's intent that the report cards also contain more detail about the strengths and performance of schools.

We hope this explanation helps provide clarity around the new inspection and reporting approach. As always, all of our focus remains on providing the best possible educational experience for every child, and we will continue to keep you informed as further guidance becomes available.

A short video from Ofsted can be found here: [Ofsted Video](#) and a written explanation here: [Ofsted Written Explanation](#)

Yours sincerely



Andy Johnson
Director of Education
Maiden Erlegh Trust

