Partnership of Schools Group

A Guide to the New Ofsted Framework (2025 onwards)
What does this really mean for your Child and their School?

The Partnership of Schools Group is a board designed to support and champion all of the 363 schools across Lincolnshire. As part of their work, an overview has been created for parents, schools and communities to work together in understanding the recent changes to the Ofsted inspection framework. We hope that you find this guide useful.

Current Picture: Why Communicate?

You may already be hearing discussions, particularly around the new grading language and what terms like “Needs Attention” represent. We recognise that these changes can feel confusing, especially as they differ significantly from the previous system many families were familiar with.

The purpose of this message is to help provide clarity, reassurance, and a shared understanding across our school communities. The new framework is designed to give a more detailed and balanced picture of schools, moving away from single headline judgements and towards a broader view of strengths and areas for development.

In the information that follows, we hope to support you in interpreting these changes with confidence, so that you can better understand what they mean in practice - and what they do not mean - for your child’s experience in school.

Did you know in May 2026?

67% of schools have achieved **expected** in all areas

40% of schools have **needs attention** in one or more areas.

This video overview is a great starting point

Key Messages

1. The biggest shift: no more single-word judgements

Previously, schools were labelled with one headline grade like “Good” or “Outstanding.”

That’s gone.

Instead, Ofsted now uses a report card approach - rating several different areas separately (e.g. achievement, behaviour, inclusion, wellbeing).

☞ What this means for parents

You’re no longer looking at one label - you’re looking at a profile of strengths and areas to improve.

2. Understanding the new grading scale

Each area is now graded on a five-point scale:
Exceptional
Strong standard
Expected standard
Needs attention
Urgent improvement

This is where confusion is happening.

The key mindset shift:

“Needs attention” is NOT the same as failure.
It means the school is not yet at the expected standard
It highlights specific areas to improve

It often triggers support and follow-up inspections, not punishment

☞ Think of it more like:

“Work in progress with clear next steps” — not “this school is poor.”

3. Why “Needs Attention” feels harsher than “Good”

Many parents are noticing this tension - and they’re right to.

Early analysis suggests:

The new “expected standard” is harder to achieve than the old “good”.
More schools may fall into “needs attention” than previously “requires improvement”

☞ Consider:

A school that used to be labelled “Good” might now show a mix like:
Expected standard in some areas
Needs attention in others

That doesn’t mean it got worse - it means the bar moved and the reporting got more detailed.

4. A more honest (but more complex) picture

The new system is designed to:

Give greater transparency
Show what’s actually happening day-to-day
Highlight areas like inclusion, wellbeing, and attendance more clearly

☞ For parents:

This is powerful - but also more demanding:
You now need to read the detail, not just the headline.

5. How to read a report card?

Instead of asking:
"Is this a good school?"

Ask:

- ✔ Where is the school strong?
- ✔ Where are they improving?
- ✔ Do the weaker areas affect my child directly?
- ✔ Is there a clear plan and progress?

☞ Remember:

A school that has areas/an area of "needs attention" and several expected or better outcomes may still be a very positive environment for your child.

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Finally...

Schools offer a wealth of opportunities for pupils – why not visit the school to explore the report findings further and see the impact first hand?