# Ofsted’s new report cards aim to transform parental insight but face sector scepticism



Ofsted is set to introduce a new style of school inspection reports dubbed ‘report cards,’ designed to offer parents clearer, more detailed insight into the quality of education provided by schools. Under the revamped system, which will be rolled out from November 10 this year, schools will be graded on a five-point colour-coded scale across several key criteria, rather than receiving an overall inspection grade. This change represents a significant shift from the traditional single-word judgments, which were scrapped by the government last year amid concerns that they were overly simplistic and did not adequately reflect the nuanced realities of school performance.

The new report cards will assess schools on at least seven areas, including curriculum and teaching quality, achievement, inclusion, leadership and governance, personal development and wellbeing, as well as attendance and behaviour. Safeguarding standards will continue to be inspected but reported simply as ‘met’ or ‘unmet.’ The grading scale ranges from blue for ‘exceptional,’ through dark and medium green indicating ‘strong’ and ‘expected’ standards, down to orange and red signalling ‘needs attention’ or ‘urgent improvement.’ Parents will be able to view these assessments on an easy-to-navigate online report card, alongside additional contextual information such as pupil demographics, performance data, and recommended next steps for school improvement.

Ofsted Chief Inspector Sir Martyn Oliver emphasised that the new approach aims to provide parents with robust and transparent information to help them understand the strengths and areas for improvement in the schools their children attend. He also highlighted the importance of fairly assessing the work of education professionals, stating that the revised reports would help to showcase the best in schools while identifying where development is needed.

The initiative comes after feedback from parents and educators who found the previous grading system too blunt. Independent polling by YouGov suggests there is strong parental support for the new format, with nearly 70% preferring the report cards and around 90% finding them easy to understand. Ofsted has responded to concerns about increased inspector workload by committing to add an extra inspector for each inspection and by incorporating recommendations from a recent staff wellbeing review.

However, despite these endorsements, significant reservations persist within segments of the education community. Some headteachers, teaching unions, and advocacy groups have expressed deep concerns that any form of graded accountability—especially one that is publicly displayed—may continue to place unsustainable pressure on school leaders and staff. The tragic case of headteacher Ruth Perry, who died by suicide following her school’s downgrading in an Ofsted inspection, remains poignant in these discussions. Critics argue that the new system may not adequately address the mental health impact and could perpetuate a culture of fear around inspections. The National Education Union reports that a substantial majority of its members doubt the new system will ease the intense stress linked to Ofsted visits, and many feel the rollout timeline is too rushed for schools to prepare effectively.

The implementation timeline stipulates that schools inspected from mid-November 2025 will receive the new report cards, with the first public releases anticipated early in the new year. The changes will apply to state-funded primary and secondary schools, early years centres, and further education establishments, while independent schools outside the Independent Schools Council face a slightly later start in January 2026.

In the context of a broader governmental push for transparency and continuous improvement in education, the new Ofsted report cards seek to balance the need for detailed parental information with a fairer and more supportive inspection framework. Whether they achieve this delicate balance remains to be seen, as the education sector continues to debate the appropriate measures to ensure both accountability and wellbeing within schools.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/education/ofsted-new-school-report-cards-coming-what-look-like-when-can-parents-see-5311795), [[2]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ofsted-sets-out-proposals-for-fairer-education-inspections-and-new-more-detailed-report-cards), [[4]](https://www.itv.com/news/2025-09-09/new-ofsted-report-cards-to-be-rolled-out-to-parents-from-november), [[7]](https://www.theguardian.com/education/article/2024/sep/02/ofsted-single-word-school-ratings-scrapped)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/education/ofsted-new-school-report-cards-coming-what-look-like-when-can-parents-see-5311795), [[2]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ofsted-sets-out-proposals-for-fairer-education-inspections-and-new-more-detailed-report-cards), [[5]](https://www.ft.com/content/32e4c590-1a84-470b-a8b8-0b2ff172f3fd), [[4]](https://www.itv.com/news/2025-09-09/new-ofsted-report-cards-to-be-rolled-out-to-parents-from-november)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/education/ofsted-new-school-report-cards-coming-what-look-like-when-can-parents-see-5311795), [[2]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ofsted-sets-out-proposals-for-fairer-education-inspections-and-new-more-detailed-report-cards), [[4]](https://www.itv.com/news/2025-09-09/new-ofsted-report-cards-to-be-rolled-out-to-parents-from-november)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/education/ofsted-new-school-report-cards-coming-what-look-like-when-can-parents-see-5311795), [[4]](https://www.itv.com/news/2025-09-09/new-ofsted-report-cards-to-be-rolled-out-to-parents-from-november)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/education/ofsted-new-school-report-cards-coming-what-look-like-when-can-parents-see-5311795), [[3]](https://www.theguardian.com/education/2025/feb/03/ofsted-new-school-report-card-worse-than-old-system-say-headteachers), [[5]](https://www.ft.com/content/32e4c590-1a84-470b-a8b8-0b2ff172f3fd), [[6]](https://www.theguardian.com/education/2023/mar/11/labour-school-ratings-ofsted-education-policy)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/education/ofsted-new-school-report-cards-coming-what-look-like-when-can-parents-see-5311795), [[3]](https://www.theguardian.com/education/2025/feb/03/ofsted-new-school-report-card-worse-than-old-system-say-headteachers)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/education/ofsted-new-school-report-cards-coming-what-look-like-when-can-parents-see-5311795), [[2]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ofsted-sets-out-proposals-for-fairer-education-inspections-and-new-more-detailed-report-cards), [[4]](https://www.itv.com/news/2025-09-09/new-ofsted-report-cards-to-be-rolled-out-to-parents-from-november), [[7]](https://www.theguardian.com/education/article/2024/sep/02/ofsted-single-word-school-ratings-scrapped)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/education/ofsted-new-school-report-cards-coming-what-look-like-when-can-parents-see-5311795> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ofsted-sets-out-proposals-for-fairer-education-inspections-and-new-more-detailed-report-cards> - In February 2025, Ofsted announced plans to introduce new report cards for schools, replacing the traditional single-word judgments with a five-point grading scale. This scale ranges from 'causing concern' to 'exemplary' and aims to provide parents with more detailed information about various aspects of their child's education. The report cards will assess areas such as curriculum, teaching, achievement, inclusion, leadership, personal development, and attendance. The new system is set to begin inspections from November 10, 2025, for state-funded primary and secondary schools, early years centres, and further education or skills training centres. Independent schools not part of the Independent Schools Council will begin in January 2026. The initiative follows feedback from parents and educators seeking a more nuanced understanding of school performance. Ofsted Chief Inspector Sir Martyn Oliver emphasized the importance of providing parents with clearer insights into the strengths and areas for improvement in schools. The move also addresses concerns about the previous grading system, which some felt was overly simplistic and did not capture the full picture of a school's performance. The introduction of these report cards is part of a broader effort to enhance transparency and support continuous improvement in the education sector.
3. <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2025/feb/03/ofsted-new-school-report-card-worse-than-old-system-say-headteachers> - In February 2025, headteachers and teaching unions criticized Ofsted's proposed new school report cards, arguing that the changes could be more demoralising than the existing system. The new approach aims to replace single-word judgments with a five-point grading scale across eight key areas, including achievement, leadership, curriculum, teaching development, personal wellbeing, attendance, behaviour, and inclusion. Critics expressed concerns that the new system might induce anxiety and be difficult to implement effectively within short inspection periods. The Labour government had previously scrapped the single-word judgment system following pressure from teaching unions. The initiative also follows criticism of Ofsted's handling of the 2023 suicide of headteacher Ruth Perry, which was partly attributed to a negative report. The proposed assessment areas include curriculum, teaching, achievement, leadership, behaviour and values, attendance, preparation for next steps, opportunities to thrive, inclusion and belonging, and safeguarding. Schools will be graded on a five-point scale, providing more nuanced feedback. However, some education sector figures criticized the new proposals as potentially more damaging and punitive. While Ofsted will launch a consultation in January, the transition has met with mixed reactions from school leaders and teachers.
4. <https://www.itv.com/news/2025-09-09/new-ofsted-report-cards-to-be-rolled-out-to-parents-from-november> - In September 2025, Ofsted confirmed that new report cards for schools would be introduced, featuring a five-point grading scale. The report cards aim to provide parents with more detailed information about their children's education, assessing schools across various areas, including attendance, behaviour, and inclusion. The grading scale ranges from 'urgent improvement' to 'exceptional', with the highest grade being 'exceptional'. An independent poll by YouGov found that nearly 70% of parents preferred the new-look report cards to Ofsted's current inspection reports, with 90% finding them easy to understand. The introduction of these report cards is part of a broader effort to enhance transparency and support continuous improvement in the education sector.
5. <https://www.ft.com/content/32e4c590-1a84-470b-a8b8-0b2ff172f3fd> - In January 2025, Ofsted announced plans to introduce a colour-coded scorecard to assess schools across eight key areas, replacing single-word judgments with one- or two-word assessments. The proposed grading scale ranges from 'causing concern' in red to 'exemplary' in dark green. The initiative aims to provide a more nuanced understanding of school performance and has received significant pushback from educators, who argue it may induce anxiety and be difficult to implement effectively within short inspection periods. The move follows criticism of the old system being overly simplistic and unrepresentative. The proposed areas of assessment include achievement, leadership, curriculum, teacher development, personal wellbeing, attendance, behaviour, and inclusion.
6. <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2023/mar/11/labour-school-ratings-ofsted-education-policy> - In March 2023, the Labour Party pledged to overhaul England's school ratings by replacing the existing system with a 'report card' aimed at providing parents with more detailed information. The new system would retain the areas currently given individual grades by Ofsted, such as behaviour, management, and quality of education, but would replace their grade descriptions. The proposal received support from school leaders, who welcomed the move away from the current grading system, which they felt was overly simplistic and often unrepresentative. The initiative also included plans for annual reviews of school safeguarding to avoid potentially long gaps between inspections.
7. <https://www.theguardian.com/education/article/2024/sep/02/ofsted-single-word-school-ratings-scrapped> - In September 2024, the UK government announced the immediate scrapping of single-word Ofsted judgments for state schools, replacing them with report cards aimed at improving standards and helping parents better understand schools' strengths and weaknesses. The four headline ratings previously awarded by Ofsted—outstanding, good, requires improvement, and inadequate—were criticized for being overly simplistic and not providing a comprehensive assessment of school performance. The new report card system, set to be introduced from September 2025, will provide parents with a more rounded picture of their school's performance, including assessments in areas such as quality of education, behaviour, personal development, and leadership. The change follows concerns about the impact of the previous grading system on the mental health of school staff and the need for a more transparent and effective inspection process.