

Upton Hall School FCJ

Address: Upton, Wirral, Merseyside, CH49 6LJ

Unique reference number (URN): 137929

Inspection report: 29 September 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.

Attendance and behaviour**Exceptional** ●

Pupils' impressive standards of attendance and behaviour are the result of leaders' deliberate approach to instilling a deep sense of personal responsibility. This is systematically developed from the beginning of Year 7. It quickly leads to a remarkable degree of independence that is sustained throughout pupils' time at school. Pupils' rates of attendance are high because they understand the benefits of coming to school. Even so, leaders are highly alert to potential barriers to regular attendance. They take every possible step to support pupils through changes of circumstance that may lead to absence. Leaders' work consistently dismantles these barriers so that pupils can swiftly get their attendance back on track, usually sustaining their improvement so that further support is rarely needed.

The same sense of responsibility permeates pupils' conduct. Over many years, leaders have successfully established a culture in which pupils behave themselves impeccably, even when no one is watching. Pupils are fully engaged in their lessons. They learn without disruption and socialise free from worries about bullying. The companionship that they offer each other ensures that no one feels left out. The gentleness with which they support friends and classmates facing difficulties helps everyone to feel they belong. These qualities firmly echo the school's founding values. Highly positive role modelling from staff and older pupils, alongside consistent application of the school's 'Brilliant Basics' approach, instils a shared understanding of what is expected of pupils. These high expectations are passed down from each intake of pupils to the next. Should pupils need help to meet them, staff quickly put highly effective support in place. Notably, this support often works so well that it is not needed again.

Personal development and wellbeing**Exceptional** ●

Leaders' consistent, deliberate and thoughtful approach to developing pupils' character has been sustained over time to a noteworthy degree. Year after year, pupils and sixth-form students leave Upton Hall incredibly well-prepared for their future lives. The school's distinctive combination of high-quality careers provision, extensive enrichment activities and meaningful opportunities for service, charity and social action weaves seamlessly into a remarkably comprehensive programme of personal development. Leaders' relentless drive ensures that this programme transforms the aspirations of those most in need. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, or who are disadvantaged through difficult life circumstances, are skilfully guided to overcome any barriers to participation. Staff nurture their confidence to the point where these pupils thrive through the same high-quality experiences as their peers.

Pupils build an impressive body of knowledge about the world around them. This is supported by the school's meticulously designed 'Flourish' curriculum which encompasses personal, social, health and economic education, citizenship and relationships and sex education. Pupils learn this curriculum just as thoroughly as their other subjects. For instance, they confidently articulate what it means to live in a democracy and that the right to free speech carries responsibilities. Pupils learn about the harmful misogynistic content they might encounter online and how to challenge gender stereotypes constructively. Beyond the classroom, leaders ensure that pupils connect their learning to real-world contexts. For

instance, pupils practise expressing their thoughts clearly to others. They learn how to resolve conflicts amicably. This helps them to debate opposing viewpoints and build the skills needed to communicate positively with people from backgrounds different from their own.

A highly aspirational programme of careers guidance gives pupils a wealth of information and support for their next steps in life. Overwhelmingly, they move on to ambitious higher education and employment, equipped with the skills they will need to succeed. They are truly ready to take their place as responsible citizens and make a positive difference in their lives beyond school.

Strong standard ●

Achievement

Strong standard ●

Pupils achieve very well at this school. For example, their average attainment in GCSE examinations at the end of key stage 4 has consistently surpassed national averages over time. The school's small cohort of disadvantaged pupils does especially well, regularly outperforming the national average for their non-disadvantaged peers. This, along with the noteworthy progress made by pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), underlines the success of the school's high-quality curriculum and inclusive teaching. Pupils' achievements are not limited to examination results. In all year groups they build a rich body of knowledge and vocabulary which contributes to work of a high quality across the full range of subjects. Pupils' development of communication skills helps them to articulate their thinking clearly. Pupils with SEND, including those in the sixth form, make strides forward from their starting points. This supports them to be successful in their next steps and be ready to make a positive difference in modern society.

Curriculum and teaching

Strong standard ●

Leaders have set out a carefully designed curriculum that reflects their high ambitions for pupils' depth and breadth of learning. Pupils in key stage 3 build a solid foundation of knowledge across a wide variety of subjects. This maximises the range of qualifications that they are equipped to pursue in key stages 4 and 5. For instance, learning two foreign languages in Year 7 contributes to pupils' successful study of the English baccalaureate suite of subjects in Years 10 and 11. Consistently high-quality teaching enables pupils to learn very well. Leaders of each subject ensure that teachers use their expertise to determine the most effective ways to teach, understanding that this may be different for each concept, skill or individual pupil. Teachers are quick to spot when pupils have not grasped something fully. They use this insight to address misconceptions swiftly. Pupils who may take longer to close any gaps in understanding, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are ably supported to learn effectively. Leaders recognise that the quality of teaching and the curriculum are not static. They keenly identify where the next improvement can be found. For example, leaders have recently introduced strategies that pupils can use independently to enhance their recall of prior

knowledge. This helps pupils to take increasing responsibility for their own learning as they move through the curriculum.

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

Inclusion is a deeply embedded part of the ethos that leaders have established. Leaders are well-attuned to changes in the school's intake. In recent years this has informed their strategic priorities, for instance by enhancing staff's understanding of the types of special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) that pupils might face. Leaders know individual pupils' needs and circumstances very well. They swiftly identify any barriers to learning, often before pupils join the school. This makes sure that staff get timely, helpful information about how best to support each pupil. This support usually happens in the classroom. It successfully ensures that pupils with SEND can access, and benefit equally from, the same ambitious curriculum as their peers. For the small number of pupils who need more specialist help, leaders ensure that they have access to the right kind of professional expertise. This includes working closely with alternative providers.

The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged or face other challenging circumstances is lower than at many schools. Nevertheless, these pupils are not left behind. Leaders' determination to ensure that the most vulnerable pupils can achieve highly and participate fully in school life is tangible. Staff and leaders carefully shape pupils' experiences to ensure that each gets the opportunities that will benefit them the most.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard ●

The school's established high standards of performance do not distract leaders from their work to secure further improvements. Leaders do not rest on their laurels when new approaches are needed, for instance by reviewing the school's identification of special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders have a keen understanding of what makes the school's provision special, such as the remarkable sense of community and belonging experienced by staff and pupils alike. Governors support leaders to think strategically about how to retain the school's distinctiveness when identifying future priorities. Governors ensure that leaders hold true to the school's vision, skilfully balancing the best interests of pupils and staff with upholding their legal duties. For example, by introducing streamlined assessment systems, leaders have successfully reduced teachers' workload while making sure they gather the most useful information about how pupils' progress. This contributes to a highly positive culture in which governors, staff and leaders at all levels feel invested in the school's success.

Leaders responsible for the curriculum have a sharp understanding of how well pupils are learning, including pupils with SEND. They ensure that the school's overall priorities translate into the most effective approaches to teaching in each subject. This is supported by a comprehensive and well-considered professional development programme. This ensures that staff have the expertise that they need, for instance to be able to teach some of the new subjects that leaders have introduced to the sixth form, or to help pupils understand the best revision techniques for remembering their learning in the long term.

Leaders have designed a programme of post-16 study which combines ambitious qualifications with an impressive breadth of enriching opportunities. These are tailored to students' existing aspirations and varied enough to foster new ones. For example, leaders' close connections with employers help to open students' understanding about the many options available to them when they leave. Opportunities to lead and serve younger pupils help to prepare students very well for their lives beyond the sixth form, reinforcing important qualities such as empathy, resilience and responsibility. Leaders pay extra attention to disadvantaged students and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) when developing the wider sixth-form programme. These students benefit from multiple work experience placements and additional support to develop the skills they will need to be successful in their chosen pathway.

Students in the sixth form benefit from the same high quality of education as lower down the school. By the time they reach key stage 5, most students are highly motivated learners who achieve well. Their A-level results are usually above the national average. Leaders have listened to students' views to ensure that the curriculum and the way it is taught are as inclusive as possible. Their recent changes, including introducing new subjects, have ensured that students with SEND have an offer which is right for them in the sixth form. These students succeed alongside their peers and secure equally ambitious and appropriate next steps into further education or employment.

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

Pupils build a remarkable sense of belonging at this school. The firm friendships that they forge early in Year 7 stay with them as they move into the sixth form and beyond. Equally long-lasting are the trusting and respectful bonds that they form with staff. Pupils feel secure and comfortable to be themselves here. They know that staff keep pupils' wellbeing foremost in their minds. This gives pupils well-placed confidence that staff will keep them safe and act swiftly on any worries that they have. Staff deal promptly with any worries of unkind behaviour or bullying.

Pupils are proud of their school's sense of community and its rich Catholic history. They are inspired to live up to the values of the school's founder, which include companionship, dignity, justice, hope and gentleness. These values truly describe pupils' daily experiences at school, guiding both their exemplary conduct and their thoughtful consideration of the world around them. Students in the sixth form are excellent role models. They demonstrate leaders' high expectations, helping younger pupils to develop the independence and sense of responsibility to make positive choices for themselves.

Pupils keenly recognise the advantages that coming to this school gives them, such as the high-quality teaching that they receive and the wide-ranging enrichment activities that they benefit from. This makes coming to school a joy for pupils. Most pupils rarely miss a day, including some who travel long distances to attend. They achieve highly and flourish through all that the school offers them, regardless of any barriers or difficulties they may face. Pupils and sixth-form students leave the school remarkably well prepared for their futures, not only

for the next step into university or an apprenticeship, but with a strength of character that will support them in thriving far beyond.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue to refine and embed developments to inclusion, teaching and the curriculum so that high standards of achievement can be sustained across all subjects and key stages.
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About this inspection

This school is the only school in a single-academy trust. The trust is overseen by the governing body, chaired by Patricia Young. The school is also a member of the FCJ Educational Trust and the Gaudete Trust. These are religious organisations that do not have statutory responsibility for the school's governance.

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

This inspection took place on Tuesday 29 and Wednesday 30 September 2026.

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 the headteacher, other leaders and staff during the inspection. They also spoke with representatives of the local authority and of the alternative providers that the school uses. The lead inspector met with a group of governors, including the chair. He also spoke with a representative of the diocese by telephone.

The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school is registered as having a Roman Catholic religious character. It is in the Diocese of Shrewsbury. Its last section 48 inspection, for schools of a religious character, was in May 2025.

The school currently makes use of 2 alternative provisions, of which 1 is unregistered.

Headteacher: Andrea Gaunt

Lead inspector:

Ben Hill, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Stephanie Gill, Ofsted Inspector

Scott Maclean, Ofsted Inspector

Neil Moore, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

This was the data available at the time of the full inspection, taken from [different sources](#). More recent data may have been published since the full inspection took place.

 The inspector(s) used this data during the full inspection on 29 September 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

1,004

Close to 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: 1,063

School capacity

1,000

Close to 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: 1,154

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

9.94%

Well below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last 6 years.

National average: 30.4%

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

0.60%

Well below 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: 3.53%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

14.64%

Close to average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 14.0%

Location deprivation

Well below 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

English and maths GCSE

Percentage of pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	88.3%	45.4%	Above
2023/24 (final)	89.9%	45.9%	Above
2022/23 (final)	93.3%	45.3%	Above

Attainment 8

A measure of pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	65.6	46.1	Above
2023/24 (final)	68.2	45.9	Above
2022/23 (final)	66.5	46.3	Above

Progress 8

How much progress pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	0.91	-0.03	Above

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2022/23 (final)	1.08	-0.03	Above
2021/22 (final)	0.90	-0.03	Above

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' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils achieving grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	92.9%	25.8%	Above
2023/24 (final)	75.0%	25.8%	Above
2022/23 (final)	75.0%	25.2%	Above

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	64.6	34.9	Above
2023/24 (final)	55.9	34.6	Above
2022/23 (final)	61.1	35.0	Above

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	-0.03	-0.57	Above
2022/23 (final)	0.70	-0.57	Above
2021/22 (final)	-0.55	-0.55	Close to average

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' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (final)	92.9%	53.1%	39.7 pp
2023/24 (final)	75.0%	53.1%	21.9 pp
2022/23 (final)	75.0%	52.4%	22.6 pp

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (final)	64.6	50.4	14.2
2023/24 (final)	55.9	50.0	5.9
2022/23 (final)	61.1	50.3	10.8

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2023/24 (final)	-0.03	0.16	-0.20
2022/23 (final)	0.70	0.17	0.53
2021/22 (final)	-0.55	0.15	-0.71

Destinations after 16

Destinations after 16

Percentage of pupils staying in education or employment for at least 2 terms after the end of secondary school (key stage 4).

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023 leavers (revised)	99%	92%	Above
2022 leavers (revised)	98%	93%	Above
2021 leavers (revised)	99%	94%	Above

16 to 18 performance

A-level average point score

The average points that students achieved per A-level entry.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	37.91	35.00	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	38.04	34.38	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2022/23 (final)	40.10	34.16	Above

A-level value added

A score showing students' progress between the end of key stage 4 and the end of their academic qualification studies.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	0.0	0.0	Close to average
2023/24 (revised)	-0.1	0.0	Close to average

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
2025/26 (1 term)	5.3%	7.8%	Below
2024/25 (3 term)	4.9%	8.4%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	5.4%	8.9%	Below

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
2025/26 (1 term)	12.2%	21.5%	Below
2024/25 (3 term)	8.9%	23.4%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	10.8%	25.6%	Below

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.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects services providing education and skills for children and learners of all ages, and inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people.

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