

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Upperwood Academy

Dartree Walk, Darfield, Barnsley, South Yorkshire S73 9NL

Inspection dates:

10 and 11 June 2025

Outcome

Upperwood Academy has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Ange Brown. This school is part of HCAT Multi-Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Tom Banham. The trust is overseen by a board of trustees. The acting chair of trustees is Stephen Gallagher.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They are safe and happy. Relationships between staff and pupils are warm and respectful. There are clear expectations for pupils' behaviour and achievement. Consistent values and routines are established right from the early years. Pupils know the school's code of '100% safe, 100% kind and 100% effort' and rise to meet them. The school takes swift and effective action in response to incidents of bullying or derogatory language. Bullying is extremely rare.

There is an ambitious new curriculum in place, which is well thought through. Pupils gain the knowledge and skills that they need for their next stage. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are generally supported well.

There is a wide range of experiences to support pupils' personal development. These are organised into five strands: sports and arts performance; people and places of worship; curriculum focus; community links; and lifetime experiences. Pupils benefit from and enjoy educational visits. For example, pupils enthusiastically described a recent visit to a local sculpture park and explained how it helped them to create their own clay art.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The curriculum has been recently renewed. In most subjects, this has been a process of refining or restructuring an already strong offer. In some wider curriculum subjects, the changes are more significant and have increased the level of ambition. The school has

identified the knowledge and skills that all pupils should learn. Teachers revisit important knowledge with pupils so that they remember it. Teachers provide regular opportunities for pupils to articulate their thinking through talking and in short written tasks. This helps pupils to think deeply and practise explaining concepts. However, some lesson activities do not have a clear enough purpose. Where this happens, pupils do not have the opportunity to reinforce the intended learning. This affects how well they achieve.

The school's approach to supporting pupils with SEND has improved. There is a clear process for identifying needs. The school works with external agencies, such as local authority services, to seek advice and further support for pupils with SEND. Staff make adaptations to support pupils to access the curriculum. Occasionally, these adaptations are not as effective as they could be. This prevents pupils from learning new concepts securely.

Pupils enjoy reading. Pupils in the early stages of learning to read learn quickly. Staff teach pupils strategies to read fluently. Pupils get lots of practise reading aloud. There are effective interventions in place for pupils who need extra support to learn to read.

The early years provides children with a great start to their education. Staff are highly trained and effective. They skilfully seize opportunities to develop children's communication and language. They help children begin to manage feelings and develop independence. The environment is used well to meet children's learning needs. Children learn the curriculum and are prepared for Year 1.

Pupils develop tolerance and respect for others. There is a well-designed programme in place for pupils' personal, social and health education. Pupils learn about keeping safe, including online, and explore fundamental British values. Pupils typically remember what they are taught well. For example, they have a strong knowledge of citizens' rights in relation to discrimination. There is a range of leadership opportunities, such as joining the school council or being a reading ambassador.

Pupils behave well in lessons. If pupils lose focus, staff respond quickly and effectively. At social times, pupils get along well together. They warmly welcome visitors.

The trust has shown a clear commitment to supporting the school. There are secure processes for checking the school's systems and performance. There are lots of opportunities for staff to network with, and train alongside, other schools in the trust. Staff morale is very high. Staff feel well supported by school leaders and the trust.

Those with responsibility for governance understand their statutory duties and carry them out well. Though new, the local academy committee is being supported effectively by the trust.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some lesson activities and adaptations are not clearly purposeful or matched to pupils' learning needs. Where this happens, pupils do not learn as well as they could. The school should ensure that tasks and adaptations have a clear learning intention and that staff check that all pupils secure the intended knowledge and skills.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024, graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged school to be good for overall effectiveness in July 2016.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	138615
Local authority	Barnsley
Inspection number	10346454
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	289
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Acting chair of trust	Stephen Gallagher
CEO of the trust	Tom Banham
Headteacher	Ange Brown
Website	www.upperwoodacademy.org
Dates of previous inspection	11 and 12 February 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school joined HCAT, a multi-academy trust, in September 2025.
- There is a new headteacher in post since the previous inspection.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.
- Stephen Gallagher took on the role of acting chair of trustees on 10 June 2025.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the school.

- The inspector met with senior leaders, including the headteacher and assistant headteacher. The inspector also met with the CEO, the chair of the trust board and a member of the local academy committee.
- The inspector visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- The inspector spoke to parents and carers as they dropped their children off at the school gate.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour throughout the school day, including during breakfast club, during lesson visits and at breaktime. The inspector spoke to groups of pupils about their views on behaviour at the school.
- The inspector reviewed the responses received through the Ofsted online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text responses. The inspector also considered responses received through Ofsted's staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Zoe Helman, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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