

23 February 2026

Dear Parent/Carer

A Renewed Inspection Framework for Schools

You may be aware that from November 2025 there has been a renewed Ofsted inspection framework for schools. Changes to inspection frameworks can be difficult to understand, especially when they move away from a model with which we were all very familiar.

I am writing to set out the changes to the renewed inspection framework and explain what this means for schools in Kingston and Richmond. All schools will be affected by this change. A small number of local schools have already been inspected under the renewed inspection framework and others will be inspected at some point in the future.

Ofsted will no longer give schools a single overall grade following their inspection of a school. They will no longer grade schools as 'outstanding', 'good', 'requires improvement' or 'inadequate'. Instead, schools will receive an online report card that grades them in seven areas:

1. Inclusion
2. Curriculum and teaching
3. Achievement
4. Attendance and behaviour
5. Personal development and well-being
6. Leadership and governance
7. Early years or sixth form in schools (where applicable)

Each of the seven areas will be evaluated and graded as either:

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

The report card will also evaluate whether safeguarding standards at the school are met or not met.

Ofsted have explained that these new grades cannot be directly compared with the old grades as they take a different approach to inspection and a new way of reporting on the performance of schools. So, a grading of 'outstanding' is not the same as 'exceptional', and 'requires improvement' does not mean the same as 'needs attention'.

The grade 'needs attention' is designed to be helpful and advisory. It is an indication that there is some work to be done in the school to reach the 'expected standard'. It does not indicate a school is failing, but it highlights where issues need to be addressed before they become bigger problems that need more urgent attention.

Under the renewed inspection framework, most schools are expected to be graded at the 'expected standard'. The 'expected standard' is just that – it means the school is doing everything that it should be doing for its pupils. It is a high standard that makes sure children and young people are receiving everything they need and deserve.

'Strong standard' marks out excellent, consistent work that is making a real difference for children and young people. Very few schools nationally are expected to receive the 'exceptional' grade. Ofsted only award this grade when they see practice that is among the very best nationally, which should be shared with other schools to help them improve.

Ofsted has stated that it is highly likely that there will be a mix of grades across a school's report card as it is perfectly possible to achieve highly in some areas and require more focus in others. Ofsted's expectations remain high, and the bar has been raised again for schools. In many cases, schools will have improved what they offer pupils, but Ofsted's criteria are now more demanding. The new grades reflect these higher expectations and not a drop in quality.

You can find more information for parents and carers about the renewed Ofsted framework here: [Understanding Ofsted report cards and grades - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/understanding-ofsted-report-cards-and-grades).

I remain very proud of our partnership with schools across Kingston and Richmond and the significant outcomes that have been achieved for our children and young people. Kingston and Richmond schools remain some of the very best nationally and I am confident that they are well prepared for their next inspection under the new framework.

Yours sincerely



Charis Penfold
Director for Education Services