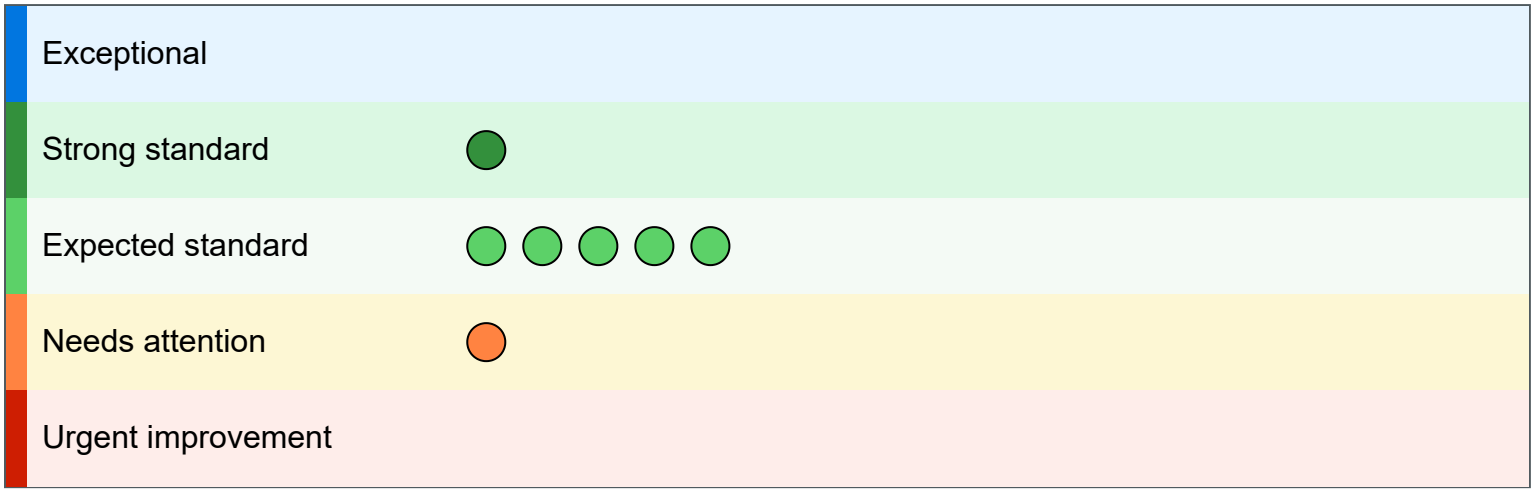
Cherry Tree Academy

Address: Cobblers Lane, Pontefract, WF8 2HN

Unique reference number (URN): 144400

Inspection report: 9 September 2026



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.

Strong standard

Leadership and governance

Strong standard

Leaders, trustees and governors have a clear and accurate view of the school. They build improvement around a single, connected strategy that links pupils' safety, behaviour, attendance, inclusion and achievement. Staff at every level are able to describe this shared vision clearly.

Leaders deliberately secured a calm and safe school first, then improved attendance and now their focus is on raising attainment. This approach is working. Behaviour incidents and suspensions have fallen sharply, and attendance has risen rapidly, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Leaders check the quality of teaching accurately. During visits to lessons, they identify precisely where teaching is less effective and provide targeted coaching for staff. Leadership and governance are graded higher than other evaluation areas because leaders know exactly what needs to improve, and their actions are already making a significant difference. Leaders recognise that it will take time for these improvements to become fully embedded and reflected consistently in pupils' outcomes.

Leadership is developed at every level. Middle leaders are knowledgeable and lead developments across the trust. Trust leaders know the school's context in detail. Staff feel valued and cared for. They say that professional development is meaningful and that leaders consider their workload and wellbeing.

Trustees and governors understand their statutory duties well. They visit school regularly and check systems for safeguarding, medical conditions and allergies. They challenge leaders, for example about whether additional funding secures value for money.

Leaders work closely with parents and carers. Well-attended craft mornings give leaders the chance to share information about attendance and online safety. Most parents feel that the school communicates well with them.

Expected standard

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard

The school's vision is for every child to thrive and grow into confident, independent and successful individuals. Attendance and behaviour at Cherry Tree reflect this goal. Pastoral staff know pupils and their families well. This helps them spot barriers to attending early. The staff provide ongoing, personalised support that fits each pupil's needs. Pupils, families and staff understand leaders' expectations for attendance. Suspensions have reduced in all areas. Families tell leaders they appreciate the consistent support. Disadvantaged pupils and pupils with education, health and care plans now attend school far more regularly. Leaders work with external agencies to provide support to families and pupils.

Pupils behave respectfully around the school. They are polite, kind to one another and respond appropriately to what staff ask them to do. Relationships between staff and pupils are warm and positive. The atmosphere around the school is calm and orderly, which helps pupils to concentrate on their learning. In the early years and key stage 1, children and pupils follow routines well and take an active part in learning. Pupils report that bullying is rare, and recorded incidents of bullying have fallen over time. Staff apply the school's behaviour systems consistently. As a result, pupils engage well in learning and are increasingly able to work independently.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard

The curriculum carefully sequences knowledge from the early years to the end of key stage 2. Each subject has clearly identified end points that help teachers build pupils' knowledge over time. Teachers adapt learning to meet pupils' needs, and pupils' work shows how they build on prior learning.

Teachers establish positive learning environments. Clear explanations and smooth transitions help pupils remain focused on their learning. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and use this effectively to help pupils learn important content. Staff teach phonics effectively. Various reading sessions, including guided reading, help pupils develop secure reading knowledge and skills.

Leaders and teachers work together to strengthen pupils' learning. Teachers share effective practice with one another and routinely check what pupils know and can do. They revisit important learning when pupils need additional support.

There are times when teachers do not provide sufficient opportunities to support pupils to think deeply and work independently. When this happens, some pupils rely too heavily on adult support and do not engage fully with their learning. Where teaching is most effective, staff encourage pupils' curiosity and provide additional fiction and non-fiction texts to extend their learning further.

Early years

Expected standard

Children learn in a calm and nurturing environment. Relationships between adults and children are warm and respectful. Teachers design the learning environment carefully so that children can access activities independently. Children move confidently between activities and seek support from familiar adults when needed. They play cooperatively, use good manners and develop positive relationships with others.

Teachers observe children carefully and use what they learn to shape teaching. They identify the next steps in children's learning and use this information to plan meaningful interactions. Through play and well-chosen activities, children develop their communication, physical and social skills. Children learn to feed themselves, dress independently and make friends.

Leaders plan children's transition into Reception carefully. Staff visit families at home before children start school. They use what they learn to adapt the provision, so that children settle quickly and feel secure.

Leaders have a clear understanding of the strengths of the provision and the areas they want to improve. They evaluate their work carefully and make appropriate changes, such as adapting the provision for each new group of children, to further strengthen children's learning and development.

Inclusion

Expected standard

Pupils who face barriers to their learning receive effective support in lessons and at social times. Staff continue to develop their expertise in identifying and responding to pupils' increasingly diverse needs. As a result, pupils grow in confidence and independence in managing their learning and wellbeing.

The school is inclusive. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities participate fully in school life alongside their peers. Leaders support vulnerable pupils, including those known to social care, through carefully planned strategies. They consider these pupils' needs carefully when reviewing provision and planning next steps. Disadvantaged pupils benefit from well-considered support and guidance. Leaders use additional funding, including the pupil premium, effectively. For example, they fund targeted support that helps disadvantaged pupils to attend school regularly and take a full part in school life.

Teachers act quickly when pupils need help. They adapt resources, texts and learning activities so that pupils can access the curriculum successfully. These adaptations help pupils remain engaged and build on what they already know. Staff organise learning environments so that pupils can work together effectively. When pupils feel overwhelmed, staff help them to regulate their emotions, refocus and return to learning.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard

The school's personal development programme helps pupils to understand life in modern Britain. Pupils learn about equality, diversity and healthy relationships. Leaders adapt the programme when necessary to respond to issues in the local community. For example, they hold open sessions for parents and carers on the texts used in the equality programme. Well-planned pastoral support helps pupils develop positive attitudes towards themselves and others.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school and that adults support them well. They understand the school's values and how respect and the rule of law apply to everyday life. Pupils trust staff to listen to them when they have concerns and know where to seek support when needed.

Pupils learn about mental health, online safety and healthy relationships through assemblies and lessons. Staff receive training to help them identify pupils who may need additional support with their wellbeing. They respond appropriately to concerns and work with families and external agencies when needed. Leaders signpost families to mental health support and work with a local charity to provide practical help, such as winter coats.

Pupils benefit from outdoor learning, enrichment activities, educational visits and leadership opportunities. They take part in music, sport and community activities that broaden their

experiences beyond the classroom. Visits to local colleges help pupils understand future education, training and employment opportunities.

Leaders ensure that pupils can participate fully in these opportunities. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who face additional barriers to their learning. Almost all disadvantaged pupils attend clubs, and all take part in trips. As a result, pupils develop confidence, broaden their horizons and prepare well for their next steps.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention

Over the past three years, too few pupils attained the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics by the time they left the school at the end of Year 6. Not enough pupils were ready for the next stage of their education. However, leaders have established strong foundations for improvement. These foundations are now enabling improvements to translate into stronger outcomes at an increasing pace. Over the last three years, pupils' attainment at Key Stage 2 has improved.

Teachers mostly identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and provide timely support to help pupils catch up. They revisit important learning and give pupils additional opportunities to practise. Many pupils can talk about what they know and remember.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with the most complex needs, make progress towards the targets set for them. Staff record this progress carefully, for example, in individual floor books. Pupils engage positively in lessons. They apply their knowledge to increasingly demanding work and build securely on what they have learned before.

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

Pupils are positive about their school and value their learning. They enjoy reading and read often throughout the school day. Pupils at the early stages of reading receive appropriate support that helps them to catch up with their peers. Teachers identify when pupils need additional help and revisit learning to help them build securely on what they already know. As a result, pupils make progress from their starting points.

Pupils work purposefully in calm and orderly classrooms where they can concentrate on their learning. Those who need support to regulate their emotions, respond positively to staff reminding them about behaviour expectations. They quickly refocus on their work. Pupils are safe and secure at school. They describe the school as 'a safe environment where they feel protected'. Pupils trust staff to listen to them and help them when they have any worries or concerns. Bullying is rare and staff deal with any concerns appropriately. Behaviour

across the school is respectful and calm. Pupils know the school's values and talk about how respect and fairness are important in everyday life.

Relationships between staff and pupils are warm and positive. Throughout the school, pupils go on visits and take part in enrichment activities. These opportunities help pupils feel connected to their learning and the wider school community. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who may face additional barriers to their learning or wellbeing.

More pupils attend school more often than previously. Leaders work closely with families to support attendance and remove barriers that prevent some pupils from attending regularly. Pupils develop secure social and emotional skills. They learn about mental health and online safety. Staff recognise when pupils need additional support and help them effectively. As a result, pupils become increasingly confident and independent over time.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue to embed their raising attainment strategies so that pupils' achievements are further improved.
- Leaders should further strengthen the strategies in place to ensure that pupils consistently demonstrate positive learning behaviours and take an active part in their learning every day.

About this inspection

This school is part of Waterton Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, David Dickinson, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Stephen Johnson.

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

This inspection took place on Wednesday 9 and Thursday 10 September 2026.

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 headteacher and other school leaders. They also spoke to representatives of the local governing board, trustees and the chief executive officer.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school currently uses no alternative provision.

Headteacher: Adam Dawson

Lead inspector:
Richard Jones, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:
Coralie Corrin, 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 9 September 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

233
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: 268

School capacity

315
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: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

48.07%

Well above average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 26.5%

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

4.72%
Close to 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: 4.1%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

18.03%
Close to average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 15%

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

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	39%	61%	Below
2024/25 (final)	49%	62%	Below
2023/24 (final)	43%	61%	Below
2022/23 (final)	26%	60%	Below

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	49%	74%	Below
2024/25 (final)	53%	75%	Below
2023/24 (final)	55%	74%	Below
2022/23 (final)	40%	73%	Below

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	63%	72%	Below
2024/25 (final)	63%	72%	Below
2023/24 (final)	64%	72%	Below
2022/23 (final)	63%	71%	Below

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	52%	73%	Below
2024/25 (final)	60%	74%	Below
2023/24 (final)	50%	73%	Below
2022/23 (final)	44%	73%	Below

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	31%	46%	Below
2024/25 (final)	32%	47%	Below

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	30%	46%	Below
2022/23 (final)	31%	44%	Below

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	43%	62%	Below
2024/25 (final)	40%	63%	Below
2023/24 (final)	52%	62%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	38%	60%	Below

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	55%	59%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	52%	59%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	52%	58%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	62%	58%	Close to average

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	45%	60%	Below
2024/25 (final)	48%	61%	Below
2023/24 (final)	35%	59%	Below
2022/23 (final)	50%	59%	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 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	31%	68%	-37 pp
2024/25 (final)	32%	69%	-37 pp
2023/24 (final)	30%	67%	-37 pp
2022/23 (final)	31%	66%	-36 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	43%	80%	-36 pp
2024/25 (final)	40%	81%	-41 pp
2023/24 (final)	52%	80%	-28 pp
2022/23 (final)	38%	78%	-40 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	55%	78%	-22 pp
2024/25 (final)	52%	78%	-26 pp
2023/24 (final)	52%	78%	-25 pp
2022/23 (final)	62%	77%	-16 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	45%	80%	-35 pp
2024/25 (final)	48%	81%	-33 pp
2023/24 (final)	35%	79%	-45 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	50%	79%	-29 pp

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 (3 term)	7.4%	5.2%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	8.8%	5.5%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	8.9%	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 (3 term)	18.8%	13.0%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	28.6%	14.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	32.0%	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.

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