

Sir Thomas Wharton Academy

Address: Tait Avenue, Edlington, Doncaster, South Yorkshire, DN12 1HH

Unique reference number (URN): 144364

Inspection report: 17 March 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.

Exceptional

Personal development and wellbeing

Exceptional 

Pupils access a meticulously planned personal development programme throughout key stages 3, 4 and 5. Pupils with special educational needs and those who are disadvantaged receive priority access to the programme. This has a positive impact on their attendance and belonging at school, and in helping to secure highly positive destinations in their next steps. Through 'Life' lessons and daily 'standing assemblies', pupils develop a detailed knowledge of relationships education, fundamental British values and online safety. Relevant and topical issues, such as misogyny and conflicts around the world, are discussed in regular debate lessons. This ensures that pupils develop a very broad understanding of life beyond school.

The school's impressive electives programme considerably enriches pupils' personal development and transforms their future aspirations. The vast range of activities includes on-site and off-site options, such as horse riding, fishing and rowing with an Olympian. Leaders design the programme thoughtfully so that each elective has a clear curriculum purpose. These enable pupils to develop important character traits, such as resilience, teamwork and self-belief. In addition to this is an extensive extra-curricular offer. A wide range of opportunities, such as international trips and visits to places, such as Costa Rica, considerably broaden pupils' horizons. Participation in the 'An Audience With' programme exposes pupils to ambitious role models, who motivate pupils to aim high.

Pupil leaders, including those in post-16, have a significant impact on the school community. They play an active and meaningful role in their local community. Pupils who act as mental health first aiders mentor and support younger pupils with care. The pupil parliament plays an active role in the work of the local council's regeneration board. The comprehensive careers programme is well designed to ensure that pupils receive timely and high-quality guidance. Regular employer and higher education encounters, alongside purposeful work experience in Years 10 and 12, prepare pupils extremely well for their next steps.

Strong standard

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard 

Attendance has a high priority at the school. Staff are aware of this and are involved in helping to raise attendance levels. Leaders know the pupils and their families well. They use this knowledge to apply bespoke strategies to help pupils improve their attendance. There is a particular focus on the most vulnerable pupils within this work. As a result, overall attendance has improved over time. The number of pupils who are persistently absent has decreased significantly. There is a notable improvement in attendance this year, particularly for those who are disadvantaged.

Leaders have created a culture of high expectations. Pupils' behaviour is extremely positive across all areas of the school. Classrooms are calm and focused learning environments. Pupils are active partners in their learning and they enjoy learning. Older pupils, including

those in post-16, act as role models for younger pupils. Suspensions are used appropriately. Staff understand the systems to support behaviour and apply them consistently. When necessary, leaders take effective action to support pupils to improve their behaviour. Bullying and other forms of harassment are rare. If it does happen, it is effectively dealt with.

Curriculum and teaching

Strong standard 

Pupils access an ambitious and well-planned curriculum. Leaders routinely check the quality of the curriculum and make appropriate adaptations as needed. For example, the curriculum in English has been adapted to ensure a focus on foundational skills, such as reading and writing in key stage 3. Teachers have secure subject knowledge. They use this knowledge to consistently make highly effective choices about what to teach and how to teach it.

Leaders have developed a pedagogical approach based on evidence-informed strategies to deliver the curriculum. Teachers consistently apply this approach. For example, they regularly revisit prior learning to ensure that pupils remember what they have been taught. Teachers routinely check learning to identify any gaps in knowledge. These gaps are swiftly addressed.

Leaders are acutely aware of pupils' starting points. Care is taken to identify pupils with gaps in their foundational mathematical and English knowledge. A range of support is in place to ensure that these pupils catch up quickly with their peers. Teachers receive precise training on how to adapt the curriculum so that all pupils can access the learning. These adaptations are consistently applied effectively.

Inclusion

Strong standard 

Inclusion is the golden thread that runs through the school. It has the highest priority in all areas. Leaders leave no stone unturned when effectively identifying and removing barriers for pupils. This ensures that all pupils, regardless of need, have access to all areas of school life. Staff receive high levels of training to support them to consistently implement interventions and adaptations within classrooms. As a result, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those who are disadvantaged achieve well from their starting points.

Leaders rigorously check the impact of the support that is in place for each pupil. They keep a close eye on pupils' academic progress, attendance, behaviour and access to the personal development programme, working closely with parents and carers. Leaders make effective use of the pupil premium funding.

For pupils with the highest needs, leaders have developed a number of internal inclusion support provisions, which are well planned and implemented. These pupils receive highly effective and tailored support, including in relation to their social, emotional and mental health needs.

Use of alternative provision is consistently in the best interests of pupils. Many pupils who access this thrive and are positive about their future. Leaders work closely with outside

agencies, such as social care and the virtual school, to ensure that the most vulnerable pupils receive the best possible support.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard 

School leaders and those responsible for governance have a detailed and insightful understanding of the schools' strengths and areas for development. Leaders prioritise the correct areas for improvement and ensure rapid improvement in these areas. The school's vision drives every decision that is made by leaders, with a clear focus on ensuring that pupils are prepared to lead successful and fulfilling lives. Those responsible for governance meet their statutory duties. They effectively challenge and support school leaders where appropriate.

Staff have access to a highly effective professional learning programme. Leaders use innovative methods to allow staff to self-reflect and to share good practice. Staff access bespoke training that is matched to their career ambitions. Staff, including teachers in the early years of their careers, are well supported by leaders. Leaders consider workload and wellbeing when making decisions. Staff appreciate this.

Pupils' best interests, in particular those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those who are disadvantaged, are at the heart of leaders' decisions. Leaders have developed an innovative approach to both inclusion and personal development. This includes the highly inclusive practice developed through, for example, the 'exceed', 'explore', 'engage' and 'thrive' provisions, which ensure the most vulnerable pupils receive high-quality support. The school's 'electives' programme provides an extraordinary range of opportunities for pupils to develop their talents and interests. This support and these opportunities help ensure that pupils, especially the most vulnerable, thrive and belong at the school.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Pupils' achievement has improved over time. Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, generally achieve well. They develop secure knowledge and skills over time. This results in pupils producing work that is usually of a high quality.

Over time, pupils in key stage 4 typically make secure progress from their starting points. Disadvantaged pupils at the school achieve close to the national average for disadvantaged pupils.

Sixth-form students attain broadly in line with national averages. Leaders recognise the need to ensure that students achieve consistently highly. They are taking steps to support this.

Pupils are well prepared for their next steps. At the end of key stage 4, pupils secure appropriately ambitious destinations. Students from the sixth form go on to further

education, training or employment. An increasing number of students continue studying at university.

Post 16 provision

Expected standard 

Leaders have devised an appropriate 16 to 19 study programme. The curriculum is well planned and sequenced. Leaders consider the starting points and needs of all pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged, when designing the curriculum. This helps to ensure that all students can access the learning. The curriculum is generally well taught by subject specialists. There is some work to do in a small number of subjects to ensure that the curriculum is consistently taught well.

Students typically achieve well. Published outcomes show that, in many measures, students achieve close to the national average. Leaders are aware that some students do not make as much progress as they could. The quality of work and students' knowledge of the curriculum indicates that current students progress better than their peers did historically.

Students have access to an extensive range of wider opportunities. These ensure that students are very well prepared for life beyond sixth form. Students learn how to manage their money and live independently. In Year 12 there is a focus on developing students' independent study skills. All students have access to an extensive enrichment and student leadership offer. Students receive a wide range of careers advice and guidance. A very high percentage move on to sustained high-quality destinations.

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

Pupils enjoy coming to school at Sir Thomas Wharton Academy. They enjoy learning here. Leaders have high expectations of all pupils. Pupils' behaviour is calm and respectful. There is no disruption to learning in classrooms. Pupils in key stage 4 and sixth-form students are highly regarded role models for younger pupils. Pupils feel safe in school. Leaders work with pupils to address any areas of concern or undue worry. If pupils have a concern, they know how to seek support and are confident this would be forthcoming.

Pupils generally achieve well and secure the skills needed to succeed in their learning and later life. The comprehensive careers programme ensures that pupils are well informed about their next steps.

Pupils thrive as a result of the school's innovative approach to personal development. Pupils choose a wide range of experiences across their time at the school. Pupils' faces light up when they talk about 'electives' and the confidence they gain through the programme. Pupils value the opportunity to try new things, develop their talents and make new friends. Understanding and appreciation of differences underpin relationships between staff and pupils. The respectful and tolerant environment of the school means bullying is rare.

Pupils who face barriers to their learning, such as those with special educational needs and/or disabilities or those known to social care, are very well supported. There is a commitment to all pupils having a wide range of experiences and opportunities. This

enables the most vulnerable to develop their skills and achieve their aspirations. Pupils feel they belong at the school and are proud to be part of the local community. Pupils who start Year 7 with gaps in their learning receive highly effective support to catch up with their peers in the 'explore' provision.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that the post-16 curriculum is consistently taught well so that students achieve highly in all subjects.
 - Leaders should continue their work to ensure that pupils achieve highly in national tests and examinations.
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About this inspection

This school is part of the Maltby Learning Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), David Sutton, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Glyn Staves.

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 principal, the CEO, 3 trustees and 2 members of the local governing body.

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 makes use of 9 alternative provisions, 2 registered and 7 unregistered.

Principal : Matthew McDonald

Lead inspector:

Chris Sergeant, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Harkireet Sohel, Ofsted Inspector

Joe Barton, Ofsted Inspector

Gill Senior, Ofsted Inspector

John O'Hara, 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 17 March 2026

School and pupil context**Total pupils**

1,166

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: 1,067

School capacity

1,266

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: 1,153

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

32.45%

Close to average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 28.9%

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

1.29%

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: 3.09%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

15.01%

Close to average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 13.4%

Location deprivation

Above 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 (revised)	33.1%	45.4%	Below
2023/24 (final)	48.9%	45.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	54.0%	45.3%	Close to average

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 (revised)	43.3	46.0	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	46.9	45.9	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	49.7	46.3	Close to average

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)	-0.07	-0.03	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	0.07	-0.03	Close to average

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 (revised)	13.5%	25.8%	Below
2023/24 (final)	32.3%	25.8%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	23.8%	25.2%	Close to average

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 (revised)	31.8	34.9	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	40.6	34.6	Above
2022/23 (final)	34.7	35.0	Close to average

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)	-0.19	-0.57	Above
2022/23 (final)	-0.59	-0.57	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 (revised)	13.5%	53.1%	-39.7 pp
2023/24 (final)	32.3%	53.1%	-20.9 pp
2022/23 (final)	23.8%	52.4%	-28.6 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 (revised)	31.8	50.4	-18.6
2023/24 (final)	40.6	50.0	-9.4
2022/23 (final)	34.7	50.3	-15.6

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)	-0.19	0.16	-0.35
2022/23 (final)	-0.59	0.17	-0.76

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 (provisional)	89%	91%	Average
2022 leavers (revised)	92%	93%	Average
2021 leavers (revised)	90%	94%	Below

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 (revised)	28.91	34.99	Below
2023/24 (final)	29.70	34.38	Below
2022/23 (final)	29.54	34.16	Below

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 (revised)	-0.8	0.0	Below
2023/24 (revised)	-0.4	0.0	Below

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)	8.4%	8.1%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	9.8%	8.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	10.1%	9.0%	Close to average

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)	25.2%	21.9%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	31.7%	25.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	35.5%	26.5%	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.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk



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