InnerDrive's Big Ofsted New Framework Analysis

Inclusion

InnerDrive

Acknowledgements.

This paper was written by:

- Caroline Spencer: Head of Teaching & Learning at InnerDrive
- Dr Claire Badger: Head of Teacher Professional Development at InnerDrive
- Bradley Busch: Chief Psychological Officer at InnerDrive
- Jade Pearce: Trust Head of Education at Affinity Learning Partnership
- Dr Pippa Busch: Child and Educational Psychologist at The Child Psych
- Dev Sathi: Educational Psychology Researcher

The wider team at InnerDrive also played an invaluable role. With special note to Edward Watson, Daniel Nixon, Moses Hart and Tania John for their vision, time and effort in creating this paper.

To reference this paper, please cite: InnerDrive (2026): "InnerDrive's Big Ofsted New Framework Analysis: Inclusion."

To discuss any of this content or explore how InnerDrive can help in your setting, contact us at info@innerdrive.co.uk

Contents.

Executive Summary 4

Introduction 5

Signal Patterns by Rating 7

1. Staff implementation and classroom practice 8

Relevant Research 9

InnerDrive's Suggestions 10

InnerDrive Recommended Training and Support 11

2. Monitoring and evaluation of provision 12

Relevant Research 13

InnerDrive's Suggestions 14

InnerDrive Recommended Training and Support 15

3. SEND: identification, planning and family confidence 16

Relevant Research 17

InnerDrive's Suggestions 20

InnerDrive Recommended Training and Support 20

4. Curriculum access and achievement outcomes 22

Relevant Research 23

InnerDrive's Suggestions 24

InnerDrive Recommended Training and Support 25

Final Thoughts 25

References 26

Executive Summary.

The introduction of Ofsted's 2025 inspection framework has placed inclusion at the centre of school improvement, with a renewed emphasis on how effectively schools identify, support and remove barriers to learning for disadvantaged pupils, pupils with SEND, children known to social care, and other vulnerable groups.

Our analysis of over 400 inspection reports published under the new framework identified clear patterns in the Inclusion evaluation area.

Schools receiving lower inclusion judgements frequently demonstrated inconsistent classroom adaptations, insufficient understanding of pupils' barriers to learning, weak evaluation of support strategies, delayed or inaccurate identification of additional needs, and limited engagement with families. These weaknesses often resulted in pupils not receiving the timely, targeted support required to access the curriculum and make sustained progress.

In contrast, schools judged most positively for inclusion showed a consistent commitment to high expectations for all pupils, robust systems for identifying and addressing need, strong partnerships with families, and a clear focus on monitoring the impact of interventions.

InnerDrive's suggestions focus on supporting schools to increase knowledge of evidence-informed practices as well as providing opportunities to embed them. Central to this is our 'little and often' approach that sees schools drip-feed development to avoid cognitive overload. Through this approach staff can enhance understanding, self-reflect and improve their practice long-term.

Introduction.

In November 2025, a new Ofsted Inspection Framework was released. Schools are now provided with a report card which gives a judgement on six different areas:

- Inclusion
- Curriculum and teaching
- Achievement
- Attendance and behaviour
- Personal development and well-being
- Leadership and governance

As outlined in the state-funded school inspection toolkit (2025), the Inclusion evaluation area "*considers how leaders and staff identify and support:*

- *Socioeconomically disadvantaged pupils (those eligible for the pupil premium)*
- *Pupils with SEND; this means pupils receiving special educational needs (SEN) support, and those with an education, health and care (EHC) plan*
- *Pupils who are known (or previously known) to children's social care, such as children in need and looked-after children*
- *Pupils who may face other barriers to their learning and/or well-being, which may include pupils who share a protected characteristic.*"

In the 2019 framework, each area was judged on a four-point scale (grade 1 – outstanding; grade 2 – good; grade 3 – requires improvement; grade 4 – inadequate) and an overall judgement for the school awarded.

These single-word overall judgements on a school's effectiveness were removed in the 2025 framework; instead, schools are provided with a report card which gives a judgement on a 5-point scale on each area.

The 5-point scale is:

- 'Exceptional'
- 'Strong standard'
- 'Expected standard'
- 'Needs attention'
- 'Urgent improvement'

InnerDrive's team analysed over 400 recent inspection reports produced under the new framework. Focusing specifically on schools judged as 'Needs Attention' and 'Urgent Improvement' in the 'Inclusion' evaluation area, we have identified broad patterns and nuanced trends. It is also worth highlighting that, due to there being more primary schools than secondary schools and colleges, the sample may be skewed by more inspection reports from primary settings.

From this analysis, four key themes emerged:

1. **Staff implementation and classroom practice**
2. **Monitoring and evaluation of provision**
3. **SEND: identification, planning and family confidence**
4. **Curriculum access and achievement outcomes**

Signal Patterns by Rating

How frequently each signal type appears within schools at each rating level, based on prevalence across the dataset.

Signal	EXCEPTIONAL	STRONG	EXPECTED	NEEDS ATTENTION	URGENT IMPROVEMENT
Staff implementation and classroom practice	**Absent**	**Rare**	**Occasional**	**Very Common**	**Extremely Common**
Monitoring and evaluation of provision	**Absent**	**Rare**	**Occasional**	**Very Common**	**Extremely Common**
SEND: identification, planning and family confidence	**Absent**	**Rare**	**Occasional**	**Common**	**Very Common**
Curriculum access and achievement outcomes	**Absent**	**Absent**	**Rare**	**Common**	**Extremely Common**

In this white paper, each theme is explored in turn. The aim is to support schools in making sense of the framework and applying its principles in a clear and sustainable way. We present the key finding, link it to relevant research, and offer practical, evidence-informed suggestions and solutions.

While these themes are presented separately, in practice they are closely interconnected, and there is inevitably some overlap in the resulting analysis.

Evidence-informed professional development that actually works.

The Teacher CPD Academy is an InnerDrive service that helps schools and colleges design and deliver engaging professional development programmes that improve teaching quality and consistency.

What sets us apart?

The Academy is a complete professional development service, designed to embed evidence-informed practice over time.

Engaging

We just don't do boring. If you don't engage your audience, learning and change doesn't happen.

Flexible

One size doesn't fit all. It's not a system. Our experts help you use our resources, in your PD plan, in your context.

Success Management

We are not just a platform; we are a service. You get a dedicated account manager who will help you get the best out of our service.

Get started today.

Book a meeting | **Get the information pack**