



Education inspection framework

Our renewed approach

Schools



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improving lives



Outline of session

- Overview of inspection across England
- Overview of inspection in Cornwall
- Using toolkits
- Ofsted updates- the achievement grade
- Timing of inspections
- Monitoring
- Questions

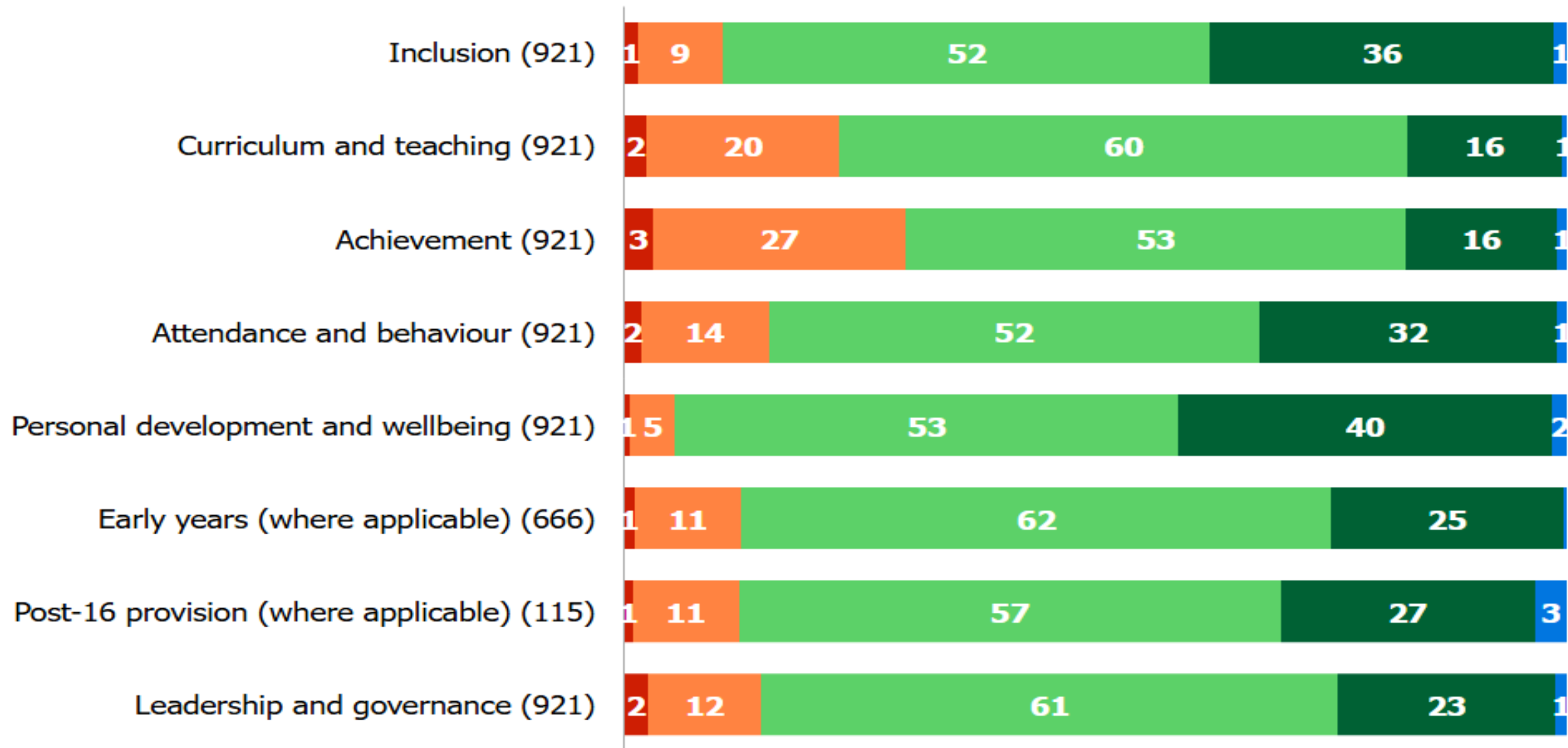


Overview of inspection across England

The renewed education inspection framework came into use in November 2025. Since then, we have inspected and published report cards for **921** schools.

These 921 schools represent only **4% of all state-funded schools**, so the grade profile is not representative of all schools. In fact, as we inspect lower-performing schools more often than high-performing schools, the mix of schools inspected in any single year is not typically representative.

The following analysis is based on inspections carried out between **10 November 2025 and 30 April 2026**, where the **report card was published by 30 April**.



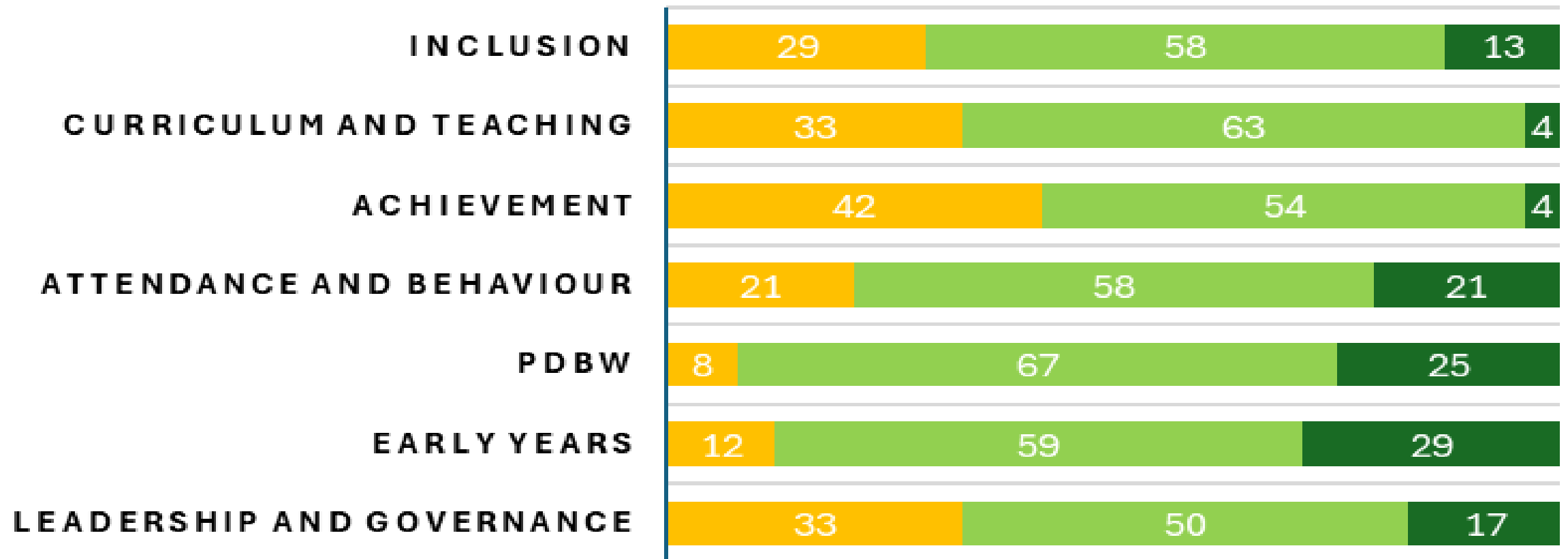
■ % Urgent improvement ■ % Needs attention ■ % Expected standard ■ % Strong standard ■ % Exceptional



Overview of inspection in Cornwall

CORNWALL

■ Needs Attention ■ Expected Standard ■ Strong standard





Using toolkits

Using Toolkits

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Early Years-

This evaluation area considers whether:

- the school meets the **statutory requirements** of the **EYFS**
- the school offers a **high-quality early education** for children, especially **disadvantaged children**, those with **SEND**, those who are **known (or previously known) to children's social care**, and those who may face **other barriers to their learning and/or well-being**, that gives them the knowledge and skills they need for a successful start to their education and the best chance of later success

Using Toolkits

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Inspectors focus on gathering evidence relating to the factors that statutory and non-statutory guidance, professional standards, research and inspection evidence indicate contribute most strongly to the quality of early education.

These factors are:

- leaders **understanding** the **strengths and areas for development** of the school's early years provision, and the effectiveness of their actions to improve it
- planning, designing and implementing an **early years curriculum** that is **ambitious** for all children
- having a curriculum and care practices that **meet the needs of the range of children** who attend

Using Toolkits

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These factors are:

- the **content of the curriculum** being taught **systematically**, in a logical progression, and **explained effectively**, so that children **gain the necessary foundations** for the **rest of their schooling**
- ensuring that children **develop, consolidate and deepen their knowledge, understanding and skills across all the areas of learning and development** in the EYFS
- staff focusing on developing children's **communication and language**
- leaders **identifying and supporting** the groups of children listed above

Leadership of early years

In gathering evidence about the **leadership of early years**, inspectors consider the extent to which leaders:

- have a **clear and ambitious vision** for giving children the **best start** to their education
- have an **accurate understanding** of the **provision's context, strengths and areas for development**, which informs the actions they take to improve children's education and care, in line with the statutory requirements of the EYFS
- **take all reasonable steps** to make sure that all children have access to an **ambitious curriculum**, including those who attend part time or attend more than one setting, those who are **disadvantaged**, those with **SEND**, those who are **known (or previously known) to children's social care**, and those who **may face other barriers to their learning and/or well being**

Leadership of early years

In gathering evidence about the **leadership of early years**, inspectors consider the extent to which leaders:

- ensure that the **curriculum identifies and sequences** the **key knowledge** that children will learn across the EYFS educational programmes
- ensure that the **curriculum is well taught** across the setting
- ensure that staff **use assessment well** to make any necessary changes to teaching and/or the curriculum, including sharing information with Year 1 teachers when children move to key stage 1
- work in **partnership with parents** to promote children's learning and development and to **raise their awareness** about supporting children's readiness for starting school
- establish **appropriate policies, procedures and practices** that promote the welfare, mental health and well-being of **all children**



Ofsted updates- the achievement grade

Schools in challenging circumstances

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- Schools serving disadvantaged communities face a range of challenges, which can act as barriers to their pupils reaching high levels of achievement.
- Our expectations for pupils' achievement, regardless of their backgrounds, are rightly high. However, we take the context of a school into account – including by recognising the hard work of leaders and staff in schools that are making a real difference despite the challenges they face.



- When we talk about achievement, we are referring to attainment and progress – but we never rely on test and exam results alone to reach grading decisions. Achievement is measured in more than statutory outcomes and qualifications. It's about realising potential and helping pupils to thrive.
- We define achievement broadly, considering pupils' knowledge and skills, and their readiness for their next steps, as well as their results in national tests and examinations.
- Most importantly, inspectors strike a balance between the information provided by published data and the evidence they gather on site.



- As part of their inspection preparation, inspectors use the Inspection Data Summary Report (IDSR) to understand the performance of the school and its context.

The IDSR:

- shows whether the school's performance on a particular measure is above average, close to average, or below average
- provides data over time, for all pupils, and for disadvantaged pupils
- gives additional context on the pupils in the school, such as the proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM), and children in need
- looks at the stability, and the deprivation level in the local area

National benchmarks

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- In some schools, a significant number of pupils face or have faced significant barriers to learning. Our toolkit standards are carefully worded to reflect this complexity.
- For the 'expected standard', inspectors evaluate whether 'On the whole, pupils achieve well. Typically, this will be reflected in their attainment and progress in national tests and examinations.'
- The word 'typically' here is crucial. It emphasises that national test results may not reflect how well some pupils are doing. Inspectors will always take each school's context into account. They will use their professional judgement to decide whether the quality of pupils' learning that they've seen across the school is reflected in their results at the end of Years 6, 11 or 13. Inspection report cards will also always tell this nuanced story.

National benchmarks

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- Inspectors use national averages cautiously (especially where cohorts are small) to understand different aspects of a school's performance.
- In schools with average proportions of disadvantaged pupils, this is more straightforward, as it is likely that the school's performance compared to national averages gives a reasonably accurate picture. But we know that disadvantaged pupils do not attain as well as all pupils nationally. That is why inspectors' first consideration when starting to build a picture of the attainment of disadvantaged pupils in a school will always be how this compares to national averages for all disadvantaged pupils.
- A context-driven comparison is therefore baked into the inspection process.

National benchmarks

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- Rightly, neither school leaders nor Ofsted would ever be comfortable with capping our expectations for disadvantaged pupils.
- That is why, particularly when considering the 'strong standard' for achievement, inspectors will also consider whether gaps between the attainment of the school's disadvantaged pupils and non-disadvantaged pupils nationally are closing.
- In this way we ensure that we consider achievement in schools fairly, including for those that serve a large proportion of disadvantaged pupils, while upholding the right ambitions for these pupils over time.

- While there is a relationship between the level of disadvantage in a school and the school's grade for the 'achievement' evaluation area, 57% of schools with above average FSM have been graded 'expected standard' or better so far. Schools with strong outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are more likely to be graded 'strong standard' or 'exceptional', especially where they are performing above the national average for disadvantaged pupils.
- Inspectors are allowing for context, without normalising lower levels of achievement for children from more disadvantaged backgrounds.

Next Steps

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- Last year, we announced that we would develop an additional measure to strengthen how we take account of a school's context: by comparing its performance to other schools in a similar context.
- We have been working with the Department for Education (DfE) to develop this 'similar schools' model. This allows us to look at how a school is performing both compared to national benchmarks and to other schools in similar contexts.
- We will introduce this comparison into the IDSR in the new academic year and further detail will also be shown in the DfE's new digital service which will enable schools to benchmark their performance and connect with similar schools.



When can schools expect their
next inspection?



My school was judged to be good or outstanding

A full inspection is likely within 4 years of publication of the most recent inspection report (graded or ungraded) if:

The school was inspected before September 2024 and:

- received an overall effectiveness judgement of good or outstanding; or
- the inspection report stated that the school continues to be a good or outstanding school.

The school was inspected between September 2024 and September 2025 and:

- received all individual judgements of good or better; or
- the inspection report stated that the school had taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.



My school was judged to require improvement

A full inspection is likely within 2 and a half years from the publication of the most recent inspection report if:

The school was inspected before September 2024 and:

- received an overall effectiveness judgement of requires improvement.

The school was inspected between September 2024 and September 2025 and:

- received at least one sub judgement of requires improvement.



My school remained good and received an inspection report that indicated that it might be improving

A full inspection is likely within 4 years of publication of the most recent inspection report (graded or ungraded) if:

The school received an ungraded inspection before September 2024 and:

- the inspection report stated that the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might be outstanding, if a graded inspection was carried out.

The school was inspected between September 2024 and September 2025 and:

- the inspection report stated that the evidence gathered suggests that the school's work may have improved significantly across all areas since the previous inspection.



My school remained good or outstanding and received an inspection report that indicated that it might be declining

A full inspection is likely within 2 and a half years from the publication of the most recent inspection report if:

The school received an ungraded inspection before September 2024 and:

- the inspection report stated that the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded inspection were carried out.

The school was inspected between September 2024 and September 2025 and:

- the inspection report stated that the evidence gathered during this ungraded inspection suggests that aspects of the school's work may not be as strong as at the time of the previous inspection.

My school was judged to have serious weaknesses or requires special measures

- **Schools judged to have serious weaknesses:**
 - **Up to 5 monitoring inspections** (usually once per term).
 - If not improved **within 18 months**, a full graded inspection will be scheduled as soon as possible.
- **Schools judged to require special measures:**
 - **Up to 6 monitoring inspections.**
 - If not improved **within 24 months**, a full graded inspection will be scheduled as soon as possible.
- **Schools subject to a directive academy order or in the process of being re-brokered to a different trust:**
 - Ofsted will continue monitoring the school until such time as the structural intervention is completed.



My school is new or a previously exempt outstanding school

New schools are likely to receive a full inspection in **their third academic year of operation** (not necessarily three years from opening).

Previously exempt schools (rated 'outstanding' before November 2020 and that haven't had a graded inspection since) will receive a **full inspection by the end of July 2026** if their ungraded inspection indicated a decline in standards.



Monitoring Inspections

- Purpose and principles of new monitoring approach
- Outline how new inspections and programmes will work

Purpose and principles



Principle 1

To celebrate improvements, validate the work of leaders and highlight where more work is needed.



Principle 2

To focus on the work of leaders and governors and their impact on the evaluation areas.



Principle 3

To allow for grade changes to be made in evaluation areas in a more timely fashion.

Types of Monitoring Inspections

Legacy

(annex of operating guide)

- schools that were placed in a category of concern, before the end of October 2025
- may have had one or more monitoring inspections already
- may be their first monitoring inspection.

Category of concern

- individual grades may improve, but the statutory designations of 'requires significant improvement' or 'requires special measures' can only be removed following a full section 5 inspection.
- may deem or next full inspection at earliest opportunity.

Evaluation areas 'need attention'

- schools will normally have a monitoring inspection no later than 24 months after the publication of the report card.
- robust evidence needed to change the grade, or it remains the same.

Focused

- follow up concerns about a school
- when we do this, we:
 - consider the issues that prompted inspection
 - do **not** determine grades for any evaluation area.



Monitoring schools with evaluation area(s) graded 'needs attention'

Will be subject to a planned monitoring programme.

- Assigned HMI will make contact with leaders to complete an 'introductory monitoring programme call'.
- The assigned HMI will maintain ongoing contact with school leaders and the nominee.
- Schools will normally have a monitoring inspection no later than 24 months after the publication of the report card.



Monitoring schools with evaluation area(s) graded 'needs attention'

- Following the inspection, the HMI will typically complete a written update.
- If during a monitoring inspection there is enough evidence to support a change in grade, the report card will be updated accordingly.
- The report card will then reflect where leaders and governors have made improvements.



Monitoring schools with evaluation area(s) graded 'needs attention'

- Oversight of the monitoring programme process will be by SHMI in regions.
- Each HMI will be allocated to a school/case load of schools by regional SHMI.
- Tracking of the monitoring programme process will be with the national central team.

Monitoring schools with evaluation area(s) graded 'urgent improvement'

Similar process for schools graded Urgent Improvement. However:

- onsite monitoring termly
- to remove a school causing concern category, can only be done on a full graded inspection.





Updates to inspection guidance and toolkits for September 2026



Questions

Simon.rowe@ofsted.gov.uk

Thank you

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