



Department
for Education

Free schools: Ofsted inspection grades

Statistical release

September 2014

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Free School Ofsted data

On 19 June 2014, the Department for Education put out a press release¹ announcing the approval of 38 new free schools. Within this announcement it was stated that free schools are twice as likely to be 'outstanding', with 21% of open free schools rated 'outstanding' compared to 10% of all schools inspected under the same framework.

The proportion of free schools rated outstanding is based on all open free schools which had a published Ofsted report at the time of the press release. At this time, 62 open free schools had published inspections reports, 13 of which were rated outstanding.

See [Annex A](#) for a list of these free schools along with their inspection grade.

The comparison group is all schools inspected under the new Ofsted framework which came into effect in September 2012. It has been taken from published Ofsted sources² and relates to the position as at 31 March 2014. As of this date, 43 free schools had been inspected, with seven (16%) rated outstanding.

For the press statement, the most up to date figure on free schools was used because an additional 19 free schools had inspection reports published between 1 April and 19 June 2014, an increase of more than 40% increase on the number of free schools inspected between September 2012 and 31 March 2014. When dealing with such small numbers of schools, including these additional reports is likely to make the statistic more robust. Although this means the time periods for the comparison are inconsistent, the proportion of all schools rated outstanding is unlikely to change in this period due to the large sample size.

Ofsted published figures on 16th September 2014 for inspections up to June 2014. These figures show 24% of free schools to be rated outstanding compared to 10% of all schools inspected under the new framework^{3 4}.

It should be noted that two free schools, City Gateway and the London Academy of Excellence (LAE), have been inspected under Ofsted's common inspection framework for further education and skills⁵. LAE is a 16-19 free school and City Gateway is a 14-19 free school. All other free schools, including another 14-19 free school (the rural enterprise academy), have been inspected under the framework for school inspection⁶ as have all

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-schools-bring-total-number-of-free-school-places-to-175000>

² <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/latest-official-statistics-maintained-schools-and-academies-inspections-and-outcomes>

³ <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/latest-official-statistics-maintained-schools-and-academies-inspections-and-outcomes>

⁴ Ofsted official statistics for maintained schools and academies includes those subject to the framework for school inspection. A very small number of 16-19 schools are inspected under the CIF and counted in our official statistics about Further Education and Skills inspection outcomes.

⁵ [Common inspection framework for further education and skills](#)

⁶ [The framework for school inspection](#)

schools in the comparator group. If we exclude the two free schools inspected under the learning and skills framework, 23% of free schools are rated outstanding compared to 10% of all schools.

New Ofsted framework from September 2012

Ofsted introduced a new framework for inspection in September 2012. Comparing the outcomes of free school inspections with other schools therefore presents some difficulties. All free schools have been inspected under this new framework whereas this is not the case for all other schools. The comparison given in the press statement uses only schools inspected under the new framework to address this issue.

It should be noted that Ofsted operates a policy of proportionate inspection, with inspection carried out where it is likely to have most impact. For example, a school judged outstanding at its last inspection is exempt from further inspection unless risk assessment indicates a serious risk of decline. Therefore, within any one year, the sample of schools inspected by Ofsted is not representative of all schools: outstanding and good schools are under-represented, whilst those requiring improvement or inadequate are over-represented. The findings cannot be interpreted as a balanced view of the quality of education nationally. In addition, the sample selected for inspection varies over time, so it is difficult to make meaningful comparisons between the inspections conducted during different periods of time.

A small number of free schools have been inspected

There are the differences in the sizes of groups when comparing free schools to all schools. At the time of the press release, Ofsted had inspected and published reports for 62 free schools, but overall around 20,000 schools are subject to Ofsted inspection. These different group sizes should be taken into account when making comparisons. Additionally, given the small number of free schools inspected to date, the percentage of free schools rated outstanding may be subject to some volatility. Just a few additional inspection grades could have a substantial impact either way on the proportion rated outstanding.

Finally, only a minority of open free schools has been inspected to date. At the time of the press statement, 36% of all open free schools had been inspected. Added to this, only free schools which opened in 2011 and 2012 have been subject to inspection so far. Caution should therefore be taken when drawing conclusions about the performance of all open free schools and when comparing free schools to other schools. However Ofsted inspection grades provide a valuable source of information, in the absence of attainment data, to begin to judge the performance of free schools.

Many free schools have empty year groups

There is evidence that some free schools are not populating all year groups straight away, but starting with one or two cohorts which will then move through the school. This is not unusual for new schools. An inspection can only judge the provision on offer at the time of that inspection. This does not detract from the judgement made because the judgement is not conditional on the school being 'full'. However, the judgement applies at the point in time when the judgement was made and relates to the provision that was on offer at that point in time. It is a judgement and not a status.

Annex A

The table below sets out all open free schools which had been inspected and had a Ofsted report published at the time of the 19 June 2014 press statement. This excludes Discovery New School, which closed down in April 2014. It also excludes university technical colleges and studio schools.

| Free school name | Ofsted Judgement | Year opened |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|-------------|
| All Saints Junior School | Outstanding | 2011 |
| ARK Atwood Primary Academy | Outstanding | 2011 |
| ARK Conway Primary Academy | Outstanding | 2011 |
| Canary Wharf College | Outstanding | 2011 |
| Becket Keys Church of England School | Outstanding | 2012 |
| City Gateway 14-19 Provision | Outstanding | 2012 |
| Corby Technical School | Outstanding | 2012 |
| Derby Pride Academy | Outstanding | 2012 |
| Dixons Trinity Academy | Outstanding | 2012 |
| Harris Primary Free School Peckham | Outstanding | 2012 |
| Reach Academy Feltham | Outstanding | 2012 |
| Stone Soup Academy | Outstanding | 2012 |
| Tauheedul Islam Boys' High School | Outstanding | 2012 |
| Aldborough E-ACT Free School | Good | 2011 |
| Barnfield Moorlands Free School | Good | 2011 |
| Bristol Free School | Good | 2011 |
| Eden Primary School | Good | 2011 |
| Etz Chaim Jewish Primary School | Good | 2011 |
| Krishna-Avanti Primary School | Good | 2011 |
| Langley Hall Primary Academy | Good | 2011 |
| Maharishi School | Good | 2011 |
| Rainbow Primary School | Good | 2011 |
| St Luke's Church of England School | Good | 2011 |

| Free school name | Ofsted Judgement | Year opened |
|--|-------------------------|--------------------|
| Stour Valley Community School | Good | 2011 |
| The Free School Norwich | Good | 2011 |
| West London Free School | Good | 2011 |
| Woodpecker Hall Primary Academy | Good | 2011 |
| Alban City School | Good | 2012 |
| Beccles Free School | Good | 2012 |
| Bolingbroke Academy | Good | 2012 |
| Cobham Free School | Good | 2012 |
| EBN Free School | Good | 2012 |
| Everton Free School | Good | 2012 |
| Kings Leadership Academy | Good | 2012 |
| Lighthouse School Leeds | Good | 2012 |
| London Academy of Excellence | Good | 2012 |
| Rimon Jewish School | Good | 2012 |
| Sandymoor | Good | 2012 |
| Southwark Free School | Good | 2012 |
| Steiner Academy Frome | Good | 2012 |
| The City of Peterborough Academy, Special School | Good | 2012 |
| The Gateway Primary Free School | Good | 2012 |
| The Rural Enterprise Academy | Good | 2012 |
| Batley Grammar School | Requires Improvement | 2011 |
| Kings Science Academy | Requires Improvement | 2011 |
| Nishkam Free School | Requires Improvement | 2011 |
| Sandbach School | Requires Improvement | 2011 |
| The Priors School | Requires Improvement | 2011 |
| Bedford Free School | Requires Improvement | 2012 |
| CET Primary School, Tower Hamlets | Requires Improvement | 2012 |

| Free school name | Ofsted Judgement | Year opened |
|--|-------------------------|--------------------|
| CET Primary School, Westminster | Requires Improvement | 2012 |
| Enfield Heights Academy | Requires Improvement | 2012 |
| Greenwich Free School | Requires Improvement | 2012 |
| Grindon Hall Free School | Requires Improvement | 2012 |
| Harpenden Free School | Requires Improvement | 2012 |
| St Michael's Catholic Secondary School | Requires Improvement | 2012 |
| The Tiger School | Requires Improvement | 2012 |
| Wapping High School | Requires Improvement | 2012 |
| Al Madinah School | Inadequate | 2012 |
| Hartsbrook E-ACT Free School | Inadequate | 2012 |
| IES Breckland | Inadequate | 2012 |
| The Hawthorne's Free School | Inadequate | 2012 |



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