

Unity School

Independent school standard inspection report

DfE registration number	861/6006
Unique Reference Number (URN)	137574
Inspection number	397690
Inspection dates	3–4 October 2012
Reporting inspector	Jacqueline Wordsworth HMI

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

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 www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/090070.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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

No. 090070

© Crown copyright 2012



Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.^{1, 2}

Information about the school

Unity is an independent secondary school, managed by Unity Training and Education Services Limited, which caters for students aged 14–16 years who have been identified with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD). It was registered in August 2011 and opened in September 2011, to provide, education for up to 24 male and female students who have a poor attendance record or have been excluded from mainstream schools. Currently, there are five Year 11 male students on roll, two of whom have a statement of special educational needs. This is the school's first full inspection by Ofsted.

The school is housed in Cartwright House, which is a newly refurbished annex to an arts centre close to the city centre of Stoke-on-Trent. Students attend mainly on a full-time basis, but some are registered on the roll of a mainstream school and attend on a part-time basis as dually registered students. The school's ethos is based on the provision of equal opportunities for all students to reach their potential and develop into positive young citizens. Through this ethos it aims to prepare students with the skills they require to become productive and positive young adults so that they are able to enter further education or employment.

Evaluation of the school

Unity School provides a good education for its students and it meets its stated aims well. As a result of a good curriculum, together with good teaching and assessment, students make good progress in their learning. Effective provision for students' personal development enables them, over time, to understand their emotions and develop strategies to manage and improve their behaviour. The provision for students' welfare, health and safety, including safeguarding is good. All but one of the regulatory requirements for independent schools are met. The school makes satisfactory provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents.

² www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents.

Quality of education

The school's curriculum is good. The school provides a calm, purposeful learning environment with very good relations between staff and students. Consequently, students settle in well and develop a much more positive attitude to learning.

Students profit from a carefully planned curriculum derived from the requirements of a range of external accreditations and awards. All of the required areas of learning are included and there is good emphasis on the development of skills in literacy and numeracy. Leaders are aware that less emphasis is paid to providing a detailed scientific course, although students have a science day each term. Plans to address this form part of the school's current development plan.

Well-planned personal, social and health education (PSHE) is offered through an externally accredited entry-level course with a high focus on enhancing the students' self-esteem and improving their behavioural and emotional problems. This reflects the school's expertise in meeting a range of increasingly challenging learning needs. Appropriate opportunities prepare students for the responsibilities and experiences of adult life, particularly through the improvement of their social and communication skills. Students have access to satisfactory careers education; however, opportunities for them to gain first-hand experience of the world of work, although appropriate, are limited.

Students benefit from good physical education experiences within the school's own facilities, for example through the BTEC in sport and active leisure awards. In addition, through visits to local sports and leisure centres, students engage in such activities as climbing, boxing and fitness programmes. Good opportunities to study subjects with a more practical and vocational bias such as art, media and information and communications technology (ICT), motivate and interest the students. Good quality artwork was seen in students' files and on display in classrooms and outdoor spaces. Of particular note is the work completed on digital media and graffiti. There are few educational visits and only a limited number of visitors to enrich the curriculum.

Teaching and assessment are good. Schemes of work and daily planning clearly indicate clearly how learning will progress and how it is to be assessed. Students' work is regularly marked and it is graded using the criteria from the nationally recognised accreditations. All students have individual targets for all of their subjects. Those with a statement of special educational needs benefit from good support strategies to help them both with their behaviour and their learning. Information is used well, along with the targets in the students' individual education plans, to plan effectively for the next stage of learning in each subject. Consequently, students are clear about what they need to do to improve their work and reach the next level in their learning.

Students benefit from small teaching groups and the high level of individual support. Lessons are helpfully resourced, with students having regular access to good quality

ICT. Lessons usually engage the interest of students because of the wide variety of approaches to learning that are used. Students often sustain their concentration and interest for lengthy periods. In the most successful lessons, teachers make good use of questions and discussion to check progress and give students the opportunity to hear and appreciate what others think. Of particular note is the positive relationships teachers have with their students and the effective use of praise and encouragement to motivate them. These features were illustrated well in a mathematics lesson: the students worked in a settled way to solve real-life problems involving working out rates of pay. They clearly understood the task and what it was they were learning.

Active engagement in learning enables all students to make good progress and to experience success at school, sometimes for the first time. School records and the observation of lesson show that, from low starting points, students' progress is good even though their levels of attainment remain lower than that of most others of the same age in mainstream schools.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Social development is good. Students have all experienced disruptions and difficulties in their previous schools. Some exhibit challenging behaviour on entry to the school. Students benefit from good quality relationships with the staff and this is a significant feature in the students' ability to learn mutual trust and respect, and their substantially improved behaviour. Many students demonstrate a sense of achievement and success through gaining a range of nationally recognised qualifications. This does much to promote their self-esteem, as does their increasing level of cooperation with adults. Students are taught to be reflective about their behaviour and to develop strategies to manage their anger and frustration. They respond well to expectations of appropriate behaviour and usually treat each other with respect. Students' behaviour in lessons and around the school is generally good. Any occasional outbursts or evidence of frustration are managed effectively by the staff.

Students' increasing enjoyment of school is reflected in their improving attendance. Often they have not attended a school for several months prior to their admission to Unity, but now attend almost every day and have improving attendance records, although these well below what could be expected. All students spoken to during the inspection confirmed that staff care about them, treat them fairly and help them to achieve. All of this puts them in a sound position to go on to the next stage of their careers or education with well-placed confidence.

Students' cultural development is satisfactory. Although topics such human rights, citizenship and local democracy are taught, they are not planned for insufficient depth to give students a good awareness of public institutions in England. Leaders acknowledge that there are too few opportunities for students to learn about or to develop their tolerance of and respect other lifestyles and cultures or for the diversity of national and international communities. Good opportunities exist for students to

develop their aesthetic awareness through the arts and media courses that they follow and this does much to enhance their satisfactory spiritual awareness.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The provision for the students' welfare, health and safety is good. Written policies follow national guidance and focus on minimising risk. Staff are sensitive to students' individual pastoral and welfare needs. Students increasingly understand how to behave in a cooperative manner and all state that they feel safe in school. Parents and carers, and the local authority officer were unanimous in their support for the school and agree that children are kept safe and cared for well. Regular reviews of provision undertaken by the placing authority enable the leadership to keep up-to-date with requirements and to participate in training offered by the local authority.

Effective procedures for safeguarding students, including comprehensive child protection arrangements, are in place with the school utilising members of staff who have been appropriately trained. The school has effective procedures in place for the safe recruitment of staff. All parents and carers are required to sign a home-school agreement. As a result, the school's expectations for the contribution of the senior leaders, staff, students, parents and carers are clearly set out and known by all. Good attention is paid to teaching students about staying safe and healthy living, and these are well supported by ample opportunities for physical education and sporting activities.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The school makes all the required checks about staff and members of the proprietorial body. The single central register contains all of the required information.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The school occupies two stories of a recently refurbished well-decorated annex to a media arts centre. As outdoor play space is limited, the school makes use of the good use local park and local leisure facilities.

Provision of information

The school has established strong links with parents, carers and outside agencies, including the local authority. Parents and carers, together with placing authorities, are kept well informed through regular review meetings and comprehensive half-yearly reports. These reports are a helpful summary of each student's progress and attainment in the key areas of learning. The prospectus has been recently updated and all of the required information is provided or made available to parents and others.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school has a clearly written complaints procedure which meets regulatory requirements.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations'), with the exception of those listed below.³

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils (standards in part 2) and must:

- give support to pupils to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures, in a way that promotes tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions (paragraph 5(e)).

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development.

- Include scientific learning experiences and activities as an explicit element of all curriculum planning.
- Extend the opportunities for students to experience work-related learning.

³ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2010/1997/contents/made.

Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
-------------	------	--------------	------------

The quality of education

Overall quality of education		✓		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils		✓		
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		✓		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		✓		

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development			✓	
The behaviour of pupils		✓		

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils		✓		
--	--	---	--	--

School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Independent secondary for pupils with BESD		
Date school opened	1 September 2011		
Age range of pupils	14–16		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 4	Girls: 0	Total: 4
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 1
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 2	Girls: 0	Total: 2
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£12,488		
Address of school	Cartwright House Broad Street Hanley Stoke-on-Trent ST1 4EU		
Telephone number	01782 829900		
Email address	Israel@unitystoke.co.uk		
Headteacher	Israel Ampnesh		
Proprietor	Unity Training and Education Services Limited		

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



4 October 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Unity School, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, ST1 4EU

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school. I really enjoyed seeing you work so hard in lessons. You showed me how much you enjoy your school and how pleased you are with how well you are doing, particularly in how well you are learning to manage your own behaviour. You are right to be pleased, because it is a good school. Here are some of the highlights.

- You enjoy school and make good progress in your learning. You behave well in class and you work hard to reduce the times you have out of lessons. I was particularly pleased to see how well the school supports you in developing your confidence and improving your social and communication skills
- You have an interesting curriculum. I especially enjoyed finding out about your media activities, particularly your new graffiti art project.
- Your teachers are doing a good job. They plan interesting lessons and involve you in your own learning as much as possible.
- Your spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory.

There are some things the school could do better and I have asked the headteacher to make sure that:

- you are taught about other faiths, traditions and cultures
- more science is planned into the curriculum
- you have more opportunities to learn first-hand about the world of work
- more use is made of visits and the use of specialist speakers from outside the school, so that you know more about local and national leaders and the jobs they do.

You can help by responding to your teachers ensuring that you tell them if you do not understand anything.

Yours sincerely
Jacqueline Wordsworth
Her Majesty's Inspector