

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Unsworth Academy

Parr Lane, Bury, Lancashire BL9 8LP

Inspection dates:

23 and 24 April 2025

Outcome

Evidence gathered during this ungraded (section 8) inspection suggests that the school's work may have improved significantly across all areas since the previous inspection. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Alex Fair. This school is part of the Shaw Education Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the interim chief executive officer (CEO), Kerry Inscker, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Andrew Meehan.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils benefit significantly from the harmonious, aspirational and high-achieving environment that exists at Unsworth Academy. They treat each other with the same warmth and kindness that they receive from staff, who care for them exceptionally well. Pupils thrive here.

Pupils rise to the extremely high expectations that the school has for their achievement. Those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive the guidance that they need to succeed. Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, achieve extremely well.

The school prioritises the development of pupils' character and it prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain. Pupils access an extensive range of opportunities that help them to become confident and independent young people. As school councillors, pupils develop green and white papers to bring about positive change, such as improvements to the school's uniform and curriculum offer.

Activities such as sports, retro-gaming, cooking, learning Japanese and taking part in school performances help pupils to develop their talents and interests. The school ensures that all pupils benefit from additional opportunities that enrich their understanding of the curriculum. These include science and technology themed events, trips to museums and to European cities to learn about different languages and cultures.

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

Trustees have a precise understanding of the performance of the school. They provide strong support and challenge to the school to ensure that it makes decisions in the best interests of pupils. Collectively, trustees and the school have created an aspirational culture where everyone is valued. They have taken the necessary steps to ensure that current pupils achieve very well.

Pupils are energised by the ambitious curriculum that the school has designed. Staff receive training that enables them to deliver the curriculum with expertise. They design activities that are well matched to pupils' needs. This helps pupils to build a deep body of knowledge about the subjects that they study. As a result, pupils are well prepared for each stage of their education. The school has increased the number of pupils that follow the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects. Pupils move on to meaningful destinations that include further education, apprenticeships or employment with training.

Staff use their very strong subject knowledge to make regular checks on what pupils know and remember. They address any misunderstandings that pupils may have about their learning promptly. Pupils make strong links to their previous learning. Staff ensure that pupils are well prepared to tackle the increasing challenges of the school's ambitious curriculum.

The school identifies the additional needs of pupils with SEND with precision. Staff value the time, training and support that they receive from the school. They use this to adapt activities and ensure that these pupils achieve the best possible outcomes. This supports their workload.

The school is committed to developing pupils' communication skills. The school identifies the reading needs of pupils accurately. It provides pupils with the support that they need to become confident and fluent readers. For some pupils, this includes helping them to catch up quickly with any gaps that they have in their phonics knowledge. Pupils make appropriate use of technical vocabulary in their written work and when they talk about their learning.

The books that pupils read make a powerful contribution to their wider understanding of the world. For instance, they learn about developments in artificial intelligence and the importance of positive friendships, loyalty, compassion and courage.

The school ensures that pupils are highly motivated by their learning. Pupils routinely demonstrate positive attitudes in lessons. Pupils attend well.

The school's provision for pupils' personal development shows its commitment to developing well-rounded, resilient young people who are ready to make the most of life in modern Britain. Pupils learn how to stay safe, including online. They know the importance of treating others with respect and value the differences that may exist between people.

Pupils benefit from a comprehensive programme of careers education that prepares them well for adulthood.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in November 2019.

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.

Further information

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

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and

pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	143848
Local authority	Bury
Inspection number	10348358
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	971
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Andrew Meehan
CEO of the trust	Kerry Inscker (Interim CEO)
Principal	Alex Fair
Website	https://unsworthacademy.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	12 and 13 November 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school makes use of one registered alternative provision.
- The current headteacher has been in post since September 2022.
- 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.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- 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 visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector held meetings with members of the trust, including the vice chair, the interim CEO and the chief education officer. He also spoke with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors met with leaders to discuss provision for pupils with SEND, the curriculum, assessment, reading, pupils' behaviour and attitudes, and the provision for pupils' personal development.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They considered responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and pupils and gathered the views of staff and pupils throughout the inspection.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors spoke with staff about their workload and well-being.

Inspection team

Andy Cunningham, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Phill Walmsley

Ofsted Inspector

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