

Inspection of Upwell Academy

School Road, Upwell, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire PE14 9EW

Inspection dates: 23 and 24 November 2021

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy at Upwell Academy. They enjoy coming to school. They care about each other and are well cared for by staff. Parents feel the school is making a real difference to their children's lives. Pupils and staff alike are proud to be part of 'Team Ace'.

Pupils get on well with each other and have lots of friends. If pupils are unkind, or bully others, staff quickly intervene so it rarely happens again. Caring is one of the school's values.

In class, pupils are usually focused and want to learn. Lessons are rarely disrupted. Most pupils follow the school rules and are rewarded for their good behaviour. On the playground, pupils play nicely together, making good use of the school's playing fields and outdoor gym.

Outside the classroom, there is a range of experiences. From trips to the pantomime to visits to local cities, pupils, across the school, get an opportunity to do something different. Following the disruption caused by the pandemic, after-school clubs are now restarting. Pupils get their say in improving the school, for example by helping to design the 'maths garden'. There is a strong extra-curricular programme.

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

The principal and her team have created a kind environment for pupils to learn and be themselves in. School leaders and staff show a determination and focus to give pupils a rich curriculum and a range of new experiences. They want pupils, of all ages, to enjoy school life.

The school's curriculum is ambitious and, in the main, well thought out. Curriculum leaders have carefully considered the important knowledge that they want pupils to learn. They plan when this will be taught, from early years to Year 6. Work is sequenced in a helpful way that allows pupils' knowledge to build step by step. For example, in early years, children have lots of practice with their number facts. By the time pupils are in Year 6, many are confident mathematicians who can solve a variety of mathematical problems.

In many subjects, teachers have good subject knowledge. In class, they check what pupils have learned. Teachers typically choose activities that help pupils learn.

Some curriculum plans lack detail in what activities would work best. This means that, on a small number of occasions, teachers choose unhelpful activities, such as activities which are too complicated. In these circumstances pupils get confused and do not learn as well.

Reading is prioritised from the moment children start in Reception Year. All staff are appropriately trained and have a firm grasp of how to teach reading effectively.

Pupils quickly learn to read. If pupils fall behind with reading, or find it tricky, staff help them catch up. Pupils access a wide range of different books across the school and, through the curriculum, encounter challenging vocabulary. Pupils enjoy reading, particularly on the school's red 'reading bus'.

The support for the majority of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is effective. The needs of pupils with education, health and care plans (EHC plans) are swiftly assessed and accurately identified. EHC plans are clear. They allow staff to make appropriate adjustments to help these pupils learn.

Leaders have not fully developed systems for providing the same level of information to teachers about pupils with SEND who do not have EHC plans. Teachers are not as precise in the support they give these pupils. As a result, these pupils sometimes struggle with the work they are given.

Leaders have high expectations of how pupils should behave. Staff use the behaviour system consistently and reward good behaviour. Most pupils behave well because they want to. Leaders use a range of effective strategies to help pupils who sometimes misbehave. This ensures that misbehaviour does not persist. The school is calm and orderly.

The school has an effective personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme. Leaders have considered carefully the PSHE curriculum to ensure pupils learn what they need to at an appropriate age. As a result, pupils have a clear understanding of a variety of topics, such as how people are different from themselves and what it means to be a respectful British citizen.

Leaders of the school and the trust support staff in their roles effectively. Staff have access to a range of learning opportunities that help improve their practice. Leaders ensure that new initiatives are not burdensome and do not create unnecessary workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff, across the school, are well trained to spot signs that a pupil may be at risk from harm. They have a thorough understanding of risks pupils face in the local area. There is a clear system to report safeguarding concerns to leaders which is understood by all. Leaders keep detailed records of safeguarding concerns for pupils who may be at risk. They work closely with a range of different agencies to ensure pupils get the help they need.

Staff teach pupils how to keep themselves safe through a range of age-appropriate learning activities.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Sometimes, leaders' curriculum plans do not have the detail needed to support teachers to adapt activities to their classes. Consequently, on a small number of occasions, teachers choose activities that do not support pupils' learning. Leaders need to make sure curriculum documentation enables teachers to ensure all pupils make progress through the curriculum.
- Information leaders give to teachers about the needs of a small number of pupils with SEND is not as clear as it should be. These pupils do not always get the in-class support that they need. Leaders should ensure information teachers receive about these pupils is accurate and supports pupils' learning.

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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

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

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.

School details

Unique reference number	144017
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10200546
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	202
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Julie Perry
Principal	Haidee Norman
Website	www.upwellacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Upwell Academy converted to become an academy in February 2017. When its predecessor school, Upwell Community Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- The school is part of the Eastern Multi-Academy Trust.
- The school uses alternative provision at Hillcrest Primary School Specialist Resource Base (SRB).

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: reading, mathematics, science and history. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders,

visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at a sample of pupils' work.

- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the school's single central record of recruitment checks. Inspectors looked closely at safeguarding procedures and processes. They talked to trustees, leaders, other staff and pupils about safeguarding in the school.
- Inspectors explored reading by visiting phonics lessons and interventions, listening to pupils read to other adults and talking to pupils and staff.
- Inspectors held meetings with the special educational needs coordinator and other senior leaders, including the principal and the chief executive officer.
- The lead inspector held telephone calls with trustees and members of the academy council.
- Inspectors considered the 44 responses made by parents to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including 35 free-text responses. Inspectors also considered the 17 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire and 24 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

Damian Loneragan, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Joanna Pedlow

Ofsted Inspector

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