

Children's Services Directorate

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Dear Parents and Carers,

As the Corporate Director for Education in Waltham Forest 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" or "Requires Improvement." 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 and
- Urgent Improvement.

Ofsted have been very clear to point out that you cannot compare the old judgements with the new grades: e.g. 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 continues 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 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' and Ofsted expect that very few schools will be graded as 'Exceptional' in an area.

Therefore, a school that was previously judged as 'Good' that is now graded at the 'Expected Standard' may well have improved its provision for pupils but sits within the grade banding within the new toolkit as meeting the 'Expected Standard,' because expectations are higher than in the previous Ofsted framework.

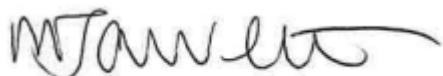
More information for parent/carers about the Ofsted framework can be found here:

[Understanding Ofsted report cards and grades - GOV.UK](#)

We are very proud of our schools in Waltham Forest and are confident that Waltham Forest schools are well prepared for their next inspection. Schools will generally be inspected within four years of their last inspection, but the statutory framework requires them to be inspected within five school years of the end of the academic year of the previous inspection.

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

Yours sincerely,



Mary Jarrett
Corporate Director of Education
Waltham Forest Council