

Upper Wharfedale School

Wharfeside Avenue, Threshfield, Skipton, North Yorkshire BD23 5BS

Inspection dates

5–6 June 2019

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The headteacher, supported by governors, leaders and staff, has developed an exceptional learning culture within the school, where effort and endeavour are highly valued.
- Leaders are uncompromising in their ambition for pupils. A relentless focus on overcoming individual barriers to learning has led to pupils making outstanding progress during their time at school.
- Leaders have designed a vibrant and rich curriculum which meets the needs of pupils extremely well. The teaching of the curriculum ensures that pupils develop a deep understanding of what they are learning.
- Pupils' outcomes are truly outstanding in the widest sense. They achieve outstanding outcomes in public examinations and also in terms of their personal development. Staff are very proud of their pupils and rightly so.
- Teachers use their excellent subject knowledge to plan learning that will challenge pupils, capture their interests and meet their differing learning needs. They use questioning skilfully to check pupils' understanding and deepen their learning.
- Outcomes in mathematics are excellent. Pupils work steadily and consistently to master skills and secure their understanding so that the vast majority of pupils make excellent progress over time.
- Leaders show extraordinary care for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They adapt the curriculum thoughtfully, where needed, so that pupils are able to thrive both academically and in their personal development.
- Pupils feel very safe and well cared for and parents and carers agree. Leaders and governors ensure that the culture of safeguarding throughout the school is extremely strong.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent and underpins the happy, caring and inclusive ethos of the school.
- Pupils are hard-working, resilient and confident young people. Their behaviour is excellent and their attitudes to learning are exemplary. They are polite, welcoming and friendly, and are very proud of their school.
- Disadvantaged pupils make strong progress from their starting points because staff meet their individual needs carefully.
- Pupils are not prompted to correct and improve their grammar, spelling and punctuation consistently. As a result, errors are not always recognised and corrected.
- Despite leaders' encouragement and good outcomes in French, the number of pupils studying French at key stage 4 is relatively low.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Leaders should ensure that any weaknesses in a pupil's spelling, punctuation and grammar are addressed so that they are able to present their written work consistently to the highest standard.
- Leaders should continue to promote and encourage the study of modern foreign languages at key stage 4 so that uptake improves.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The headteacher and his senior team are compassionate, caring and ambitious for their pupils. Their wholehearted determination to provide their pupils with a first-class education is evident throughout the school. Leaders have created a culture of learning and endeavour. Consequently, pupils thrive. They are very well equipped to flourish in modern Britain.
- Leaders are uncompromising in their work to enable pupils who are disadvantaged to experience success. Together, they overcome barriers and obstacles in their learning. Additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is used wisely with this goal in mind.
- Leaders ensure that the provision for pupils with SEND is excellent and that additional funding is effectively spent. The special educational needs coordinator ensures that pupils' needs are well understood by staff so that pupils receive precise, timely support and make strong progress across the curriculum. Pupils and parents are included in planning for learning and this contributes to pupils' strong progress.
- One parent's comment on Parent View was typical of many:

'The special needs provision is very good. I always feel I can speak to staff about any concerns I might have. Staff are actively looking for ways to ensure that my child is continually moving forward.'
- Leaders know their school very well. They do not stand still. They are constantly looking for ways to improve the school even further. Leaders are outward-facing. They have actively sought partnerships with other schools so that staff can share good practice and expertise. They are acutely aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses and precisely target improvement goals to make the quality of provision even better.
- A wide range of training opportunities for staff to enhance and refine their skills has ensured a motivated and highly effective workforce who deliver high-quality teaching across the school.
- Leaders monitor the quality of teaching and learning regularly, both formally and informally, and use the information effectively to respond to emerging needs. They use assessment information about pupils' learning very well. They identify where pupils are struggling and quickly intervene in order to prevent difficulties from growing.
- Governors and leaders are deeply committed to maintaining a broad curriculum offer, despite the small size of the school. They enrich the curriculum significantly with a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including sports, arts, crafts, musical activities, visitors and trips. Leaders are acutely aware of the low numbers of pupils choosing a foreign language and are proactive in encouraging a higher uptake. However, despite their best efforts, numbers remain low.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is meticulously planned across the whole curriculum. Every opportunity is used to develop pupils' strong understanding and knowledge of fundamental British values. The principles of equality and respect permeate every aspect of the life of the school.

- Inspectors agree fully with one parent who wrote on Parent View:
'Upper Wharfedale School goes above and beyond to make sure that each and every child feels well cared for and important. What they achieve in progress, not only academically, but also in confidence and as a person, is something that cannot be measured by exam results alone.'

Governance of the school

- Governors add considerable strength to the leadership of the school. They are passionate advocates, are well informed and visit the school regularly to check progress for themselves. As a result, they are well equipped to provide effective support and challenge to leaders.
- Governors understand their statutory duties fully and assure themselves that additional funding is used well to support the learning of disadvantaged pupils. The safeguarding governor regularly checks that the school's records of checks on staff meet requirements.
- Governors promote equality of opportunity very effectively. They are determined that pupils will have the best possible opportunities for their futures. They strive, successfully, to ensure that they are able to maintain a rich and broad curriculum that will meet the needs and aspirations of their pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- An extremely strong culture of safeguarding is clearly evident throughout the school. Pupils say they feel very safe in school. They have complete confidence that staff will keep them safe and intervene on their behalf if needed.
- Staff receive regular safeguarding training and updates. They recognise the warning signs that a pupil may be at risk and report concerns quickly. Leaders respond appropriately so that pupils receive the support and protection they need.
- Leaders have a good understanding of the risks faced by pupils in the local area. They are particularly concerned about risks from the internet as so many pupils live in remote areas and connect to the internet to talk to others. Pupils are regularly reminded how to keep themselves safe from known and emerging threats.
- Leaders are proactive in helping pupils to look after their mental health, as well as their physical health. This is appreciated by pupils and their families.
- Safeguarding checks on all staff, governors and volunteers are meticulous and thorough and meet all requirements.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Teachers have the highest of expectations for every pupil in their care. They use their excellent subject knowledge to plan challenging lessons. These capture pupils' interests and develop their curiosity. A deep love of learning permeates the school.

- Teachers use skilful questioning and clear explanations to enable pupils to master challenging concepts. Teachers give pupils enough time to think about their answers to probing questions. These are used to check pupils' developing understanding and deepen their thinking.
- Caring, respectful relationships characterise all classrooms. As a result, pupils are always ready to try and 'have a go', knowing their efforts and contributions will be valued.
- Pupils work productively and with dogged determination and purpose. They take part in discussions with their peers eagerly and listen respectfully to the views of others. Pupils are sensitive and sensible when asked to provide feedback to their peers. As a result of the high-quality incisive feedback from their teachers, pupils know precisely how well they are doing and what to do to improve further. Any misconceptions are identified and addressed quickly.
- A rich diversity of activities capture pupils' imaginations and help them to learn successfully. Activities are matched carefully to pupils' needs and so pupils thrive, showing both enthusiasm and self-discipline in their approach to work. For example, in a science lesson, pupils were captivated as they learned about the effect of currents in the earth's molten core by watching the movement of a broken biscuit floating on treacle as it was slowly heated.
- Teachers do not shy away from difficult discussions, as seen in a religious education lesson where pupils were eager to express their thoughts about death. Pupils demonstrated perceptive thinking, maturity and compassion, together with exceptional skills in communication.
- Teachers link topics between subjects wherever possible so that the context and language of each are enriched. For example, while studying Shakespeare's play 'Macbeth' in English lessons, pupils also explored the culture of the ancient Celts in history. As a result, learning in each subject was enhanced.
- Pupils love to read. They are encouraged to read a wide variety of genres throughout the year. Pupils who struggle to read fluently are well supported and make rapid progress.
- The work in pupils' books shows both superb effort and determination. Nearly all books are neatly presented. However, on occasions, teachers do not guide pupils to improve their grammar, spelling and punctuation. As a result, some pupils repeatedly make the same mistakes.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are exemplary. They are hard-working, confident and self-assured. The ethos and culture of the whole school are centred on the principle that every child is a valued and unique individual. Pupils see adults caring sensitively for others with a wide range of needs each day in every aspect of school life. As a result, they have learned tolerance and show high levels of respect and consideration for

others.

- Pupils are very proud of their school, with a palpable sense of belonging and community. Pupils speak enthusiastically about the work they have undertaken to understand the plight of refugees and to become a 'School of Sanctuary'. They talk with maturity about the dangers of radicalisation and extremism.
- Pupils' understanding of fundamental British values is strong and underpinned by action. For example, the school's 'equality committee' recently arranged for pupils to increase their awareness of dementia by visiting a local community nursing home. Pupils enjoyed learning about the past and residents very much enjoyed sharing their experiences with the young people.
- Pupils contribute confidently in lessons. They listen carefully to each other and readily work in groups with other pupils.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is enhanced as they enjoy a wide range of extra-curricular activities. They talk enthusiastically about their visits to local sites and further afield to places such as the Houses of Parliament.
- Pupils also benefit from a strong programme of careers activities and guidance and so, as they progress through the school, they are increasingly well prepared for the next stage of their education, employment or training and for adult life.
- Pupils say that they feel very safe in school. Incidents of bullying are rare and are dealt with quickly and effectively. Pupils have a finely tuned understanding of different forms of bullying, including racist bullying, gender-based bullying and cyber bullying. They are frequently taught, and then reminded, how to keep themselves safe online. As a result, they are very well informed.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils move around the school calmly. They are very welcoming to visitors, polite and friendly.
- Inspectors saw no instances of inappropriate or disruptive behaviour at any time during the inspection. Behaviour was exemplary.
- The school has seen significant improvements in behaviour since working with pupils on developing a much greater understanding of their emotions and their mental health. Staff firmly believe that this has helped pupils who previously struggled to be able to regulate their emotions and better control their behaviour.
- The proportion of pupils who have been excluded from the school is extremely low.
- Pupils are enthusiastic about learning. They are keen to attend and take part in all that the school has to offer. Their attendance has improved significantly this year. The proportion of pupils who are regularly absent is currently below average.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Outcomes for pupils, together with the progress they make from their starting points, is excellent. The progress made by Year 11 pupils in GCSE examinations has been in the top 20% of all schools in England over the last three years. Overall, progress was even higher in 2018 and in the top 10% of all schools.
- Outcomes in mathematics have been exceptionally strong and consistent over time as a result of very secure learning in every year group from entry to exit. Pupils have a very strong grasp of mathematical principles and techniques. This enables them to excel and make excellent progress from their varied starting points.
- Progress in English has strengthened over time and is now very strong. Pupils make a flying start when they enter the school. Those who struggle with their reading receive highly focused support to help them gain fluency and to catch up with their peers.
- The progress that pupils make in science, humanities and modern foreign languages is also strong. However, the proportion of pupils who choose to study a foreign language is very low.
- Observations of learning, scrutiny of pupils' work in books and the school's own pupil assessment information show that all groups of pupils make excellent progress across all key stages from their various starting points. Without exception, pupils have very challenging and aspirational targets. The assessment system ensures that teachers and pupils keep these targets in mind at all times. Consequently, pupils understand their own progress and are empowered to take responsibility for their learning.
- Pupils with SEND make strong progress from their very different starting points. Leaders and teachers plan learning very carefully around pupils' individual needs and, together with the well-deployed teaching assistants, support pupils astutely. As a result, pupils are happy and involved in their learning.
- Additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is very carefully targeted to ensure that individual learning needs are met. As a result, the progress made by disadvantaged pupils is at least similar to that of their peers with comparable starting points.
- The most able pupils also thrive in a climate of high expectations, encouragement and challenge. Pupils of all abilities flourish and prosper due to the high-quality teaching they receive and the vibrant, rich curriculum thoughtfully tailored, where needed, to pupils' individual learning needs and career aspirations.

School details

Unique reference number	121690
Local authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	10087585

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	303
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Stuart Bond
Headteacher	Andrew Taylor
Telephone number	01756 752 215
Website	www.uws.n-yorks.sch.uk
Email address	admin@uws.n-yorks.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	15 May 2018

Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is below the national average. The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is well above average.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and the proportion who speak English as an additional language are below average.
- There are no pupils in the school who attend alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in all year groups and most subjects. Some of these observations were carried out jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils informally in lessons and during breaktimes and lunchtimes. Formal meetings were held with three groups of pupils from key stages 3 and 4.
- Inspectors listened to some pupils read.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders and middle leaders.
- The lead inspector held a telephone meeting with the chair of governors and met with members of the governing body.
- The lead inspector met with a local authority representative.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work in books and folders across a range of subjects to check attainment, progress and the quality of pupils' written presentation.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of evidence, including the school's self-evaluation, improvement plans, analyses of pupils' performance and attendance, and behaviour records. Inspectors also scrutinised the minutes of governing body meetings, as well as external reviews of the school's work.
- Inspectors examined policies and procedures for the safeguarding of pupils, including records of checks on the suitability of staff to work with children.
- Inspectors analysed the 58 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 39 free-text comments. They also took account of the 42 responses to the staff survey and the 87 responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Janice Gorch, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Janet Gabanski	Ofsted Inspector
John McNally	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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