



The New Ofsted Framework: How Leaders Need to Prepare for November 2025

A clear, practical guide for headteachers and senior leaders, from inspection mapping to narrative confidence.

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Note:

While this report reflects the direction Ofsted has set out, the final framework will not be confirmed until September 2025. Treat this as early guidance – useful for getting ahead, but to be refined once the official version is published.

Introduction

In November 2025, Ofsted will introduce the most significant inspection changes in over a decade. Out go single-word judgments. In come detailed report cards, broader evaluation areas, and a greater emphasis on context, inclusion, and professional dialogue.

And critically – **no more Section 8 inspections**. Every inspection will now be a full inspection – for every school.

While Ofsted calls this an “evolution, not a revolution”, the scope and pace suggest a transformation that school leaders must prepare for carefully – and quickly.



What We Think Is **Changing** (But We Won't Really Know Until September)

1. Single judgments scrapped

Inspectors will rate performance across 11 areas grading each "Causing Concern" to "Exemplary".
Safeguarding will stand alone - rated simply as "Met" / "Not Met".

2. No more ungraded inspections

All visits, regardless of previous outcome or risk level, will be full inspections, meaning no school is exempt from deeper scrutiny. Up to Christmas these visits will be led by an HMI with an additional appeals process in place.

3. Deep dives replaced

Subject-specific deep dives are being replaced with full inspections and broader professional conversations covering themes across subjects.

4. Inclusion and context aren't side notes - they're central

Inspectors must understand your community, challenges, and inclusion strategy - not as an excuse, but as part of fair evaluation.

What Remains Unclear

While the direction of travel is welcome in many ways, a number of key details are still missing:

- The final framework won't land until September, leaving limited preparation time for headteachers and system leaders
- Grade descriptors and definitions remain vague in several categories
- Training timelines for inspectors have come under some criticism
- The nominee role, which becomes more central, lacks clear guidance
- Schools will be expected to nominate a senior member of staff who understands the school context. This has never been done before.
- What will happen to schools that are evaluated as "Attention Needed"/"Causing Concern"

Sector Reactions



Parents and carers

Welcome more detailed reporting according to Ofsted internal research.



Education professionals

Expressed serious concern about compressed preparation time, and complexity of more grades and criteria.



Governance bodies

Emphasis on inclusion, but warn about consistency and clarity.



Professional Bodies

Called for a delay until September 2026 due to pace of change and high stakes nature of inspection for all concerned.



What School Leaders Can Do To Prepare



How to use this section: While some aspects are out of your control, there's still plenty you can do now to get ahead. **Print these pages.** Use the checkboxes as you work through your preparation plan.

1. Understand the new inspection landscape

- ☐ Download Ofsted's draft report card template (once published) and map it against current school evaluation tools.
- ☐ Create a school-specific inspection map identifying lead staff for each evaluation area.
- ☐ Ensure SEND, disadvantaged pupils, and EAL learners are visible in your quality assurance cycle—not as an add-on, but integrated into curriculum, behaviour, and personal development scrutiny.
- ☐ Invite your SENCO or inclusion lead to present regularly to governors throughout the year

2. Strengthen your school's narrative

- ☐ Prepare a short, evidence-informed context statement covering:
 - Key demographics and challenges
 - Inclusion priorities
 - Local partnerships and community factors
- ☐ Select a senior leader with strong contextual understanding and credibility across the school. Give them time to deeply understand the school context and for specific groups.
- ☐ Schedule time for nominee-specific training in September using Ofsted's published materials.
- ☐ Run mock inspection conversations to rehearse contextual framing and narrative clarity.

3. Audit for visibility and impact

- ☐ Use staff meeting time in early autumn to conduct a structured audit across the new areas (curriculum, inclusion, attendance, wellbeing, etc.).
- ☐ Prioritise gaps where evidence is thin or where impact isn't clearly demonstrable.

4. Streamline evidence, don't multiply

- ☐ Review your key documentation in light of the new framework. ***Is it telling you what you need to know?***
- ☐ Map what you have to the new framework – find the gaps and consider how you can address them. It's not always another piece of paper.

5. Brief staff with clarity

- ☐ Hold a full-staff briefing in September to outline the changes, dispel myths, and clarify the emphasis on dialogue based on key information that everyone understands.
- ☐ Emphasise that inspection is now about context, action and impact, that each member of staff is responsible for improving children's lives.

6. Prepare for the first term's inspections

- ☐ Track regional inspection activity once the framework begins and watch for themes in early reports.
- ☐ Establish a weekly leadership check-in to refine your narrative, break the framework down – deal with it systematically and evaluate thoroughly.

It's Not About Panic – It's About Preparation

The new Ofsted framework has potential to create fairer, more thoughtful inspections. But the reality of navigating it – especially at pace – will be demanding. With thoughtful preparation, schools can not only navigate the new framework but use it as a catalyst for meaningful reflection and improvement.





Intelligent Evidence

Preparing for inspection shouldn't take you away from leading your school.

With Intelligent Evidence, your existing documents are scanned, mapped to Ofsted's grade descriptors, and presented in a way that's clear, consistent, and inspection-ready all year round.

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"If this platform can make inspection readiness a by-product of daily leadership, not a scramble every few years, then it's not just helpful - it's transformational."

Chris Moore - CEO Link - Salford

