



12 February 2026

Dear Colleagues

Ofsted are now inspecting using the revised framework outlined in the State-funded School Inspection Toolkit September 2025. Ofsted have not released information for parents and carers of the changes to inspection in schools, colleges and Early Years' settings on a national basis, therefore the Learning Improvement Service at Westmorland and Furness Council wish to provide the information in this letter for you to share with your parents and carers, if you wish to do so. We have discussed and agreed this with our regional Senior His Majesty's Inspector (SHMI) at Ofsted.

As schools are inspected and reports are published, parents and carers will begin to see changes. The collection of evidence for a 'best fit' judgement and the grades of outstanding, good, requires improvement and inadequate are no longer used.

The revised 'state-funded school inspection toolkit' for inspection evaluates the schools' work in the following areas:

safeguarding, inclusion, curriculum and teaching, achievement, attendance and behaviour, personal development and well-being, Early Years, Post-16 and leadership and governance.

Each area is judged against a specific five- point grading criteria. All criteria for the grade **must** be met for the grade to be awarded. A grade is given to each of the area of the school's work. Please note, safeguarding is only judged as **met** or **not met**.

The following five-point grading system is used for each area, except safeguarding:

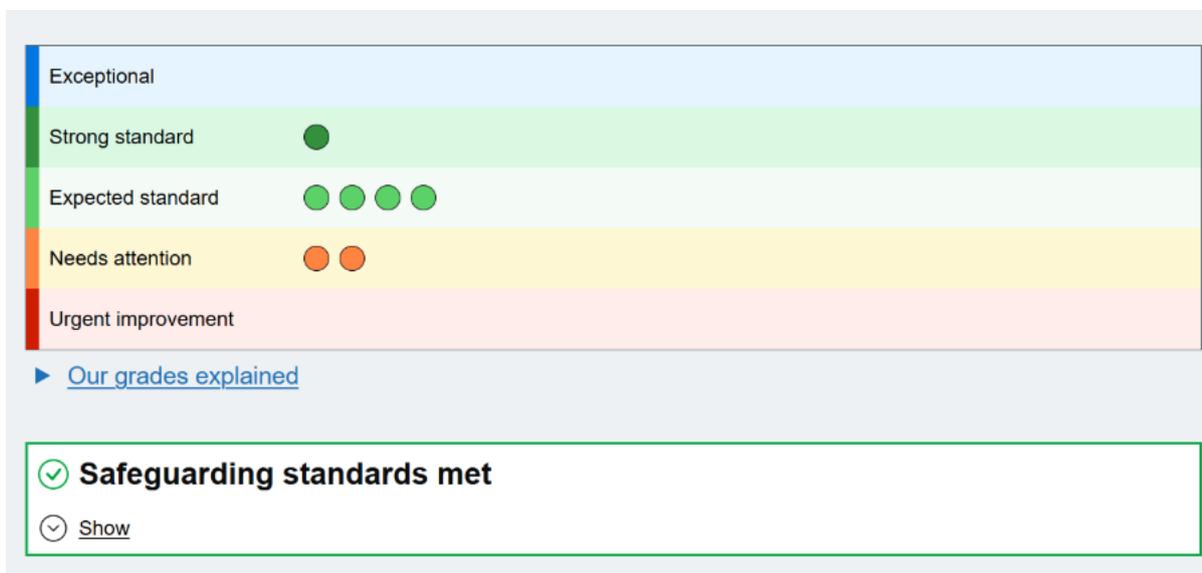
Exceptional, strong standard, expected standard, needs attention and urgent improvement.

From the pilots, trial and early inspections, Ofsted have stated that the vast majority of schools are likely to have most inspection outcome judgements at 'expected standard' and around 2 judgements per school at 'needs attention'.

Please note, use of the 'needs attention' grade does not constitute a failure. Ofsted have stated we are likely to see approximately 2 needs attention grades in each inspection. These are areas for development often already identified by the school themselves and written in the school's improvement plan. It should also be noted that an 'exceptional' judgement will be very rare.

The Ofsted reports are written to provide information to parents and carers, as well as schools, on how well the school is performing. The new style reports are now much longer and contain more information than reports in the last few years. These reports now use a colour coded system at the start of the report. They are designed to be interactive, including on mobile phones. This allows parents/carers to look at areas that interest them most without reading through the whole report first. You will also notice outcome data/national test results are used more within the report.

An example of the grading system from a recent inspection report. The dots show the grade for each of the areas inspected and you can see safeguarding standards have been met.



We hope this letter helps our school communities to understand the changes and supports further conversations about inspection over time.

Yours sincerely

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