

Ealing Council
 Perceval House
 14-16 Uxbridge Road
 London W5 2HL
 Tel 020 8825 5000

5 January 2026

Dear Parent/Carer,

As the strategic director of Ealing's children's services, I am writing to share important information about the revised Ofsted inspection framework, which came into effect in November 2025.

Ofsted will no longer give schools one overall grade such as "outstanding", "good", "requires improvement" or "inadequate". Instead, schools will receive a new report card with a 5-point grading scale across several areas. The new gradings are:

- Exceptional
- Strong Standard
- Expected Standard
- Needs Attention
- Urgent Improvement

Ofsted have been very clear to point out that you cannot compare the old judgements with the new grades. For example, the old judgement of 'requires improvement' does not mean the same as the new grade of 'needs attention' and the old judgement of 'outstanding' is not the same as the new grade of 'exceptional'.

Ofsted have stated that 'needs attention' should be seen by a school as advisory, suggesting that work needs to be done to reach the expected standard in that area. It is not a fail, but it highlights where issues can be addressed before they become bigger problems where they may need urgent improvement.

Ofsted continue to have high expectations and the bar has risen again. When evaluating schools, using the new Ofsted Toolkit, Ofsted are expecting most schools to be graded at the 'expected standard' which, in itself, means that the school is providing an effective education for its pupils and doing everything it should be doing in that area.

Some schools may have areas graded at the 'strong standard'. Ofsted expect that very few schools across the country will be graded as 'exceptional' in an area. Therefore, a school that was previously judged as 'Good' may now be graded as 'expected standard' under the new framework.

This does not mean that the school's quality has declined. In many cases, the school may have improved its provision for pupils, but the criteria and expectations used by Ofsted are now more demanding than under the previous inspection framework. As a result, the school's judgement reflects these higher expectations, rather than a reduction in performance.

More information for parent/carers about the Ofsted framework can be found here: [Understanding Ofsted report cards and grades - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/understanding-ofsted-report-cards-and-grades)

We are very proud of the outcomes that our schools achieve for the children and young people they serve and we are confident that our schools will be well prepared for their next inspection under the new framework.

Schools will generally be inspected within four to five years of their last inspection.

Thank you for your continued support in helping us provide the very best education for your children.

Yours sincerely,



Robert South

Strategic director children's services
Ealing Council