ACTIVATE LEARNING EDUCATION TRUST

Crescent Road, East Reading
Berkshire, RG1 5RQ

Schools
- The Bicester School
- Theale Green School
- UTC Heathrow
- UTC Oxfordshire
- UTC Reading
- UTC Swindon

Dear Parents and Carers for students in ALET Schools,

I am writing to you in regard to the changes in Ofsted inspections following the introduction of the new *Evaluation Toolkit* which was launched in November 2025. The new inspection process represents a significant shift in how schools are evaluated, therefore we would like to ensure all families across our schools have clear information.

How is an Ofsted inspection different now? The new process for inspecting a school, evaluating and grading is substantially different. There are more areas which are graded and this information is reported differently.

What areas will Ofsted inspect when they visit our schools? For secondary education provision with sixth forms , there will be grades published across 8 areas. These are as follows: 1) Safeguarding 2) Inclusion 3) Curriculum and Teaching 4) Achievement 5) Attendance and Behaviour 6) Personal Development and Well-being 7) Post 16 Provision 8) Leadership and Governance

What is Ofsted's New Grading Method for schools? The areas above are graded on a 5-point scale.

These grades are as follows:

- Exceptional (Practice is exceptional; of the highest standard nationally. Other settings can learn from it)
- Strong Standard (The setting reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them)
- Expected Standard (The setting is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them)
- Needs Attention (The expected standards are not met, but leaders are likely to be able to make the necessary improvements)
- Urgent Improvement (The setting needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care).

These grades will be given for all the areas above, with exception of Safeguarding which will simply be graded as Met or Not Met.

There is no overall judgement or grade for a school.

Are the previous Ofsted and 'New' Ofsted grading comparable? No. The new grading structure is fundamentally different from the previous one and the measures used are not directly comparable. Therefore, it is very important that no comparisons are made between a school's previous grading and its new one. A change in grade under the new system does not reflect a decline or improvement in performance; it simply reflects a new assessment and grading approach.

Why are there multiple gradings and not one single grade given? The new framework may show what are known as 'variable profiles', where different aspects of a school's performance are rated at different grades. This is entirely expected and reflects the inspectorate's aim to give a more nuanced, detailed view of school performance to provide helpful information for parents and carers.

What does a "Needs Attention" grade really mean? You may see the grading "Needs Attention" in a report. This should be viewed like an MOT advisory. It highlights an area that would benefit from further focus but does not indicate a serious concern. It is expected that many schools may have one or more areas labelled this way as part of normal continuous improvement.

What are Exceptional grade? These are not comparable to the previous judgments of 'outstanding'. The highest level of recognition, referred to as exceptional grades, will be awarded only in genuinely transformational circumstances. *Most schools will not receive these grades.*

How can I support the school during an Ofsted Inspection? An Ofsted inspection is an opportunity for a school community to showcase a school and for parents and carers to provide their feedback on the school. You will be notified the day before an inspection takes place and will have the opportunity to provide your feedback and support the school via a ParentView survey (Welcome to Ofsted Parent View | Ofsted Parent View) provided by Ofsted. ParentView can be accessed at any time. Please do take a moment to give feedback. Schools can access their school feedback.

How do ALET schools prepare for Ofsted inspections? ALET schools aim to provide the best education for the students and communities we serve, 'Transforming Lives through learning'. We don't work on improvement for the sake of the Ofsted process. However, of course it is important to us and the frame work gives schools a useful evaluative tool, to help prioritise actions for improvement. ALET central team includes a serving Ofsted inspector and we provide strong, proactive support to our schools in preparation for Ofsted inspections and as part of our ongoing school improvement work. We work with other trust leaders to give our processes rigour and quality assurance. Our School Improvement Team offers clear guidance, professional challenge and practical support, including external review, leadership coaching and collaborative working across schools. We have robust shared systems, and we draw on extensive school leadership within our team to ensure that no school works in isolation and that improvements are sustained.

Yours sincerely

Rachel Cave

Rachel Cave
Chief Education Officer