

Ofsted reporting has changed

What's different – and what it means for families



* Why this matters for families

Ofsted inspection reports help families understand how a school is doing. Because Ofsted has changed how inspection outcomes are reported, it's important to know how to read the new information and what it tells you about your child's experience at school.

The new report card helps you see what is working well and what needs improvement in specific areas, rather than relying on one overall label.

Then (old system)	Now (new system)
One overall grade was given	No single overall grade – new report card
Provided a limited picture of performance	Shows a fuller picture across key inspection areas
Strengths and areas for improvement were combined into one judgement	Strengths and next steps are shown by area, with explanations

* What this means

The new grades cannot be compared to the previous Ofsted system. Each new Ofsted grade applies to a specific inspection area, not to the school as a whole. Their meanings are below.

New Ofsted grade	What the new grade means
Exceptional	Rare, sector-leading practice - reserved for provision that is significantly above and beyond expectations.
Strong standard	Practice goes beyond what is expected in clear and sustained ways, with strengths having a positive impact.
Expected standard	All required standards are securely met. This is a high bar and means children and young people are receiving everything they are entitled to.
Needs attention	Some required standards are not yet met. Improvement is needed, but issues are not at the most serious level.
Urgent improvement	There are serious weaknesses in this area that require immediate action to protect children's education, wellbeing or safety.

* What matters most when reading an Ofsted report

- the full report card, not a single word
- what inspectors say about teaching, behaviour, inclusion, leadership and safeguarding
- how the school will build on strengths and address next steps

? Common questions

Can the new grades be compared to the old ones?

No. Ofsted advises against any direct comparison with the previous system.

Does one grade define the whole school?

No. Each inspection area is judged separately, so no single grade tells the full story.

If a school is not judged Strong or Exceptional, does that mean it is underperforming?

No. "Expected standard" means all required standards are securely met. Strong and Exceptional recognise practice beyond this level, and Exceptional is intentionally rare.

Why did Ofsted change the system?

To provide clearer, fairer information and a more rounded picture of school performance.