

School inspection results show positive picture despite pressures of pandemic

Ofsted has today published [data on school inspections](#) carried out since the start of term, which shows that the overall grade profile for schools has improved in comparison with the period prior to the pandemic.

The data shows that, during the 3 months up to the end of November, 83% of schools were judged good or outstanding. This compares with 77% of schools rated good or outstanding between September 2019 – when the new education inspection framework (EIF) was introduced – and March 2020, when inspections were suspended.

The data also shows that schools previously judged requires improvement (RI) or inadequate have done particularly well this term. 72% of previously RI schools have attained a good or outstanding grade since September – compared with 56% during the 2019/20 period, while 56% of those previously rated inadequate have improved to good or outstanding, compared with 40% last year.

For the first time since the government lifted the exemption on inspecting outstanding schools, today's data includes the new grades for those schools visited this term. Ofsted is currently inspecting previously exempt schools that have gone the longest without an inspection – over half of those inspected this term had not been inspected for over 10 years – so it isn't surprising that many have not retained the top grade.

At the end of November, 87% of all schools in England were rated either good or outstanding. This is similar to the 86% reported in August 2019, prior to the EIF being introduced and before the pandemic began.

Ofsted has also today published [data on post-inspection surveys](#) completed by school leaders since the beginning of this term. It shows that 88% of leaders were satisfied with the overall process of their inspection, and 91% thought that their inspection will help them improve. These figures are similar to the results of surveys completed before the pandemic.

Ofsted's Chief Inspector Amanda Spielman said:

I am fully aware that schools are still facing very significant challenges as a result of the pandemic. So, I'm very pleased to report that schools are improving and being recognised for doing so. In fact, inspection results this term are very much in line with what we saw before the pandemic began, if not slightly improved. That will be a reassurance to parents and to schools as well.

Our inspections are intended to be constructive and supportive, so

I'm pleased that our survey results show they are valued by the vast majority of school leaders who have experienced one this term. But inspections are also incredibly important for children, who only get one chance at education and have already lost so much in the last 20 months.

No two years of inspection outcomes are ever completely alike, because the mix of schools inspected varies each year, but grouping schools by their previous inspection grade makes the data more comparable. The chart below shows the new grade profile for all schools inspected this term, grouped together by their previous grade, alongside the grade profile for schools inspected between September 2019 and March 2020. For example, of schools previously rated RI, it shows that 72% were judged good this term, 27% remained RI and 1% dropped to inadequate.

Inspection outcomes by previous overall effectiveness grade

	% Outstanding	% Good	% Requires improvement	% Inadequate
Outstanding 2021/22 (99)	53	36	9	2
Outstanding 2019/20 (344)	33	49	14	4
Good 2021/22 (291)	3	86	11	0
Good 2019/20 (1844)	2	83	12	3
Requires improvement 2021/22 (128)	0	72	27	1
Requires improvement 2019/20 (586)	0	56	36	8
Inadequate 2021/22 (25)	4	52	40	4
Inadequate 2019/20 (124)	0	40	52	8
New school 2021/22 (1)	100	0	0	0
New school 2019/20 (21)	19	57	14	10

1. The figure in brackets in the chart above is the number of schools inspected where reports have been published. Percentages are rounded and may not add to 100%.
 2. The way in which schools previously rated outstanding are selected for inspection will have an influence on the pattern of improvement vs decline.
 3. Some schools rated good or outstanding will have had concerns highlighted in their inspection report. In these cases, the school retains its current grade but will receive a full, graded inspection within 2 years.
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Boost for Teesside with new direct trains from Middlesbrough to London

A new direct train service between Middlesbrough and London launches today (Monday 13 December) for the first time in 31 years, in a huge boost for the North East.

The daily weekday service will drive opportunity in Teesside, providing better connections for workers and a major lift for tourism. It follows on from the government's pledge to invest £96 billion in the railways to help level up the nation.

Running Monday to Friday in each direction, the new service will also connect nearby Thornaby directly with London King's Cross in around 3 hours.

The first train will depart Middlesbrough at 07:08 this morning and will arrive at London's King's Cross at 10:22.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

The railways are the backbone of this country, and I'm delighted we're establishing a direct service between Middlesbrough and London for the first time in more than 3 decades.

Not only will this world-class service provide green benefits, but it will also give the people of Teesside better connections for work, help bring loved ones together, and drive tourism to this fantastic region.

This follows our ambitious Integrated Rail Plan which is building a better rail network that benefits everyone.

Run by London North Eastern Railway (LNER), the service will see passengers travel on the world-class Azuma trains which offer huge environmental benefits, running on electric wires between London and North Yorkshire, before switching to diesel to Middlesbrough. They also boast free onboard wi-fi, electric sockets at every seat and more space than conventional carriages.

Families will also be able to travel on a special Family Ticket offering around a 48% discount and a strong incentive to ditch their cars for greener public transport.

The Middlesbrough to London service is part of a new timetable designed to help the network build back better from the pandemic. It also delivers improved value for money for taxpayers with rail services adjusted to meet changes in passenger demand.

As well as the introduction of a direct London-Middlesbrough service, the new timetable will also see improvements on journeys between Harrogate and York and between Newcastle and Edinburgh.

Train operator Northern is adding more services, increasing the York-Harrogate service to half hourly from hourly. A new service of 5 trains per day between Newcastle and Edinburgh is also being introduced by TPE for Transport Scotland, serving Northumberland and the Scottish Borders.

Last month the government announced £96 billion for the biggest ever public investment in Britain's rail network. Journeys across HS2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail, both from London and across the Pennines, will be faster, more frequent and reliable under the government's [Integrated Rail Plan](#) over the next couple of decades – including shorter journeys between Leeds and Manchester, Nottingham and Birmingham, and London and Sheffield.

Just last week, it was also announced that Britain's new generation of [super-fast 'bullet trains' will be designed and built here in the UK](#), promising massive investment in the North East and Midlands and 2,500 new jobs.

[Biggest ever renewable energy support scheme opens](#)

- Biggest ever round of government's flagship renewable energy auction scheme opens with £285 million a year funding for low-carbon technology moving the UK away from volatile foreign fossil fuels
- fourth round aims to secure more capacity than 3 previous rounds combined with additional offshore wind capacity that could generate electricity equivalent to powering around 8 million homes
- offshore wind will be supported by £200 million funding a year, with £24 million initially allocated for floating offshore wind and £20 million on tidal stream projects – with solar and onshore wind included for first time since 2015

The biggest ever round of the UK government's flagship renewable energy support scheme is opening to applications today (Monday, 13 December), with £285 million available a year for building the next generation of Great Britain's green energy projects.

Renewable energy projects across Great Britain can now bid for funding in the fourth round of the Contracts for Difference (CfD) scheme, which is aiming to secure 12GW of electricity capacity – more renewable capacity than the previous 3 rounds combined. The additional offshore wind capacity resulting from the funding alone could generate enough electricity to power around 8 million homes.

Compared to the previous round, this is open to an expanded number of renewable energy technologies, with offshore wind, onshore wind, solar, tidal and floating offshore wind projects, amongst others, all eligible to bid for funding in the scheme's auction process – this will ensure we have a more secure, more resilient energy system and support the UK's transition to net zero through a greater range of energy sources.

The competitive nature of the CfD scheme has been hugely successful in driving the deployment of renewable energy across Great Britain whilst rapidly reducing costs. The scheme's design has led to the price per unit of offshore wind to fall by around 65% between the first allocation round (AR) in 2015 and the third in 2019.

Business and Energy Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng said:

Our biggest ever renewables auction opening today will solidify the UK's role as a world-leader in renewable electricity, while backing new, future-proof industries across the country to create new jobs.

By generating more renewable energy in the UK, we can ensure greater energy independence by moving away from volatile global fossil fuel prices, all while driving down the cost of new energy.

A total budget of £285 million a year has been allocated to the fourth round, with £200 million available for offshore wind, £75 million for emerging technologies, such as remote island wind, tidal stream and floating offshore wind, and £10 million for established technologies, such as solar and onshore wind.

Within emerging technologies, £24 million a year has been ringfenced for floating offshore wind projects and £20 million initially set aside for tidal stream projects, demonstrating the government's support for new, innovative technologies that can make an important contribution to the UK's decarbonisation commitments.

The £20 million per year support for tidal stream projects represents the biggest investment into tidal power in a generation, kickstarting a brand-new chapter for the tidal industry that could also have the benefit of creating jobs across the UK.

Onshore wind and solar are competing in an allocation round for the first time since 2015, and the government is seeking significant capacity from these technologies which will help us achieve the required levels of deployment in line with meeting climate change targets.

Subject to the outcome of the competitive auction, it is expected that AR4 will be a major step towards delivering the government's increased ambition to have 40GW of offshore wind by 2030, including 1GW to come from floating offshore wind, as set out in the Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution.

Energy and Climate Change Minister Greg Hands said:

The Contracts for Difference scheme is proof that green and growth go hand-in-hand as it continues to be a key driver behind the world-leading renewable energy sector that is providing us with secure clean energy, creating jobs across the UK and opening investment and export opportunities.

The previous 3 rounds have allowed us to push forward with the Green Industrial Revolution and this round will take us further and faster than ever before while continuing to drive down costs for consumers.

There has also been a strengthening of the supply chain plan process, so the CfD's fourth round can support the effective development of open and competitive supply chains and promote innovation and skills in the low-carbon electricity generation sector.

RenewableUK CEO Dan McGrail said:

This is set to be a landmark auction securing the largest amount of new renewable energy capacity so far, as ministers have listened to our calls for the overall capacity cap to be lifted to reflect the enormous appetite among companies and investors in UK projects.

More than 16GW of wind could be ready to compete and over 23GW of renewables overall. We could see investment of over £20 billion in this round, creating thousands of jobs and cutting costs for energy consumers.

We need a range of renewable technologies to get us to net zero as fast as possible, so it's great to see the development of innovative floating wind and tidal stream projects supported by ring-fenced funding, as we've been advocating. This will enable us to ramp up the roll-out of these cutting-edge technologies, building up massive industrial opportunities for the future, including exports.

Low Carbon Contracts Company CEO Neil McDermott, said:

We've been supporting new low-carbon power projects through the CfD scheme since its inception, so we're incredibly excited to see what the next Allocation Round brings. The current CfD portfolio features projects located across the length and breadth of Great Britain, including some of the world's largest offshore wind farms to date.

We've seen the scheme's impact on diversifying and increasing the

investment needed to support vital new low-carbon power, and this year's COP26 only served to underline the critical timing of this round.

We've learned a fantastic amount to date and we stand ready to support the ambitious infrastructure that will power the UK's transition to Net Zero emissions by 2050, as well as protecting the long-term health of our environment, economies and societies.

Key points (£ budgets in 2011/2012 prices):

Pot 1: Established technologies (includes Onshore wind, Solar and Hydro):

- £10 million pot budget
- 5GW capacity cap
- maximum capacity limits of 3.5GW imposed on both onshore wind and solar PV

Pot 2: Less-established technologies (includes Floating Offshore Wind, Tidal Stream, Geothermal and Wave):

- £75 million pot budget
- no capacity cap
- within the £75 million total, £20 million ringfenced funding for tidal stream projects and £24 million initially ringfenced funding for floating offshore wind projects

Pot 3: Offshore wind:

- £200 million pot budget
- no capacity cap

The latest round of the CfD scheme supports the Prime Minister's [Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution](#), which outlines an ambitious vision of a low-carbon future for the UK, and will ensure that clean energy continues to play a key role in ending our contribution to climate change entirely by 2050.

- the Contracts for Difference fourth allocation round will close to applications on 14 January 2022, with the final results of the auction expected to be announced in spring-summer 2022
- Contracts for Difference are 15-year private law contracts between renewable electricity generators and the Low Carbon Contracts Company (LCCC), a government-owned company that manages CfDs at arm's length from government
- contracts are awarded in a series of competitive auctions, known as allocation rounds, which have been run approximately every 2 years. In the auction process, the lowest price bids within each pot and/or ringfence are successful, which drives efficiency and cost reduction
- CfDs give greater certainty and stability of revenues to electricity generators by reducing their exposure to volatile wholesale prices, while protecting consumers from paying for higher costs when electricity

prices are high

- the scheme has delivered substantial new investment and helped deliver significant reductions in the costs of capital for some renewable technologies
- CfD auctions (together with the bespoke CfD contracts signed in the early days of the scheme) have so far awarded contracts to around 13GW of offshore wind and around 16GW of new renewable electricity capacity across all technologies in 58 projects
- monetary support (pot budget) estimates in this notice, including the £285 million total figure and split across the 3 pots, are presented in 2011/2012 prices in line with the Control for Low Carbon Levies. These figures are an estimate of annual support in the most expensive year in the first 4 years following deployment. Actual annual figures will vary over the lifetime of the contract depending on future wholesale electricity prices, and outcomes of the competitive auction process

Information on methodology behind 'homes powered' estimates:

- the '8 million homes' estimate is based on the estimated consented pipeline for offshore wind (around 7 GW). Actual generation secured through this allocation round will vary based on the outcome of the competitive auction process, and given the large number of projects from other technologies competing in the round
- this has been calculated using load factor estimates for offshore wind commissioning in 2025 from the published [2020 BEIS Generation Costs Report](#), and published [estimates of average household electricity consumption](#)
- importantly, wind generation is intermittent – it is not possible to continuously power a home through wind alone

[£510 million to crackdown on benefits fraudsters](#)



The money will be used to improve the department's capability and capacity to detect and deter benefit fraud and catch fraudsters, recovering more taxpayer

money that funds essential public services.

This crackdown will include 2,000 trained specialists to review claims by carrying out property checks, following up earning declarations of self-employed claimants and cross-checking bank details.

It builds on the department's highly skilled and agile counter-fraud team and investigators in cyber security and serious and organised crime. They led government action to tackle organised crime groups seeking to exploit support during the pandemic, shutting down systematic attacks on the benefit system and preventing at least £1.9 billion in benefits from being paid to people trying to scam the system.

Thérèse Coffey, Secretary of State at the Department for Work and Pensions, said:

Investing in measures to fight fraud protects honest taxpayers' money and stops criminals funding their illicit activities off the back of our welfare system.

We know the characteristics of a suspicious claim. This half a billion-pound cash injection is a clear message to fraudsters and criminal gangs: Anyone trying to con us will get caught out.

A recent case handled by the counter-fraud team supported a high value fraud bust with police in Stratford-upon-Avon. Operation Iggy was a sting on a woman who had made 14 Universal Credit claims using false identity documents for a total of £270,000. She was arrested, with the false documents found in her house, and sentenced to 30 months in prison, with DWP now recovering the money.

- £510 million cash injection from government to root out fraudulent benefit claims
- New money will include funding for around 2,000 trained specialists to identify and stop scammers
- Funds were released after figures show DWP prevented at least £1.9 billion of fraud during the first year of the pandemic.

Media enquiries for this press release – 0115 965 8781

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[Urgent Omicron appeal: Get boosted now](#)

- Prime Minister and NHS turbocharge booster programme against Omicron and launch an urgent national appeal calling for people to get jabbed
- Latest data shows booster is needed to protect ourselves and the NHS against the variant
- Prime Minister: “A tidal wave of Omicron is coming. Get Boosted Now.”
- UK Chief Medical Officers raise UK Covid Alert Level from Level 3 to Level 4
- All adults in England to be offered a booster jab by the end of the year. Devolved administrations also agree to accelerate vaccinations.

The Prime Minister, together with the NHS, has today [Sunday 12 December] launched an urgent national appeal calling for people to get jabbed, as he outlined plans to significantly increase NHS vaccination capacity.

It comes as the UK Chief Medical Officers have today increased the UK Covid Alert Level from Level 3 to Level 4 due to a rapid increase in cases of the Omicron variant.

The latest data suggests Omicron is extremely transmissible and will become the dominant variant by mid-December. Cases are now doubling every 2 to 3 days.

Data published on Friday suggests that vaccine efficacy against symptomatic infection is substantially reduced against Omicron with just two doses, but a third dose boosts protection back up to over 70%.

It is too early to draw firm conclusions about whether the Omicron variant is as virulent as Delta but even if it is more mild, a slight fall in vaccine efficacy can lead to a substantial increase in hospitalisations. Hospitalisations in South Africa have doubled in a week and are expected to rise in the UK over the next 2 weeks.

The extent of transmissibility, coupled with reduced protection after two doses and the raising of the alert level by the UK CMOs, means the Prime Minister and NHS England are today launching an urgent national Omicron appeal for the public to Get Boosted Now.

The government and NHS will rise to the challenge, working flat out to deliver jabs, save lives and ensure the NHS is not overwhelmed this winter with an influx of Omicron cases.

The vaccination programme is already delivering hundreds of thousands of boosters every day, with over 530,000 jabs in arms on Saturday alone, while catching up on elective surgeries and appointments and delivering all urgent care.

All adults will now be offered a booster jab by the New Year, bringing the target forward by one month.

Bookings through the [National Booking System](#) will be prioritised at most sites unless it is a pop up or walk-in only site. The National Booking System will now be stood up for over 18s and will take a short time to operationalise. From tomorrow adults over 30 will be able to book online, and all over 18s from Wednesday.

Some walk-in appointments will be available from tomorrow for over 18s, dependent on location. If there are long queues or all slots have been booked, people are encouraged to be patient and keep trying, or book online.

To deliver the ramped-up vaccination programme, NHS staff will need to be redeployed away from non-urgent services. This means that all primary care services will now focus on urgent clinical need and vaccines, and some non-urgent appointments and elective surgeries may be postponed until the New Year while every adult in the country is jabbed. Without the added protection from this third dose, NHS beds will quickly fill up and the long term damage to the economy and the NHS efforts to bring down the backlog will be even greater.

The NHS will be given everything it needs to get jabs in arms as the UK responds to the Omicron variant.

The Prime Minister has today set out that the NHS will be given everything it needs to boost jabbing capacity, which will include:

- New vaccination sites set up across the country, including mobile pop up sites
- Increasing opening times for vaccination sites, to 7 days a week with more appointments early in the morning, in the evening and at weekends
- 50 military planning experts will help coordinate the national effort by supporting the NHS with logistics of the rollout
- Reprioritising the NHS workforce to deliver as many jabs as possible
- A national call for thousands more NHS volunteers

If Omicron is left unchecked the NHS is at risk of being quickly overwhelmed. This week the Prime Minister confirmed the move to Plan B for England following its rapid spread.

Face coverings are now compulsory in most public indoor venues, people are asked to work from home if they can from tomorrow, and from Wednesday 15 December negative lateral flow tests will be needed to enter nightclubs and large events, except for those who are double vaccinated and subject to approval from Parliament.

Every adult in the country is now being urged to book their jab as soon as possible. The vaccination programme is open to everyone, and first and second doses remain available.

The government will continue to work closely with the devolved administrations on the booster rollout, and there will be Barnett

consequential for any new funding.