



Dear Parents and Carers,

We are writing to update you on the new OfSTED grading method introduced in the OfSTED Evaluation Toolkit launched in November 2025. As this represents a significant national shift in how schools are evaluated, 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 Trusts and LA schools and is being sent out to other schools inside and outside of Corus Learning Trust.

The new inspection framework is substantially different in all areas 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

There will be grades published across 7 core areas at a school, these are:

Safeguarding, Inclusion, Curriculum and Teaching, Achievement, Attendance and Behaviour, Personal Development and Well-being and Leadership and Governance. Additionally, for schools with an 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. There will be no overall judgement or grade.

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 inspectorates 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 a number of schools may have one or more areas labelled this way as part of normal 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 transformational 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.

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

We hope this explanation helps provide clarity around the new system. 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.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Gibson".

Paul Gibson

Director of Education

Corvus Learning Trust