

Unstone Junior School

Address: Main Road, Unstone, Dronfield, Derbyshire, S18 4AB

Unique reference number (URN): 112642

Inspection report: 13 January 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.

This school requires special measures

His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires **special measures** because it is failing to provide an acceptable standard of education, and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Expected standard

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders have clear systems and processes in place to support pupils to attend well. They provide challenge and support when pupils are not attending as well as they should. Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), attend well.

Leaders have high expectations of behaviour. They make sure that pupils understand the expectations. Staff and pupils have positive relationships built on trust and respect. Leaders have established a calm, orderly and respectful environment. Pupils learn without disruption. They behave well. Pupils say that bullying is rare and when it does happen, teachers help them. Leaders have created a culture where staff support and protect pupils.

Leaders know and understand their pupils and the context of the school well. Staff have received appropriate training to support a consistent approach to behaviour management. Recent training has included, for example, understanding pupils' emotions. Pupils who need help to manage their behaviour get the support they need. Staff make appropriate adjustments to support pupils. For some pupils, this includes through time spent in the 'willow' room.

Pupils work is mostly well presented. Most pupils take pride in the work they produce. Typically, pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to their learning.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

The school's personal development offer provides pupils with the education and opportunities they need to be well prepared for life beyond Unstone Junior School. This aspect of the school's curriculum is well sequenced and ensures that pupils revisit learning to embed their knowledge. As a result, pupils know and remember what they have learned. The curriculum considers the context of the school. Pupils enjoy learning about knife crime through a visit from the police. They learn about right and wrong. They understand the importance of showing respect for others. Pupils learn about fundamental British values and how these link with the school's rights. Pupils know and understand the right to be safe, the right to learn and the right to be heard.

The curriculum is designed to enable pupils to learn how to keep physically and mentally healthy. It helps pupils to keep themselves safe when working online and when out in the community. Pupils learn how to maintain positive, healthy relationships.

Leaders ensure that pupils can access the pastoral support that they need. For example, at the start of the day to ensure that they are ready to learn. This includes physical activities and time to regulate their emotions. The pastoral offer is effective and tailored to meet the needs of pupils.

Pupils benefit from a wide range of activities and events. They attend clubs which help them to develop their character. Pupils' talents and interests are developed, for example, through a fencing club. Pupils particularly enjoy the art club. Older pupils learn to play the clarinet. Leaders ensure that pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, benefit from the offer. Leaders analyse the attendance at curriculum enrichment activities to ensure that all groups of pupils are included. When necessary, leaders ensure that pupils have the additional support needed so that they can participate.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

Pupils who are at the early stages of reading are not supported to achieve well. As a result, they do not develop fluency and accuracy in reading. They cannot readily access the wider curriculum. There are gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding when writing. This includes letter formation and handwriting. These gaps are not being identified effectively. As a result, they are not closing.

In some subjects, pupils are learning the intended curriculum. In these subjects, they talk about their learning confidently and they are ready for the next stage in their learning. Pupils are not consistently making progress in all curriculum areas or across the different year groups.

Pupils in 2025 achieved well in national tests taken at the end of key stage 2. However, the overall quality of provision observed during the inspection does not reflect the most recently published outcomes.

Inclusion

Needs attention 

Staff do not know the barriers that disadvantaged pupils face. Leaders use funding to ensure that pupils access the enrichment offer. However, leaders do not support vulnerable pupils to overcome barriers to their learning. Leaders have ensured that staff have received training to reduce barriers to pupils' learning for those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). However, inconsistencies in practice have a negative impact on this particular group of pupils. Leaders are not aware of the inconsistencies in practice.

On occasion, pupils are supported to overcome the barriers to their learning. This is through adult support or teachers providing additional resources. However, this is not consistent. Some gaps in learning are not accurately identified. This means that pupils are not given the appropriate support to catch up with their peers.

Leaders have not ensured that an appropriately qualified special educational needs coordinator is in place. However, they have taken appropriate action to accurately identify and assess the needs of pupils with SEND. Leaders ensure that specialist advice is sought as appropriate. Leaders demonstrate knowledge of the graduated approach to supporting pupils. They work effectively with parents and external agencies to support pupils to achieve well. This is particularly effective when supporting pupils' social and emotional needs.

Urgent improvement ●

Curriculum and teaching

Urgent improvement ●

Leaders do not have an accurate understanding of the quality of teaching. Although teachers impart knowledge clearly, they do not take the time to ensure that all pupils understand what they need to do. They do not check what pupils already know and can do. As a result, they do not adapt their teaching to ensure that all children are making the progress that they should.

Leaders do not ensure that teachers use assessment well to identify gaps in learning. Leaders have not ensured that teachers have the knowledge they need to teach early reading. For example, gaps in early reading and writing are not identified. As a result, intervention is not put in place swiftly to ensure that they can catch up with their peers.

The school's curriculum identifies what pupils will learn. In some subjects, for example science, it is well sequenced and builds on what pupils have learned before. Here, pupils enjoy their learning; they talk about what they have learned. However, in many foundation subjects, for example art and history, this does not happen. The way that parts of the curriculum are taught means that older pupils are sometimes prevented from developing a depth of understanding.

On occasion, the curriculum meets the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, this is notably inconsistent.

Leadership and governance

Urgent improvement ●

Leaders do not have an accurate understanding of the weaknesses in school. They do not identify the right priorities to ensure the best possible outcomes and experiences for pupils. The school's capacity to improve is weak.

Governors are not effectively holding leaders to account. They are unclear about the school's improvement priorities. Governors do not check that additional funding is being used effectively to support vulnerable pupils. They do not understand the barriers to learning for pupils in receipt of pupil premium. Leaders are not held to account for the impact of support for disadvantaged pupils. As a result, many decisions made are not done so in the best interest of pupils.

Leaders recognise the changing demographics of the school. They have responded appropriately to some of these changes. For example, training has been provided on how to

best meet the emotional needs of pupils. However, leaders have not effectively considered how to meet pupils' academic needs.

Staff access appropriate professional development. For some, this has helped them to deliver an improved quality of provision, when meeting pupils' emotional needs. However, this is not consistent. In some areas the learning from training has not impacted on classroom practice. This includes, for example, adapting learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Staff say that leaders are mindful of their wellbeing. Leaders ensure that their workload is manageable. Leaders occasionally work with other schools to share good practice, such as with attendance strategies.

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

This is a school of contrasting qualities. On one hand, pupils are happy to be in school, they behave well and they attend well. However, at the same time, pupils do not learn well here. There are significant weaknesses in the quality of the curriculum and standards of teaching. Leaders have not done enough to address these issues. As a result, pupils' learning, their attainment and the progress they make more widely are all limited.

The school has not ensured that teachers understand the barriers to learning that disadvantaged pupils may face. As a result, teachers do not ensure that their needs are met. Work for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is not well matched to what they know. This means that they too do not learn as well as they should.

Despite these issues, pupils begin the school day with a positive and warm welcome. They are happy to be in school. They attend well. Pupils' wellbeing is a priority for the school. Leaders make sure that pupils feel happy and ready to start the school day. Pupils play and socialise well together during social times across the different year groups.

The school has high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils behave well. They are friendly and polite. They learn in calm classrooms, free from disruptions. Pupils understand that everyone is respected and treated fairly. They know that staff care for them and will sort out any worries, including if bullying were to happen. This makes pupils feel safe in school.

Pupils benefit from wider experiences through after-school clubs, including fencing and art. They enjoy their leadership roles, for example, when making decisions as a school councillor. Older pupils reflect on their own beliefs and those of others. They know right from wrong. They are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that they have a full and accurate understanding of the quality of the curriculum and teaching. They should ensure that they prioritise the most important

areas for improvement, including taking swift action to improve the quality of teaching, and work strategically to monitor the impact of these initiatives.

- Leaders, including governors, should ensure that there is the capacity to support progress in the school. Leaders should ensure that an appropriately qualified special educational needs coordinator is in place.
 - Leaders should ensure that teachers use assessment information to check what pupils already know, in particular, when adapting learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
 - Leaders should ensure that teachers develop sufficient expertise in the teaching of reading to meet the needs of all pupils, ensuring that gaps in pupils' learning are identified and acted on, to improve all aspects of pupils' reading and writing.
 - Leaders should ensure that they monitor the implementation of provision for vulnerable groups, including those with SEND and disadvantaged pupils.
 - Governors should ensure they have an accurate understanding of the school's priorities and provision for disadvantaged pupils so that they are well placed to challenge and support leaders' work.
-

About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Jonathan Flower.

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

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and other leaders. The lead inspector met with 2 representatives from the governing body and the representative from the local authority. Inspectors met with a range of teaching and non-teaching staff. They also spoke to a wide range of pupils throughout the school during the inspection.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school does not make use of alternative providers.

The school offers a breakfast club.

Executive headteacher: Rachael Fowlds

Lead inspector:

Donna Chambers, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Matthew Rooney, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 13 January 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

59

Well below 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: 272

School capacity

76

Well below 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: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

47.46%

Well above average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 26.3%

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

5.08%

Above 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: 3.5%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

49.15%

Well above average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Close to 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

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standards in a combined reading, writing and mathematics measure.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	58%	61%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	67%	62%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	50%	61%	Below
2022/23 (final)	54%	60%	Close to average

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	69%	74%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	78%	75%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	57%	74%	Below
2022/23 (final)	69%	73%	Close to average

Pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	80%	72%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	89%	72%	Above
2023/24 (final)	71%	72%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	77%	71%	Close to average

Pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	78%	73%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	78%	74%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	71%	73%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	85%	73%	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 reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	52%	46%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	S	47%	S
2023/24 (final)	44%	46%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	56%	44%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	61%	62%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	S	63%	S
2023/24 (final)	44%	62%	Below
2022/23 (final)	67%	60%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	74%	59%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	S	59%	S
2023/24 (final)	78%	58%	Above
2022/23 (final)	78%	58%	Above

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	74%	60%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	S	61%	S
2023/24 (final)	67%	59%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	78%	59%	Above

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

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 reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics, including the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	52%	68%	-15 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	69%	S
2023/24 (final)	44%	67%	-23 pp
2022/23 (final)	56%	66%	-11 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	61%	80%	-19 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	44%	80%	-35 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	67%	78%	-12 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	74%	78%	-4 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	78%	S
2023/24 (final)	78%	78%	0 pp
2022/23 (final)	78%	77%	0 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	74%	80%	-6 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	67%	79%	-13 pp
2022/23 (final)	78%	79%	-1 pp

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been

mirrored and applied in the report card.

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
2024/25 (2 term)	5.3%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	6.3%	5.5%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	7.6%	5.9%	Above

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
2024/25 (2 term)	13.3%	13.3%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	15.8%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	25.9%	16.2%	Above

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.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted
© Crown copyright 2026



