

Inspection of Upton Hall School FCJ

Upton, Wirral, Merseyside CH49 6LJ

Inspection dates: 28 and 29 June 2022

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Sixth-form provision

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Ofsted has not previously inspected Upton Hall School FCJ under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. However, Ofsted previously judged Upton Hall School FCJ to be outstanding, before it opened as an academy.

What is it like to attend this school?

Upton Hall School FCJ is a school where pupils are inspired to succeed in all that they do. Leaders and staff have created an environment where pupils and students thrive.

Leaders have the highest expectations for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils, and students in the sixth form, benefit from a broad, rich and ambitious curriculum that prepares them exceptionally well for the next stage of their education.

Pupils and students feel safe and happy at school because staff nurture their aspirations and self-belief. Leaders have taken care to prioritise pupils' wider development alongside support for them to achieve academic excellence.

Pupils behave in an exemplary manner. They live up to leaders' high expectations of how to conduct themselves and try their best. They show a kindness and gentleness, embodied by the school's values, to their peers and their teachers. Pupils and students are confident that, if bullying does happen, staff are swift to act, dealing with these incidents effectively.

Pupils take part in many extra-curricular and enrichment activities. Many of these opportunities are carefully linked to the curriculum. This complements pupils' and students' learning of the subjects that they study. For example, when Year 12 students learn about production processes in business studies, they make and market their own apple juice using apples from the school orchard.

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

Leaders are unapologetically ambitious for all pupils, including those with SEND. All pupils study the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects and many study three modern foreign languages at key stage 3. Leaders have designed a vibrant and varied curriculum. This ensures that pupils, including students in the sixth form, learn well beyond the expectations of the national curriculum and examination specifications. They achieve very highly.

The curriculum is meticulously planned by leaders. They have thought deeply about what pupils and students need to know, ordering this learning logically so that pupils and students develop a rich body of subject knowledge.

Teachers are experts in their subjects. They draw on innovative research to hone their skills further, delivering learning that enables pupils to know and remember more. Teachers skilfully check pupils' understanding and spot opportunities to extend their knowledge through questioning and meaningful debate. Teachers ensure that pupils know and understand subject-specific vocabulary. This is especially true for disadvantaged pupils, who are at the forefront of teachers' minds.

Through teachers' effective use of assessment strategies, pupils and students become independent learners who make exemplary progress during their time at school.

Pupils, including students in the sixth form, have a real love of literature and they read avidly for pleasure. Pupils benefit extensively from a vast offer of reading activities, including 'book tastings' and staff-read audiobooks. Teachers of all subjects create a climate for reading, encouraging pupils to read extensively beyond the curriculum.

Pupils with SEND receive support that is matched precisely to their individual needs. Teachers know pupils well. Staff identify the needs of pupils with SEND at the earliest opportunity. Leaders check regularly that the needs of this group of pupils are being met. Pupils with SEND access an equally challenging curriculum as their peers and are fully involved in all aspects of school life. They achieve very well.

Pupils behave in a mature and courteous manner. They know that teachers believe in them and they show a real appetite for learning. Low-level disruption is extremely rare. This allows pupils to focus closely on their work. Students in the sixth form are self-motivated and strive to succeed. Well-established routines mean that no learning time is lost. Parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's survey agreed unanimously that the school makes sure its pupils are well behaved.

Teachers cultivate pupils' learning with rich experiences both inside and outside of the classroom. Leaders have thoughtfully designed a personal development programme that prepares all pupils and students for life in modern Britain. Leaders have ensured that all pupils learn about diversity, equality and respecting difference. Through a range of events, such as culture week and feast day, pupils develop their cultural awareness so that they can take their place as responsible citizens in a modern society.

Leaders have organised an exceptional careers programme that wholly prepares pupils and students for their next steps. From Years 7 to 13, pupils and students receive high-quality careers advice. Pupils know about the courses and jobs that they can secure after school. They are ambitious in their next steps because staff, external speakers and visits have inspired them to achieve their goals. Many students in the sixth form secure places on competitive university courses.

Teachers feel valued. They appreciate the open and transparent relationship that they have with senior leaders. Teachers told inspectors that they feel privileged to work at the school. Leaders take active steps to minimise workload and look after the well-being of staff.

Trustees, together with the governing body, have robust mechanisms in place to hold school leaders to account. Those responsible for governance have a comprehensive understanding of leaders' priorities and a clear oversight of all aspects of school life.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff at all levels are alert to the safeguarding risks that pupils may face. Leaders ensure that all staff receive regular safeguarding training. Staff know pupils well and take swift action when concerns arise.

Leaders are adept at working with a wide range of external agencies. They are persistent in ensuring the right support is in place for vulnerable pupils and their families. Support for pupils' well-being remains a priority at the school.

Pupils learn about how to keep themselves safe, including online. Without exception, pupils said that they have a trusted person in school who they can go to if they are feeling worried or upset.

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	137929
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	10199295
Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	991
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	209
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of governing body	Kate Green
Headteacher	Andrea Gaunt
Website	www.uptonhallschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Upton Hall School FCJ converted to become an academy school in August 2012. When the predecessor school, Upton Hall School FCJ, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding.
- Upton Hall School FCJ is a selective, girls' grammar school. It serves girls from a wide catchment across Wirral and Liverpool.
- Leaders use alternative provision for a small number of pupils at one unregistered alternative provider.
- The school is part of the Diocese of Shrewsbury. The school's previous section 48 inspection was carried out in March 2018.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, other senior leaders, subject leaders and other members of staff. Inspectors also spoke with members of the local governing body, two trustees, a representative of the local authority and a representative of the Diocese of Shrewsbury.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils about their experience of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. Inspectors also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of evidence, including leaders' self-evaluation document, improvement plans, minutes of governing body meetings and records of pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors checked the school's safeguarding policies and procedures and the school's single central record. Inspectors met with leaders, staff and pupils to evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in art and design, English, mathematics, geography and science. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and some pupils about their learning, and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View and the responses to Ofsted's surveys for pupils and staff.

Inspection team

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