

February 2026

Dear Parents & Carers

Understanding the new Ofsted Framework

I am writing to share some information about the new Ofsted inspection framework as many parents across the country have found recent inspection outcomes confusing or surprising. I hope that this explanation will help you to understand what sits behind the judgements that schools receive both now and whenever your child's school is inspected in the future. The new framework is very much in its infancy and the transition from one accountability model to another can take adjustment.

A Shift in Expectations

Ofsted has made several key changes. One of these is that the grade 'expected' is now much harder to achieve than the previous grade of 'good'. If a school receives an 'expected' grade, then this is something to celebrate. It means that the school is meeting a very high bar.

The rise in challenge is partly due to a move away from a 'best fit' approach, where inspectors looked at the overall picture, to a 'secure fit' model. This means that schools are expected to meet all parts of the criteria in full. Consequently, direct comparison between 'good' and 'expected' is not always appropriate as they are based on different criteria, different expectations and a higher standard of evidence.

'Needs Attention' – An Important Clarification

A report may contain elements described as 'needs attention'. Ofsted is very clear in its public guidance that this is not a 'fail' and that it is entirely normal for schools to have areas that require further development. This wording simply reflects where practice is still embedding or where additional focus is needed. All schools have areas to work on.

New Criteria and Embedded Practice

Another area of change is that schools are being judged in new areas of practice that were not part of the inspection expectations previously. These new elements are expected to be fully embedded, even though they are still very new. Naturally, this will take time for schools to implement well.

Greater Emphasis on Data

There is a very strong emphasis on achievement data, including the results children receive and not simply what progress they make. Attendance data too is looked at very closely. Some schools may receive judgements that feel harsh if the results the children get do not line up closely with national expectations. These schools may be doing excellent, often inspirational work, day by day with the children in their care.

Greater Scrutiny of School Leaders

You will probably have heard in the news that the new Ofsted framework was introduced with the intention of supporting the well-being of school leaders. We hope that this will bear fruit. Nevertheless, the level of accountability and scrutiny is exceptionally high, and this can take its toll.

I see first-hand through my interactions with school leaders, the dedication and compassion with which our headteachers and staff teams serve your children. They work tirelessly. They lead with integrity and care.

I am deeply grateful to you for the support, understanding and kindness that you show to our school leaders. Your encouragement makes a tangible difference, and it is deeply appreciated by those who work so hard for the good of your children and the life of the school.

What matters

We all, including our headteachers and staff, understand and indeed welcome the need for external scrutiny and accountability. Children deserve the very best opportunities; a truly transformational education. In our church schools we expect to see a strong Christian vision underpinning all of its work. A Christian vision that is inclusive and welcoming to those of all faiths and none. Our schools are not schools for Christians but rather Christian schools for all.

My grateful thanks to you all for your partnership and for the trust that you place in our church schools day by day.

Yours

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C Shoyer', with a stylized, cursive script.

Canon Carolyn Shoyer
Diocesan Director of Education