

Upwell Academy

Address: School Road, Upwell, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire, PE14 9EW

Unique reference number (URN): 144017

Inspection report: 6 May 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	●
Expected standard	● ● ● ● ●
Needs attention	●
Urgent improvement	

✓ **Safeguarding standards met**

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Strong standard

Early years

Strong standard 

Leaders have established a well-organised and ambitious early years curriculum. Topics are chosen thoughtfully to capture children's interest and broaden their understanding of the wider world. Leaders have sequenced this curriculum so that it provides ample opportunities for children to develop their communication and language skills. Staff regularly revisit new knowledge and vocabulary through stories, discussion, rhymes and structured adult-led sessions.

Staff carefully design independent learning activities to enable children to develop and rehearse specific skills, such as how to draw with precision and control. High-quality phonics teaching ensures that children quickly experience success with reading. Staff make sure that every child can take part in all activities so that they have equal opportunities to learn.

Regular contact with children's nursery settings and families ensure that staff understand children's starting points before they begin school. Leaders regularly check children's progress and development, using this information to identify children's needs and adapt provision. Staff quickly spot children's misconceptions. They ensure that children receive regular opportunities to catch up with missed learning.

Children benefit from warm and respectful relationships with staff. This supports children to listen attentively, follow instructions well and engage positively with learning. As a result, children quickly learn the classroom routines and expectations. This helps everyone to settle, get along, take turns and share. Children are very well prepared for their next steps in learning.

Expected standard

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Over time, pupils' levels of attendance have been lower than the national averages. Leaders have prioritised attendance and introduced rigorous systems to improve pupils' attendance and punctuality. They communicate high expectations clearly and follow procedures consistently. Leaders closely check patterns of pupils' absence and share information with governors, parents and carers. Staff work closely with families, external agencies and the local authority to identify and reduce barriers to regular attendance. This work has contributed to improving levels of attendance, including for pupils who are disadvantaged. Pupils' attendance is now close to the national averages.

Leaders have established clear expectations and routines for pupils' behaviour. These are easily understood by all, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff and pupils appreciate the way these expectations, rules and routines contribute to a calm and orderly environment across the school. Pupils respond positively to these expectations. They are keen to do well and receive praise for their efforts. Staff manage pupils' behaviour well, providing additional support for pupils with SEND who need

to manage their emotions and behaviour. Leaders monitor pupils' behaviour closely. They respond quickly and effectively to any rare incidents of bullying.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

The curriculum is broad, ambitious and well sequenced. Leaders have designed it to provide pupils with insights into the world around them and equip them with important knowledge in reading, writing and mathematics. Staff check how well pupils progress through the curriculum. They provide swift support for pupils who need additional help to secure basic skills.

Leaders have strengthened the quality and consistency of pupils' learning experiences. They have ensured that staff know how to use the agreed, high-quality teaching approaches across the school. Typically, staff deploy these approaches well. For example, they provide many opportunities for pupils to rehearse subject-specific vocabulary. Overall, these approaches are enjoyable, accessible to all and effectively secure pupils' participation. This supports pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, to remember important knowledge successfully. However, occasionally, staff do not use these teaching approaches in the way leaders' intend. This means that some pupils do not benefit, as they miss out on what teachers explain or demonstrate.

Reading is prioritised across the school. Pupils at the early stages of reading benefit from clear routines and precise teaching. They develop confidence and fluency in reading increasingly well. Leaders ensure that all pupils become familiar with a variety of high-quality texts. This supports pupils to learn more about a range of topics, as well as enjoy stories that provide inspiration for role play and writing.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders identify pupils' needs carefully and ensure that pupils receive appropriate support to access education successfully. Staff use assessment information, including external advice where needed, to understand pupils' barriers to learning. Leaders provide staff with a range of training, including in communication needs, so that they can give pupils effective support in lessons. The adaptations staff make, such as providing additional visual resources, help pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to follow the same curriculum as their peers. This includes for pupils who attend 'The Hive'. This provides targeted support for pupils who require additional help with communication, confidence and independence. Leaders closely check pupils' progress to ensure that any additional support is having the right impact.

Leaders work effectively with external agencies, and with parents and carers, to secure appropriate support for pupils with multiple needs. They maintain detailed oversight of pupils who attend alternative provision. Leaders use additional funding with care to support pupils who are disadvantaged. This helps to reduce these pupils' barriers to learning and ensure that they participate fully in school life.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders and those responsible for governance have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and priorities for improvement. Leaders have taken purposeful and swift action to improve pupils' behaviour, strengthen the curriculum and raise expectations across the school. A refreshed vision that emphasises pupils' sense of belonging is having a positive impact. Leaders are committed to seeing these changes translate into better academic achievement for pupils. The trust has provided effective support during this period of change, including through curriculum development, professional guidance and regular monitoring.

Leaders' actions are contributing to greater consistency in pupils' experiences across the school. Pupils feel and are successful in lessons. Staff value this consistency, as it supports their wellbeing and ensures they can focus on teaching and supporting pupils. Staff appreciate the training and support they receive, including opportunities to work with trust colleagues and external professionals. Their professional development is linked closely to whole-school priorities and gives them the skills needed to meet pupils' needs. Local governors and trust leaders know the school well through regular visits and checks. They provide support and challenge and ensure that statutory responsibilities, including safeguarding duties, are met.

Leaders communicate openly with families. They have established clear expectations regarding attendance and behaviour. Some parents recognise that expectations are high and routines are more consistent than they were previously. Leaders have worked carefully to strengthen the school's place within the local community. The trust provides additional support where needed, helping leaders to respond effectively to challenges and maintain a clear focus on continued improvement.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders have designed a carefully structured programme to support pupils' wider development effectively. Pupils learn knowledge and skills that help them become increasingly confident and independent. Older pupils take on responsibilities, including as house captains and pupil leaders. They value the opportunities that they have to contribute to school life. A wide range of clubs, visits and experiences enrich the curriculum further. Leaders work thoughtfully to ensure that these opportunities are accessible for all pupils.

Leaders and staff are rightly proud of how they support pupils to feel a sense of belonging. Leaders have prioritised creating an environment where pupils feel included, valued and part of the school's community. Pupils speak positively about the school and are proud of their achievements and responsibilities. Staff support pupils' wider interests and talents well. Pupils enjoy taking part in sports events, musical performances and trips to explore the natural world around them.

Leaders have established a range of wellbeing support, including through work with external agencies where appropriate. Pupils benefit from calm routines and individual approaches that help them to manage their emotions and engage positively with school life. This supports pupils to learn how to respect and be kind to each other.

The personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) curriculum is well sequenced. The school adapts PSHE lessons to meet the needs of pupils. Pupils learn how to stay safe, including online. Staff teach these topics in an age-appropriate way. Pupils develop secure understanding of healthy relationships and wider social issues through assemblies, PSHE and religious education. They learn about the importance of fundamental British values. For example, pupils understand that people may have different beliefs and backgrounds and are respectful towards others. As a result of this work, pupils are being prepared well for life in modern Britain.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

Over time, too many pupils do not achieve as well as they should by the end of key stage 2. Their attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is below the national averages. To address these weaknesses, leaders have introduced more consistent approaches to curriculum and teaching. While improvements to teaching are beginning to strengthen pupils' achievement, it is too soon to see the impact on pupils' attainment in Year 6. These pupils are not as well prepared for their next steps as they should be.

Pupils achieve positively in phonics and early reading. They become increasingly fluent and accurate in reading texts that are matched to their phonics knowledge. Across the curriculum, pupils generally remember important knowledge from recent learning. In some subjects, pupils recall prior learning successfully and apply this in lessons. However, some pupils do not remember important knowledge from earlier learning.

Older pupils benefit from catch up support in the basics, as well as support to develop independence and personal organisation in readiness for the expectations and routines of secondary school.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Pupils are greeted with smiles and encouragement by leaders as soon as they step onto the school site. Dedicated staff understand pupils' needs well. This supports pupils to feel safe and included. They are confident that staff promptly deal with any concerns, including if bullying happens. Pupils know and appreciate the school's expectations and routines. They understand that it helps them to concentrate on their learning and participate fairly in class discussions and activities. Pupils behave well and are keen to make their teachers proud. They enjoy receiving recognition and praise for their efforts, such as badges that are linked to the school's values.

Children in the early years get off to a flying start to their early education. They settle quickly in a nurturing environment where stories, topics and activities inspire their imagination. Pupils engage enthusiastically with their learning and make progress from their starting points. Generally, teachers effectively support pupils to understand and apply new

knowledge and skills. Staff provide additional support to reduce any barriers to learning that pupils may face. As a result, pupils experience greater success across a range of subjects, including in mathematics and reading. However, pupils do not achieve as well as they should, including in reading, writing and mathematics, by the time that they leave the school.

Pupils appreciate the wider opportunities available to them that broaden their horizons and prepare them well for life in modern Britain. Pupils enjoy taking part in experiences, such as hockey tournaments, visits to a wetland centre and history-focused themed days. They also value opportunities to contribute to school life through taking on leadership roles, such as house captains. Leaders help pupils to overcome any barriers to wellbeing that they may face, to ensure that these opportunities benefit all.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue to support staff to consistently deploy high-quality teaching approaches, so that all pupils learn and remember more.
 - Leaders should ensure that pupils' achievement improves over time, so that a greater proportion of pupils are well prepared for their next stage of education, including the move to secondary school.
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About this inspection

This school is part of Eastern 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, Paul Shanks, and overseen by a board of trustees, co-chaired by David Wilde and Graham Pearson.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMI.

Inspectors spoke with leaders, staff, parents and pupils during the inspection. The lead inspector also spoke with representatives of the trust board and the local governing committee.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school currently makes use of one unregistered alternative provision.

The headteacher took up post in September 2025.

Chris Harris : Principal

Lead inspector:

Hannah Stoten, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Jo Nutbeam, Ofsted Inspector

Tim Leah, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 6 May 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

192

Below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 272

School capacity

210

Below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

25.52%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 26.3%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

9.38%

Well above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.5%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

25.00%

Well above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Close to average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standards in a combined reading, writing and mathematics measure.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	37%	61%	Below
2024/25 (final)	31%	62%	Below
2023/24 (final)	42%	61%	Below
2022/23 (final)	39%	60%	Below

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	63%	74%	Below
2024/25 (final)	59%	75%	Below
2023/24 (final)	65%	74%	Below
2022/23 (final)	65%	73%	Below

Pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	56%	72%	Below
2024/25 (final)	45%	72%	Below
2023/24 (final)	65%	72%	Below
2022/23 (final)	58%	71%	Below

Pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	51%	73%	Below
2024/25 (final)	41%	74%	Below
2023/24 (final)	61%	73%	Below
2022/23 (final)	48%	73%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	16%	46%	Below
2024/25 (final)	21%	47%	Below

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	18%	46%	Below
2022/23 (final)	0%	44%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	48%	62%	Below
2024/25 (final)	50%	63%	Below
2023/24 (final)	45%	62%	Below
2022/23 (final)	50%	60%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	32%	59%	Below
2024/25 (final)	36%	59%	Below
2023/24 (final)	36%	58%	Below
2022/23 (final)	17%	58%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	32%	60%	Below
2024/25 (final)	36%	61%	Below
2023/24 (final)	45%	59%	Below
2022/23 (final)	0%	59%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics, including the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	16%	68%	-51 pp
2024/25 (final)	21%	69%	-48 pp
2023/24 (final)	18%	67%	-49 pp
2022/23 (final)	0%	66%	-66 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	48%	80%	-31 pp
2024/25 (final)	50%	81%	-31 pp
2023/24 (final)	45%	80%	-34 pp
2022/23 (final)	50%	78%	-28 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	32%	78%	-45 pp
2024/25 (final)	36%	78%	-43 pp
2023/24 (final)	36%	78%	-41 pp
2022/23 (final)	17%	77%	-61 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	32%	80%	-47 pp
2024/25 (final)	36%	81%	-45 pp
2023/24 (final)	45%	79%	-34 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	0%	79%	-79 pp

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	8.2%	5.2%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	7.3%	5.5%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	6.3%	5.9%	Close to average

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	23.1%	13.0%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	23.1%	14.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	18.8%	16.2%	Close to average

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention ●

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement ●

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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