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The new Ofsted framework: What families need to know and what it means for Balksbury Federation

Ofsted have introduced a new Inspection Framework, designed to give families clearer, more meaningful information about how schools are performing. This is a major shift in how inspection findings are reported. *It's important to understand that the new system cannot be compared to the old one.*

When will Balksbury Infant School and Balksbury Junior School be inspected?

Our *infant school* was inspected in the spring term of 2022, which means we are likely to be inspected under the new framework *from* spring 2026. Our culture and ethos in the infant school align with the new national focus, particularly around strong foundations, inclusion, attendance and personal development.

Our *junior school* was inspected in spring term 2025. As we were awarded the highest ungraded outcome, usually this means that Ofsted return within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection, to award a graded outcome. However, Ofsted now say that under the new framework, this will typically be within 4 years.

What has changed?

Previously, schools received a single overall judgement such as Outstanding, Good, or Requires Improvement. Under the new framework, this approach has been replaced with *report cards* that break down performance into key areas that Ofsted say matter most to families:

- Inclusion (how well the school meets the needs of all children)
- Curriculum and Teaching
- Achievement
- Attendance and Behaviour
- Personal Development and Well-being
- Early Years
- Leadership and Governance
- Safeguarding will be marked as 'Met' or 'Not Met'



New Grading Scale

Exceptional	Among the very best nationally, practice should be shared with others.
Strong Standard	Excellent, consistent work making a real difference.
Expected Standard	The school is doing everything it should be doing to meet high expectations.
Needs Attention	There are areas where work is underway, but impact isn't yet visible. This is not a fail.
Urgent Improvement	Significant changes are needed.

Why can't the new system be compared to the old one?

Previously, schools were assigned a single overall grade. The updated system, however, offers a multi-dimensional perspective, highlighting both strengths and areas for improvement within the same school. As a result, a school might be at the Strong Standard in one aspect but Expected Standard in another, giving families a clearer sense of their children's experience at the school. Since the new grading method and criteria differ entirely from the old system, *Ofsted says that previous judgements such as Good or Outstanding cannot be directly mapped onto the new categories and grades.*

National Priorities

There is a strong national focus on inclusion (ensuring every child's needs are met) and a renewed emphasis on attendance, recognising its vital role in achievement and wellbeing. These priorities are already central to our ethos and culture at Barksbury Federation.

What will Ofsted reports look like?

Reports will be in the form of a '*Report Card*'. Alongside the colour-coded grades, families will see clear explanations of what inspectors found, plus key data such as pupil numbers and age ranges. This transparency is designed to help families feel reassured about their child's education.

Want to learn more?

Ofsted have a video for families to watch on YouTube. This will give a full explanation of the changes: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iMMoqZv-DUU>

Kind regards
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