

# Unity School

Cartwright House, Broad Street, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST1 4EU

## Inspection dates

10–12 October 2017

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The headteacher, who is also one of the proprietors of the school, has ensured that the school meets all of the independent school standards.
- The headteacher and staff are ambitious, passionate and successful in getting pupils to re-engage with learning and improve their self-confidence and basic skills so that they attain relevant qualifications. Consequently, they succeed and do not drop out of school.
- Given their low starting points, all pupils are now making good progress academically and in their personal development. Behaviour and pupils' attitudes to learning are rapidly improving.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. Teachers plan lessons effectively and teach concepts securely. Management of pupils' behaviour is highly effective and this ensures that learning is not disrupted.
- The curriculum is well matched to pupils' specific needs and capabilities. Citizenship and religious education are promoting respect and tolerance of those with different beliefs and lifestyles.
- Since the last inspection, the school has improved planning for science and is now providing work-related learning, where relevant to do so.
- Pupils are kept safe and secure and are very well cared for. Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent.
- Communication with parents and placing authorities is very good. Staff ensure that parents and others are regularly contacted to inform them about how well individuals are performing and what must be improved.
- Senior leaders are suitably monitoring pupils' attainment, effort and behaviour. However, the tracking of pupils' progress is insufficiently robust.
- In mathematics, pupils are not having enough opportunities to use and apply their mathematical skills to improve their reasoning and problem-solving skills.
- Attendance is improving; however, there are some individuals who do not come to school often enough and this slows their learning. Punctuality is not yet good enough.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

## **Full report**

### **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Improve the tracking of pupils' progress in the main subjects taught. Analyse performance information effectively to determine how well individuals are achieving over time in all subjects.
- In mathematics, ensure that pupils have more opportunities to use and apply their mathematical skills, knowledge and understanding to improve their reasoning and problem-solving skills further.
- Improve the attendance and punctuality of those pupils who do not come to school regularly enough or on time.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The headteacher opened the school in September 2011, with the aim of improving the life chances of some of the most vulnerable pupils in the local community. He and his staff have brought his vision to fruition as they successfully re-engage pupils with learning. They also significantly improve pupils' behaviour, basic skills and their self-confidence and self-worth.
- The headteacher and his deputy have sustained the good quality of education provided at the time of the last inspection. This has been achieved with a significant change of staff. The headteacher has recruited good staff, who have settled in well and are giving of their best.
- The headteacher is an inspiration to the pupils, staff and parents. Parents who spoke to the inspector said that they hold him in high esteem. Local authority officers who place pupils at the school say that he is doing a very good job. If he was not, they would not send pupils to the school.
- The headteacher and staff set the highest expectations for social behaviour, and respect and courtesy are the norm. An important strength is the high-quality relationships between staff and pupils. This ensures a very positive climate for learning and enables pupils to apply themselves so that they learn effectively.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. At the time of the last inspection, pupils were not provided with sufficient opportunities to learn about or develop their tolerance of, and respect for, other lifestyles and cultures. This shortcoming has been addressed effectively. Work in citizenship and religious studies enables pupils to learn about diversity, stereotyping and sexual exploitation in a way that promotes respect for others.
- All of the required areas of learning are taught, with a good emphasis on improving pupils' basic skills. As at the time of the last inspection, pupils profit from a suitably planned curriculum derived from the requirements of a range of external qualifications. Appropriate enrichment activities are provided. For example, a three-day trip to London to visit the law courts and other places of national interest was enjoyed by the boys who went on the trip. Such an event helps pupils acquire an understanding of cultural traditions and civic duties in England. Visitors come into school to provide careers and drugs education to extend learning.
- The headteacher has improved science planning, and scientific learning experiences are now of better quality. Weaknesses in work-related learning have been suitably addressed. Work experience is now provided for those who would benefit from it. For example, some pupils work in a local kitchen a couple of days a week, and love being there. They say that they enjoy working with adults and are acquiring the necessary culinary skills to work as a chef and are developing their interpersonal skills to better prepare them for working life.
- Staff who completed the inspection questionnaire indicated that they enjoy their work. They are proud to be members of staff and judge that the school is well led and managed. They have a clear understanding of the goals the schools is aiming to achieve.

## Governance

- There is no governing body. The headteacher, who is also one of the proprietors, runs the school.
- The headteacher has fulfilled his responsibilities effectively. He has ensured that the school meets all of the independent school standards.
- The proprietors actively promote the well-being of pupils.
- The proprietors make appropriate decisions about staff salaries and suitably monitor teachers' performance.
- The proprietors work effectively with staff and local authority officers to communicate the vision and ethos of the school and to ensure that provision enables all pupils to achieve well.
- Senior leaders and local authority officers provide a suitable balance of challenge and support to enable staff and others to understand the school's strengths and areas for further development.
- The tracking of pupils' progress requires further improvement in order to better understand the impact of teaching on the rate of learning.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All of the required recruitment and staff vetting checks are carried out on all staff, and others, to ensure that they are suitable to work unsupervised with pupils.
- All staff have been appropriately trained to fulfil their child protection and 'Prevent' duty roles and responsibilities.
- The school's safeguarding policy is up to date and it is implemented effectively. The framework is in line with national guidance. The policy is made available to parents and others on request.
- Risk assessments for the premises, classroom activities and trips off-site are of good quality. The fire risk assessment is comprehensive. Audit recommendations are addressed effectively.
- A qualified first aider is in school at all times to deal with accidents and emergencies.
- Pupils are properly supervised through the effective deployment of staff.
- Senior leaders engage very well with parents, local authority officers and others to ensure that pupils are effectively supported and guided and are kept safe from harm.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- Teachers use effective planning to help pupils learn well. Good use is made of assessment information to ensure that work is matched effectively to pupils' specific needs and capabilities.
- Learning activities are relevant and worthwhile. Time is used productively. Teacher expectations are high and work is suitably demanding.

- Assessment of pupils' prior learning is carried out effectively by the school and local authority officers. Gaps in learning are identified and teachers plan activities to eradicate them quickly.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is good and they teach concepts securely. They use their expertise to plan learning that sustains pupils' interest and challenges their thinking. Teachers develop, consolidate and extend pupils' knowledge and understanding of fractions in mathematics and of the characters in 'Romeo and Juliet' in English. In computing, pupils are learning how to use hardware and software packages, such as spreadsheets, effectively. In creative media, pupils are successfully taught how to use digital images and individuals produce good-quality work on topics of interest.
- Most of the teaching is in small groups or one to one. Pupils say that they like the high level of support and guidance that they receive, particularly the encouragement to persevere and achieve the objectives set for them. They like the learning atmosphere in class and the opportunity to get on with their work without disruption or distraction.
- Teachers get the balance between teaching and intervening just right. They provide help when necessary; however, they ensure that there are plenty of opportunities for pupils to work independently to complete tasks on their own.
- Good feedback is given orally and in writing so pupils know what is working well and what must be improved.
- Teachers expect pupils to work diligently on the tasks set and to apply themselves so that they make good gains in their learning and achieve lesson and course objectives.
- High priority is given to improving pupils' basic skills and behaviour. Teachers develop pupils' reading, writing, numeracy and communication skills effectively so that they can achieve the examination objectives set.
- Good use is made of computers to support learning and to motivate pupils to learn. Pupils say that they like using computers to research topics and to use the internet to find out things for themselves. For those that find handwriting difficult, using a computer to complete their work results in a higher standard of presentation of their work.
- In mathematics, pupils are not having enough opportunities to use and apply their mathematical skills to improve their reasoning and problem-solving skills.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils say that they have formed very good relationships with teachers, trust them and are treated with respect and fairness. Consequently, their conduct, self-confidence and self-esteem are improving rapidly.
- Pupils are kept safe and secure at all times. They are free from harassment and intimidation.
- High priority is given to ensuring that pupils are very well cared for. Staff have a good understanding of pupils' needs and they work patiently and diligently to help pupils overcome any emotional, social or mental health difficulties that are barriers to learning.

- Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe and healthy, for example through drugs and sex education and learning how to keep safe when using the internet and social media.
- Pupils get appropriate impartial careers guidance to help them make informed choices about which courses and pathways suit their needs and aspirations.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are consistently positive and they work diligently on the tasks that are set. Pupils are keen to succeed and say that they are 'knuckling down' to work harder and put more effort into their studies nowadays.
- Pupils have formed excellent relations with staff and with their classmates. Pupils look smart and the presentation of their work is improving.
- Pupils know right from wrong and follow the school's code of conduct closely. They show respect to visitors and for the school premises and equipment.
- Incidents of poor behaviour are very rare. When unacceptable behaviour occurs, it is dealt with effectively so that there is no re-occurrence. Appropriate records are kept of any serious misbehaviour.
- Around the school, pupils are polite, friendly and courteous.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development ensures that pupils are encouraged to be reflective, tolerant and responsible for their actions.
- The school has strategies in place to make sure everyone understands the importance of regular attendance, because non-attendance hinders pupils' progress. Despite the school's best efforts to bring about improvement, attendance and punctuality rates are too low for some individuals.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Good

- Pupils are making good progress in all of the subjects taught. This is particularly true in English, mathematics, computing and citizenship subjects. Consequently, standards are rising, albeit from a low base.
- Pupils' attainment on entry is well below the standards expected for their age. This is because all of the pupils have had a very disrupted education and the vast majority have missed a lot of schooling due to exclusion, absence or complex social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.
- Pupils are making good gains in their learning in literacy and mathematics. Teaching is helping pupils to catch up on 'lost ground' quickly. Gaps in learning are being eradicated effectively. For example, in mathematics, weaknesses in pupils' understanding of equivalent fractions were suitably addressed through secure teaching of the concept. Those studying English at GCSE level acquired a good understanding of the characters in 'Romeo and Juliet'. Most were reading Shakespeare for the first time, and enjoyed the challenge of the work.
- School data indicates that pupils are attaining relevant qualifications so that they can

progress to the next stage of their education or employment. All of the boys who left in July 2017 went onto suitable courses that led to higher-level qualifications or are in employment locally.

- The curriculum is well matched to pupils' specific needs and capabilities. Most pupils are taking entry-level courses and/or GCSEs at various levels of difficulty. It is right that pupils are following accredited courses that have currency in the adult world. First-hand evidence indicates that most pupils are on track to achieve course objectives by the end of the year. Those who are not have missed units of work because of absence. Nevertheless, teachers are helping pupils to catch up with coursework so that they attain the qualifications of which they are capable.
- The school's great achievement is improving pupils' attitudes to learning and behaviour. These prerequisites are establishing good learning habits, particularly the motivation to learn that is helping individuals to succeed academically and in their personal development.

## School details

Unique reference number	137574
DfE registration number	861/6006
Inspection number	10006068

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, 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.

Type of school	Independent day school
School category	Independent secondary school
Age range of pupils	13 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	5
Number of part-time pupils	1
Proprietor	Unity Training & Education Services Limited
Headteacher	Israel Amponsah
Annual fees (day pupils)	£16,150
Telephone number	01782 409508
Email address	school@unitystoke.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	October 2012

## Information about this school

- There are six pupils on roll. All are boys. Two boys were admitted 12 months ago and four joined the school in September 2017. Eight other pupils attend the school for between one and three days a week. These pupils are on the roll of local secondary schools and are placed in the school by local authorities. All of the pupils are in Years 10 and 11.
- All of the pupils have had a very disrupted education and most have been excluded from school, some several times. The vast majority have social, emotional and mental health difficulties and all have challenging behaviour. Some have learning difficulties.
- None of the six pupils on roll have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.



- The school's previous standard inspection was in October 2012, when the quality of education provided was judged good. A material change inspection was conducted in October 2014, to alter the age range from 14 to 16 years to 13 to 16 years.
- The headteacher is one of the two joint proprietors of the school. There is no governing body.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher were in post at the time of the previous inspection. The other four members of staff are newly appointed.
- The school does not use alternative provision. Supply teachers are not employed.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning and sampled pupils' work in a range of subjects taught.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and a representative from Staffordshire local authority who is responsible for placing pupils at the school. Discussions were held formally and informally with pupils to seek their views about school life. No Ofsted point-in-time surveys had been conducted for pupils or placing authorities.
- There were no responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire. The inspector had telephone conversations with parents to find out what they think about the quality of education provided and the effectiveness of leadership. He considered the responses from five questionnaires completed by staff.
- The inspector scrutinised a number of school policies, procedures and other first-hand evidence to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards.

## Inspection team

David Rzeznik, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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