



Briefing Note:
Inspecting Safeguarding by
OFSTED
September 2025



HELEN HOGAN:
SAFEGUARDING
MATTERS

From November 2025 the new OFSTED inspection report cards will evaluate the following 6 areas in schools and settings:

Leadership and Governance

Strategic oversight, safeguarding culture, and accountability.

Curriculum and Teaching

Quality, ambition, sequencing, and delivery of the curriculum.

Achievement

Outcomes for pupils, progress, and attainment across subjects.

Attendance and Behaviour

Pupil conduct, exclusions, attendance patterns, and interventions.

Personal Development and Wellbeing

Mental health support, enrichment, resilience, and life skills.

Inclusion

Provision and outcomes for SEND, disadvantaged pupils, and those at risk of contextual harm.

Additional Areas (where applicable)

Early Years Provision

Judged separately if the school includes nursery or reception.

Post-16 Provision

Applies to schools with sixth forms or further education settings.

Safeguarding will either be judged as MET or NOT MET

This judgment will appear in an expandable section beneath the main report card. Inspectors will evaluate safeguarding based on:

- The culture of safeguarding: openness, pupil-first ethos, and proactive risk management
- Evidence of effective decision-making to protect children, rather than technical compliance alone
- The Single Central Record (SCR) and its accuracy
- Referrals to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and multi-agency involvement

- Provision for vulnerable groups, including SEND, children known to social care, and those at risk of contextual harm

Before inspection, schools must provide:

- SCR
- List of referrals to the local authority
- Details of open cases with children's services
- Multi-agency plans and outcomes

Implications for Safeguarding Practice

- Schools must demonstrate a strategic safeguarding culture, not just procedural compliance
- Training and supervision for DSLs and staff should reflect current risks, including online harm, radicalisation, and contextual safeguarding
- Governors and senior leaders must be able to articulate safeguarding priorities and oversight mechanisms
- Case study evidence (e.g. PREVENT, knife crime, school anxiety) should be ready to illustrate decision-making and impact

Ofsted will replace traditional inspection grades with report cards that use a five-point, colour-coded scale:

- Exceptional (Blue)
- Strong Standard (Dark Green)
- Expected Standard (Medium Green)
- Needs Attention (Orange)
- Urgent Improvement (Red)

These report cards aim to provide clearer, more nuanced insights into school performance across key areas, including safeguarding.

As part of their inspection OFSTED will

- Review policies and check how they work in practice
- Review the SCR
- Speak to all stakeholders
- Meet with the DSL, Governors, SENCO's, Headteacher, Designated Teacher, CEO

If Safeguarding is 'unmet'

- If minor improvements are required school can be given time to rectify within the inspection window.

If safeguarding judgement is 'unmet' but all other areas are at the expected standard

- Suspend the inspection for 3 months

If safeguarding judgement is 'unmet' and other areas do not meet the expected standard

- Monitoring inspection once every term that will focus on the specific areas for improvement.