

State School Self-Evaluation

Using the New Inspection Toolkit Framework

This toolkit has been created to give state schools a clear, practical way to measure themselves against Ofsted's new inspection arrangements (from November 2025).

It takes the official grade descriptors and presents them in plain English, with straightforward explanations and clear next steps for improvement.

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Foreword

This toolkit has been created to give state schools a clear, practical way to measure themselves against Ofsted's new inspection arrangements (from November 2025).

It takes the official grade descriptors and presents them in plain English, with straightforward explanations and clear next steps for improvement.

Our aim is simple: to help leaders and governors quickly see where the school is strong, where more attention is needed, and how to move provision forward.

By turning the Ofsted framework into an action-focused self-evaluation tool, we hope to support state schools in building confidence, accelerating improvement, and achieving the very best outcomes for learners.

Introduction

This self-evaluation toolkit has been developed to support state school education in preparing for inspection under the revised Ofsted framework, which is being introduced in November 2025. It translates the official inspection toolkit into a practical resource that school leaders can use to reflect on their current position, identify strengths, and plan for improvement with confidence.

The structure follows the new Ofsted scorecard approach. Each section of the inspection framework is presented in a table format with three clear components:

- **Grade Descriptor** – adapted directly from Ofsted’s published descriptors, using the most recent terminology (Exemplary, Strong, Secure, Attention Needed, Causing Concern, and Met/Not Met for safeguarding).
- **Explanation for Grading** – a plain-English interpretation to help leadership teams understand how the descriptors apply in practice within a school setting.
- **Next Steps** – concise, actionable recommendations that highlight how providers can move from their current position to the next level, ensuring ongoing improvement and readiness for inspection.

This resource is not intended to replace Ofsted’s official guidance, but rather to simplify and operationalise the framework so that senior leaders, governors, and middle managers can:

- Benchmark their current provision against the inspection expectations
- Pinpoint priority areas for development with clarity
- Use the “Next Steps” as a springboard for strategic planning and quality improvement

By combining the latest Ofsted documentation with practical sector insight, this toolkit is designed to reduce complexity, support reflective conversations, and accelerate school improvement planning.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding is a **limiting judgement** under the 2025 framework. It is assessed simply as **Met** or **Not Met**. If safeguarding is “Not Met,” the school’s overall grade will be restricted. Inspectors look for a vigilant safeguarding culture, effective policies, swift and transparent reporting, and staff who are trained and confident in keeping pupils safe.

Grade Descriptor	Explanation for Grading	Next Steps
Met	Leaders create a strong safeguarding culture; staff are well trained and vigilant; pupils feel safe; concerns are recorded and acted on promptly; statutory duties are met.	Maintain regular safeguarding audits; refresh staff training; ensure governor oversight and external review where possible.
Not Met	Safeguarding arrangements are weak or inconsistent; statutory duties are not met; records are incomplete; pupils may be at risk.	Urgent review of policies and practice; retrain all staff; update and secure records; seek external safeguarding audit and immediate improvement plan.

Rationale for your choice:

Leadership & Governance

Leadership and governance are judged at a whole-school level. Inspectors assess whether leaders set a clear strategic vision, raise expectations for all pupils, and hold staff accountable for high-quality provision. Governance must provide effective oversight, challenge, and support. Strong leadership creates a culture of trust, improvement, and sustained success.

Grade Descriptor	Explanation for Grading	Next Steps
Exemplary	Visionary leadership drives excellence across the school.	Build succession planning; mentor other leaders.
Strong	Clear strategy and effective governance ensure accountability.	Sharpen self-evaluation; evidence long-term impact.
Secure	Leadership is adequate, but monitoring is inconsistent.	Strengthen the governor challenge; increase stakeholder voice.
Attention Needed	Weak strategy and low staff morale.	Leadership coaching; governance development.
Causing Concern	Ineffective leadership undermines provision.	External review and urgent restructuring.

Rationale for your choice:

Inclusion

Inclusion measures how well the school supports pupils with SEND, those from disadvantaged backgrounds, and other groups at risk of underachievement. Inspectors look at equity of access, ambition for all pupils, and the removal of barriers to learning. Schools are expected to create a culture where every pupil feels valued and supported to succeed.

Grade Descriptor	Explanation for Grading	Next Steps
Exemplary	Inclusion is central to ethos; high ambition for SEND/disadvantaged.	Share practice across trust; continue to innovate.
Strong	Provision valued and effective; gaps closing.	Deepen impact measures; strengthen transitions.
Secure	Meets needs adequately but inconsistently.	Monitor interventions; track disadvantaged progress.
Attention Needed	Inconsistent approach to SEND/disadvantaged.	Review provision urgently; staff CPD.
Causing Concern	Pupils excluded from opportunities; significant underachievement.	Immediate safeguarding and SEND audit.

Rationale for your choice:

Curriculum, Teaching & Learning

The curriculum is central to inspection. Inspectors consider how broad, ambitious, and well-sequenced the curriculum is, whether teaching enables pupils to learn and remember more, and how assessment is used to support progress. High-quality teaching, secure subject knowledge, and effective implementation underpin this judgement.

Grade Descriptor	Explanation for Grading	Next Steps
Exemplary	Ambitious, broad, and sequenced curriculum; exceptional teaching.	Disseminate approach; link with research schools.
Strong	Curriculum broad and well taught; outcomes positive.	Further embed retrieval and assessment practice.
Secure	Meets statutory requirements but lacks ambition.	Strengthen subject knowledge and pedagogy.
Attention Needed	Curriculum is narrow or weakly sequenced.	Re-map curriculum; review schemes of work.
Causing Concern	Curriculum fails to prepare pupils for the next steps.	Urgent overhaul required.

Rationale for your choice:

Achievement

Achievement reflects the impact of education on pupil outcomes. Inspectors look at progress, attainment, and destinations, considering whether pupils meet or exceed expectations across the curriculum. Strong achievement means all groups of pupils, including the most disadvantaged, achieve well and are well prepared for the next stage of education, training, or employment.

Grade Descriptor	Explanation for Grading	Next Steps
Exemplary	Outcomes exceed national benchmarks across groups.	Sustain excellence; share with feeder schools.
Strong	Pupils achieve well; progress in line with expectations.	Close gaps; strengthen KS3-KS4 transition.
Secure	Attainment is broadly in line but uneven.	Refine assessment; targeted interventions.
Attention Needed	Gaps widening; outcomes weak for key groups.	Review teaching and tracking systems.
Causing Concern	Serious underachievement is widespread.	Immediate recovery plan.

Rationale for your choice:

Behaviour, Attitudes & Development

This judgement brings together behaviour, attendance, attitudes to learning, and personal development. Inspectors look at how consistently pupils show respect, resilience, and readiness to learn. They also consider enrichment opportunities and how well the school prepares pupils for life in modern Britain. A positive culture of behaviour and development enables pupils to thrive.

Grade Descriptor	Explanation for Grading	Next Steps
Exemplary	Pupils' conduct and character exemplary; highly respectful.	Share strategies across networks.
Strong	Pupils behave well; good attendance and engagement.	Strengthen resilience and enrichment offer.
Secure	Behaviour is acceptable but inconsistent.	Consistency in expectations and rewards.
Attention Needed	Attitudes hinder learning; high absence.	Review behaviour policy; increase support.
Causing Concern	Unsafe or negative culture.	Urgent safeguarding and behaviour reset.

Rationale for your choice:

Moving Forward with Confidence

Completing this self-evaluation is not just about preparing for inspection — it is about strengthening your school's vision, culture, and outcomes for learners.

By mapping your provision against Ofsted's new framework, you now have:

- A clear picture of current strengths
- A practical set of next steps for improvement
- A shared language for governors, leaders, and staff to work from

This audit is fully incorporated into [SchooliP](#), our complete platform for driving school improvement. SchooliP not only supports self-evaluation and self-assessment, but also:

- Improvement planning aligned to inspection priorities
- Staff appraisal and professional development records to build capacity and track growth
- Policy management to ensure compliance and consistency
- Whole-school self-evaluation integrated with daily improvement processes

With SchooliP, your leadership team can move forward with confidence — not just to meet Ofsted expectations, but to exceed them. By embedding this framework into your ongoing improvement cycle, you'll be able to evidence progress, accelerate change, and deliver first-class outcomes for learners and communities.

First-class school improvement begins here — with SchooliP.

References

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Further Reading

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