

Inspection of XP School

Middle Bank, Doncaster, South Yorkshire DN4 5NG

Inspection dates: 6 and 7 June 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Good

Previous inspection grade

Outstanding

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders have developed an ambitious curriculum that is, in the main, delivered through 'expeditions'. When pupils study an expedition, they learn important knowledge from different subjects and apply their learning to a specific topic. This supports pupils to connect their learning and think deeper about key concepts.

Due to gaps in older pupils' knowledge, leaders have reviewed and refined the curriculum to improve the quality of education and ensure pupils are better prepared for their next steps in education, employment and training.

Pupils welcome the extensive range of opportunities to extend their experiences. This includes working with experts as part of expeditions or participating in planned activities beyond the classroom, which are referred to as 'fieldwork'. Leaders ensure that all pupils have the opportunity to take part, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are a real strength of the school. Pupils demonstrate exceptionally high levels of self-control and maturity. The small number of pupils who need additional help to manage their behaviour are expertly supported by adults. Pupils feel safe at XP school. There is always a trusted adult to go to. Staff do not tolerate bullying and discriminatory language.

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

Leaders are proud of their unique and ambitious curriculum. Pupils value the wider experiences that the curriculum offers them. Leaders recognised that in some subjects there are gaps in pupils' knowledge, not least following the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and issues with staffing. As such, in 2022, some pupils were not well prepared for the end of key stage 4 examinations in some subjects.

In response to this, leaders have made some refinements to their curriculum offer. In addition to learning through expeditions, leaders have reflected on the balance between expeditions and discrete teaching. In some subjects, such as science, additional time has been given to teach subject-specific lessons. Throughout the school, all mathematics lessons are now taught discretely, with delivery from subject specialists.

These changes have been well thought through. Leaders have identified the precise gaps in knowledge that some older pupils have. Leaders have sought external support in mathematics to help ensure these gaps are addressed through the revised curriculum. Additional subject-specific staff have been recruited. Recent staff training has focused on addressing gaps in pupils' knowledge. Further support has also been given to help non-specialists deliver curriculum subjects beyond their areas of expertise.

There is clear alignment between the expedition-based learning and subject-based knowledge. Across all strands of the curriculum, leaders have identified the important knowledge that they want pupils to know and remember. When designing the curriculum, leaders have ensured that new content connects to what pupils already know. For example, when pupils study the 'Wherever I Lay My Hat' expedition in key stage 3, they connect their learning in English, history, geography and religious education to develop a deep understanding of the impact of migration.

More widely, the key stage 3 curriculum is carefully designed to build on what pupils learn in primary school. This is evident in subjects such as art and design and physical education, where the curriculum builds on pupils' different starting points from their key stage 2 studies.

Leaders ensure that pupils with SEND have their needs identified accurately. These needs are closely met. A culture of high expectations from well-trained staff gives these pupils personalised support. This helps pupils with SEND to access the same broad and ambitious curriculum as their peers and to achieve well.

Leaders focus sharply on supporting all pupils to read widely and often. Pupils have regular opportunities to read high-quality books as part of expeditions and during 'crew' time. Pupils needing additional help with their reading benefit from extra support, including for phonics.

Staff have high expectations of pupils. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Pupils take responsibility for their actions and the impact that they have on the school community. Pupils make 'pledges' in front of their peers to demonstrate their commitment to maintaining their high levels of behaviour. They receive support from the wider school community to achieve these aims. Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes towards their learning. They show resilience even when they find work challenging.

Leaders prioritise pupils' wider personal development. This aspect of the school is exemplary. Pupils are organised into 'crews' and 'crew sessions' are a central part of the school day. During this time, pupils learn important knowledge about equality, diversity and inclusion. Leaders have also established a programme of experiences to build pupils' character and independence. For example, pupils in Year 9 complete 'passage,' where they organise conferences, talk about their learning through school and present their aspirations for the future. Careers guidance is well planned. Pupils receive appropriate and helpful information on the options open to them in the future.

Governors are aware of the school's strengths and the need to refine their practice further. Individual governors bring expertise to their respective roles. Leaders are addressing the school improvement priorities by engaging with external support, where needed. Staff are proud to work at the school. They say that leaders are mindful of their workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured that all staff are well trained in safeguarding. Staff receive regular safeguarding updates. This means that they know the risks that pupils may face. Staff know how to report any concerns.

Leaders of safeguarding are knowledgeable. They keep detailed records and act quickly to address any issues. They work well with other agencies where necessary.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including when online. They know who they can talk to if they have any concerns.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have made recent refinements to the school's curriculum. These changes were made because some pupils had gaps in their knowledge. Some of these gaps have been exacerbated by the disruption to learning caused by the pandemic and issues with staffing. As a result, some older pupils have not made as much progress as they could by the end of key stage 4, including in national assessments. This impacts the extent to which they are well prepared for their next steps in education, employment and training. Leaders should continue to implement their plans to address these gaps, such as by introducing subject-specific learning in subjects, such as mathematics and science, to ensure pupils make better progress by the end of Year 11.

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](#)' 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	140964
Local authority	Doncaster
Inspection number	10266139
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	248
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Stephen Cooper Bielby
Principal	Claira Salter
Website	www.xpschool.org
Date of previous inspection	13 July 2017

Information about this school

- The school is part of the XP School Trust Limited.
- The current principal was appointed in April 2023.
- The school uses one registered provider of alternative education. This provider is subject to inspection by Ofsted.
- The school uses six unregistered providers of alternative education.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

This was the first routine inspection the provider received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the principal and several other senior leaders.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in physical education, English, history and art and design. As part of the deep dives, inspectors visited lessons, reviewed curriculum plans and spoke with curriculum leaders and teachers. They also talked to pupils about their learning and looked at the work they have completed.
- In addition, inspectors looked at curriculum plans, discussed assessment and looked at pupil work in science and mathematics.
- Inspectors met with the special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator, reviewed educational health care plans and support plans for pupils with SEND and visited lessons to see how pupils with SEND are supported to learn.
- Inspectors met with the leader responsible for reading to discuss how reading is promoted in the school.
- Inspectors met with the designated safeguarding leads and reviewed a range of documentation, including safeguarding records and policies.
- Inspectors considered the views of pupils, parents and staff through Ofsted surveys, as well as additional communication from parents during the inspection.
- Inspectors scrutinised the school's records of bullying, reviewed the actions leaders take when bullying occurs and spoke to several groups of pupils, including some single-gender groups, to understand their experience of school.
- Inspectors met leaders to discuss pupils' behaviour and reviewed the school's data on suspensions and internal suspensions.
- Inspectors met with representatives from XP school Trust Limited and the local governing body.
- Inspectors scrutinised records relating to attendance and the number of pupils' who have joined or left the school roll.

Inspection team

Stuart Voyce, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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